

DISSERTATION DEFENSE

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN IRAN AND THE TRENDS OF *POLITICAL EXPRESSIONISM*

By

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The 2009 Green Movement in Iran attracted global attention as a new kind of social movement where for the first time in the 21st century, millions of people risked their lives in peaceful protests to replace its oppressive theocratic regime. Afterward, activists in other movements worldwide reached peaks from thousands to millions. Increased usage of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and their impact on Traditional Communication Methods (TCMs) transformed the nature of contention, entering an age of redefining the conceptualization of space defined as Political Expressionism, abstract like the age of expressionism in art. Two questions about the Green Movement framed this dissertation: “What is the Iranian dream for change, its achievements, and what will be in store for the next chapter of social movements in Iran?” and “What impact did ICTs have on the conceptualization of space in state and society?”

Relevant theories were analyzed to determine space is more fluid leading to benefits and drawbacks. A historical overview of social movements in Iran revealed a shift from TCMs to ICTs by contrasting 18 Tir (the peaceful July 1999 student uprising) with the Green Movement, both significant for their respective times considering their similarities and differences. A discussion of ICTs alongside a literature review evaluated their relatedness to newer social movements, the Arab Spring, Taksim Square (Gezi Park) Movement, Umbrella Revolution, Bahraini and Syrian. Surveys and interviews of Iranian nationals both former and current activists from different hierarchies within the Green Movement and 18 Tir worldwide shaped the scope of this research to highlight key trends. This study aims to bridge knowledge gaps between the theory and practice of social movements for academics and human rights activists alike.

Keywords: Social Movements, Activism, Censorship, Resistance, Middle East, Nonviolent tactics, Intergenerational Change, ICTs, Human Rights, Social Change.

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