



FROM IRAN: Cafés, Schools, Homes – Everything Around the Target Destroyed

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): We've now left the Mosalla Mosque, the largest mosque in Iran, and witnessed the extraordinary scene of tens of thousands of worshippers, probably in excess of 100,000, when you count the people who were outside also praying, celebrating the end of Ramadan, and from there we've come to Niloufar Square, and that's where I'm currently standing. Those of you who have been following the bombing campaign of the Netanyahu and Trump regimes on Tehran, may have heard the name Niloufar Square before, behind me is a cafe, a famous cafe known as the Ahla Cafe. Ahla, I'm told, means welcome in Arabic. And it has been largely destroyed. I don't know, and I would guess that it wasn't actually the target, because to my right and behind the camera that is recording this report is what remains of, I would say, a four-story building. It has been completely and utterly demolished. You can see the metal frame of the building more or less standing, but pretty much everything else has been ripped to shreds and crushed under the weight of a massive explosion. Unfortunately, I can't film that, I've been told, because it was a police station and for security reasons, they've told us that that is off limits in terms of recording. But we can record the damage around this square. And so one of the victims of this strike was this cafe, sadly. I don't know if the intention of the owners is to rebuild, but it's not just this cafe that suffered. I'm going to walk around the square and show you other things that have been damaged all the while taking care not to film the part of this square that is off-limits for video purposes. So as you can see, it's just not the cafe, the building next to it, which appears to be commercial at the bottom, maybe was residential at the top, suffered quite serious damage, and you can see a massive hole there. I would imagine that a piece of shrapnel tore through that wall, that white wall. There are various other holes and huge chunks of concrete that have been taken out or cement whatever that was. Here too you can see significant damage that looks like an apartment. You can see there are holes in this metal door that tore through, probably shrapnel, here as well. Up top, the windows have been blasted out. This looks to have sustained some damage. Here is a mosque. The mosque, fortunately, appears not to have been significantly damaged, at least not the parts that I can see. This building, however, was significantly damaged.

Now, it has been widely reported that the US and Israeli air forces have struck police stations repeatedly. And I think the reason for that is quite clear. What they want to do is weaken the capacity of the state to enforce the law so that if and when they can provoke a riotous uprising, the law enforcement authorities will not be strong enough to deal with it in an effective manner. These are, by the way, not the only adjacent buildings which have been damaged severely. There are a number of buildings on the other side of the police station, I can see them from here, but in order for me to show them to you, I would have to also show you the demolished police station. Apparently that building there which has also been damaged as you can see was a school or is a school. We can also see that there has been damage to the windows of this mosque, possibly the interior as well. In any case, I can assure you that the police are not a legitimate military target, especially for an aggressor. Israel has been doing precisely the same thing in the Gaza Strip, of course. It has been murdering en masse not only the police officers of the Gaza Strip, but also their families. Again, for the purpose of calling, I'm sure their objective is to cause a complete breakdown in civil order so that the resistance forces that are in power in the Gaza Strip will be, you know, I think their aim is to ensure that they are consumed with just maintaining order and are not able to put up any effective resistance to the genocidal entity. So now I've moved to the other side of the square across from the Ahla Cafe and you can see this building has been severely damaged. I'm no architect or engineer, but I suspect that this one might not be recoverable. And the building behind it is a massive hole up there. And then you see here as well quite substantial damage. Even that building off there in the distance has suffered damage to the windows. And these buildings, what remains of the police stations, I should say, is immediately behind me, so these buildings were very close to the police station, and it looks like they may not be recoverable either. But if they are, there's going to have to be very considerable repair work done. So basically this entire square has been hit hard by the US and Israeli objective of wiping out the Iranian police forces. Not for the purpose of ensuring human rights, if they give a damn about that, they wouldn't be carrying out a genocide in Gaza as we speak. I think the clear objective here is regime change, weakening the ability of the existing government to remain in power. And here finally you can see what looks like a nice apartment or what was a nice apartment.

So now I'm standing across the street on the other side of the square, across the streets from what remains of the Ahla Cafe. You can see here more heavy damage to commercial premises and what appear to be residential units. Heavy damage here as well. This florist appears to have been spared. And there's another school over here. The fact that there were schools and a mosque within no more than 200 metres of the impact site of the target would have been public knowledge, readily known to the Israelis or the Americans, whoever it was, who struck this police station. But clearly that didn't deter them from inflicting terrible damage on this neighbourhood.

DL: So Reza, thank you for speaking with me. I understand that behind you there is a shop that you own and also some units above them. Can you tell us what was here before this airstrike happened?

Reza: My father made this building 60 years ago, okay? The ground floor is a shop, a bakery for the normal people. We made bread for the people; residential area. But someone who doesn't understand the residential area was bombing this building and they didn't know that there is a residential, commercial, administrative area. Why are they bombing a building like this?! Two ladies upstairs, fortunately, they are alive.

DL: Were they injured?

Reza: A little bit. Five people were working in the shop. Fortunately, some of them are okay. One of them is injured.

DL: When you say shop, you're talking about the bakery?

Reza: Shop.

DL: Your bakery?

Reza: Bakery, my bakery. Okay, but alhamdulillah, most of them were very good.

DL: That's great. And you live in this area?

Reza: Yes my own house is four streets down. I took my mother-in-law and sister-in-law there. And we are trying our best to make it as soon as possible active. Because we have to provide the bread for the people. The people are waiting for bread.

DL: And where were you when it was struck?

Reza: Shocked. For this small building; this is not military, this is a residential area.

DL: Right so I understand this was a police station?

Reza: Yes it was a police station but anyhow when you want to bomb somewhere you should make sure the other people, the civilians, don't get injured.

DL: Right. And I understand that's a school over there?

Reza: Yeah it's a school over there, there is another school over there, we have a mosque over there. I don't understand why for one police station, they are bombing.

DL: Just overall, how do you feel about the way the war is going? Do you think you feel confident?

Reza: I think it's not a war. War is fighting face to face. Like our war with Iraq, eight years. The people went there and fought each other. But now someone is coming, pushes the button, 20 people die. It is not a real war.

DL: Yes, so Donald Trump says that the NATO countries who won't open up the Street of Hormuz, they are cowards, what do you have to say about who is the coward in this scenario?

Reza: Land in Iran is like God. It's like my mother; land. If they come to our territory we go to defend our territory. We don't care, we just defend our territory. I promise to you, that is a different war, that will be a very different war. Very normal people, ordinary people will go and defend our territory because land, as I said, is very important for the Iranians. They can come, push the button, destroy the residential area or commercial area, doesn't matter. But if they come to occupy our land, it will be a huge one, I promise.

DL: Well, thank you very much. It's been a pleasure speaking with you.

Reza: I wish you all the best.

DL: What you're looking at here is a small park that was situated adjacent to the police station, the remains of which are immediately to my right. And you can see there the children's toys, playground equipment. All of this, of course, the presence of all of these elements, the park, the commercial shops, the residential units, the schools, the mosque, the cafes, all of this would have been public knowledge that they were immediately adjacent to this target.

END

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