

Community Forum

I'm a Daughter of Iran and I'm Under Attack

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Elica Le Bon, pictured, is an attorney and an outspoken critic of the regime in Iran and has gained a significant following online. Elica says :

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By [Elica Le Bon](#)

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My first visceral memories of the regime in Iran were formed before I was born. My mother had been in the notorious Evin prison in the 1980s, when hanged bodies were lined up along the entrance path so that prisoners knew what to expect.

Although naturally apolitical, my mother was seen with a dissident. She narrowly escaped lynching, only because the dissident learned of my mother's arrest and turned herself in.

embellishment, but according to her, back then, she was one of the "only people to make it out alive."

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When she left the prison, she demanded that a guard walk behind her so she wouldn't be shot in the back.

The regime was never more brutal than in its nascent years of life. Anyone caught with anti-regime materials—books, articles, publications, or anything of the sort—was executed.

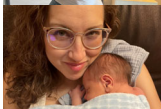
I often marvel at how miraculous my own existence is. It wasn't just one time that my mother narrowly escaped death; it happened three times.

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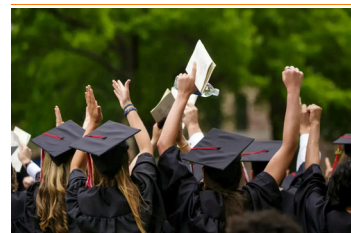


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On another occasion, regime agents were chasing a family member who showed up at my mother's door asking to bury some books in her home. My mother refused, but the books were tossed in anyway as the relative fled the scene on foot.

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The agents searched the entire home, and when they reached the bedroom, my mother stood by with bated breath. As they began to lift the bed, she imagined what it would feel like to be shot in the head.

She was around 20, too young to die. Bracing herself, she watched as the agents suddenly put the bed down and began making their way out of the home.

What had happened? Had she imagined it? Did they vanish? Was she in a dream?

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As soon as she heard the door slam shut, she frantically searched under the bed.

Sure enough, the books had become stuck between the bed boards and gone up when it was lifted. We could only attribute this to one of two things: A miracle, or an other-worldly conspiracy that had other plans for my family.

My aunt and uncle were also imprisoned while my aunt was pregnant with my oldest cousin.

My uncle was tortured in ways that I was too young to hear about as a child, from having his fingernails pulled off to losing appendages, having body parts cut, being hung upside down, lashed, and, of course, subjected to psychological torture.

My aunt was eventually released to give birth to my cousin, who was born with epilepsy due to the poison she was fed during her imprisonment, while my uncle was ultimately hanged. He had committed no crime other than fighting for freedom.

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When my family came to England, my aunt and cousin moved in with us, and we were collectively raised on a trauma that nobody ever discussed, but all of us felt in the deepest marrow of our bones, and which shaped much of who I would later become.



Elica Le Bon, pictured, is an attorney and an outspoken critic of the regime in Iran and has gained a significant following online. Elica says :

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Several years ago, various media outlets and U.S. intelligence began reporting that the regime was creating bot farms online to smear Iranian dissidents.

In the 1980s, the regime would send agents to the West to assassinate dissidents, such as in the Mykonos café assassinations in Germany in 1992, where several prominent Iranian-Kurdish opposition leaders were slaughtered in a bloody, mafia-style machine gun attack.

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breaking them with the hands of their own people.

To do this, they would have to play the "long game" of character assassination by using bot farms and regime agents to spread wild rumors and deeply malicious accusations about Iranian activists online.

These bots typically consisted of tens or even hundreds of newly created accounts daily, all repeating identical copy-paste smears, tailored to each community—and I had become a target.

After October 7, a smear campaign online soon began, with videos and tweets telling the pro-Palestine audience I was a spy for Mossad, and the pro-Israel crowd I was a spy for the IRGC.

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To the independents that would not be so quickly swayed, I was accused of being a [CIA](#) agent and a "running dog" for the Shah's former regime.

They didn't need to be "successful" in proving any of these contradictory, fantastical claims. They only needed to achieve one thing: To plant a seed of doubt.

By sowing doubt, they create confusion and uncertainty among the audience, leading them to withdraw support "just in case."

When doubt takes root and the activist loses support "just in case," the outcome is the exact same as if the propaganda had been wholesale bought: The activist is silenced.

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It has happened time and time again to Iranian activists, who have been smeared with false accusations like doctoring fake pornography to convince loved ones they are an undercover pornstar, including those who have then faced assassination attempts. This is the purpose of the smear: To make it safe for them to kill you without a whisper in the wind.

When the rumors about me being a spy were dismissed as laughable, I was subjected to subtler discrediting tactics. I was accused of lying about being secretly Israeli, secretly Jewish, secretly an agent, secretly married to an Israeli, secretly the daughter of Simon LeBon, "a raging Zionist" (then later, "lied about being his daughter to gain fame"), lying about being Iranian, and having family ties to various intelligence agencies, Israel, the IRGC, and the regime.

None of it was true, but it didn't need to be to plant a seed of doubt.

The goal was to erode my reputation as a truth teller and cast doubt on the work I was doing, which was heavily disparaging the regime.

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To break down people's trust, they would spin small lies designed to make the audience think, "I guess that doesn't really add up," when, truth be told, there wasn't a single thing that didn't add up.



One rumor was that I "lied about being born in Iran when I was actually born in London." It was well known by now that I was born in London, having explained my family's story in almost every interview.

It was only Piers Morgan who had once accidentally referred to me as "Iran-born." But that slip was enough for the agents to sow doubt in my audience: "If she lied about this, what else would she lie about?" "What is she hiding?" "Her story doesn't add up!"

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A quote once started circling on X, falsely attributed to me. It wrote: "I miss growing up in the streets of Tel Aviv and smelling fresh falafel every morning - Elica Le Bon."

The accounts with 0 followers and 0 following frantically posted the quote in all of my tweet comments, exclaiming: "Elica lies about being from London when she's actually from Israel! What else is she hiding?! She can't be trusted!"

Another lie concerned my family's asylum status. I had on several occasions shared the story of how my family came to London: Under the Shah's regime, my father was sent to Oxford for his PhD but had to drop out when his bursary was cut off after the 1979 coup, subsequently seeking asylum in the UK and becoming a British citizen (later completing his education). My mother's side of the family managed to flee, and she later married my dad.

In a viral video posted by a regime-affiliated account on [Instagram](#) (later investigated and taken down by [Meta](#)), the claim was that I had "lied about my family being asylees" because my father "actually voluntarily traveled to the UK to study."

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Not the gotcha they had hoped for. It is impossible to seek asylum from outside the UK; one would have to voluntarily travel there first. A quick [Google](#) would have immediately debunked this rumor.

Another time, a regime agent dug deep online to find a picture of my family attending a celebration of Bahrain's Independence Day in the UK many years ago. Bahrain has been a staunch opponent of [Hamas](#) terrorism and the Islamic regime.

In the photo, my family was pictured with the Bahraini Ambassador, who was dressed in traditional Arab clothing.

The agent quickly disseminated this picture through WhatsApp groups, accusing the Bahraini Ambassador of being an "IRGC terrorist" (Iranians are not Arabs and do not dress the same) and my family of doing business with them.

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The caption wrote: "Elica is highly suspicious" and "Elica has a lot to explain."

Elica has nothing to explain, because I learned well from the Jewish community that the Nazis and antisemites who asked them to turn out their pockets didn't do it because they believed they were guilty, but because of the satisfaction of watching them prove their innocence.

The first rule of (Freedom) Fight Club is: Never turn out your pockets.

A more recent lie claimed that I had attempted to go to Israel in January, but EL AL cancelled my flight and I was barred from entry without a permit.

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A convincing thriller, no doubt, but the agents were unaware that I did, in fact, travel to Israel that March (during the thick of Israel's war against the regime and knowing I was Iranian, conducted extensive background checks on me and my family because of its heightened alarm) and I was warmly welcomed in.

Upon discovering this, the agents frantically retracted the statement and moved the goalpost: "It doesn't mean anything!" "Maybe they knew she was a spy and were keeping an eye on her!" "Maybe it's because she's a Mossad spy!"

But it didn't work. Once they were caught in one lie, all their lies began tumbling like a house of cards.

One of the best strategies for deflecting attention from the crimes of the regime and its proxies is to turn communities inward against each other.

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They target an effective advocate and sow division within the community, hoping that the resulting chaos will create deep rifts and eventually lead to its collapse. This is a tactic that KGB defectors have testified to.

On that note, there are some useful tools for identifying suspicious individuals. A key red flag is someone who undermines Iranian dissidents and important activists with outlandish conspiracy theories.

Another red flag is individuals who claim to be "against" the regime in Iran and its proxies but spend more time attacking activists and dividing the community than meaningfully challenging the regime.

Additionally, one doesn't have to be an agent to destroy a movement out of insecurity, hatred, jealousy, narcissism, and hostility.

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Even if they were to not succeed in discrediting political dissidents, there is still success in the psychological warfare that seeks to set us back.

Iranians are no stranger to psychological warfare under this regime. In prison, "white torture"—depriving detained individuals of color, sound, smell, tastes, textures, and social interactions—is used against political prisoners to destroy their sense of personhood and incapacitate them for life.

Many commit suicide upon release.

Before they hanged my uncle, he was handed a gun and told that if he would execute his friend, they would let him go.

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He didn't do it, not only because he refused to, but because he already knew that the regime would make friends assassinate each other and then kill them anyway, as a form of psychological torture. There is no underestimating their depravity.

Our audiences must understand that as we gain ground and our voices become amplified, the attacks will intensify, and every "shocking expose" will be a fabricated, doctored, manipulated, distorted, out-of-context smear.

Of course, you have the option to believe the smears and turn away, but I'm speaking only for myself when I say that if you choose to stand by me, you stand by all of me.

Either you accept me as I am, someone who stands for truth and has nothing to hide, or you should cut me loose and never linger in my shadows again, because you cannot have one mind that supports me and another mind that holds even the dimmest candle for the terrorists who killed my family, my people, and my motherland.

You stand shoulder to shoulder with us, or you are our enemy. There is no in-between.

years of descendants ahead of me and the wisdom of 8,000 years of ancestors behind me.

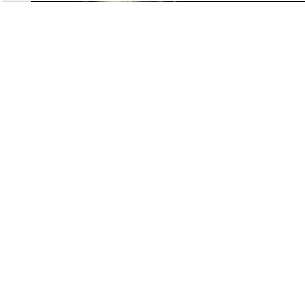
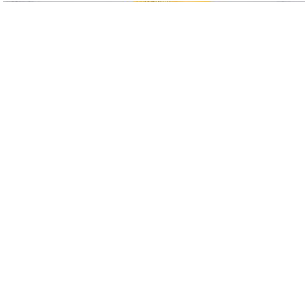
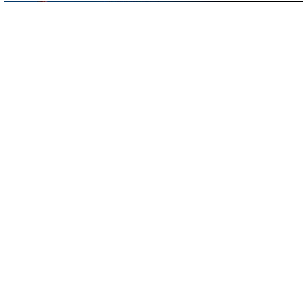
They have darkness. I have the light, and in the words of Chance the Rapper, "you cannot mess with the light."

Elica Le Bon is an attorney, activist, and artist.

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