

Iran Sponsors Another Cartoon Contest, This One About the Supposed Coronavirus Conspiracy

by Hugh Fitzgerald



[Here](#)'s the latest unappetizing news from Iran:

The organizer of the Iranian regime's contest of caricatures trivializing the Nazi Holocaust has seized on a new theme – promoting the conspiracy theory that the US is behind the

coronavirus pandemic.

Masoud Shojaei-Tabatabaei – an artist and veteran propagandist on behalf the Islamic Republic ‘s ruling clerics – told media outlets in Tehran on Wednesday that more than 2,000 submissions had been received from cartoonists in 68 countries for the regime’s “We Defeat Coronavirus” competition.

The accusation that the US deliberately unleashed coronavirus on an unsuspecting world and is now withholding medical and financial assistance to the same end appeared in many of the cartoons.

One entry showed a coronavirus missile being launched from the US with an accompanying note from US President Donald Trump that read, “To China and Iran, with my love.”

Another showed an Iranian man coughing while carrying a coronavirus microbe on his shoulder, as an enlarged hand draped in the American flag snatches vital medication away from behind his back.

Shojaei-Tabatabaei was the main organizer of the two contests staged by Iran in 2006 and 2016 showcasing cartoons that variously denied and mocked the Holocaust. More than 150 cartoons from the latter contest were exhibited at the headquarters of the Islamic Propaganda Organization in Tehran in May 2016.

“We held the Holocaust Contest to raise the question of why the Holocaust cannot be discussed in the West despite its claims of freedom of expression,” Shojaei-Tabatabaei explained at the time. He went on to praise the “pure nature” of the artists who submitted entries to the Holocaust cartoon contest, saying they were motivated by opposition to the “child-killing regime of Israel.”...

The contest is being sponsored by Iran’s Ministry of Health,

which earlier this week summarily ruled out any role for foreign organizations in dealing with the chronic outbreak of coronavirus in the country...

Nothing signals the “pure nature” of “artists” like their ability to have some fun with the Nazi treatment of the Jews. It’s the stuff cartoonists dream about, to be able to poke a little fun at sacred cows, like the Holocaust, that you’re never supposed to joke about. But why not? That’s what we Iranians wanted to know. Why should one group of people, “the Jews,” be able to use the Holocaust for their own ends – which is to talk endlessly about their supposed suffering, in order to make people too embarrassed to bring up the “child-killing regime of Israel”? If you dare to discuss the Holocaust without any presuppositions, you are made to feel guilty. Why?

If the Holocaust existed at all – and of course no one is saying it didn’t, just that there might need to be more convincing evidence than we’ve been given so far – let’s face it, we still have no idea how many victims there were. Some people say a few hundred thousand, mostly from typhus in the work camps, which of course doesn’t excuse it, while others say a million or even more, and the estimates go all the way right up to six million as the tippety-top figure. We should always question authority. How do they come up with these numbers? One million, two million, four million, six million—come on, does anyone really know? We can all agree, can’t we, that some things were done by some people? Bad things, no question about it. But isn’t that enough? It was so long ago.

Now we wanted to give cartoonists a chance to focus on the coronavirus, to give us all a little comic relief at a time when so many people are walking around with long faces, or hiding in their houses until they get the all-clear. Ayatollah Khamenei, our Supreme Leader, spoke for a lot of us when he said “it’s not such a big deal.” And it isn’t. It will all be

over way before the end of the year. He also said that he had a hunch – no, he was sure – that the Americans had created a kind of coronavirus that would attack only Iranians. Do you put it past them? Isn't that worth bringing to the world's attention? Why should that subject be off-limits to discussion any more than the Holocaust should be? We felt that the cartoon contest was the perfect way to focus the world's attention on this matter. And if the Americans want to debate the issue, let them present whatever evidence they can come up with to prove that Ayatollah Khamenei's claim was wrong. It'll be a frank and honest debate. Just like what it says in your Declaration of Independence: "Let facts be submitted to a candid world." Meanwhile, you can see many of the coronavirus cartoons on social media and can judge them for yourself. Enjoy!

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