

Condolences on the Passing Away of Hazrat Ma'sumah (SA)

Gunman Kills Three at U.S. Naval Base

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AFP) -- A gunman opened fire on Friday at a U.S. naval base -- the second such shooting in as many days -- killing three people before being shot dead by police, officials said. The shooting, which took place at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, left seven people injured including two sheriff's deputies who responded to the attack, one of whom was shot in the knee, the other in the arm. Police received their first call about the shooting shortly before 7:00 am (1200 GMT), Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan told a press conference. One of the responding deputies eventually killed the attacker. "Walking through the crime scene was like being on the set of a movie," Morgan said. "You don't expect this to happen at home. (Continued on Page 7)

Kayhan

International

Tehran Condemns U.S. Meddling in China

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Friday condemned a recent decision by U.S. Congress to approve a bill against China, saying that interference in other nation's internal affairs is a principle in Washington's foreign policy. "The U.S., with a shameful record of genocide of indigenous (Americans) and the black slavery and massacres of internal minorities, as well as the massacres of Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Palestine, and Yemen, and the pardoning of war criminals, is the least qualified to comment on ethnic groups, races and Muslims," Mousavi said in a statement.

VOL NO: LV 11045 TEHRAN / Est.1959

Saturday, December 7, 2019, Azar 16, 1398, Rabi as-Sani 6, 1441, Price 30,000 Rials

Viewpoint

Iraqi Muslims Rally Against Global Arrogance & its Agents

Iran's Short Film Competes in London



Marc Wilmots Quits as Iran Coach



Yemeni Air Forces Shoot Down Saudi Spy Drones



The Staircase to Paradise

By: Seyyed Ali Shahbaz

"Ya Fatema ishfa'i li fi'l-jannah fa inna laki ind-Allah shaanan min ash-shaan (O Fatema! Intercede for me for (the reward of) paradise, for indeed you have with Allah a lofty status)."

The above phrase is part of the **ziyarah**, or the standard form of salutation by pilgrims to a lady carrying the blessed name Fatema (SA). It is an intercession for the eternal bliss of paradise, since, as is clear from the wordings, the lady is a spotlessly pure person whose supplications in the Divine Court never go unanswered.

Is the Fatema (SA) mentioned here, the immaculate daughter of the Last and Greatest Messenger to mankind, Prophet Muhammad (SAWA)?

The answer is in the negative. The Noblest Lady of all time, whom the Almighty refers in the holy Qur'an as **Kowthar** (Fountain of Perpetual Blessings), vouches her, her husband's and her sons' purity in ayah 33 of **Surah al-Ahzaab**, and commands her to accompany her father the Prophet along with her immediate family to the historically decisive **mubahela** with the Christians of Najran (3:61) in order to make Islam triumphant forever, does not have a shrine, let alone pilgrims.

It is an irony of Islamic history that the daughter at whose doorstep Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) used to salute, almost daily in the morning, rests in peace in Medina in an unmarked grave in an undisclosed spot.

Obviously it was God's Will that the tomb of Fatema az-Zahra (SA), the sanctity of whose threshold was desecrated by fire and crowbars by a roguish group of her father's companions immediately after his departure from the mortal world, should be safe from the sacrilege of ass other blasphemers in the future, such as the Wahhabi heretics, who in 1925 after seizing the Hejaz in a bloody massacre, sacrilegiously destroyed the mausoleum of four Imams of her household -- Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (AS), Imam Zain al-Abedin, Imam Muhammad al-Baqer (AS) and Imam Ja'far as-Sadeq (AS).

Is it Fatema (SA), the daughter of Imam Hasan (AS), the wife of Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), the mother of Imam Baqer (AS), and the grandmother of Imam Sadeq (AS)?

Is it Fatema (SA), the daughter of Imam Husain (AS), the wife of Hasan al-Muthanna (AS), and the ancestress of the Tabatabaie branch of Hasani Sadaat?

The answers are again a sad no. These two noble ladies, who witnessed the heartrending tragedy of Karbala and were laid to rest in Medina's sacred Jannat al-Baqie Cemetery when they died years later, have no longer any canopy or tombstone. May God damn the Wahhabis for their crimes against Prophet's family and followers!

Then who's this Fatema (SA), whose intercession with God, pilgrims to her shrine seek?

Today, the 10th of Rabi al-Akher should provide us the answer. For on this day, the hearts of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt all over the globe, especially in Iran, are turned towards the holy city of Qom, where reposes in eternal peace, Fatema al-Ma'asumah (SA), the daughter of Imam Musa al-Kazem (AS) and the sister of Imam Ali ar-Reza (AS).

Born in Medina in 173 AH (790 AD), she was ten years old when her father was martyred through a dose of poison in the prison of Baghdad on the orders of the tyrant Haroun Rashid, the self-styled caliph of the usurper Abbasid regime. Thereupon her consanguineous brother, Imam Reza (AS), assumed charge of her upbringing.

Following her brother's forced departure from Medina to Khorasan, she decided to join him. Divine Providence, however, willed that this learned lady should have a shrine and a city exclusive for herself in view of her exalted status, for the benefit of the seekers of knowledge and truth.

Thus, today was the sad day, when after a brief 17-day sojourn in this city on the edge of the Iranian desert, following an attack near Savah by agents of the Abbasid caliph, on her caravan which was on its way to Khorasan, this namesake and noble descendant of the Immaculate Hazrat Fatema az-Zahra (SA), left for the ethereal heavens.

Unlike the people of Medina who in pursuit of the perishing power of the transient world had deserted the Prophet's daughter and the Ahl al-Bayt, the people of Qom clad themselves in black to mourn the daughter of the 7th Imam, and gave her a fitting burial in the garden outside the city that belonged to Musa al-Khazraj al-Ash'ari.

On learning of her death at the young age of 29 years, the aggrieved brother called his virtuous sister **"Ma'souma"** or the Immaculate, and gave tidings to the faithful: **"Whoever visits her grave, cognizant of her status, paradise is the reward."**

Later, her nephew Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (AS) also expressed a similar statement, promising believers the rewards of pilgrimage to the shrine of his learned aunt, whose city, the **haram** or sanctuary of the Ahl al-Bayt -- as prophesied decades earlier by her grandfather Imam Ja'far Sadeq (AS) is one of the 8 gateways to heaven.

It is also said that whoever of the true believers is buried in Qom, will go directly to paradise without witnessing or experiencing the calamities of the Day of Resurrection. This is indeed a Divine Favour for those of the faithful destined to repose eternally in the city from which it is said Satan has been banished forever, as per a lengthy narration of the wonders encountered by Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) during his Me'raj (Ascension) to the highest point in the heavens and back to Planet Earth in a part of a single night.

No wonder, Imam Jawad's (AS) daughter, Hazrat Zainab (SA), who is also buried near her grandaunt Hazrat Fatema al-Ma'sumah (SA), built the first dome over her shrine, which today is indeed a sprawling sanctuary for the faithful from all over the world -- whether pilgrims or scholars and theology students from all over the world, seeking her intercession with God for the eternal bliss of Paradise.

Chaos, Violence Hits France Amid Massive Strike



French riot police clash with protesters during a demonstration against pension reforms in Paris.

PARIS (Dispatches) -- A nationwide general strike hit France for a second day Friday in a row over planned pension reforms by the government, causing chaos across the country.

Schools remained closed and hospitals were understaffed. Reports said the cancellation of rush-hour trains into Paris has caused a huge traffic jam around the capital.

According to traffic app Styadin, traffic jams totaling more than 350 kilometers clogged the main roads in and around the capital as many commuters took to their cars.

The Chateau de Versailles remained shut for a second day because of the na-

tionwide strike, and the Louvre Museum warned visitors to expect delays and some closed galleries. The Eiffel Tower reopened Friday after an all-day closure Thursday, but tourists from around the world remained challenged by strike-related disruptions.

On the first day of the general strike on Thursday, about a million workers held protests that later turned violent after police tear-gassed demonstrators in Paris.

The strike, the largest since 1995, was started against President Emmanuel Macron's plan to overhaul the pension system that would see workers retiring later or facing reduced payouts.

Hundreds of thousands of strikers paralyzed the transport system on the first day of industrial action which prompted closure of schools across the nation.

According to union leaders, more than 1.5 million people turned out across the country, with police using tear gas to disperse them.

Just in Paris alone, tens of thousands of people took to the streets, while more than 6,000 police officers were deployed with a decree to forbid the protesters from gathering on the Champs-Élysées or at police stations.

Police in riot gear used tear gas and truncheons to disperse protesters near

the Place de la Republique. The judiciary 57 people were detained on Thursday.

Strikers on Friday were set to continue a similar pattern across the country, with widespread rail cancellations and disruption to flights expected across the nation.

In Paris, most of the metro system shut down and hundreds of flights were expected to be cancelled.

Union leaders warned that the strike could last at least until Monday if the government did not take the right action.

"The strike is not going to stop tonight," said Philippe Martinez, secretary general of the CGT union, on Thursday.

Paris's bus and metro operator have said their walkout will last until Monday at the very least.

President Macron is already faced with a major challenge to his rule from "Yellow Vest" protesters, who have been holding weekly demonstrations for more than a year.

Trade union leaders are now calling on Macron to abandon his campaign promise to overhaul the retirement system.

The president has said he wants to simplify the country's complex retirement system, which comprises more than 40 different plans, many with different retirement ages and benefits.

The new system will introduce a "points system" for retirement, which will have a significant impact on the public sector.

Until now, the sector had enjoyed special retirement systems to compensate for difficult working conditions.

Ayatollah Sistani Urges Protesters to Counter Rioters

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) -- Iraq's top cleric said Friday violence and chaos will only hinder true reforms as demanded by ongoing anti-corruption and economic protesters in Iraq, calling on demonstrators to counter violent rioters.

Addressing worshipers during Friday prayers in the holy city of Karbala, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said protests are effective in hastening needed reforms on the condition that they "are not drawn to violent acts, chaos and destruction."

"Conserving the peaceful nature of the protests and keeping them far from violence and destruction is very important and everyone needs to unite in achieving such," a representative of Ayatollah Sistani said as he delivered the top cleric's sermon.

The top cleric added that the protesters should not allow rioters to infiltrate the rallies and target "se-

curity forces and destroy public and private property" just as protecting the lives of protesters is the responsibility of the security forces.

During his statements, Ayatollah Sistani also said that a new prime minister must be chosen "without any foreign interference" and partisan politics after the incumbent Adel Abdul-Mahdi tendered his resignation a week ago.

"We hope a new head of government and its members will be chosen within the constitutional deadline" of 15 days since the resignation was approved in parliament on Sunday, Ayatollah Sistani said.

Abdul-Mahdi announced his resignation last week after the top cleric called for the country's lawmakers to "reconsider" their options amid ongoing demonstrations and the government's inability to address them effectively.

(Continued on Page 7)

(Continued on Page 7)