

“PERSEPOLIS”

A Note from Sidiki Kaba

- President of the International Federation of Human Rights

What lingers on after those long, late-night talks with God and Karl Marx, those war-ravaged city streets and that brief and painful exile in a Europe which is both close and remote? A vivid, black-and-white picture, a realistic and imaginary picture of life in Tehran from the pre revolutionary days to the present time. A gripping picture too, because it is seen through the eyes of a young girl whose body is growing even as her country is being crippled by intolerance and war. The intellectual elite flee their country in which they are persecuted, tortured and even killed, the martyrs become part of history books, a history re-written by the Mullahs. Distrust sets in while the Pasdaran control all activities especially those of women, who are daily harassed, blamed for their “misconduct” for “improper headgear”. This tragic history is also part of our own history because our friend Akbar Ganji and Abdolfattah Soltani and many other victims are struggling against this repressive regime, so we are proud to take part in this admirable adaptation project.

It is because we can read, in the eyes of Karim Lahidji, president of the Iranian League for Human Rights, the grief and the anger of an exile, that we understand how endearing that country can be to those who were born there. The 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner and a relentless lawyer, Shrin Eshaghi Ali commented on her unflagging conviction: "Actually, the events, (the Islamic revolution and its aftermath) are simply an accident of history. This is not what Iran is about. Iran's history spans over 1,000 years. There won't be another revolution. Iranians have already experienced one and for them enough is enough. But one day, this country will become again what it has always been, a country of tolerance and of cheerful life. " Persepolis is the story of this " accident in history", it is a first-hand account of contemporary events, and also a message of hope for the future, a message brought to us by your forceful style and your strong words. Thank you Marjane and a big cheer to you and Vincent for achieving this amazing feat of breathing life into a splendid story, the story of your life.

SYNOPSIS

Persepolis is the poignant story of a young girl coming-of-age in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. It is through the eyes of precocious and outspoken nine year old Marjane that we see a people's hopes dashed as fundamentalists take power - forcing the veil on women and imprisoning thousands. Clever and fearless, she outsmarts the “social guardians” and discovers punk, ABBA and Iron Maiden. Yet when her uncle is senselessly executed and as bombs fall around Tehran in the Iran/Iraq war, the daily fear that permeates life in Iran is palpable.

As she gets older, Marjane's boldness causes her parents to worry over her continued safety. And so, at age fourteen, they make the difficult decision to send her to school in Austria. Vulnerable and alone in a strange land, she endures the typical ordeals of a teenager. In addition, Marjane has to combat being equated with the religious fundamentalism and extremism she fled her country to escape. Over time, she gains acceptance, and even experiences love, but after high school she finds herself alone and horribly homesick.

Though it means putting on the veil and living in a tyrannical society, Marjane decides to return to Iran to be close to her family. After a difficult period of adjustment, she enters art school and marries, all the while continuing to speak out against the hypocrisy she witnesses. At age 24, she realizes that while she is deeply Iranian, she cannot live in Iran. She then makes the heartbreaking decision to leave her homeland for France, optimistic about her future, shaped indelibly by her past.

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