

# PRESS RELEASE

Tehran, March 4/2007

## IRAN VIEW FROM HERE

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with an afterward by Thomas Erdbrink

**Design by:** Kamran Ashtary.

**Published by:** Ashtary Design &  
Deem Communications

**Printed:** Armenia 2007

**ISBN:** 978-99941-2-067-3

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### Everything that you can say about Iran is true.

Perhaps the biggest cliché about Iran is the truest: that it is a country of paradoxes, surprises, and contradictions. A man raises his fist into the air, shouts Down with America, and then welcomes an American into his house. A woman in a chador advocates for an end to Iran's restrictions on women's dress while the one in the tight jacket and barely-there scarf claims that she has no problems with the restrictions. Mullahs provide dating services and write Weblogs. A snowy day in north Tehran looks like a winter wonderland postcard.

*Iran: View from Here* features photographs taken over three years of living in Iran. It is a personal account that features images of Iran that not only include the snow-covered mountains and desert expanses that surround the county but also images that illustrate the culture of Iran: images of mourning and celebration, of day-to-day life, and of special events. The book captures an Iran that eludes the casual visitor and often escapes the notice of professional photographers.

Like many returning Iranians, Kamran returned to his home country when his mother fell ill – his first visit in the twenty two years since he had left. A few months later he made another visit, this time bringing his wife, Tori, along. What was meant as three-month tour became a three-year odyssey.

This book visually documents their last three plus years in Iran: the time when they called Tehran “home.”



*Iran:View from Here* book cover



*Iran:View from Here.* 96 Pages, Hard Cover, Full Color. 14.5 x 20.5 cm

**Available online at: [ashtarydesign.com](http://ashtarydesign.com)**



Tehran. Shi'a mourn Hossein's death in battle on Ashura.

### Masters of confusion

Stop looking for 'the real Iran', it's a nearly impossible task. The more you try to find it, the more elusive it becomes. The more you look for the 'true Iran,' the harder it becomes to explain what makes Iran and Iranians tick. Several approaches can be used to discover Iran's true identity, but they rarely do the trick.

The international view of the Islamic Republic of Iran is by far the simplest tool to use to try and understand Iran. Switch on any news show, and you will likely see the unofficial representatives of the Islamic Republic: organized demonstrations featuring masses of women clad in black chadors swinging their fists at effigies of the U.S. president.

What you probably won't see on the news are the same women shopping for stockings and lingerie on the sidelines of the same demonstration. The news often misses the broader context.

### The second way to get to know Iran is through a visit.

Surprised by a society totally different from what they were expecting, foreign visitors to Iran, or even Iranian expatriates returning home, are amazed by the sights of modern Tehran. Women in tight manteaus, galleries full of contemporary art, Gucci sunglasses, and BMWs: Iran's capital seems to have it all. And even better, it looks so much like home!

But the 200 year-old capital isn't the whole of Iran, even though Tehran leads while rest of the country follows. Blinded by all the surprises a short visit presents, one might fail to notice the seemingly countless layers that Iran and its inhabitants have.

The most elaborate method to try to understand Iran is captured in the pages of this book. To live in Iran like Tori and Kamran have done means riding a constant rollercoaster of impressions. Every time you think you have it all figured out, Iranians surprise you.

Whether they suddenly elect a surprise candidate for president, claim Lipton tea is better than their traditional samovar, or nearly kill you in traffic only to persistently wait for the foreign guest to enter the lift before them: Iranians will often do the opposite of what you expect. That's why you can find a happy smile from a widow at the Behesht-e zahra war cemetery near Tehran or a cleric from Qom who has started a dating service over the internet.

Iran is a land full of the unexpected and Iranians are masters of confusion. *View from Here* will surprise you, but always keep this in mind: things in Iran are never what they seem.

Tehran, 19<sup>th</sup> of February, 2007  
**Thomas Erdbrink**

Thomas Erdbrink is the Iran-based Middle East correspondent for the Dutch daily newspaper NRC. He has worked and lived in Iran since 2001



Arak. Kamran's sisters sent Tori home to get the camera so that there could be a record of the funeral.



Tehran. The first day of real snow in Tehran we ride ski lifts to a teahouse at Darband in north Tehran.



Minab. These red-masked women sell fresh herbs at the market. The masks are ornamentation. We saw women lift them up and display their faces.



Image No: 1

Khorramabad. Reading the Qoran.



Image No: 5

Tehran. From the infamous mural in front of the former American embassy now called "The Den of Espionage."



Image No: 1

Arak. Peace.



Image No: 6

Tehran. Khomeini's shrine sparkling in the distance.



Image No: 3

Choqa Zanbil. 3000 year old ruins north of Ahwaz.



Image No: 7

Kavir-e Lut. Salt has invaded every inch of dirt.



Image No: 4

Near Esfahan. Gathering near the bride's tent.



Image No: 8

Kavir-e Lut. Our travelling companion does a cartwheel in the dunes.



## Bio

### Kamran Ashtary

Kamran Ashtary left Iran as a teenager and was gone for over twenty years before returning to his home country. He became a citizen of the Netherlands where he graduated in art from the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. Kamran is a graphic designer and photographer and has had work published and exhibited all over the world.

Kamran is an art director with more than 14 years of experience working with clients and companies to develop and design their visual communication styles. He has worked as a designer and art director of corporate communications at numerous technology companies, including Siemens and Siebel Systems.

Kamran has worked primarily on business-to-business corporate communications.

In 1993, Kamran graduated from the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam and completed exchange work at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City.

## Quotes:

### From Kamran:

“When I leave Tehran, I am in love with Iran. This is true even though I know that I would not be able to live in another Iranian city for even one day. Travelling around Iran is such a pleasure. The air is clean. The landscape is gorgeous. The people are nice. There are so many contrasts in this lovely country of ours. Iran will always be a place that I love and that I hate.”



## Bio

### Tori Eggherman

Tori Eggherman is an American who lived in Iran for more than three years. She has authored a number of articles on a wide variety of topics from the Weimar Republic to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Tori is currently working on a book about living in Iran. She met her husband, Kamran, when they were both studying at New York City's Cooper Union.

## Quotes:

### From Tori:

“What never ceases to amaze me is how welcoming Iranians are to me, especially once they discover that I am an American. In a shrine in north Tehran, the caretaker leaned in my ear to whisper how much she liked Americans. A restaurant owner could barely keep himself from hugging me. People stop me on the street and talk to me everywhere I go.”

**Available online at: [ashtarydesign.com](http://ashtarydesign.com)**  
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## IRAN VIEW FROM HERE

### Online and in the News

**Iran:View From Here** interview with Tori Egherman and Kamran Ashtary on Focus 580 with David Inge

<http://www.will.uiuc.edu/am/focus/archives/07/070618.htm>

**Iran:View From Here** featured in **IMPRESSIONS**, the Inflight magazine of BMED operating as British Airways

[http://impressions-ba.com/features.php?id\\_feature=10543](http://impressions-ba.com/features.php?id_feature=10543)

**Iran:View From Here** reviewed on Payvand

<http://www.payvand.com/news/07/mar/1074.html>

**View from Iran** at Harry's Place

[http://hurrypharry.bloghouse.net/archives/2007/07/31/view\\_from\\_iran.php](http://hurrypharry.bloghouse.net/archives/2007/07/31/view_from_iran.php)

**"Iran:View from Here", A Look at Iran from inside** on Mideast Youth, Arabisto, and Kamangir.net

<http://www.mideastyouth.com/2007/08/01/iran-view-from-here-a-look-at-iran-from-inside/>

[http://www.arabisto.com/p\\_blogEntry.cfm?blogEntryID=710](http://www.arabisto.com/p_blogEntry.cfm?blogEntryID=710)

<http://kamangir.net/2007/08/02/iran-view-from-here-a-photo-book-by-an-american-blogger/>

**American Blogger in the land of "Down with USA"** on Global Voices

<http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/2007/07/27/american-blogger-in-the-land-of-down-with-usa/>

**Updated:August 9, 2007 Amsterdam/USA**

**Iran:View from Here** on Thought Process

<http://clalexander.blogspot.com/2007/07/iran-view-from-here.html>

**View from Iran,View from Here** on Pars Arts

<http://www.parsarts.com/2007/07/19/view-from-iran-view-from-here/>

As yet unpublished interview with Germany's largest broadsheet, Sued Deutsche

<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/>

### Speaking Engagements

Picnic in the Garden of Eden: Unexpected Tales from Iran

Sunday, June 24, 2007, Temple Beth Emet  
Ann Arbor, MI

Iran:View from Here

Wednesday, June 27, Bombadills Café in  
Ypsilanti, MI.

A Jew Among Muslims

Thursday, July 26, 2007

Champaign-Urbana Jewish Federation

Iran: The view from here

Monday, September 10, 2007

Champaign Public Library