



**Who am I?
What do I do?
Why do I do
it? And how
do I do it?**

This is not a typical resume or biography. It will not tell you where I gave my latest speech but it will tell you what I am and why I am. Those who

read my true story, *Living in Hell*, sometimes subject me to ridicule, personal judgment and hate mail; sometimes, they simply question my motives. I did not write *Living in Hell* to become famous. I dedicated my book to all people who have endured pain and humiliation in being abused physically, emotionally, and mentally. I should have added politically. Iranian children, men and women are subjected to abuse daily and to the incredibly unjust justice system of the Islamic government of Iran.

I have been called many things, some of them horrific, but I have never been accused of being a liar. I have been accorded many adjectives but none described me as hateful toward others. I have been called hurtful words but none called me selfish or self centered. I have been told that I could be many things but it has never been suggested I was a destroyer of a life. To the contrary, my pain inspired a burning passion for my mission and conviction that it is my religious duty to help bring justice to as many lives as possible, regardless of ethnicity or religion. I sincerely believe a person's religion is between that man or woman and God. Pride in ethnicity or other identifying labels is up to their conscience and is none of my business.

I learned early on that our Creator is the only power entitled to take a life. Those infidels taking lives in His name are frauds, forever condemned to Hell.

I have been told that I am bold and brave. I don't consider myself brave, but I am proud to be bold. It is a shame that most women are not. If every man had a woman standing up to him, we would never have suffered at the hands of Hitler, Bin Laden, Khomani and their ilk. For every man who destroys life, there ought to be a woman to restore it.

Why do I do, what I do? A long time ago I was a child myself. That child died in silence because she didn't have a hero to save her. She prayed but still she lost her battle; at least for a while. At age 13, I was an atheist. I challenged our Creator to show me that He cared about me or I would deny Him to the last day of my life.

God has mystical ways of testing us and places us on each other's path for a reason. My mother was making her *Hajj* to Mecca but we could not afford for me to go. An old

family friend from years ago, a Jewish Rabbi in whose house we lived for two years when I was five to seven years old, came to our rescue. In the mind of the child, he was the ideal, kind father who saw humanity, not through religion but through goodness. His influence had a lot to do with my becoming who I am. I pray that he is peeking at me from Heaven and approves of what he sees. He made my *hajj* possible when I was no more a Muslim than a newborn baby is.

When I reached Mecca and entered the house of God our Creator, the God who has given us life and will take it back when it is time, I didn't know what to expect. Then, I saw Abraham's footprint. I saw Ishmael's tomb in front of the Ka'ba. My entire short thirteen years of life passed before my eyes and, in a blink, I saw that He had nothing to do with my pain. His grand gesture was to invite me into His house despite the fact that, when I entered, I was not a believer. If the governments of Iran or Saudi Arabia had been aware of that little technicality, I would have been beheaded on entering Mecca, the holiest city of Islam. An atheist is not welcome or even permitted there by those who make the laws of their land but He didn't care about technicalities. Right then, something changed inside of me. He turned me from a reluctant Muslim, who did her prayers only because her mother forced her to and, just in case her mother was right, to avoid Hell, into a believer. I believe in His power more than I believe in the breath I take in.

My faith renewed, I made a promise that, as long the light He rekindled in my heart burns, I would not allow His name to be used to justify violence without standing up in protest. It is not God who whispers into our ears to do harm to others, calling them infidels; it is Evil. Evil doers do more harm to humanity in the name of God than those who don't believe in God. Many Muslims are suffering greatly because of the Evil trapped in the skins of the leaders they follow without question. The evil doers and too many religious authorities are wolves in sheepskin.

Sitting in (*Masjed al-Haraam*.) the Grand Mosque, I wondered to myself: Why would the God of Abraham make him build His grand house, only to call some of His children infidels? As I asked myself more questions, I noticed God doesn't discriminate against the many races and religions He has wrought. He called Christians and Jews *People of the Book* also because they too believe in Him. God does not cause hate; people cause hate because we were not present for the passage of history. We don't see everything; yet we judge him unmercifully.

My infidel question was answered before my eyes in the Grand Mosque where I saw crimes committed in the House of God. Thieves, dressed as *Hajjis* pretending to be worshippers, placed themselves in the rows of prayers and picked the pockets of honest pilgrims. People like these thieves, not Christians and Jews, are the true infidels. We have bad Muslims today, such as Bin Laden, who, in my mind is an infidel. He may do his prayers, which he will someday understand are of no value to him, but do his prayers make him a worshiper? Every race and religion harbors good and bad. Being bad has nothing to do with religion; it has to do with the person. If God says something, I will take His word and not judge Him. After all, He is God!

My hajj to Mecca changed my attitude toward life; hope for the best and expect the worst for the lives you touch and do more than just pray for others. Try to make a difference; not alone but with the help of those who also see the same light at the end of the tunnel.

A inner voice tells me to expect to be disappointed but try to never disappoint. I teach the little children and youths who write to me through my work, not by verbal communication. Our children are absorbent and talented and it is no longer exclusively the voice of wisdom that works. I value staying on the cutting edge of technology and using it in my non-profit organization, [Iran & its future.org](http://Iran_&_its_future.org), to help children distinguish right from wrong. I believe in being truthful, staying strong, turning every stone and hanging tough. Most of all, I say what I do and I do exactly what I say. I can't be a good role model if I have an On/Off switch. I teach children to keep their conscious clean, stay alert and make choices that matter, not just to them but to their fellow humans.

Beneath this thick skin, I am still a child of sorts; a wild child. I call myself a "Rebel with a Cause". I don't stand up only for what benefits me or is in fashion but for what counts for the good of humanity. I don't let groupthink affect me. God doesn't give us gifts to throw into the trash. I believe it is my job and duty as a human to help others. To keep motivated, I ask myself every day: If this isn't my job, then whose, is it? If you can't answer this question that means it is your job too!

I don't work for any government but I work for a lot of people. I work for Iranians who are losing their battle and being hanged everyday. I work for the 350,000 Iranian children sleeping on the streets. I work for the American children and people who have hearts of gold. They did not deserve 9/11 and do not deserve the acrimony they now endure and the fear in their hearts. I work for the Israeli children to someday have peace and be able to play, without borders, with friends of any nationality and religion. I work for the Palestinian children to stop opportunist adults who brainwash little kids to become suicide murderers in the name of God

What is my definition of God, one might ask? My God is your God is our God. He is the God of Abraham, the God who instructed Noah to build an ark, the God who allowed Abraham to walk on fire and Jesus to walk on water, the God who enabled the illiterate Muhammad to recite perfectly synchronized poetic verses from heart in the presence of the Angel Gabriel.

When people question me out of curiosity what defines me as a Islamic Scholar, I point out that Webster's Dictionary defines a Scholar as "a learned person." It may not be how the modern world defines a scholar but it is certainly true about studying Islam. I have been studying Islam for thirty years since I was 7 years old. After reading my book, ***Living in Hell***, you will know that my life experiences give me a point of view and, according to true Islam, a responsibility to speak up. That is what defines me as a scholar.

I define myself by my work. The only people I want to judge me are the children. The authority I answer to is God and the only fear I have is: Standing in front of Him and being speechless when He asks me why I didn't do more. I want to be able to tell Him that I did everything I could for humanity with the limited skills and tools I was given. I wear many scars in my heart and deliberately revealed my disabilities to dispel the notion that someone so afflicted could not accomplish what I have. I invited mockery by writing a "tell all" book to help women and children who need a guide book on how to survive the Iranian regime and bullying by others.

I don't care what history or others think of me. I never have or will fit neatly into any box that may be perceived by others. As my Jewish friend at the Boston brotherhood told me, "You see in people your own reflection." God would never approve of our unkind actions toward others because we self-righteously see them as insignificant or an infidel. This is the message of God and my teachings to the children.

I am proud to be part of the Text Book Project studies recently started in Israel; working to change the world one child at the time by opening new windows to give them hope, courage, accurate information, positive role models and, most of all, love. When we change the children, we also change the world for a better more peaceful place

God Bless.

Ghazal OMID

www.ghazalomid.com

www.livinginhell.com