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**“The Legacy of Iran’s Green Movement:
Film Screening and Discussion on *The Green Wave*”
West End Cinema
Thursday, August 9, 2012, 6:00-9:00pm**

On Thursday The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) hosted a discussion and screening of *The Green Wave* (2010) which featured speakers **Alireza Nader**, Senior International Policy Analyst for Rand Corporation; **Jamal Abdi**, Policy Director for the National Iranian American Council; and **Suzanne Maloney**, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The discussion was moderated by **Stephen McInerney**, Executive Director of POMED.

Alireza Nader opened the discussion with his hesitance to classify the Green Movement as an organized opposition. During the protests there was a split between leadership figures such as reformist candidate Hossein Mousavi and followers who did not believe that reform of the prevailing system was possible. Many followers’ rallying cry, Nader said, had started as “where’s my vote?” but then developed into a call for an Iranian Republic rather than an Islamic Republic; and this idea of the separation of church and state is absolutely necessary for true democracy to develop. **Although the regime still has sizeable support due to its deep roots in Iranian society, a large percentage of the population has changed its mode of thinking and developed democratic ideals and a desire for change.**

Jamal Abdi reflected that **the Green Movement is a largely forgotten phenomenon [as opposed to the nuclear issue] among policymakers and commentators, including in Washington.** The last time he saw the movement mentioned was in a Wall Street Journal editorial arguing in favor of sanctions, and the last time he heard the name of killed protester “Neda” invoked was at a rally for the People’s Mujahidin of Iran, or MEK. **But this movement was a call from the Iranian middle class for civil and human rights** which presented a very different image of Iranians than what many on the outside were accustomed to seeing. Although the Obama administration has been more interested in human rights issues than past administrations, the net effect of their policy, especially sanctions, has hurt the prospects of this movement coming to the fore again. Although we cannot engineer change in Iran, we can identify what aspects of our policy are harmful. God forbid there is a military conflict, Abdi said, it will only hurt Iranians’ democratic aspirations.

Suzanne Maloney placed the blame for the narrow interest on the nuclear issue and sanctions on commentators, analysts, academia, and even everyone in the audience; **those who are interested in political developments within Iran like the Green Movement need to demand more**

discussion on the subject, she said. Iran is a very political country, and always has been, but still the protests in 2009 were totally unexpected and shocking. We should be careful not to sanctify the movement, though, because in the end it did fail. We can and should, however, be talking about what the U.S. can do to encourage such movements when we have so many influential Iranians here in Washington.