

Worlds Apart

An Iranian student faces an uncertain future as the U.S. and his homeland drift toward war

The Iranian Student Association has functioned on the University of Oregon's campus for eight years.

Hossein Balou, a member of the Iranian Student Association, is 32 years old, has lived in the United States and has been a member of the association for more than two years.

Hossein left his family in Iran and moved to the U.S. to continue his studies in adaptive physical education. He chose this area of study because the revolution has left many handicapped people. Someday, Hossein plans to return to Iran after receiving his masters degree and help those who were wounded in the bloody revolution.

The following is a question and answer session with Hossein about his personal views on the current situation facing Iran.

Q: When Iranian students come to the U.S., and more specifically the University, do many of them change their citizenship?

A: It depends on the student. Some change their nationality as soon as they get to the United States. I didn't change mine and I won't. I don't want to tolerate Khomeini's policy, but at the same time I belong to my country and want to help my people.

Q: Do most Iranian students plan on taking residency the the U.S.?

A: I don't think so. If the war were over, they would rather go back. Most of them are fleeing from the war

and I don't blame them.

Q: Does your country help pay for your tuition?

A: No, my father supported me. Unfortunately, for some reason, my government doesn't allow my father to send me money anymore. They won't allow him to because I haven't been admitted into the physical education department, and my government said we can't send money to you until you send proof of admission. So anybody who wants to send money to someone in another country has to get permission from the government. So my father is not able to send money to me. This is ridiculous when people aren't able to spend their own money the way they please. My father wants to send money to me so he sends money through the black market and this is really hard to do and you have to pay much more.

Some students from Iran who live in Washington, D.C., have a scholarship from my country because they agree politically with Khomeini and are working for him.

Q: What religion are most Iranians?

A: Ninety-nine percent of Iranians are Shiite Muslim. The Iraqis are Muslim too, but they are Saudi Muslim, kind of like the difference

between Catholics and Protestants.

Q: Do you personally support Khomeini, and if so, why?

A: No, I do not like Khomeini's policies. Since he came to Iran in 1978, the Iranian people do not have any freedom. I think he is to blame for the war with Iraq. Khomeini, his family, and friends have the power and they are doing whatever they want. There is no balance of power at all.

Q: Do the majority of Iranian students here at the University support or oppose Khomeini?

A: The majority of Iranian students don't support Khomeini--just a few support him as far as I know.

Q: Did you oppose the Shah when he was in power?

A: Yes, but now I like the Shah a hundred times more than Khomeini. He was much better than Khomeini, he liked to have a good relationship with the western world, especially with the United States. I think most of the educated Iranian people would rather have a good relationship with the western world, and one think I'd like to mention about this is that if the United States wants to have a good relationship with Iran, the United States policy (with Iran) isn't very good. It's increasing tension in the Persian Gulf. If the tension increases too much, my government might go to the Soviet Union (for support).

STORY BY

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