



*Iranian American
Jewish Federation*

فدراسیون یهودیان ایرانی
Iranian American Jewish Federation

1317 N. Crescent Heights Blvd., West Hollywood, CA 90046
Tel: (323) 654-4700 Fax: (323) 654-1791



An Affiliate Organization of
Jewish Federation Council
Of Greater Los Angeles

.....
April 17, 2017

IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION
.....

**STATEMENT BY THE IRANIAN-AMERICAN JEWISH FEDERATION
WITH RESPECT TO MR. BERNARD-HENRI LEVY'S INTERVIEW
ON FRENCH TELEVISION ON APRIL, 2018**
.....

In 1935 the government of Persia, under the rule of King Reza Pahlavi the Great approved changing the country's name from Persia to Iran.

Numerous reports, accords and documents attribute a wide range of motivations to this particular decision. The most credible of which are based on, and corroborated by, the fact that as a true nationalist, Reza Shah was tirelessly working to modernize both the country of Iran and its society and had indeed achieved tremendous success in that endeavor.

In a short span of time Reza Shah's efforts and his personal leadership had turned Iran from a lawless country in which a lazy, unorganized, incompetent and corrupt central government was unable to exert control over its provinces, into a country of law and order, rooting out crime and corruption, rewarding performance, and demanding competence and accountability.

During the same time major infrastructure was built, Tehran University was inaugurated, a modern education system was introduced and Iran finally started to feel the pride that it had lost centuries before.

The change of name to "Iran", according to most accounts, was first and foremost meant to signify the emergence of a new forward looking and dynamic society, as opposed to "Persia" which looked back to an ancient albeit glorious time. Then it was also meant to

distinguish Iranians from the neighboring Arab societies whose conquest of Persia centuries before had left lingering effects on Persians. Effects which in the eyes of Iran's nationalist elites were the very sources of Iranian society's backwardness.

The Iranian-American Jewish Federation has not seen any evidence that would corroborate Mr. Levy's claims to the effect that such name change was a result of some secret pact between Iran and Nazi Germany to divide the world among them, years before Germany embarked on the war. Nor do we find much logic in the notion that a country would need to change its name in order to enter into a pact with another, which itself did not change its name nor did it require its other allies such as Italy and Japan to change theirs!

What we do know and deeply appreciate is that as part of Reza Shah's modernizations, our community was finally allowed to leave Iran's Jewish ghettos, our children were provided the opportunity to seek higher education, measures of official discrimination against all religious minority groups were actively being erased and our community was allowed to enter into the mainstream of Iranian society and contribute its share to the nation's progress. Furthermore even during the war, Iranian diplomats and officials were instrumental in saving many Jewish lives from being sent to Nazi concentration camps in Europe and rejecting Germany's requests for the rounding up of Iran's Jews.

It is based on these facts that we find it our duty to publicly and forcefully reject Mr. Bernard-Henri Levy's version about the reason for Iran's name change.