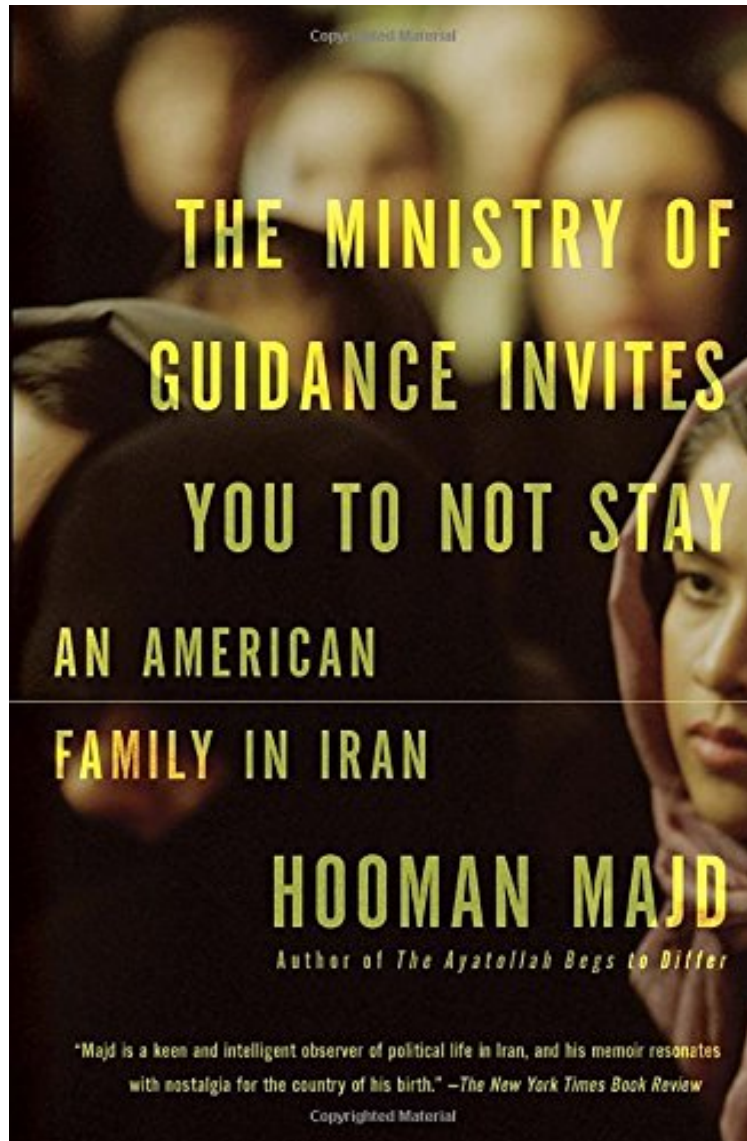


[Free] The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay: An American Family in Iran

## The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay: An American Family in Iran

Hooman Majd

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**Hooman Majd : The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay: An American Family in Iran** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay: An American Family in Iran:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. funny, and thought provokingBy Leepysae Fascinating book on living in a culture many Westerners a) don't know much about, and b) don't quite understand. Engaging, funny, and

thought provoking. My only wish is that the author would have elaborated a little more on how he personally negotiated his relationship, so to speak, to his home country. There is a bit more "it just is the way it is" (in terms of how women are treated, enforcing laws, etc) rather than "this is how I reconcile the two different viewpoints." I like and appreciate that Mr. Majd has a connection and appreciation for Iran, but as a reader would have liked a little more discussion of how he emotionally and cognitively reconciled the differences, other than anecdotes of how he and his family avoided patrols and kept quiet and under the radar. Having said that, a really good read. 13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A very personal look at life in Iran today

By Phil (not) in MagnoliaHooman Majd's latest book is a very personal recounting of the year he recently spent living in Tehran. It was his first time to live in Iran since his own infancy - Majd grew up living outside of Iran, primarily in the US and UK, and so he was living in Iran for the first time as an adult, bringing his American wife and infant son along with him. Iran today is perhaps the most strategically important country in the world where the U.S. does not maintain a diplomatic presence. We need to understand one another better than we presently do. Although the U.S. is not officially represented in Iran, the UK did maintain an embassy until 2011 - and in fact it was on Nov 29, 2011, during Majd's stay in Tehran, when the British Embassy was stormed and subsequently shut down. The UK immediately expelled Iran's embassy staff from London, and only recently have the two countries began to talk together about reopening their respective embassies. This book attracted me because I want to understand Iran better, at a personal level. Reading Majd's words, I have the impression that he is a very good and decent person. His pride of Iran and of his Iranian heritage is evident throughout. He is very honest in sharing his personal thoughts throughout his stay in Tehran, his anxieties as he lived in Iran and helped his wife and son to adapt to the country. Their adjustment to life Tehran takes time. The pollution of Tehran is severe (Economist magazine in 2011 said that Tehran is one of the most unlivable cities in the world), and his descriptions of the prevalence of small scooters darting through congested traffic, and the adaptations needed to live with a small child in Tehran (they learn that toting a car seat while taking their son with them in taxis is unworkable), are interesting. Modern Iran is a security state, but on the surface life is ordinary and unremarkable. And despite the pollution, Majd remarks several times to how clean the city is maintained. The life of 'real' Iranians is interesting to observe, although to be fair Majd's experiences are almost entirely with upper-class and affluent members of society, often describing parties held at luxurious homes, behind high walls built for security, and with alcohol openly served. This educated and successful class of modern Iranian citizens, with their satellite television, cell phones, Facebook and twitter accounts, is not so much different from ourselves and others in western Europe and elsewhere throughout the world these days. It makes one wonder - why do people continue to tolerate the rules applied to their society, when so many clearly not only disagree with them, but also openly disregard them? And to that point, he observes that Iran has not shared the "Arab Spring" that has caused such upheaval and change elsewhere in the Middle East. He expresses profound disappointment that the '79 Islamic Revolution in Iran did not lead to a democratic era but instead resulted in the Islamic regime that Iran now endures; and perhaps the experience and disappointment in the outcome of the '79 revolution helps explain why Iran's citizens do not rise up today in another revolution. Majd does provide some good insights into this, and there are also a few places in the book where he shares stories that open the door slightly into the dark side of how the current regime behaves - Chapter 8, for example, recounts the experience of an acquaintance of Majd who had been imprisoned in the infamous Evin cells in Tehran where political prisoners are held. In fact, it was at this point in the book, almost halfway through, that I began to feel that Majd was finally providing something of substance regarding life in Iran today, since the book had so far been almost entirely his personal thoughts while getting settled in Tehran with his family and adjusting to life there. There are other interesting cultural insights. The concept of the "sulk" for example - how Iranian individuals may resort to using the sulk in order to express their disappointments or frustrations, even including the highest political leaders. The 2011 sulk of President Ahmadinejad - Majd refers to it as the "Big Sulk" in chapter 4 of the book - took place during Majd's year living in Tehran. And Ahmadinejad had plenty of precedent, going all the way back to pre-Shah days when President Mohammad Mosaddegh was known to behave similarly. There were a few disappointments in the book too, when Majd has chosen to skim over details of life in Tehran that would be fascinating to read about. For example - he mentions going to an opium party, and obviously participated himself, but beyond mentioning it he goes no further. Here is one instance where he experienced something that few of us in the west would ever have the opportunity to even observe, and yet he gives no insight into it. Better that he left it out completely, than tease us with the brief mention without going any further. This is not a book for someone who desires a hard analysis of the Iranian regime or political structure today (for that perhaps one of his earlier works would be better suited - either *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran* or *The Ayatollahs' Democracy: An Iranian Challenge*). It is a personal recollection, and in personalizing the story, Majd again and again discusses his own anxieties regarding the risks he was taking in deciding to live in Iran with his wife and infant son. In the end, he had no serious problems whatsoever while living there, and so perhaps that was the point - emphasizing his fears while making it clear that none were realized. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. curious, but not entirely accurate

By tatianawell-written smart appraisal of current views and events in Iranian daily life generally, however it is less than accurate in its description of a foreign woman's existence in contemporary Iran and its grave limitations and precarious circumstances. This book gives the impression that it is safe

for a foreign woman to live in Iran today, that's very far from the truth, even when your husband is an ayatollah's relative.

In February 2011, Hooman Majd disembarked at the Tehran airport, a place he had passed through many times to visit family or accompany a news crew. But this time he had his wife, Karri; his infant son, Khash; and an oversize stroller in tow and plans to stay for a year. Few American journalists gain entry to Iran; for Majd, the son of a diplomat under the shah and the grandson of an ayatollah, it would be the first time he had lived in his homeland since childhood. In *The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay*, he recounts both his family's domestic adventures and a tumultuous year in Iranian politics. The result is an unforgettable portrait of an elusive country whose government, in the more than thirty years since its Islamic revolution, has been the United States most intractable nemesis.

From Booklist Born in Tehran to an upper-class diplomat family that fled after the overthrow of the shah, Brooklyn journalist Majd has been to Iran many times and written extensively on contemporary politics there for news journals and TV. Then, in 2011, at age 50, he returned to Tehran for a year with his young American wife and their baby son. Never simplistic, his in-depth, insider-outsider perspectives make for a gripping narrative about what is going on, personally and politically, in that troubled country. A relative of former president Mohammad Khatami, Majd has many connections in Iran, even as some regard him as an American spy. His wife must wear a hijab, even to swim. They fast at Ramadan. Everyone talks politics; he has access to Iranian officialdom, and he shows close up how Iran's unique path of modernity fused with religion has very mixed results. In spite of it all, he reports, the literacy rate has been raised to nearly 90 percent. His on-the-spot reporting will engage readers and spark debate beyond the usual headline news of theocracy and the fear in the Western world of potential Iranian nuclear weapons. --Hazel Rochman Majd is a keen and intelligent observer of political life in Iran, and his memoir resonates with nostalgia for the country of his birth. *The New York Times* Book A vibrant, witty account. *The Boston Globe* Not just a book about Iran it's a personal story that will speak to any readers who have ever been disassociated from home . . . struggled to navigate a new culture . . . or attempted to come to terms with their own foreignness. . . . Reveals an Iran far more nuanced, sophisticated and affluent than most Western readers might imagine. . . . *The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay* completes a trilogy that illuminates the politics, society, and culture of modern Iran through the eyes of the decidedly hip, well-connected Majd. *The Christian Science Monitor* No one takes you inside Iran like Hooman Majd, whose keen observations and rich writing tell the story of an illuminating, delightful, and at times, horrifying journey. *Ann Curry* A dark story, rivetingly told. . . . [Majd's] strongest and most nuanced writing on the country. . . . As a gifted writer and the grandson of an ayatollah, Majd is well-placed to probe the role of cultural pride in Iranian diplomacy and the Shia exceptionalism that makes Iran both a fundamentalist state and a less tedious place to be during Ramadan than Dubai. He is especially strong on political culture and the art of the calculated sulk. . . . Majd writes affectingly throughout the book of his passion for Iran. *Financial Times* [Majd] has crafted a memorable account of his attempt to move back to the land of his birth with his American wife and their baby son. With a keen eye for the telling detail and a refreshingly mordant wit, Majd offers glimpses of life inside the Islamic Republic in all of its unresolved contradictions. *Jon Lee Anderson* The result is on one level a breezy, down-to-earth account of everyday domestic life in the polluted, congested, tense and utterly fascinating megapolis that is modern Tehran. But having deployed himself and his family as a clever framing device, Majd goes on to build a sympathetic and nuanced picture of a complex society too often misinterpreted by the outside world. . . . An insightful study of how politics and religion intersect with daily life in the Middle East's oldest and most culturally rich state. *The Telegraph (UK)* There are some nice pen portraits of the partygoers, taxi-drivers and bored babysitters who help make Tehran's streets come to life. The Iranian attitude to children far more indulgent and demonstrative than in Europe or America is beautifully captured. . . . Majd's relationship with his Iranian past is the real subject. He writes from the point of view of someone whose home is an unfamiliar place. Whose clerical ancestors are about as far from New York socialites as you could possibly get. *The Guardian* Written in Majd's wry, laconic style, in which gentle comical lampooning combines with the relaying of facts. . . . The political insights are fascinating. . . . An insightful, appealing read. *The Independent (UK)* Bold and discerning. . . . Hooman Majd's new book on Iran, *The Ministry of Guidance Invites You to Not Stay*, is his best yet. *The Spectator (UK)* Majd's account is useful and elucidating. . . . [He offers] insightful glimpses of the complex Iranian character. *Publishers Weekly* About the Author Hooman Majd, born in Iran and educated in Britain and the United States, is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ* and of *The Ayatollahs Democracy*. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.