



ليس كل من يثقل بالقيود خاضعا

An Open Letter To:

The Honorable Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan

CC: The honorable Mr. Kofi Annan, UN General Secretary, The Honorable Dr. Javier Solana, Secretary of the General Council of EU, The Honorable Mr. George W. Bush, U.S. President, The Honorable Tony Blair, U.K. Prime Minister, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, UNPO, International Media.

March 9, 2004

We sadly learnt about the oil deal signed on February 18, 2004 between the Japanese state-owned Inpex Corp and the Iranian Government, worth \$2.8 billion, for the "development" of "Azadegan" oilfield, in Southwestern Iran.

As historical and legal owners of the "Azadegan" oilfield, we are writing to you to express our opposition to this deal. The land of the subject oil deal and indeed a large part of al-Ahwaz (Arabistan), currently known as Khuzestan province, has been in dispute since the overthrow of the Arabistan Emirate and its forceful annexation in 1925 by the Iranian government under King Reza Khan. Now, under this "development" contract, drilling of 75 oil wells and the massive amount of water required to inject in the wells, along with the pipelines to carry the crude, will force the indigenous Ahwazis out of their remaining land and add to their cultural and economic devastation.

As historical documents show, after the discovery of oil in Arabistan in 1908 by the Anglo-Iranian oil Company (now BP), the predecessor to the National Iranian Oil Company, the concessionaires signed the deal with the indigenous tribes of Arabistan, an autonomous emirate and a British protectorate at the time.

The Khuzestan region where "Azadegan" oilfield was discovered is the ancestral lands of indigenous Ahwazi Arabs who have lived there for thousand of years. Ahwazis don't want a repeat of the past 79 years, where their land that provides for over 80 % of Iranian oil production, has ironically left them destitute. No part of this revenue, none, is being allocated to or shared with the indigenous Ahwazi Arabs in southwestern Iran. After annexation, the Iranian government, contrary to the international law, expropriated this land without compensation to the rightful tribal owners such as Kaab, Adris, Albo-Nasser, Zergan, Bawi, Bani-toroo (see William Strunk in Downfall of the Municipality of Arabistan. 1976, University of Indiana).

A grievance has been lodged in the World League in 1925 and to other bodies in the 1930s, 1940 and 1950s, to that effect. Prior to the discovery of oil and flood of newcomers and immigrants workers seeking jobs, the province was 95% indigenous Arabs, according to Iranian researcher Mustafa Ansari in his book "History of Khuzestan 1878-1925", University of Chicago -1971"

The towns and village in and around the "Azadegan" oilfield, as villages around cities of Ahwaz, Abadan, Mohamara (Khoramshar), Fallahieh (Shadegan) and Dasht-e-Azadegan (Khafajieh), remain to be 100% Arabs. The current regime does not represent indigenous Arab people of Ahwaz in any international fora. However, Ahwazi nation is a proud member of Unrepresentative Nations and Peoples (UNPO), along with over fifty other unrepresented nationalities and peoples.

This deal will only strengthen and provide financial ability for conservatives and fundamentalists in Iran who are committed to the proliferation and use of Atomic bombs and other weapons of mass destruction and pursuit of terrorism. Time and again in the past twenty five years, history has shown that the Iranian government does not respect or abide by the international law.

We refer you to human rights abuses and violations cited by the U.S. Department of State 2003 Report, The British Home Office Human Rights report, the Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, other human rights advocacy groups and NGOs.

With the current unrest and volatile situations in Khuzestan, more discriminatory unemployment practices and other repressive measures by the Iranian regime against indigenous Ahwazis, will exacerbate the situations and may indeed pose safety concerns for foreign workers deployed under this deal.

The indigenous Ahwazi peoples have been fighting for autonomy and self rule and the right of self determination for the past 79 years. They have been colonized, oppressed and kept backward by the successive Iranian governments who stripped them from their human rights and lowered their status to the ranks of 2nd and 3rd class citizens. They are excluded from the oil revenue, jailed or executed for peacefully voicing their opinions.

As you know, in addition to "Azadegan", our area contains and sits atop of vast mineral resources including a reserve of over 40 billion barrels of oil and 210 billion cubic meters of natural gas, the second largest known oil and gas reserves in the world. It produces 3 to 5 million barrels of oil per day, or 20% of OPEC' daily production. Yet, the indigenous Ahwazis live in abject poverty.

The population of the indigenous Ahwazi Arab is estimated to be between 4 and 6 million. Prior to its annexation in April 20, 1925, Arabistan enjoyed full autonomy and independence at various times in its history of 5,000 years. Arabic was taught and spoken as the official language.

After the emergence of Reza Shah and by enforcing centralization in 1925, he invaded Arabistan, overthrew the local administration, occupied and destroyed Arabistan's sovereignty, and subordinated the province to Iran, without consideration of the opinions and wishes of its indigenous Arab inhabitants. The state adopted Farsi (Persian) as the official language, shut down the schools and banned Arabic education in a province where about 90% of the people were native Arabic speakers. The Iranian government officially changed the name of the province from Arabistan to Khuzestan in 1936, ignoring the roots, the history, the geography and the cultural connection of indigenous Arab inhabitants to the Land. No other province of Iran had its name changed except that of Arabistan.

In the spirit of respect for international law, and in consideration of the UN proclamation on International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004), we urgently demand that as long as the Iranian Government does not recognize the legitimate rights of the Ahwazi Arab indigenous peoples of Khuzestan, this oil deal be abrogated and future oil investment in this region be avoided without the consent of its indigenous Arab population.

A dossier of human rights abuses and violations by the Iranian government perpetrated against the indigenous Ahwazi Arabs in Southwestern Iran are attached for your information.

Sincerely Yours.

Mansour Al-Ahwazi

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The following is a dossier of Human Rights violations and abuses by the Iranian Government against the indigenous Ahwazi Arabs in Iran:

1. Iranian national policy is based on forced assimilation and integration. This policy is set on the elimination and eradication of the national identity of indigenous Ahwazi Arabs.
Attached, please see a memorandum from the Headquarters of the Central Command of the Iranian Armed Forces, and the Iranian chief of Intelligence and Operation, Brigadier General Gholamali Rasheed to Dr. Kalantari, ministry of agriculture stating the said official policy. According to the memo, "changing the mix and composition of Arab population of Khuzestan Province to relocate and induce a permanent presence of Farsi (Persian) speaking people from northern and northeastern parts of the Province to take and facilitate taking the land" of Ahwazi Arab indigenous people and building colonial type resettlement to de-populate and force them out of their homes and land.
The Islamic Republic government continues the forced resettlement policy against the Ahwazi Arab population by providing economic incentives and enticements to re-settle non- Arab population on the expropriated Arab farmlands. This policy is intended to dilute and change the composition of the towns and villages of Khuzestan, hence making Persian the dominating culture through conquest, occupation and settlement.
Please see (<http://ahwazstudies.org/english/LandResettlement.htm>) for original document.
2. Banning the exercise of Arab culture, language, and customs. Forced assimilation and imposition of Persian language and culture on the indigenous Ahwazi Arabs.
3. No part of the oil revenue- none- has been allocated to our area or to our people.
4. Imprisonment of thousands (partial list attached) of Ahwazi Arab political and human rights activist who demand restoration of their human rights, including education in mother tongue, on the charges of "separatist", "secessionist" or called "stooges of foreign countries" or "danger to territorial integrity".
Late last year, the Khuzestan branch of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Court has issued a two-year prison sentence against Mr. Kazem Mojadam, member of the central committee of the *Islamic Wafagh Party*. Mr. Mojadam is charged with "Attempt against Internal Security, Secession and Establishment of an Independent Arab Country [in Khuzestan-Ahwaz]". (Please see original court document in Farsi).
<http://ahwazstudies.org/english/KazemMojaddam%20Appeal.htm> .
Mr. Mojadam was arrested and detained in June of 2003. During his detention, he was subjected to severe physical and psychological torture. He was released on a heavy bond and a written assurance not to engage in any political or cultural activity. This is in spite of the fact that the *Islamic Wafagh Party* is an open legal party,

registered and chartered by the Iranian government, permitted to engage in political activities in accordance with the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Such accusations of "separatism" by Iran's Revolutionary Courts are commonly used against indigenous Ahwazi Arabs, as well as other ethnic groups such as the Azeri Turks, the Kurds, Baloch and Turkmen; and other ethnic and religious minorities in Iran.

The present Iranian regime, and previous ones, have used similar baseless charges to sentence, indict, execute exile or detain thousands of Ahwazi Arab political activists. Some have been in prison for decades for similar charges (*Please see attached list of 98 Ahwazi Arab political prisoners*).

Mine removal:

5. According to the Human Rights Watch 2003 LANDMINE MONITOR Report " Millions of Land mines remaining from the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) in the province of Khuzestan, kills and maims Arab inhabitants of Khuzestan in southwestern Iran every day, especially shepherds and children....." H.R.Watch Monitor Reports says "Khuzestan is the most (landmine) infested area" in Iran according to Colonel Amir Mohamadi, Iranian ground forces second-in command.
The UN donor nations contributed \$1.7 billion to Mine Action from 1992-2002 for the elimination of land mines through UNDP. Iran received some of this donation, although is not a signatory to Un Land Mine Treaty. There is no evidence that any of the donated money has been used to de-mine Arab areas. The Iranian government deliberately ignores the land-mines problem as it helps its policy of forcing Arabs from their homes and lands.
6. While the illiteracy rate among the general non-Arab population in Iran is about 20%, this rate among Arab men in Khuzestan is over 60 and among Arab women is even higher. For example, the number of Arab university students in the University of Chamran in Ahwaz, the provincial capital of Arab Khuzestan, is 2,000 students out of 30,000 , or less than 7%, in an area where over 70% are Arabs.
7. The Arab-populated border cities destroyed during the Iran-Iraq war have largely remained untouched. "Only 10-20 % of war damaged Arab towns have been rebuilt" according to Khuzestan deputies in the Majlis.
8. The regime erected dams and diverted the water Karoon river to non-Arab areas, and is currently building a pipeline to sell the waters of Karkhe river that passes through indigenous Arab areas of Howizeh and Boustan, to Kuwait- and other Gulf countries- while Khuzestan severely suffers from shortage of drinking waters. The massive water required to inject into the planned 75 oil wells, will only exacerbate the problem.
9. The regime does not permit any genuine Arabic newspapers and media in Khuzestan, while it issued 17 Farsi newspapers to the Persian minority in the province.
10. Political sidelining and disallowing political participation in decision making and self-governance. Now, as in the previous regime, governor-general of Khuzestan, all other province's political, military and security commanders and officers, mayors and all high and mid-level government officials of Khuzestan have consistently been appointed from non-Arabs outside of the native Arab population.
11. The Iranian government authorities in the Khuzestan refuse to register and issue birth identity cards to Arab newborn-babies, who do not assume Persian or religious names. Names such as Abdolnasser, Nadia, Qosi, FowziHatam, Yasser, Ghafel Taregh, Khaled, Walid, Osman, Omar..Etc. are banned.

12. Names of cities, towns, villages, rivers and other geographical landmarks were changed from Arabic to Persian during this and the previous Pahlavi regimes. Some of the de-Arabized cities, towns and villages are as follow:
Mohammara to Khoramshar, Al-Ahwaz to Ahwaz, A'badan to Abadan, Khafajieh to Susangard, **Howizeh to Azedegan**, Ma'shur to Mah-Shahr, Fallahieh to Shadegan, Ghosbeh to Arvandkenar, Sied Jari to Aghajeri, Khalfabad to Ramshir, Ras-Almina to Sarbandar, Khormousa, to Bandar Shahpour, Salehabad to Andimeshk, Salbookh to Minoo. Yet all these Arabic names can be seen in the Quajar, Afsharid, Zandieh, Safavid and earlier ruling dynasties spanning many centuries. Use of these homegrown, historical names is considered separatist by Tehran. The Khuzestan Governorship has created a special office to identify names of persons, cities, villages with remaining Arab names in Khuzestan for change and conversion to non-Arabic or Persian names.
13. Destruction of historical building that reference historical identity and attest to Arabic past of Khuzestan.(<http://ahwazstudies.org/english/DevandNatin%5BYA%5D.htm>)
14. A systematic campaign of hatreds and misrepresentation of indigenous Arabs in the media in Iran in every sphere, political, cultural, and in literature. This regime, like the previous one in Iran, prevents any public mention of the Ahwazi Arab indigenous minority population. It has imposed a silence and news blockades in the national and international media against the existence of Arabs in Iran. Moreover, the regime negates and assaults indigenous Ahwazi cultural identity by calling them gypsies. In 2000 a government inspired article calling Ahwazi gypsies inspired a massive riot in Ahwaz resulting in several deaths.
15. Iranian government in the past 2 years has intensified its campaign of repression against Arab freedom fighters, human rights and political activists and students in Khuzestan. It has executed many and imprisoned thousands of Arabs. During the past six months, security forces arrested and imprisoned members of "Islamic Wafagh Party" in the provincial city of Ahwaz, and arrested members of the "Arab House" in Tehran. Although "Islamic Wafagh" is a legal grassroots party officially registered in Iran. "Arab House" is also a legal social-cultural club and a gathering place for Ahwazi and Khuzestani Arabs living in Tehran.
16. Banning and disallowing education and study in the mother tongue, knowing that language is the vehicle of culture and identity.
17. Disallowed participation and sharing of economic wealth and resources. The Iranian government does not allocate any of oil revenues toward the development and progress in al-Ahwaz (Khuzestan).
18. Government refusal to approve requests to formation of civil society elements in Khuzestan such as labor unions, formation of Arab political and cultural centers.
19. Lack of safeguarding of the area ecology, and decontamination of the drinking water poisoned by run-offs from the "Sugar Cane" project.
20. The regime stubbornly disallows presence of international lawyers in political trials against our people especially those charged with so called separatism, despite our repeated requests.
21. Mass exile and deportation of Ahwazis from their lands for drillings wells in the **Howizeh (Azedegan)**. Confiscation of their land and building new settlements.
22. Cultural inequalities. While the regime tolerates some artistic exhibits of other non-Persian ethnic group, it has not afforded the same to Ahwazi Arabs.

23. Banning of Arab dress, and costume in official centers, schools, government centers such as Dishdashe, Aeghal, for men and for women.
- 24.
25. Denial of their Ahwazi Arabic and Semitic origin by mockingly and calling them Arab-Speaking Arians etc. Mocking indigenous culture as inferior, stating the anti-Arab and anti-Semite slogans such as, "superiority of Arian Race over Arabs", "only Aryan Blood" and similar fascist propaganda. Some of these appear on government sponsored and financed web sites such www.baztab.com.
26. Official and un-official banning of Arabs entry into and employment in high government offices. In the past 80 years, no prime minister, deputy ministers, no provincial governor, no head of any military services, and no judges were Arabs. Percentage of Arab employed in government institutions and or organizations have absolutely no relation to their share in national population.
27. While the allocation to the parliament is a deputy per 240,000, for Arab-populated areas it is about 4 times that, or one deputy per one million. Only two to five deputies have ever been allowed in the parliament (Majlis), considering the Arabs are at least 7% of the population. Accordingly, 19 deputies must be allowed, according to the constitution.
28. Historically, Arabistan has been the world second largest grower and exporter of dates, after Iraq. Date production has plummeted to near zero due to destruction of tens of thousand of hectares of date plantations, during the Iran-Iraq war. Ahwazi Arab farmers were not allowed by the regime to replant the date groves along the Shat-el-Arab.
29. Falling water level in Karoon River due to government water mismanagement, upstream damming and water diversion to non-Arab areas. This created an ecological disaster and caused thousands of herds of water buffalos, which in some areas, is the only means of Arab tribe subsistence, to die.
30. Unusually high unemployment. In Khuzestan while some non-Arab urban areas such as Dizful and other cities, have 7-8% unemployment, in Arab-populated urban areas it is over 50%. These marginalized Arabs live in a maze of huts and shacks in major cities. In the provincial city of Ahwaz, millions of Ahwazis live in the shanty towns of: Shekarabad, Shilingabad, Akhar-e-Esfalt, Zergan, Pich-e-Kazami, Ameri, Kut-e-Abdollah, Hasirabad....these areas lack most of the everyday necessities such as plumbing, electricity, telephone, paved and lighted streets, public transport, sewer, schools, clinics, hospitals, shops, parks, reminiscent of similar places in South Africa during Apartheid.
31. Restrictions of foreign journalists which are allowed to visit anywhere in Iran except Khuzestan (according to correspondent of Al-jazeera TV and other foreign correspondents in Iran).
32. Distorting Ahwazi Arabs images in literature. About 90 % of contemporary Iranian writers and historians follow the government anti-Arab racism, such as Sadegh Hedayat, Said Nafisi, Poordawood, Shafaei-Kadkani, Chubak, Akhwane-Sales, Nader pour (Images of Arabs in Modern Persian Literature, University of Maryland 1997). For example, in 1985 an uprising broke out in the Ahwaz area in protest of an article in one of the Iranian newspapers that had offensive material against indigenous Ahwazi Arabs resulting in death of many peaceful demonstrators.
33. Forced assimilation resulted in nearly one million Arab children and adults to lose their ability to speak their mother tongue.

34. While for Iranian New Year (Now-Rooz) the government holds a 15-day holiday, for Eide-Fetr, the religious and national holiday of Arabs and Sunnis have given only one day for celebrations.
35. Denials of indigenous Arab of having radio or TV stations and publish newspapers, magazines or books in their mother language. While Khuzestan has 17 Persian newspapers and magazines, there are none in Arabic. Although over 30 requests have been submitted to the ministry of Education and Islamic Guidance.
36. Unbalanced development...Although Khoramshar which was Iran's largest port before the war and employed nearly 25,000 people, it has been abandoned in favor of less desirable ports on the Gulf,, thus depriving the indigenous Arabs from jobs in their homeland.
37. Residents of War torn Arab cities of Khafajieh , Falahieh (Shadegan) and Susangard suffer from unusually high rate of skin, heart and kidney disease due to continued storage and use of chemical and biological materials remaining from the war, and other related pollutants. The government has not taken any action to remedy the situation.
38. In 1979, during a demonstration in the port city of Mohamara (Khuramshar), the governor general of Khuzestan, Admiral Madani, ordered the killing of 316 and wounding over 800 demonstrators. Still 30 persons are missing. These were all indigenous Ahwazi Arabs. This widespread repression also caused fleeing of over 21,000 across the boarder to Iraq, in addition to arrests, exile and eventual murder of Ayatollah Al-Shobir El Khaghani, Ahwazi Arabs religious leader, in 1980.
39. In 1994, a bloody confrontation took place between Iranian security forces and the Ahwazi farmers in the township of Dar-Khowin and surrounding villages, whose lands had been confiscated for the use in the "Sugar Cane" project. Many peasant landowners were killed.
40. During February 2000, "Iranian security forces fired at indigenous Arab demonstrators protesting against ballot rigging and forgery of the results of the parliamentary election, killing eight and wounding more" According to U.K Home Office's Iran Information Policy Unit (www.homeoffice.gov.uk).
41. In the cities of (Shadegan) in July 2000, the Iranian Pasdaran killed 6 and injured 22 during an anti-government demonstration, according to witness, family members and court Asylum documents, U.K Home Office.
42. In Shush on February 2001, Three Arab political activists were executed, according to family members.
43. In Abadan in August of 2002, during the so-called Drinking water demonstration, 16 demonstrators were shot to death and over 30 were injured (wire news services)
44. During 1998 and 2001, 82 Ahwazi Arabs were executed for political reasons, according to their families, employers and court documents. All were indigenous Ahwazi Arab ethnic minority fighting for greater autonomy and for peaceful expression of their views.
45. In November 2003, over 500 Ahwazi Arab college professors and students at the University of Ahwaz signed a letter of protest against Iranian officials who insulted Ahwazi Arab women in Iranian media (BBC)

46. During the second week of November 2003, Ahwazi Arabs staged a sit-in protest and a peaceful demonstration in front of the Khuzestan governorship headquarters in the city of Ahwaz, opposing the discriminatory policies of the government against Ahwazi Arabs. Especially, against racially offensive remarks by Pary Mirbaik, the deputy governor of Khuzestan for women's affairs (ISNA, FP AP and other News Agency)
47. On 28 January 2002, Iranian government executed four Ahwazi Arab political and human Rights activists: Abbas Al-Tawini 37, Hani Abadai 32, Hassan Al-Zorghani 34, and Berbas Sajirat 34, for defending the rights of indigenous Ahwazi Arab farmers whose land have been confiscated. According to family members and eye witnesses.
48. Indigenous Ahwazi Arab refugees are being subject to revenge killing by the pro-Iranian armed militia groups (Badr Brigade), who have crossed into Iraq after the collapse of Iraqi regime on April 9. The Ahwazi Arab refugees have been expelled from their camps in the Al-Kut and Al-Amarah areas of southern Iraq; their homes and businesses were looted and burned, Badr Brigade gunmen and thugs, among them Iranian security forces (Pasdaran), have been seen summarily executing Ahwazi Arab refugees. The Iranian government still refuses to allow the Ahwazi Arab war refugees to return to their homes in Ahwaz, Abadan, Mohammara (Khoramshar) and other cities. Over 35,000 refugees have been living in the Southern Iraq since expulsion from Iran in the 1980s.
- 49.
50. Thousands of other indigenous Ahwazi Arabs from the Howizeh marshes, also referred to as "Marsh Arabs", have lost their land and fled to Iraq after the Iranian Army drained Hor-el-Azim and Howizeh marshes in Southwestern Iran.
 51. Sugar Cane project. The project is considered illegitimate by Arabs, who see the purpose of the project to be the unjustifiable confiscation of their lands in order to replace them by non-Arab settlers so as to get rid of the Arab population in the province. The Arabs affected by the resettlement project refused to give up their land and resisted the plan. This in turn led to a bloody confrontation between the Arabs and local authorities from 1994 to 1995. The result was the murder of many Arab landowners and forced seizure of their lands, according to corroborated accounts from family members and courts documents.
52. Iranian government's insistence on refusing a fair payment for confiscated Arab lands. Nearly 200,000 thousands hectares of land was forcefully expropriated and Over 8,000 settlers were brought from non-Arab areas. Some 30,000 Arabs fled the repression and persecution (<http://tribun.com/1500/1519.pdf>)
53. During 2003, there has been complete militarization of the province and intensification of repressive practices against Arab Iranian activists in the past year: According to Amnesty International Press Release in 2002, seventeen Arab and Kurdish human rights activists have been sentenced to death. They are still under risk of imminent execution. Moreover, five Arab Iranian men were hanged in Ahwaz, Southwestern Iran, on January 27 of 2003, for opposing the government's policy of Arab land seizure in Khuzestan province. Their names are as follows: Fadhil Muqaddam, Rahim Sawari, Amir Sa'idi, Hashem Bawi and Abbas Sherhani.
54. Currently the Karoon prison in Ahwaz, which houses nearly 5000 prisoners, is almost exclusively full of Arab political prisoners. Additionally, there are Ahwazi

prisoners in Susangard, in Khoramshar, Abadan, Mah-Shahr and in Behbahan in addition to other detention centers in Tehran and other provinces.

55. Promotion and proliferation of drug addiction among Ahwazi youth by government agents and security forces. Cost of opium and heroine is \$.03 per dosage/package. This extreme low cost of the drug is highly suspect as to direct involvement of the regime.
56. On October 5, 2001, the Iranian government executed 7 Arab political activists as reported by Al-Mashreg Al-Arabi.
57. In May 2002, a large demonstration took place in Khoramshar by the Arab inhabitants, wearing white shrouds commemorating the city's (Khoramshar) massacre on May 29, 1979. Two persons, by the names of Hassan Khasraji and Damak Khasraji were arrested and summarily executed by the Iranian para-military security forces, according to family members and eye witnesses.
58. During 28 and 29 December 2002 there were uprisings in Ahwaz, in Khoramshar, Ma'shur, Sayed Kareem and Koot Abdullah which resulted in a confrontation between the unarmed demonstrators and heavily armed Iranian paramilitary forces with many arrest, injuries and a killing of a 10-year old boy by the name of Sharif Bani-Tamim...

We request and hope that Inpex and the Japanese government consider these human rights violations which were compiled from a range of reputable sources to reassess its commercial interests at home and abroad as well the security of its personnel by looking beyond the Iranian government's necessarily deceptive portrayal of security and local conditions in Howizeh (Azadegan) in Khuzestan.

Sincerely Yours.

Mansour Al-Ahwazi

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