

BeeHive

השיח ברשתות החברתיות במזה"ת

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From the Editors

The Doron Halpern Middle East Network Analysis Desk is happy to present the July issue of Beehive. The first two articles cover the responses on social networking sites (SNS) to the dramatic coup attempt in Turkey there and in Egypt. The third article examines the discourse on Iranian SNS surrounding large gatherings of young Iranians, themselves organized using SNS, which are considered an expression of the ostensible 'crisis of values' observed in "Generation Z" and which also raise concerns about possible political uses of SNS.

Beehive will be taking a summer break, and will return with a new issue in September.

Enjoy!

Turkey's Long Month: Agreements to Normalize Relations, Terror, and a Failed Coup

Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak

On the night of Friday, July 15, Turkey was shocked by an attempt by 8651 soldiers from the ranks of the Turkish army whose goal was ousting President Erdoğan from government.¹ During the attempted coup, 240 people were killed. The absence on social networking sites (SNS) of supporters for the coup was conspicuous, considering the impressive presence of the government's supporters, and other opponents of the coup, who played a significant role in its defeat. During the coup, discourse on Turkish SNS was marked by a sense of unity; Turks from disparate political backgrounds joined together to protect the country. But once the coup was halted, the deep divisions between the different camps in Turkish society reappeared. Recent events prior to the coup, which included normalization of relations with Israel and Russia, as well as the attack at Atatürk Airport, were portrayed as factors influencing the failed coup.

The dramatic coup attempt was preceded by a stormy period that battered Turkey; it began with the publication of the agreements for normalizing relations with Israel and Russia on June 27, and continuing with the terrorist attack carried out by ISIS at Atatürk Airport, which killed 45 people the following day.² Unlike their previous stance, supporters of the government now expressed support for the new conciliatory politics, because they believed that normalization of relations with Israel will facilitate sending humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and that reconciliation with Moscow might benefit the Turkish tourism industry.³ In contrast, many secular people called Erdoğan a "servant of Israel," and claimed that the agreement with Israel did not yield significant benefit.⁴ Among the Islamists, including supporters of IHH (the organization responsible for the Gaza flotilla), there were also those who were sharply critical of the Turkish president for the reconciliation efforts.⁵ In response, Erdoğan scolded the flotilla organizers, claiming that they did not have his blessing for dispatching the flotilla to Gaza in the first place, saying: "Did you ask me?" This, incidentally, briefly became a slogan used to ridicule the president for his alleged abandonment of the Palestinian struggle.

While discourse on SNS was focusing on these foreign policy developments, ISIS attacked the airport. Turkish users tweeted that Turkey would not give in to terrorism and that they "refuse to become accustomed to" living under a constant threat of terrorism.⁶ At the same time, the hashtag "#we're not secure," began to spread on SNS, which expressed the sense of fear that users feel, given the country's precarious security situation.⁷ Users also expressed harsh criticism of Turkey's foreign policy in Syria that, they believed, caused terrorism to spill over the border and into Turkey.

Turkey's isolation from Israel, Egypt and Syria in the Middle East, its shaky relations with Russia, and attacks by ISIS and the PKK created a state of instability. In retrospect, it seems that this should have been a golden opportunity for coup perpetrators to take over power in the country. On the other hand, the ousting of former Prime Minister Davutoğlu, who was portrayed as the source of the problems in Turkey's foreign policy, worked in Erdoğan's favor, as did the actions he took to repair the country's foreign relations, as part of a new foreign policy characterized by a spirit of appeasement. In fact, these measures worked to the detriment of the conspirators because they ended Turkey's isolation in the international arena, significantly strengthened the legitimacy of the Erdoğan government, and reduced economic and political pressures both at home and abroad. It seems that the coup perpetrators chose to implement the planned coup before the positive impact of these steps could be felt in Turkish society.

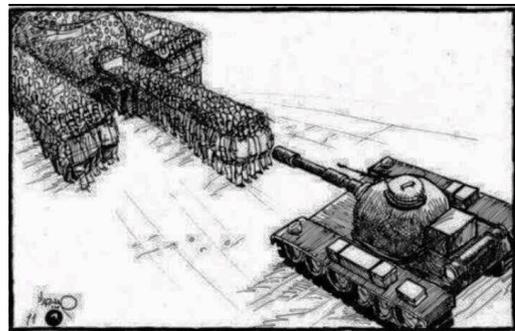
The coup attempt began with blocking Istanbul's Bosphorus Bridge that connects the Asian and European sections of the city, and is its main lifeline. This was followed by aerial sorties by elements of the Turkish Air Force over the skies of Istanbul and the capital Ankara, and the capture of the Turkish chief-of-staff. At the same time, a helicopter hovering over the area opened fire on the Turkish Intelligence Organization (MIT)



Erdoğan being interviewed on CNN TURK, via Face Time

headquarters, and there was an attempted raid that led the conspirators to the hotel in Marmaris where President Erdoğan was staying, in order to assassinate or capture him. Because the number of perpetrators was small, comprising approximately one-and-a-half percent of the Turkish army, and because they were unable to win the support of senior officers, the coup failed to gain sufficient power. Moreover, during the coup rebel forces coordinated their moves on the social network WhatsApp, and failed to take over the major news channels and SNS. This allowed the government to use such media to mobilize the public against the coup. In a television interview with CNN TURK, using the Face Time application, Erdoğan called on the public to take to the streets.

The crowds who took part in curbing the perpetrators included opponents of the president who sought to prevent the damage to democracy that would result from his ouster. Citizens physically blocked the tanks' path, and called on others to join using the hashtag "No coup in Turkey."⁸ Similar calls were also made from minarets around Turkey, accompanied by cries of



"A celebration of democracy," from Twitter on July 15, 2016

“Allahu Akbar,” which explicitly expressed the clergy’s support for Erdoğan. Resistance to the coup became a matter of the public interest, common to all parties in the parliament.

A range of factors, including mass support in the streets, insufficient backing in the military and the determination of the police, put an end to the coup. In most cases, it was policemen who arrested soldiers. However, there were multiple cases in which the crowd lynched conspiring soldiers. Many users protested against these phenomena and launched a social campaign called, “Do not touch my soldier.”⁹ Users stressed that low-ranking soldiers were just following orders, and had no right to object to their superiors. Another argument used was that the soldiers did not know they were taking part in a coup, but rather had been told that it was merely a military drill.

After the coup attempt, some users – particularly secular ones – doubted the authenticity of the process, and the hashtag “this isn’t a coup, it’s theater” became popular on SNS. From their perspective, Erdoğan and his party staged the coup to oust their opponents from all power centers in Turkey, and to enable the transformation of Turkey into a centralized presidential republic. Users mocked the “amateurishness” demonstrated by conspirators during the coup, and their inability to take over the centers of power. Conversely, supporters of Erdoğan suggested that those who doubt the veracity of the coup need a “brain transplant.” Such discourse ended the sense of unity that characterized events during the coup. The tension grew when supporters of the government compared the coup to the riots in Gezi Park in 2013. Those riots had aimed to prevent Erdoğan from turning the park into a shopping center to be constructed in the shape of the Ottoman Gunner House, on whose ruins the park was built. Users spread the hashtag “not for the trees; for the homeland,” which was intended to present the current struggle as a patriotic fight for the homeland, unlike the events in Gezi Park.¹⁰ In a speech on July 19, the day after the issue was raised on SNS, Erdoğan presented a plan to realize his intentions for Gezi Park.¹¹ After being exposed to the discussion on SNS, Erdoğan apparently came to the conclusion that the post-coup reality and the state of emergency he had declared gave him a golden opportunity to implement his plans for the Gezi Compound.

Another controversy that shook SNS related to the prospective punishment for conspirators. Government supporters sought to impose severe penalties on conspiring soldiers, including potentially renewing the death penalty.¹² Supporters of the idea included many nationalists who demanded that it also be applied to the leader of the Kurdish (PKK) Abdullah Öcalan – contrary to the current position of the government– and also to sex criminals. On the other hand, as expected, secular users opposed the death penalty on the grounds that it is a fundamental violation of human rights,¹³ and appealed for mercy for the tearful mothers of the coup perpetrators.

Beyond any doubt, SNS in Turkey proved their power in shaping events on the ground. Ironically, they were used to save the Erdoğan regime from the coup. This event provides the first proof of what was previously a theoretical predication that the advent of SNS would

challenge the traditional pattern of military coups that begin with the takeover of mainstream media.¹⁴ The anti-military discourse of all camps during the coup attempt shows that the Turkish people do not consider a military regime preferable to the rule of President Erdoğan. The conspirators' hopes that senior officers and civilian opponents of the government would join a coup that began in the field did not materialize. In fact, the conspirators met with widespread public opposition. This does, however, disguise the deep divisions that exist in Turkish society.

Foiling the Military Coup in Turkey: The Egyptian Angle

Dr. Michael Barak

Reactions on Egyptian social networking sites (SNS) to the foiling of the military coup in Turkey, and the “coronation” of President Erdoğan as the hero of the day were mixed. This was reflective of the background of rivalry between the two countries since President al-Sisi ascended to power in a military coup in 2013, overthrowing then-President Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁵ Opponents of the al-Sisi regime – liberal advocates of democracy, as well as members of the Muslim Brotherhood of whom thousands received political asylum from Erdoğan – expressed joy at the stymied coup and the Turkish people’s willingness to confront the conspirators. Conversely, other users, led by supporters of President al-Sisi, expressed disappointment with the failure of the coup, and stressed that this development plays into the hands of the Turkish president. To their mind, Erdoğan may take advantage of it to settle accounts with his rivals, using various means of oppression, and thus threaten the democratic character of Turkey. Discourse surrounding Turkish coup exposes a sensitive nerve in Egyptian society regarding questions of Egypt’s identity, and whether the country should restore democracy or, alternatively, to continue the rule of military regimes like that of al-Sisi.

The discourse that developed on Egyptian SNS following the dramatic events in Turkey dealt extensively with the reasons behind the coup's failure. There were users who noted that the popularity and legitimacy enjoyed by Erdoğan in Turkey is what brought the people out into the streets. Others stressed that citizens wanted to defend democracy, not Erdoğan, a stance they appreciated: “The Turkish people deserve respect because they never raised the

image of a person, but rather the national flag, which they wanted to protect.”¹⁶ Supporters of al-Sisi, however, claimed that it was theatre, carefully staged by Erdoğan, as a distraction from his agreement for normalization with Israel, his apology to Putin, his rapprochement with Assad’s regime, and his pattern of settling accounts with his rivals. One user explained this well: “This is a strong army, one of the ten most powerful armies in the world. How could this coup be halted by citizens? Surely they were actors.” Another user wrote that the coup in Turkey was reminiscent of that directed by former Libyan leader Gaddafi in 1991.¹⁷

The deep disdain towards Erdoğan that characterized the discourse of al-Sisi’s supporters was expressed in the mocking way that they depicted him. Some users called the Turkish president “Qirdoan,” combining his name with the word for “monkey” (*qird*). This nickname



"Erdoğan’s Turkey after the attempt coup: total purification"

was spread on SNS in a song titled “The Monkey Skinned the Army,” by Egyptian singer Shaaban Abdel-Rahim (famous for his previous song “I hate Israel”).¹⁸ Users’ aversion increased after Erdoğan gave an interview to Al Jazeera a few days after the coup, in which he again accused al-Sisi of carrying out an illegal military coup. In response, supporters of al-Sisi wrote that what happened in Egypt was a revolution (“*thawra*”), not a rebellion (“*inklab*”), because a vast majority of the Egyptian people supported the events that led the Egyptian army to act against Morsi. Many even accused Erdoğan of attempting to destabilize Egypt. Ibrahim Issa, a well-known Egyptian entertainer, tweeted, “Erdoğan is responsible for the blood that flows in Egypt,” because he supports terrorists, including the Muslim Brotherhood. Another user tweeted that Erdoğan also oversaw the plot to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak and which ultimately brought the Brotherhood to power. According to a user in Giza, throughout the last decade the Turkish president also helped the Muslim Brotherhood infiltrate state institutions in Turkey and to establish a militia that eventually helped to suppress the revolution.¹⁹ In this light, one Egyptian user declared that the Egyptian people must support the coup.²⁰

Considering the results of the coup, there were users who expressed concern about strengthening of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region: “The bogus coup in Turkey is the doctor who attended its [the Muslim Brotherhood’s] birth. It was defeated [in Egypt] but now is re-born and is growing in Turkey.” Another user tweeted, “The Brothers in the Arab countries, especially the Gulf States, are excited about the failure of the coup. Thanks to his [Erdoğan’s] support they will be able to rebel against their rulers.”²¹

In Egyptian discourse, some voices, including those of liberal users, wanted to learn from the successful blocking of the military coup in Turkey, in view of the failure of the Egyptians to prevent the military coup in 2013. An Egyptian user noted that the Turks were able to rise above their differences and come together in order to foil the coup: “Huge cheers to the national, secular and liberal Turkish opposition to Erdoğan that lent a shoulder to Erdoğan, unlike in Egypt.”²² Other users mentioned that contrary to the Turkish people, the Egyptian people are divided.²³ Omar Abdel-Hadi, a founder of Democratic Conscience party went even further, when he tweeted that the Turkish case is an “object lesson for Egyptians about how to bring down a military coup in Egypt.”²⁴ Islamist users in Egypt noted the important role of Turkish mosques in foiling the coup: “In Turkey the people were summoned by the call to prayer in mosques; in Egypt, the army instills in the minds of soldiers an aversion to the mosque.”²⁵ In this context, opponents of al-Sisi disseminated the tag “The target: mosque,” in order to demonstrate that the regime denies Islam.²⁶ Opponents of al-Sisi also protested the Egyptian media’s biased coverage of events in Turkey. They contended that the press rushed to eulogize Erdoğan’s rule and fed readers misinformation.²⁷ Many users accused the Egyptian artists of throwing sand in the eyes of the public about Erdoğan’s stance toward Egypt, as pointed out by Islamist users: “Erdoğan did not attack Egypt, but the thug who stands at its head.”²⁸ Egyptian journalists who slandered Erdoğan and called him “The Hitler of Turkey who attacks Egypt,” were criticized and described as court

journalists for al-Sisi.²⁹

Beyond the deep rivalry that exists between the two countries, discourse on Egypt SNS indicates, beyond a doubt, that the society is deeply divided, with Islamists and secular people alike being unwilling to reconcile themselves to the military coup of al-Sisi. The Turkish people's behavior is an object of envy and an inspiration for users who are members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, but also for democratic groups that oppose al-Sisi. In their view, the Egyptian people failed to adhere to the revolutionary spirit that characterized the Revolution in January 2011, and submissively accepted the military coup of al-Sisi due to the deep political rift that characterizes Egypt today. The discourse also expresses concern among supporters of al-Sisi because of the reinforcement of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, and the support Erdoğan's victory ostensibly gives to terror against Egypt.

Generation Z in Iran: Organizing on SNS, Partying in the Mall

Dr. Raz Zimmt

In June, thousands of young Iranians attended large-scale social gatherings organized via social networking sites (SNS). Two major events in Tehran and Mashhad, intended to celebrate the end of the school year, were forcibly dispersed by security forces, which consequently sparked widespread public discourse. On the one hand, there were those who were envious of the young people for their daring, and considered the gatherings acts of protest. On the other hand, they were criticized harshly, both online and in traditional media, for an ostensible crisis of values plaguing “Generation Z” – people who were born from 1990 through 2005 – in Iran. These events provide a window to the impressive ability of young people in Iran to convene gatherings using SNS, as well as the possible political implications of this kind of activity.



Young people gathering in Tehran’s Kourosh Complex, from Telegram

On June 7, thousands of young people gathered at the Kourosh shopping and entertainment complex in western Tehran, which was organized using SNS. Using an Instagram page with over 2,000 followers³⁰ and a Telegram channel with more than 16,000 members,³¹ the organizers invited young Iranians to the complex to celebrate the end of school exams and the beginning of summer vacation. A few hours before the planned event, the organizers sent an announcement on the Telegram channel saying that the meeting was cancelled, due to lack of coordination with the security authorities.³² Despite this, nearly 2,000 young people came to the mall where they celebrated and danced for a short time until they were dispersed by security forces. Photos and videos documenting the young revelers in the complex and beyond were recorded and distributed on SNS.³³

Dispersal of the young people by police did not stop attempts to organize similar meetings in Tehran and other cities. In late June, a similar event was organized using SNS by young people in Mashhad. The event attracted hundreds of young people and was also forcibly dispersed by the police, who claimed they were disrupting the public order. The Deputy Attorney General in Mashhad said that during the incident several young men were arrested, including two, aged 19 and 20, who organized the event. The defendants claimed, he reported, that they organized the event using SNS in order to prove to their friends in Tehran that young people in Mashhad could convene a similar meeting.³⁴ In other words, organizing through SNS is not limited to Tehran and can also exist in peripheral areas such as Mashhad, which is characterized by a relatively conservative population.

Reports about the young peoples’ gatherings in Tehran and Mashhad were met with varied responses on SNS and news sites, and included expressions of support alongside criticism of

their behavior. Users praised the young people for their organizing ability, and courage to hold large social gatherings without fear. “The difference between me and those born in the nineties and the new millennium is that I talked, but they do,” wrote one user.³⁵ Some even compared these acts to the protest movement that erupted in Iran in the summer of 2009, following the reformist opposition’s allegations of forgery in the presidential elections.³⁶

There were also many contrary responses that included expressions of derision and scorn for Generation Z in Iran, claiming that they prefer to celebrate and be entertained at malls and entertainment centers, without any worthy purpose. They were compared to the generation born in the 1950s and 1960s who led the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and those born in the 1980s who led the uprising of 2009. This is not the first time that the behavior of young people in Iran has sparked strident discourse about the crisis of values in Iranian society. Other such occasions included, for example, the mass mourning of Iranian young people after the death in November 2014 of pop singer Morteza Pashaei from cancer, which led to discussion of such processes occurring in Iranian society.³⁷

Especially harsh criticism against the young people’s behavior came from the media affiliated with the conservative right. An article published in Vatan-e-Emrooz also outlined the differences between gatherings of today’s young people and those of those born in the 1980s who gathered to mark religious occasions, sports victories or political protests. This suggests, the daily contends, the “moral vacuum” of Iranian society and expresses a weakening of its traditional social values of modesty, honor and self-esteem. The article also criticized the intensive activities of Iranian youth on SNS, arguing that they are fed by the information disseminated online and are led by it, and that they value things based on the feedback their posts receive online. Because of the long time they spend in virtual worlds, young Iranians allegedly do not distinguish between patterns of behavior acceptable on SNS and those acceptable in real life, and therefore also behave immorally at real meetings.³⁸

Alongside the criticism along ethical lines, the conservative daily Jahan News also warned of the potential political and security implications of young people organizing on SNS. The newspaper blamed the behavior of young people, which it described as “reckless,” on the indifference of the institutions that promote online activity, and the failure of the intelligence and security services to monitor SNS so as to become updated about planned meetings in advance. The daily also warned of the possibility that foreign intelligence services would use this as means to undermine the Iranian regime. If Telegram had been used during the 2009 riots, the newspaper said, foreign intelligence services could have taken advantage of the app to organize widespread street rioting.

The gatherings of young people in Tehran and Mashhad rekindled public criticism over the loss of core values among Iranian youth, while pointing out their ability to organize on SNS, which could be used for political purposes in the future. However, the most prominent tendency of Iranian young people is to gather without a socio-political purpose, which could be an expression of political escapism, which expresses young Iranians’ shift away from

engaging in political affairs towards a preference to dedicate their time to entertainment and leisure, as part of a larger process of de-politicization occurring in Iranian society.

¹TSK, darbe girişimine katılan personel sayısını açıkladı, *NTV*, July 27, 2016, <http://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/tsk-darbe-girisimine-katilan-personel-sayisini-acikladi.ns92udU75k2vw-1OLEK4gQ> [Accessed: August 1, 2016];

"Darbe girişiminde şehit sayısı 240'a yükseldi", *BloombergHT*, July 19, 2016

<http://www.bloomberght.com/haberler/haber/1897408-darbe-girisiminde-sehit-sayisi-240a-yukseldi>

[Accessed: July 7, 2016].

²"İstanbul Atatürk Havalimanı saldırısı için son açıklama: 44 ölü, 237 yaralı", *Cumhuriyet*, June 30, 2016

<http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/560118/istanbul-Ataturk-Havalimani-saldirisi-icin-son-aciklama-44-olu-237-yarali.html> [Accessed: July 7, 2016]

³#GazzeAblukasıKalkıyor

⁴#İsrailUşağıRTE #SıradakiÖzürKime #İsrailinDostuErdoğan

⁵#SiyonistOyunaGelme

⁶#Turkeywillnotsurrender #alışmayacağız

⁷#Güvendedeğiliz #kalkayağatürkmilleti #terörelanetolsun

⁸#Darbeyehayır #NocouponTurkey #Buülkebizim #Milletçemeydanlardayız

⁹#Askerimedokunma #Darbeciyiyargılaerleredokunma #erlerkişlalarınagönderilsin

¹⁰#Ağaçıçindeğilvataniçin #gezidekilereönerim

¹¹"Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: İsteseler de istemeseler yapılacak", *Haber 10*, July 19, 2016

<http://www.haber10.com/cumhurbaskani/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-isteseler-de-istemeseler-yapilacak-643339>[Accessed: July 7, 2016]

¹²#idamistiyorum

¹³#idamistiyorum

¹⁴Harel Chorev, "The Spring of the Networked Nation: Social Media and the Arab Spring", *The Levantine Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (December 2012), p. 129.

¹⁵The discourse about the coup was focused around several conspicuous hashtags on Facebook and Twitter, e.g. "Turkey," "The Turkish people," "Failed coup," Turkey, Erdoğan's word," "Thanks to the great Turkish people," "I'm Arab and express solidarity with Turkey," and others.

¹⁶#فشل_الانقلاب_العسكري_تركيا; #انقلاب_عسكري_بتركيا; #نعم_الرجل_اردوغان; #تركيا_تنتصر
¹⁷#مسرحية_انقلاب_تركيا
¹⁸21.7.16: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlozXbmTULA>

¹⁹#خونة_الامارات_تحتضنهم_تركيا
²⁰#خونة_الامارات_تحتضنهم_تركيا

²¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlozXbmTULA>

²²#فشل_الانقلاب_العسكري_تركيا

²³https://www.facebook.com/Benguennak/posts/1423237177694180?comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%20%22%7D

²⁴<https://twitter.com/amrelhady4000/status/754093265264279552> [Accessed: July 15, 2016]

²⁵https://twitter.com/1_S7NT8/status/755813604704657408 [Accessed: July 20, 2016]

²⁶#فشل_الانقلاب_العسكري_تركيا

²⁷

²⁸<https://www.facebook.com/EIWatanNews/photos/a.376871149022898.84250.355842901125723/1380887978621205/?type=3&theater1> [Accessed: July 16, 2016]

²⁹<https://www.facebook.com/Youm7/photos/a.175192485884755.43904.133880733349264/1527268924010431/?type=1&theater> [Accessed: July 23, 2016]

³⁰https://www.instagram.com/miting_tehran [Accessed: June 7, 2016]

³¹<https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@tehranmeetingg> [Accessed: July 10, 2016]

³² <https://web.telegram.org/#/im?p=@tehranmeetingg> [Accessed: July 7, 2016]

³³ See, for example, <https://twitter.com/secret6813/status/740476868386770944> [Accessed: July 8, 2016]

³⁴ "Organizers of the gathering of children of the 70s arrested in Mashhad." [The 1990s were the 1370s on Iranian calendar.] *Radio Ferara*, June 26, 2016.

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/fhaghani/status/740910438649597952> [Accessed: July 9, 2016]

³⁶ For reactions to the gathering on Twitter, see:

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%86%DA%AF&src=typd> ;
<https://twitter.com/hashtag/%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%86%DA%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B4?src=hash>.

³⁷ Dr. Raz Zimmt, "Popular Music, Politics and Social Criticism: Iranian SNS React to a Lecture by Dr. Yousef-Ali Abazari," *Beehive* 3, no 1, (January 2015), available at <http://dayan.org/content/bee-hive-popular-music-politics-and-social-criticism-iranian-sns-react-lecture-dr-yousef-ali>

³⁸ "Analysis of the gathering of [children of] eighties [according to the Iranian calendar] at the Kourosh complex," *Vatan Emrooz*, June 14, 2016.