

FROM IRAN: Censorship? A Response to German Media

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you for a Reason2Resist from the city of Shiraz in Iran on March 25th, 2026. We arrived here last night at about one in the morning by bus from the City of Esfahan. And when I say we, I'm referring to my journalistic colleagues Tim Anderson from Australia and Ahmad Saadaldin from the United States. Ahmad, as you may know, is the host of an excellent anti-imperialist YouTube channel called Propaganda&Co. We have been thus far in the cities of Tabriz, Tehran, and Esfahan, and from here we'll be heading further south after spending a couple of days in Shiraz, which is reputed to be the city of poetry and flowers, a very beautiful city, not dissimilar to Esfahan. In fact, all the cities we've been to have their own charm and extraordinary amount of history and culture which I hope to convey to you in the days ahead in the reports that we're going to be publishing. In any case we checked into our hotel room around one o'clock last night. About an hour after we checked in there was a loud explosion and I briefly heard warplanes flying overhead. I didn't see any of the light from the explosion, didn't see any fire, any smoke but it was close enough to be heard quite clearly. I also thought I heard, although I can't be sure, that the Iranian air defence systems were activated around the time of that explosion. In any case, this morning we awoke to find the weather was quite inclement, in fact severe. It was very cold, windy, and strangely enough, something that's very unusual for these parts, I understand. There was a tornado warning for the Gulf region, not just for the Persian Gulf coast of Iran, but also for the Gulf autocracies across the water including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. I don't know whether any tornadoes materialised but it sounded to me if you happen to be religiously minded that that might be a bit of a wake-up call from God. In any case we did have a productive day despite the inclement weather and I'll be reporting on what we learned and saw and heard in subsequent reports.

In this report I wanted to address the question of censorship. It was an issue that was raised with me by a colleague from Germany. But before I get into that, I also just wanted to summarise where we've been and where we may go. We have thus far been to the cities of

Tabriz after crossing into the country on March 20th by car from Turkey. And then from there, we went to Tehran where we spent a couple of days and then onto Esfahan. And we've been here now for almost a day here in Shiraz and we'll be heading further south. We will at some point be, we anticipate, along the coast of the Persian Gulf. I'm not going to get into any more detail about that at this time for security reasons. Frankly, all of us are concerned about the propensity of the Israeli genocidal entity to kill journalists, especially those whose reporting is not favourable to Israel. And so for that reason, I'm not going to elaborate any further at this upon our plans for where we may go next. I will say that Tim and Ahmad and I are inclined to extend our stay. We had intended to be here for about a week, but there's so much to be done, so much journalistic work to be done that we probably will end up staying for some time more and our gracious hosts are happy to accommodate us in that regard. The three of us were accompanied by a Turkish journalist, but he was not able to go further south after Tehran and sadly he had to leave us, just because he had other commitments. We've also been accompanied by several members of the Iranian state media who have acted as our guides and our translators. And as I said, I wanted to address the subject of censorship at this time after having just given you this brief summary of where we've been and where we may go. Because a colleague of mine, a friend and a journalistic colleague from Germany alerted me to the fact that there is a journalist that works for the German state broadcaster ARD by the name, I believe, of Katherina Willinger, let me just confirm that for you. Katharina Willinger, I should say, and she's apparently a reporter or host for a programme called Tagesschau. Now the reason why my colleague in Germany brought her to my attention is that apparently she has been asserting that there's no point in coming to Iran to report on the war and that is in her bailiwick – she is responsible for reporting on international affairs in this part of the world because there's simply too much censorship and too many restrictions being placed upon what foreign correspondents may do. And therefore, she's reporting on the war from Istanbul, I understand. And let me tell you folks and shouldn't be a surprise to anybody, I don't think you have to be a foreign correspondent or a war correspondent to understand this, but if you're not actually in a country that is at war, it's going to be rather difficult for you to get a really good handle of what is going on inside the country and how the country is being impacted by that war and how the people are responding to it and how government and the military are responding it. But apparently this journalist Willinger feels that she can do her job professionally and adequately from a distance and by relying upon her contacts whoever they may be.

So that then brings me to the whole subject of censorship and let me begin by saying that this is not my first time in Iran. I came here in May of last year. I was invited to attend and participate in the Sobh Media festival. It was my first trip to the country. I spent a week in Tehran. I issued many reports during that week of what I saw. It was really an enlightening week for me not having been in Iran previously and having been subjected to so much disinformation, governmental and media disinformation about the country and its people. So it was quite an education but it was only a week and I didn't have the opportunity to get outside of the capital. In any case, during that week I was allowed to roam freely around the city of Tehran. No one curated my trip. No one prevented me from going wherever I wanted to go and I ended up walking dozens of kilometres just to see at a street level how people in

Tehran live and I made extensive use of the subway system, it has an excellent subway Tehran, and I published whatever I wanted to publish and I covered any subject I felt like covering, spoke to anybody I thought might be willing to speak to me, and no one ever reviewed my reports before I published them and no one placed upon me any restriction about what I could say or where I could go. And I must say that I have had a very similar experience here up until now. And there has been absolutely no indication that the government of this country or the people who are accompanying me are trying to place any kind of restrictions on what I can say and I want to be very clear about this although they are suggesting to us that we go speak to certain people and see certain things all of this is being informed by our expressions to them of what we are most interested in seeing and what we're most interested and seeing is the impacts on the population of the US Israeli bombardment. And so we've gone to bomb sites, we've seen infrastructural projects that have been destroyed, we've talked to victims, we've talked to people who work at these facilities, these businesses, who own these businesses, and no restriction has been placed upon the identities or the vocations of the people we can speak to. Absolutely none. And I'll give you an example. I was at the Mosalla mosque, the grand mosque of Mosalla, which is the largest mosque in Iran, I understand, for the day after the end of Ramadan, an occasion called Eid al-Fitr and it was a massive gathering. I issued a report on this. This enormous mosque was packed to the brim with worshippers and then when we came outside, after the service concluded, I found thousands more people sitting. On the tarmac outside because there wasn't enough space to accommodate them on the inside. And I was accompanied by two representatives of the Iranian state broadcaster when we entered the mosque and when we exited the mosque and as we came out of the mosque, they said: Do you want to interview anybody? And I said, sure, I'd love to interview people. And they said: Well, tell us who you want to interview. And I had literally thousands of people to choose from, as I said they were all sitting there. They were about to depart because the prayer had concluded and so I just began to randomly pick people out from the audience and I've issued a report about this. I ended up interviewing five individuals outside the mosque. Every one of those individuals was selected by me and I wasn't even encouraged to speak to any particular person. I can assure you that all the reports that I put out, no one has asked to review what I was planning to publish. No one has told me that I can't say anything or talk about anything. No one has directed me to address any particular issue. In fact I feel as though I am at complete liberty to report on anything I want to report, on in the only restriction that has been imposed upon me during the time and all of us, is that we have not been permitted to videotape certain sites – and this has only happened on a few occasions – that were considered by the government, and based on what I saw, with good reason to be militarily sensitive. That's it. We couldn't videotape them, but we could talk about what we saw and we could videotape anything else. And frankly, it's hard for me to even imagine now that there's this level of latitude being given to foreign correspondents in an existentially dangerous war for this country. And I'll also point out to you that there are other reporters from corporate media in the West. I understand that there are journalists from, I'll call them journalists, you know, charitably from CNN here. We've also run into on several occasions a photojournalist from Reuters, and I understand that there were others here as well. I don't know whether they've been subjected to any restrictions, but my understanding from speaking to a representative – I put this question

to her – of the Iranian state broadcaster, somebody I know well and I trust, I said: Is the government putting on those reporters from these western corporate media outlets that are editorially hostile to Iran, I think it's fair to say, any restrictions that haven't been imposed upon us? And she assured me that they are not being subjected to any additional restrictions.

And the other thing I want to address is that one person who is an Iranian-Canadian who is quite hostile to the government of Iran criticised me on social media because I have obviously been given access to the internet, whereas many people in the country, the general population, do not have access to external internet. As I understand it, they can use the internet domestically, but not internationally. And by the way, I'm not by any means the only person. There are other people out there who have managed to gain access to the internet. Some of them are not affiliated with the government, I understand, but in any case, I completely understand, given what happened in January when there were violent riots and the Mossad and the CIA or the former CIA Director Mike Pompeo were openly stating that they had been involved in some unspecified capacity in those riots. And they became quite violent and it was apparent to the Iranian authorities that the people who were working with the Mossad, or at least it was their view based on significant evidence of the people working with this Mossad or the CIA or both, were communicating with them by means of the internet. And the violence quickly came to an end around the time that the government shut off access to the internet. I don't think that shutting off access to the internet in the time of an existentially dangerous war is necessarily unusual or unduly repressive. The very existence of this country is at stake. And although I think it's regrettable that the government feels it necessary to take that step, it's hard to be critical in the current circumstances. And in any case, how am I to do my job as a journalist if I don't have access to the internet? I mean I could of course just reserve all of my reports for publication after I leave the country and regain access to the internet, but by that time the information in my reports may well be stale and of little interest or use to the public. You know the situation is evolving rapidly and for me to be able to report in real time to the world outside of Iran what is going on here, as a practical matter I do need access to the internet. And as do I'm sure all of the other foreign correspondents in the country who I understand also have been given access to the Internet. So I make no apologies for having access to the Internet. I wish it was possible for every single person in this country to have access to the Internet, but I simply cannot do my job effectively unless I have access while I'm here.

I also want to point out to Miss Willinger, this German journalist, that again, I'm being charitable here, I'll come back to that in a moment, that the military censorship regime in Israel is as far as I can tell considerably more severe. I have been allowed without any kind of restriction to publish extensive video footage of damage that has been done to civilian infrastructure and civilian buildings, businesses, residences and so forth, automobiles, you name it, in fact, I've been encouraged to publish that information. There hasn't been a single civilian target that I have seen, a damage site, where I was told that I couldn't publish video footage or photography of the damage. But we know from reports in the Israeli media that the military sensors in Israel are placing severe restrictions on what the general public and the media can publish. Not just with respect to damage sustained by military targets, but also

damage sustained by residential neighbourhoods, by commercial properties, by civilian infrastructure and so forth. We've seen almost nothing get approved by the military sensors in Israel and I have yet to see a single photograph or video of damage sustained by a military base, not a single one. And you may say that's entirely justified, but the fact of the matter is that level of censorship, what I've just described, is well-beyond what I have experienced here in Iran, both in May of last year at a point in time when the United States and Israel were threatening to attack Iran and did, in fact, a few weeks later, attack Iran, and now when there is a full-scale war happening that is of existential importance to the Islamic Republic. And I must ask, you know, whether Katharina Willinger, working for the German state broadcaster, which is controlled by a government that is implacably hostile to Israel's critics and supports Israel in every imaginable way, and it's not just Friedrich Merz, the current chancellor and the Christian Democrats, it is also the Social Democrats and the Green Party in Germany, the entire German political elite has the blood of Palestinians on their hands, and is complicit in virtually all of the war crimes and crimes against humanity of Israel because of all the economic, military, and political aid that they extend to Israel. And we know that within Germany itself, there is severe repression and censorship of voices that are critical of Israel. And I wonder just how concerned Ms. Willinger is about the internal censorship of those who are opposed to Israel's genocide and its other crimes in the region and just how critical she has been of the military censorship regime in Israel itself. I don't have answers to those questions, frankly, I don't have the time or the inclination to go familiarise myself with all of her work but this idea that, you know, the level of censorship in Iran at this moment is so extreme that it's preferable for her to remain at a safe distance from the war zone, that's rather convenient, Ms. Willinger. No one's likely to blow you up if you're in Ankara or Istanbul, but if you are down here in the warzone, and especially if you are reporting in a manner that is critical of the aggressors in this war, namely Israel and the United States – Israel being a state, a murderous regime that has killed in excess of 230 Palestinian journalists in Gaza alone, almost obliterated from the face of the earth RT correspondent Steve Sweeney and they're you know murdered Shireen Abu Akleh who was not just a Palestinian but also a citizen of the United States, all of this with complete and utter impunity. It's rather convenient to be in Istanbul a NATO member at a safe distance from the violence being inflicted upon the Islamic Republic and the Iranian people. And to be offering up as the excuse for remaining at a safe distance an allegation that the level of censorship in this country at this particular point in time is unacceptably high.

In any case, I thought it important to address that issue now and I want to also say very to those who are wondering, because there are people who are, shall we say, well disposed towards the Netanyahu and Trump regimes, also, by all appearances, monarchists who have been suggesting out there that I am in some way, shape or form beholden to the government of Iran. I assure you that I'm not being paid by them or anyone else a dime for all the work that I've been doing here. Our average workday has been, since we arrived here about a week ago, I would say 18 hours. I've been averaging four hours of sleep a night, as have my colleagues, and ain't nobody paying me a dime for that. Not the Islamic Republic, not the Sobh Media Festival, not some agency of the Iranian government, no foreign government, no high net worth individual, no corporation, state owned or otherwise. You know the source of

revenue for Reason2Resist is monetization, and we do get a modest amount of donations as well. BAnd by the way those donations are not large these are small donations from a significant number of the people who subscribe to our channel but the vast majority of the revenue that we generate is from monetization on Youtube and up until now that has not been adequate, that revenue, to cover all of the expenses we incur in the course of doing this journalism. And the primary reason for that is that we do a lot of on the ground reporting for Reason2Resist. And I've just had to fork over the difference. The excess of the expenses over the revenue is something that I bear myself. And I'm fortunate to be in a position because I've had a successful career as a lawyer to do that and I don't mind it at all because for me, journalism is a love and a passion and something that I feel very strongly about. In any case, that's my report for now. And I hope you'll keep tuning in. If you like and if you find this video to be informative, please like and share it. If you're not already a subscriber to Reason2Resist, we warmly encourage you to become one and help us expand the reach of our unapologetic resistance journalism. This is Dimitri Lascaris signing off from Shiraz in Iran on March 25th, 2026.

END

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