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Maryam Keshavarz: 'In Iran, anything illegal becomes politically subversive'

The Iranian-American director of *Circumstance*, a teenage lesbian romance, knows a thing or two about causing trouble, and the link between desire and dissent



Homa Khaleeli

guardian.co.uk, Thursday 23 August 2012 21.00 BST



Nikohl Boosheri and Sarah Kazemy in *Circumstance*. Photograph: Peccadillo Films

"I've always had the tendency to cause trouble," says Maryam Keshavarz. The 36-year-old is speaking down the line from an idyllic-sounding writers' retreat in Portugal, but with the release of *Circumstance* in the UK this week, the first-time director is not far from controversy.

Circumstance

Production year:

2011

Country: Rest of the world

Runtime: 107 mins

Directors: Maryam Keshavarz

Cast: Nikohl Boosheri, Reza Sixo Safai, Sarah Kazemy, Soheil Parsa

[More on this film](#)

Set in Iran, the film follows two girls: Atafeh, raised in a rich liberal home, and Shireen, an orphan whose conservative uncle cannot afford to pay for her schooling. Against a backdrop of hedonistic underground parties, the teenagers' intense friendship spills over into a passionate love affair. With homosexuality illegal in Iran (punishable by lashings or even death) their happiness is threatened by the jealousy of Atafeh's brother, an ex-drug addict who finds religion and with it the ear of the powerful morality police.

Replete with illicit sex, drugs and alcohol, and furious in its criticism of the Islamic

Republic, the movie's forthright style has made Keshavarz a target of death threats, she says. On the phone from Lisbon she sounds nonchalant, saying that "in the beginning I was more frightened", but insisting there have been so many, they no longer have the power to terrorise her. Yet she is cautious enough to refuse to reveal much.

The film has also aroused passionate feelings in audiences at screenings, leading to arguments and walkouts. "There were screaming matches," she laughs. "One woman said: 'This film is such bullshit – it doesn't look like Iran, smell like Iran, taste like Iran.' I didn't even have a chance to reply when this woman in her 20s stood up and shouted at the older woman: 'I just came from Iran and it's people like you who are ruining our country because you deny the reality.'" But her taboo-busting has also won critical acclaim (and the audience award at the Sundance film festival) while fans, many of whom are young women, have sent scores of "long, emotional, emails".

Which is why, despite knowing that the focus on sexuality meant it was unlikely she would be able to travel to Iran again – "You can always go to Iran," she tells me sardonically, "you can't necessarily leave" – Keshavarz, who is bisexual, was determined to show the physical interactions of the lovers.

"As a young girl growing up, I had not seen much on film I could identify with – not just sexual orientation but sexuality.

"They [Atafeh and Shireen] are brave individuals – they don't stop, they have an emotion and attraction and even though it could get them into trouble they still do it."

Critics of the film have questioned its authenticity, and whether Keshavarz has the right to tell stories about Iran at all, given she does not live in the country. She was born and brought up in the US, where her parents have lived since the 1960s. But, she says, she has spent much of her life shuttling between the countries – spending summer holidays, a year of school, and time as a visiting scholar at the University of Shiraz in Iran. That has not always been easy.



Maryam Keshavarz, director of Circumstance.

Photograph: Peccadillo Films

"It was difficult on both ends to be from two countries that hated each other," she admits. "In Iran it was all 'death to America' and 'you are American, you are a spy!'"

After students stormed the US embassy in Tehran in the 1970s, and took staff hostage,

the family's US neighbours violently rejected them.

"Before Iran was this exotic place, but after the hostage-taking we were the enemy. My brothers were beaten up, they threw things at our windows and slashed our tyres," she recalls. "They harassed us constantly. We were ostracised – it was a very, very difficult time."

While some of her brothers (she has seven) responded by hiding their ethnicity, the experience sparked Keshavarz's lifelong attempt to "translate" the two countries to each other. Many of the film's characters were based on relatives or people she met during her time in Iran. The parties Atafeh and Shireen attend reflect her nights out with her cousins – ironically the only time she could do as she pleased as a teenager.

"I grew up in an ultra-religious family. I wasn't allowed to date boys or go out after a certain time. When I made the varsity basketball team as a freshman – which was a big honour – you had to wear shorts, so my dad said: 'You can't play.' Of course I did what I wanted, but I constantly had these huge battles with him. Luckily I had really liberal-minded brothers who helped me a lot.

"My father always had a tight hold on my social life – he was afraid I would be corrupted, but Iran is supposed to be an Islamic state so they thought 'what trouble could she get into?' The craziest parties I have been to and the wildest things I have done were definitely in Iran."

Circumstance, she says, reflects issues in both cultures – and, while set in Iran and scripted in Farsi, its glossiness and pace feel American. The theme of surveillance – which culminates in Atafeh's brother secretly filming the lovers – addresses anxieties around officially sanctioned snooping in the US during the Bush era. But it also illustrates how the state can permeate and sour family life; she first saw this, aged seven, when she spent a year in school in Iran at the height of the Iran-Iraq war.

"Questioning children was very prevalent at the time," she tells me. "They would ask 'do your parents pray?' or 'do you watch foreign movies?'"

"I was from the school system in America, where you are taught to always tell the truth no matter what. But [in Iran] you knew you could get your family in trouble so you learned to lie.

"I was very much aware that I had to be careful what I said – and it creates a schism in children, I think. I had cousins who were my age and some of them were," she drops her voice and whispers, mock-dramatically, "*the spies* for the teachers."

Circumstance's strength is in the exuberance of Atafeh and Shireen, filled with adolescent fantasies of escape (and cringeworthy lad's mag-style fantasies of each other: all matching underwear and high heels) and their rebellious rush to dance, drink and break rules. At times the sensuous hair-flicking and the way the camera lingers on their beauty feels overdone and their interest in liberalism seems to extend only to their right to party.

But the film frames their insistence on following their desires, whatever the consequences, as a powerful form of dissent; Atafeh tells a friend: "Here anything illegal becomes politically subversive."

Set immediately before the protests of the Green movement swept through Iran, the film aims to show where the anger behind the demonstrations came from. "In Iran where the state controls your behaviour ... they want you to dress a certain way, and not speak to people of the opposite sex in the street – of course the personal is political," explains Keshavarz, "in a more explicit way than anywhere else."

And while the film's religious figures may be hypocrites and villains, Keshavarz is uncomfortable with anyone reading the film as anti-religion. Rather, she says, it is about how power and politics corrupt religion.

"It is happening in the US too, with the intrusion of the church into politics. It's a global problem. Look at the focus on birth control in America. It's 2012, and we are talking about the pill – are we joking?"

Crucially, she says, it is her religious parents, who refused to impose their beliefs on her, and insisted she think for herself, who gave her the strength to make a film her mother disapproves of. "I think my parents taught me to be a fighter – I just don't think they intended it to come out the way it did."

Circumstance is released in the UK on 24 August

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[cleanorcalhoun](#)

23 August 2012 9:29PM

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[belgrave](#)

23 August 2012 9:46PM

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For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



[Adrville](#)

23 August 2012 9:54PM

If someone said to me, a traveller of old, "where is the one place you would want to go to today", I would say without hesitation Iran. To the question, "Why?", I would say because there are so many great people there, great people. The cinema is quite wonderful and this is just the window. Mullahs may come and Shahs may go but deep, wise culture flows on in the veins.

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[bigbadcanuk](#)

23 August 2012 10:01PM

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[Ysabelle](#)

23 August 2012 10:17PM

Guardian
pick

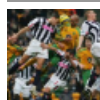
Kudos to Maryam Keshavarz for making this film. I hope to see it one day.

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[nansikom](#)

23 August 2012 10:23PM

And, unsurprisingly enough, both teenage girls are attractive types so that the movie can be targeted at as wide a market as possible ...

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[HomaKhaleeli](#)

23 August 2012 10:46PM

[g](#)

Response to [Adrville](#), 23 August 2012 9:54PM

I agree Adrivillie and Keshavarz certainly said she too loves Iran, the people and the culture. It has an incredibly rich culture and history.... and as for the food...

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[sybarite2011](#)

23 August 2012 10:54PM

[Recommend?](#) (2)

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Saw it earlier this year. It is a beautiful film although a little confusing t places. The two girls are ravishingly beautiful. Well worth watching. Iran is also a country I'd love to visit.

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[fataya](#)

23 August 2012 11:07PM

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Thanks for profiling this film, really looking forward to seeing it though wasn't sure about the reference to the lad's mag when describing the girls' fantasies:

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cringeworthy lad's mag-style fantasies of each other:
all matching underwear and high heels

feminine women are quite capable of having cringeworthy fantasies about other girlie women. There are plenty of lesbian femme couples - they're ninja lesbians though, as only those women conforming to steryotypes are culturally visible. Femme invisibility innit.



[cbarr](#)

23 August 2012 11:09PM

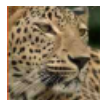
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[Responses](#) (0)

Sounds like a reasonable star crossed lovers flick probably good for dates. Might have to go see it.

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[pangar](#)

23 August 2012 11:55PM

[Recommend?](#) (8)

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It is such a waste that Iran, of all countries, should fall into the hands of religious nutters. Their history and culture are beyond compare... as evidenced by films such as this. The trouble now of course is that we are likely to see evidence of the truth of the old adage: two wrongs don't make a right. Will Obama follow Jack Kennedy's bad example?

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[Strummered](#)

24 August 2012 12:49AM

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I've seen this very poignant film -Lebanon I gather was used for filming. Circumstance comes across as very powerful with love, tragedy and betrayal. Some films you enjoy, others here due to the political, religious and social settings really do make you think - Give it a whirl, the cast are excellent.

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<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1684628/>

**mabutaleb**

24 August 2012 12:52AM

Another Iranian/Arab/Chinese director/Artist raised in the West who makes a film with Western values without any questioning of these values, and also without any interest in engaging with local viewership in the country they claim to be interested in. And then western media jumps on them and labels them as brave and rebellious. Many half talented directors rely on this dynamic to become famous.

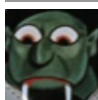
If you want real Iranian cinema watch the work of Asghar Farhadi. They don't aim to sensationalise Iranian society or point fingers at it, they instead engage with it and use universal insights through stories and situations that happen to be set in Iran.

[Recommend? \(35\)](#)[Responses \(4\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**Strummered**

24 August 2012 1:37AM

Response to [mabutaleb, 24 August 2012 12:52AM](#)

Why don't you actually watch it before passing judgement? It helps.

[Recommend? \(26\)](#)[Responses \(1\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**caroassassino**

24 August 2012 2:35AM

Guardian
pick

In some ways I wonder if it might have been more politically subversive for Maryam to do a film based more on her experiences growing up in the US, rather than potentially providing ammunition against Iran -- even if those most likely to use this are unlikely to recognise the parallels between their own religious fundamentalism and that of the Iranian regime.

Maybe there is a need for films like this to be paired, a la Clint Eastwood's Iwo Jima films: Here's a story about growing up as a lesbian in Iran; here's a story about growing up in the US as an Iranian. What's similar and what's different?

[Recommend? \(10\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**mabutaleb**

24 August 2012 3:24AM

Response to [Strummered, 24 August 2012 1:37AM](#)

No, actually, it doesn't. I don't have to watch every 'Reading Lolita in Tehran', every 'I killed Shehrazad', every 'Leila in the Wilderness' to realise what the trick is. I leave that to you neo-liberals who believe every person in the world should believe what they believe.

[Recommend? \(11\)](#)[Responses \(3\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)

Instead I will watch and read works that truly engages with problems of the world without sensationalism.

I leave the sensational, the uncritical, the condescending for you stummed. If I want to watch stuff like that, then I'm at least honest enough to watch Jordie Shore.



boocho96

24 August 2012 3:26AM

I just saw this movie in the weekend. Truly fantastic cinema. Despite the write up, which may make you think it's quite raunchy and there's lots of sex, it's much more constrained and innuendo - which makes for interesting cinema because I found it in many ways much more sensual and erotic than most more explicit cinema. So film-makers take note - this is how you create a 'sexy' movie without even needing nudity!

I wondered who the two actresses were when watching, fantastic acting, possibly bound for great things. The scene of overdubbing a western movie into Farsi seriously had me in stitches.

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rejedef

24 August 2012 3:30AM

Genius.

[Recommend? \(1\)](#)

[Responses \(0\)](#)

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msim

24 August 2012 3:45AM

It is a film about freedom. Freedom to move, to be, to think, to live as human beings who happen to be girls.

It's also about cruelty, about religious hypocrisy, sexual abuse and the vilification of women and kind men.

I don't think I'll forget the taxi scene, where an abominable humiliation occurs, for many years.

Or what happens to the Iranian-American visiting his family.

It pains me to say that Iran, today, is very close to hell on earth.

I've seen it with friends. Afterwards, we spent more than 5 hours (five!) discussing it. That is good cinema.

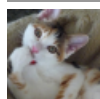
Do not miss it.

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JoshRogan

24 August 2012 3:55AM

[Recommend? \(3\)](#)

[Responses \(0\)](#)

Meanwhile in Saudi Arabia ...

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[JoshRogan](#)

24 August 2012 3:58AM

[Recommend?](#) (1)

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Anyone see the US reaction to Sascha Baron Cohen's all-male kiss in Bruno?



[JoshRogan](#)

24 August 2012 4:07AM

[Recommend?](#) (6)

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Hmm, no lesbians in my movie = no news.

The Kite runner managed well enough without stooping to males fantasies of two women.

But then the point wasn't self-publicity through Iran-bashing.

I seem to remember people going nuts in the US about Harry Potter.

Again, Saudi Arabia which is never in the news, are women even allowed to make movies???



[Phlanger](#)

24 August 2012 5:01AM

[Recommend?](#) (8)

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Response to [JoshRogan](#), 24 August 2012 4:07AM

On the other hand, difficult to make a film about Iranian lesbians without including..... Iranian lesbians.

And that old Gustav Klimt eh? Plenty of painters did well enough out of a nice sunset. Why oh why couldn't he hve just done some nice vases of flowers or pastoral landscapes and not "stooped to male fantasies"?



[BanglaChild](#)

24 August 2012 5:54AM

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Response to [mabutaleb](#), 24 August 2012 12:52AM

Couldn't agree more. Same applies to South Asians too who make quick bucks and name in the West.



[HomaKhaleeli](#)

24 August 2012 7:12AM

[Recommend?](#) (11)

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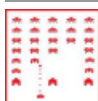
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Response to [mabutaleb](#), 24 August 2012 12:52AM

I know this is a charge levelled frequently at film makers and artists from the Iranian diaspora, but I think it is slightly unfair. With her family moving to the US well before the Revolution (rather than in reaction to it) they brought her up with a very positive impression of Iran and it's values (supplemented by frequent trips), and in, what she says, was a religious and socially conservative environment. However, through her academic career studying the country's politics she became more critical. And her film, in her eyes, is also critical of problems she sees in the West,

I would not say that she is not interested in local viewership - she commented several times on how pleased she was it was widely distributed in Iran and the comments she had from people in Iran.



Fiction

24 August 2012 7:12AM

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Response to [mabutaleb, 24 August 2012 3:24AM](#)

Instead I will watch and read works that truly engages with problems of the world without sensationalism.

The fact that this is illegal in Iran and many other countries **is** one of the problems of the world.



ossietzky

24 August 2012 7:14AM

[Recommend? \(1\)](#)

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"Questioning children was very prevalent at the time," she tells me. "They would ask 'do your parents pray?' or 'do you watch foreign movies?'"

"I was from the school system in America, where you are taught to always tell the truth no matter what. But [in Iran] you knew you could get your family in trouble so you learned to lie.

"I was very much aware that I had to be careful what I said – and it creates a schism in children, I think. I had cousins who were my age and some of them were," she drops her voice and whispers, mock-dramatically, "the spies for the teachers."

These remarks paint a picture of Iran as a totalitarian society which is completely false and misleading. Film making by

people like Farhadi and others proves that. It was not like that in the past and it is not now.



HomaKhaleeli

24 August 2012 7:24AM



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[Responses \(1\)](#)

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Response to [fataya, 23 August 2012 11:07PM](#)

This is an interesting point. When I brought it up with Keshavarz she said it was a deliberately glossy, consumerist image - like an advert, because that was the reference the girl's had, also because they were teenagers themselves.

And as for your point about cultural invisibility it is interesting because we also talked about the history of such relationships and how much women of much older generations have said "of course" your true love was your best friend - and you married out of duty. But there was a double invisibility thanks to a segregated culture...



HomaKhaleeli

24 August 2012 7:30AM



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Response to [ossietzky, 24 August 2012 7:14AM](#)

Are you saying school children were not questioned during the war about their parents habits? That's interesting because it's not the first time I have heard of it.

I think "A Separation" (which I agree is an amazing film) was actually pretty bitter about the situation, but in a more oblique way, so it's interesting you saw it as a more positive film.



HomaKhaleeli

24 August 2012 7:37AM



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Response to [JoshRogan, 24 August 2012 4:07AM](#)

Well this film is by a director who is interested in sexual orientation so I think it is a bit harsh to say it is just using a lesbian relationship to shock. However I do think your point about SA is interesting. The reason there can be so many amazing female directors, artists and campaigners in Iran is because the women are well educated and their voices are, to an extent heard. More than 50% of pupils in University are women, there are numerous female politicians (more than the UK?) and many women have satisfying careers in all sorts of fields. Most Iranians also point out how "strong" Iranian women are - and I think this can only be because there is not such an

emphasis on women/ girls being quiet and submissive, as in some other countries/ cultures.

So it is a complicated picture and not as simple as people seem to think...



daboiy

24 August 2012 7:38AM

Response to [Ysabelle, 23 August 2012 10:17PM](#)

well worth it. very intense film, sad and messed up, but very good!

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ossietzky

24 August 2012 7:52AM

Response to [HomaKhaleeli, 24 August 2012 7:24AM](#)

It is a ludicrous idea to think that the government of Iran is or was keeping files on parents of school children and I assure you it never happened. If the situation had been so ghastly the green movement could not have happened. Iran is now a more or less an industrial country (it produces more cars per year than UK) in a painful but inevitable process of social, economic and political change. Let's hope the Imperialists and their backward and reactionary allies in the region leave it alone.

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CharlieTatum

24 August 2012 8:15AM

Response to [ossietzky, 24 August 2012 7:52AM](#)

No wonder the traditionalists are so fearful of a film of two uninhibited young women enjoying themselves and not as brainwashed killjoy apostles of an evil and corrupt system.

As I recall it was a young female student who became the symbol of the last revolt. If women were to take the lead in the next revolution it would endow it even greater power, and symbolism and make it very hard for the regime to suppress it without exposing themselves for the theocratic thugs they are.

After Assad, Ahmadinejad's thuggish anti-semitic regime is next. It's why they are so nervous about Syria: with Assad goes their last ally in the region and any semblance of leadership and legitimacy in the region. Syria's revolution will be proof to Iranians that they can do the same and encourage them to reignite their opposition to a very nasty regime that no one, bar that ugly coalition of diehard anti-US leftists and Islamists will miss.

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**hobot**

24 August 2012 8:46AM

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I really want to know who funded this movie.

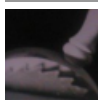
**ossietzky**

24 August 2012 8:50AM

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Response to [CharlieTatum](#), 24 August 2012 8:15AM

Ahmadinejad is not anti-Semitic and Jewish Iranians are living in peace in Iran. Christians in Syria support the Assad regime because they are frightened of the US allies in the region i.e the Qatari and Saudi regimes which fund the anti-Semitic Islamists and Salafists. The Syrian revolution was hijacked by the same enlightened, peaceful and freedom loving alliance. If Syria or Iran go under "leadership and legitimacy in the region" will pass into their hands.

**tonkatsu**

24 August 2012 9:02AM

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Response to [ossietzky](#), 24 August 2012 7:52AM

Iran is now a more or less an industrial country (it produces more cars per year than UK) in a painful but inevitable process of social, economic and political change. Let's hope the Imperialists and their backward and reactionary allies in the region leave it alone.

I'm sure Iran has many many good points - and I would not want to start invading or anything like that (UK/US tends to be a bit trigger happy)... but they execute gay people for God's sake! This is one situation where Nazi comparisons are apt...
They murder gay people

**HomaKhaleeli**

24 August 2012 9:18AM

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Response to [ossietzky](#), 24 August 2012 7:52AM

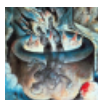
She is talking here about a specific time - the Iran/ Iraq war (80s), when the Revolution was still pretty new and tensions were high. So I don't see the bearing on the green movement. And certainly outside attacks would not help at all.

**HomaKhaleeli**

24 August 2012 9:20AM

[Recommend? \(1\)](#)[Responses \(1\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)Response to [hobot](#), 24 August 2012 8:46AM

This might help <http://www.cinereach.org/karin-chien-on-nonprofit-grants-and-circumstance>

**Mrdaydream**

24 August 2012 9:22AM

[Recommend? \(3\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)

The hair-flicking fantasy sequences and religious baddies suggest that this may turn out to be tosh with a political agenda. Serious complex subjects demand serious complex treatment.

**CharlieTatum**

24 August 2012 9:26AM

[Recommend? \(5\)](#)[Responses \(1\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)Response to [ossietzky](#), 24 August 2012 8:50AM

There is nothing 'legitimate' about either the Ahmadinejad or the Assad regimes and I suggest you reread his UN speech if you need proof of his antisemitism that led to the walkout of half the general assembly.

In Egypt, the revolution led to the replacement of Mubarak's pro-western autocracy by a government led by the muslim brotherhood so hardly proves your argument that these revolutions are controlled and steered by 'western imperialists'.

Just to confuse you a bit further Israel is one of the most tolerant societies where gays and lesbians feel as safe as anywhere in western Europe, whilst in Iran as this article says they would be tortured or even executed: a more extreme contrast between the medieval tyranny of Iran and its opponents is hard to imagine.

**Richmondecology**

24 August 2012 9:38AM

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Mabe Maryam can make ofr her next film- insteda of a David Hamilton type historical old myth about two girls etc which turns on many men and couples ! - we should aheva movie about

The Pistachio King!(Ahmadinejad) and who and what they control with such wealth!

like why in 2004 Ohio Republic an Election gathering , they use one of Pistcahio King's properties for the Republican

Convention?

We could have a serious MOVIE like Stone's JFK & at the end just say it is just a movie- whilst through a chess like, play 7 mentality, we seek & develop more about the real sincere Persian 'dna' & where it has is & will be travelling in our supposed western civilisation! As what Fox says about Iran is mostly dribble with many prepared to accept this dumbing down

**ossietzky**

24 August 2012 9:39AM

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That is regrettable especially when you consider that in Persian classical poetry (just like the classical Greek culture) love between men was accepted and talked about. But that does not make the Iranian state anything like the Nazi Germany i.e an imperialist, totalitarian, militarist, aggressive, anti-Semitic regime capable of murdering or burning millions of Jews or other people.

**Richmondecology**

24 August 2012 9:41AM

[Recommend? \(0\)](#)[Responses \(1\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)Response to [CharlieTatum, 24 August 2012 9:26AM](#)

Why is Israel so tollerant to gays, according to your words ,

?

Is this public or private policy?

as it would be more helpful of their tollerance was a little more constructive than this type of window dressing!

**GreenRevolution**

24 August 2012 9:49AM

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Look forward to seeing it. I see that it has got average reviews. Never mind I will judge for myself.

**CharlieTatum**

24 August 2012 9:50AM

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...and gorgeous women, if only they weren't covered up all the time.

**CharlieTatum**

24 August 2012 9:52AM

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So executing people for their sexual preference is window dressing?

**hobot**

24 August 2012 9:55AM

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Thank you for the link. It's important for projects of this kind to be transparent about their funding. Any American involvement will, understandably, raise concerns.

**CharlieTatum**

24 August 2012 10:00AM

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But that does not make the Iranian state anything like the Nazi Germany i.e an imperialist, totalitarian, militarist, aggressive, anti-Semitic regime capable of murdering or burning millions of Jews or other people.

Doesn't mean they are not capable of it, they simply haven't had the opportunity yet. The Final Solution was not agreed upon until December 1941 at the Wannsee Conference, two years after the war began, although there had been random slaughter and mass shootings throughout occupied Eastern Europe before then. If Hitler had been stopped earlier he would never have been able to embark on the destructions of millions of jews and others. Who's to say what Iran would be capable of if it possessed the bomb and used it to impose its will on its neighbours.

**CharlieTatum**

24 August 2012 10:13AM

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But that does not make the Iranian state anything like the Nazi Germany i.e an **imperialist, totalitarian, militarist, aggressive, anti-Semitic** regime capable of **murdering or burning millions of Jews or other people.**

imperialist - a country that wants to export its messianic brand of Islamic militancy and intolerance across the region and

destroy Israel

totalitarian - no, it's an open democratic society where people enjoy the same freedoms as we do?!

militarist - where huge resources are wasted on building nuclear weapons and maintaining a huge standing army, with endless military parades and displays of military might, backed up by bloodcurdling martial rhetoric and apocalyptic murals that glorify 'martyrdom' and all the paranoia that goes with a regime that fears its own people as much as its 'enemies'; I would say militarism is a fairly accurate description.

aggressive - see points above

anti-Semitic - read any number of public utterances by Ahmadinejad about Isreal calling for its annihilation and its determination to acquire the bomb and it is defintiely a **'regime capable of murdering or burning millions of Jews or other people.'**



hobot

24 August 2012 10:20AM

Response to [CharlieTatum, 24 August 2012 10:00AM](#)

Doesn't mean they are not capable of it, they simply haven't had the opportunity yet

This surely must rank right up there with the silliest comments ever made on CiF. Iran hasn't yet had an opportunity to use a nuclear weapon but America has and it didn't waste it, did it? You seem blissfully unaware that the world is much more afraid of the United States than it is of Iran.

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