I have no idea!

نویسنده: مریم ثابت‌نیا

تاریخ انتشار: 19 Khordad 2585 باستانی برابر با June 9, 2026 میلادی



On the twenty-eighth of February, at seventeen minutes past six in the morning, I was jolted awake by the vibration of my phone trembling against the mattress. A call from my friend in Tehran at such an hour was an anomaly. When I picked up, her voice broke as she sobbed:

"They struck us, Maryam... Oh, Maryam... the war has begun."

She spoke of a deafening blast and of smoke billowing past her window. Finally, she uttered, "*If the internet gets cut off, goodbye. I love you so deeply.*"

We were already accustomed to internet blackouts, enduring them through everything from minor civil unrest to this, a full-blown war. We had not yet digested the news of the outbreak, but it seemed our subconscious minds had already begun bracing for the severing of ties with our loved ones.

I scrambled to contact my family in Ahvaz. One was at work; another mentioned the children were at school. In that very instant, I felt a surreal chasm between the rhythm of ordinary life and the catastrophe rapidly unfolding. "Go get the kids!" I screamed. But they were still oblivious to

the reality of the situation. Minutes later, the calls dropped, one by one. It took less than ten minutes, perhaps even fewer. Yet within those fleeting moments, everything in Iran went dark: the internet, the connections, the voices.

The Weight of Not Knowing

In the bleak days of silence that followed, a wave of shared emotion washed over the Iranian diaspora, a profound blend of longing, anxiety, and dread. Within our hearts and minds, a single litany of questions echoed relentlessly: What is happening to the people in Iran right now? Is there water? Is the power still on? Can they find fuel?

This collective anxiety drew people closer together. Gatherings and rallies materialized, striving to forge a conduit for the silenced voices within the country to reach the outside world. Yet, for many, this unity was fleeting. Ideological divides and political affiliations withered the buds of newfound friendships, putting even the oldest of bonds to the test. Sometimes, overwhelmed by homesickness and isolation, I seek refuge in social media, only to be confronted time and again by a stark polarization: *"No to War"* pitted against *"Thank you, Trump and Bibi Netanyahu."* Two factions that attack one another not merely in their choice of words, but in their demeanor, their tone, and occasionally, even in the streets.

Caught in the crossfire, I feel as though I have nowhere to stand and no clear path to choose. I merely watch, yet I feel battered by both sides, struck by the slap of fury from one, and the slap of hatred from the other. All I know is that I do not know, and this very ignorance has become unbearable.

The Price of Conflict

I sometimes ask myself: *What role did we, as ordinary citizens, play in igniting this war, that we must now be forced to take a stance on it?*

As the internet reconnects in agonizing, restricted drips, a tide of news from inside the country washes over us, news that makes the lump in our throats heavier and more suffocating. We hear of arbitrary arrests, mass show trials, baseless accusations, and draconian sentences ranging from lengthy imprisonments to executions.

Alongside this, the images of ruined homes, grieving civilians, and the endlessly repeated names of children from the Minab school etch themselves like fresh wounds upon our psyches. The scarcity of medicine, skyrocketing inflation, and crushing economic pressure have frayed the fabric of daily life to a breaking point. What does this war do to the people? And what does it do to the ruling establishment?

An Ambiguous Horizon

When I converse with different people, especially those abroad who strive to be the voice of the

people inside, and ask them, *"What is your demand from the international community?"* their answers reveal a glaring lack of consensus on the path forward. Some demand military intervention. Others fall silent, or simply do not know. In the movements of recent years, we have largely shouted that the regime is committing atrocities and that we do not want the clerics in power, yet we have devoted far less thought to what we do want and the roadmap to achieve it. For instance, a father whose child was killed in the January protests met with a member of the German parliament. When asked, *"What is your demand from the people of Europe?"* he merely replied: *"Hear our voices."* The parliamentarian was already listening, but no concrete demand was ever articulated.

Ultimately, we have always known more about what we did not want. But when the choices became tangible realities, caught between the yearning for change and the terror of its consequences, there was no room left for a clear stance. It is this very ambivalence that causes the answers to the question, "Is military intervention the salvation of the people?", to be so divergent, and at times, contradictory:

- Some advocate for war.
- Some believe the system will inevitably collapse from within.
- And some maintain that true change must be born from the hearts of the people, forged by their own hands.

And perhaps, amidst all this uncertainty, the new generation will forge a different meaning. This is a generation raised on the internet, permanently connected to the globe, now fearlessly asserting its presence on the streets: with clenched fists screaming for their rights and the rights of the women of their land; with shoulders bearing the weight of wounded comrades; and with messages inscribed for a free tomorrow. This generation possesses the power to carve out a different destiny for Iran, a destiny whose final form is not yet clear, but the hope for which remains vividly alive.