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A Weak American President

President Obama has staked his reputation on being a human rights guru to people around the world. But his remarks at Tuesday's news conference and behavior since taking office have instead exposed a different persona—that of human rights charlatan.

On June 15, three days after the phony Iranian elections and the same day that seven Iranian demonstrators were murdered, Obama's UN Ambassador, Susan Rice, made a speech in Vienna promoting the Saint Obama vision: "The responsibility to protect is a duty that I feel deeply. We must prepare for the likelihood that we will again face the worst impulses of human nature run riot, perhaps as soon as in days to come. And we must be ready. We all know the greatest obstacle to swift action in the face of sudden atrocity is, ultimately, political will. It requires above all the courage and compassion to act. Together, let us all help one other to have and to act upon the courage of our convictions."

A week later there were multiple casualties, injuries and threats, and 46 million voters wrenched away from that doorway to freedom that had opened—if only a crack. But when the president was asked Tuesday: "Is there any red line that your administration won't cross where that offer [to talk to Iran's leaders] will be shut off?" He answered: "We're still waiting to see how it plays itself out."

And when asked again, "If you do accept the election of Ahmadinejad without any significant changes in the conditions there, isn't that a betrayal of what the demonstrators there are working to achieve?" He answered: "We can't say definitively what exactly happened at polling places."

And asked again: "Why won't you spell out the consequences that the Iranian people?" He answered: "Because I think that we don't know yet how this thing is going to play out."

And yet again: "Shouldn't the present regime know that there are consequences?" He answered: "We don't yet know how this is going to play out."

This is a man who embodies the opposite of the courage to act. His appalling ignorance of history prompted him to claim at his press conference that "the Iranian people aren't paying a lot of attention to what's being said here." On the contrary, from their jail cells in the Gulag, Soviet dissidents took heart from what was being said here—as all dissidents dream that the leader of the free world will be prepared to speak and act in their defense.

The president's storyline that we don't know what has transpired in Iran is an

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12-member Council of Guardians. As reported by the BBC, more than 450 Iranians registered as prospective candidates while four contenders were accepted. All 42 women who attempted to run were rejected. So exactly what part of rigged does President Obama not understand?

Instead of denouncing the fake election, President Obama now tells Iranians who are dying for the real thing “the United States respects the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran.” Whose sovereignty is that? The Hobbesian sovereign thugs running the place? Sovereignty to do what? To deny rights and freedoms to their own people? In a state so bereft of minimal protections for human dignity, why should the sovereignty of such a government be paramount?

But President Obama didn't want to dwell on the daily reality of sovereign Iran: A criminal code that permits stoning women to death for alleged adultery and hanging homosexuals for the crime of existing. Instead, he repeatedly invoked “respect” for “their traditions and their culture.”

This is the same mantra he espoused to the Islamic world in Cairo when three times he spoke of the “rights” of Muslim women to cover up their bodies. Knowing full well that women in the Muslim world face the contrary problem of surviving after refusing to cover up their bodies, he never once dared to mention that this was also a human right. What part of cultural relativism and traditional oppression does President Obama not know how it plays out?

In his scripted remarks, the president gave the impression of talking tough: “The Iranian government must respect those rights [to assembly and free speech]. It must govern through consent and not coercion.” But with the “or else” pointedly missing from his lines, he made it plain that he continues to have high hopes of partnering with this current Iranian theocracy. “I think it is not too late for the Iranian government to recognize that there is a peaceful path that will lead to stability and legitimacy and prosperity for the Iranian people.”

This Iranian government has told us in deeds, as well as in words, exactly what path it has chosen. President Obama has told us his path also: pandering to Islamic radicals and empty posturing. Ironically, the rest of the world claimed they wanted a weak American president whose foreign policy would read “apologize, capitulate and stand down.” Now that they have what they asked for, real human rights victims are being forced to pay the piper.

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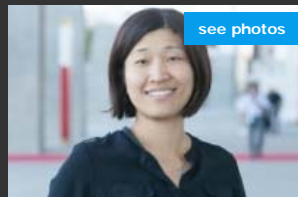
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