

Letter from Iranian Former Political Prisoners, Writers, Scholars, Activists

written by Iranian Writers | September 4, 2026

We, the undersigned former Iranian political prisoners, activists, writers, artists, intellectuals, academic scholars, researchers, and members of civil society within Iran and in exile, stand resolutely in support of the open letter published in The Guardian on 20 August 2026, "To Iran's Political Prisoners, Trapped 'Between Two Blades of A Scissors.'"

Its core principle is clear: the Iranian people must not be forced to choose between external military and economic aggression and state repression. We echo its call to immediately halt executions, release all political prisoners, end the war, and end the collective punishment of the Iranian people. We commend the signatories' historic act to build solidarity with the Iranian people by foregrounding the struggle of political prisoners directly subjected to state repression.

Employing the metaphor of "two blades of a scissors" to describe the predicament of Iranians facing both war and state repression does not suggest moral or political equivalence. To acknowledge and condemn multiple forms and sources of violence is not to erase their origins or conflate their intentions. Rather, this metaphor centers the lived reality of those trapped between irreconcilable pressures. The binary logic that demands exclusive allegiance to either the Islamic Republic or imperialist powers is both philosophically unsound and ethically impoverished. Moral clarity lies not in collapsing distinctions, but in refusing to let one form of domination justify another. True solidarity rejects the false dilemma of choosing between injustices; it demands opposition to all systems of repression and oppression that ensnare the vulnerable.

The signatories of the letter have compellingly argued that a state may be both the object of external aggression and the agent of internal repression; these truths must be held together. Iran's history is marked by foreign intervention—including the Russian-backed bombardment of the Iranian parliament after the 1908 Constitutional Revolution, the CIA-MI6-orchestrated 1953 coup, and more recent sanctions and the current US-Israeli war against Iran. It is also marked by state repression before and after the 1979 Revolution – including political imprisonment, executions, forced veiling as a form of gender apartheid, censorship, suppression of civil society and religious minorities, and the systemic oppression of Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, and Turks of Iran. Years of systemic repression and the persecution of civil movements, unions, and activists inside Iran have effectively made the possibility of any structural and transformative political change from within the country exceedingly difficult.

Recognizing and condemning this dual reality is crucial: the suffering of the prisoners is not diminished by the predicament of their jailer, nor can their rights be rendered contingent on geopolitics. Justice, freedom, and democracy, therefore, cannot be postponed or sacrificed in the name of the regime's so-called "anti-imperialist resistance" against external forces.

To those who consider the Islamic Republic the only force to support the Palestinian cause in the region, we must clarify: long before the Islamic Republic, the Iranian left played a central role in building networks of solidarity with progressive Palestinians, a legacy rooted in anti-colonial struggle and internationalism that did not start with the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This same leftist movement was the first victim of severe repression after the 1979 Revolution. The mass

execution of political prisoners in the summer of 1988 has been documented by numerous former Iranian political prisoners, scholars, and human rights organizations and amounts to a crime against humanity.

We reject the instrumentalization of Iranian suffering, whether as justification for foreign military intervention or as an excuse for domestic repression. Iranian lives must not be manipulated for propaganda by any ideological camp. The domestic laws of a sovereign state that result in the criminalization of protest and dissent, coerced confessions, sham trials, and the summary execution of prisoners without evidence are not a sign of the legitimacy of those laws, but rather a testament to their injustice, and must be opposed.

“Resistance” that turns a blind eye to the struggle of political prisoners is not worthy of that name. We stand in solidarity with all who resist domination, oppression, and imperialist wars.

In Solidarity,

List of Signatories In Alphabetical Order

1. **Frieda Afary**, writer, translator, librarian, Los Angeles, California, USA
2. **Janet Afary**, Professor of History, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA
3. **Mona Afary**, Clinical Director at Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants, USA
4. **Amir Ahmadi Arian**, writer, Professor of Creative Writing, Binghamton University, USA, Iran
5. **Hamid Akbari**, Audrey Reynolds Professor Emeritus of Management, University of Chicago, Illinois, USA
6. **Hossein Akbari**, former political prisoner, writer, labor-union researcher, Iran
7. **Reza Akrami**, former political prisoner, political activist, France
8. **Kazem Alamdari**, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, California State University, USA
9. **Aida Amidi**, former political prisoner, poet, Iran
10. **Batoul Arasteh**, human rights activist, France
11. **Shahrzad Arshadi**, filmmaker, playwright, Canada
12. **Maryam Ashrafi**, photographer, social activist, France
13. **Touraj Atabaki**, Professor Emeritus of the Social History of the Middle East and Central Asia, Leiden University, Netherlands
14. **Sanaz Azimipour**, gender rights activist and writer, German
15. **Pouyesh Azizeddin**, researcher in technology and human rights, Slovenia
16. **Ali Banuazizi**, Professor of Political Science, Boston University, USA
17. **Monireh Baradaran**, former political prisoner, human rights activist, writer, Germany
18. **Nora Bayani**, women’s rights activist, USA
19. **Mansoureh Behkish**, leftist feminist activist, former political prisoner, member of the Families of Khavaran, Germany
20. **Alireza Behnam**, poet, translator, journalist, Iran
21. **Alireza Behtoui**, Professor of Sociology, Södertörn University, Sweden
22. **Atena Daemi**, former political prisoner, human rights activist, Canada
23. **Mehrdad Darvishpour**, sociologist, Associate Professor, senior lecturer in Social Work at Mälardalen University, Sweden
24. **Armen Davoudian**, poet, translator, Stanford University, USA
25. **Amin Feizpour**, Founder and Director of “Iran Circle”, USA
26. **Parastou Forouhar**, artist, social activist, Germany
27. **Halleh Ghorashi**, professor of social sciences, Vrije University, Netherlands
28. **Barbad Golshiri**, artist, social activist, France
29. **Mohammad Habibi**, spokesperson for Iran’s Teachers’ Trade Association Council, Iran

30. **Hadi Hiyali**, former political prisoner, writer, Iran
31. **Ali Hojat**, former political prisoner, retired graphic designer, USA
32. **Homa Hoodfar**, women's rights activist, Professor Emeritus of Women's Studies, Concordia University, Canada
33. **Asghar Izadi**, former political prisoner, political activist, Germany
34. **Guisso Jahangiri**, former Secretary-General of the International Federation for Human Rights, women's rights defender, human rights activist, France
35. **Pouria Jahanshad**, researcher in social sciences, Iran
36. **Milad Jannat**, former political prisoner, poet, translator, Iran
37. **Aso Javaheri**, feminist activist, PhD student, Simon Fraser University, Canada
38. **Mihan Jazani**, political activist, France
39. **Fatan Jokar**, former political prisoner, human rights activist, Finland
40. **Mehrangiz Kar**, lawyer, women's rights activist, USA
41. **Kazem Kardavani**, social activist, researcher of social sciences, Germany
42. **Golshid Karimian**, writer, researcher, Iran
43. **Sara Karimian**, research Associate in Political Science, University of Sussex, England
44. **Nasser Khandabi**, former political prisoner, Canada
45. **Reza Khandan**, former political prisoner, writer, Iran
46. **Mina Khanlarzadeh**, Professor of History, Deep Springs College, USA
47. **Nasim Khaksar**, former political prisoner, novelist and writer, Netherlands
48. **Azam Khatam**, women rights activist, editor in chief of Global Iranian Studies Review, University of Toronto, Canada
49. **Azar Khounani**, Early Childhood Education Specialist, USA
50. **Amir Kianpour**, writer and researcher, Paris, France
51. **Saeed Madani**, former political prisoner, sociologist, Iran
52. **Ali Akbar Mahdi**, Professor of Sociology, Ohio Wesleyan University, USA
53. **Chowra Makaremi**, researcher in anthropology, CNRS, France
54. **Zaman Massoudi**, political activist, Germany
55. **Mahnaz Matin**, doctor, researcher and women's rights activist, France
56. **Kamran Matin**, professor of International Relations, University of Sussex, England
57. **Farzaneh Milani**, Professor Emerita of Gender Studies, University of Virginia, USA
58. **Haideh Moghissi**, Professor Emerita of Women's Studies, York University, Canada
59. **Nasser Mohajer**, advocate for the rights of political prisoners, researcher in Modern Iranian History, France
60. **Shahzad Mojab**, feminist activist, Professor Emeritus of Women's Studies, University of Toronto, Canada
61. **Saeed Molaei**, former political prisoner, social activist, Iran
62. **Esha Momeni**, former political prisoner, lecturer of gender studies, University of California, Los Angeles, USA
63. **Shaghayegh Moradi**, former political prisoner, human rights activist, Iran
64. **Manijeh Moradian**, feminist activist, Professor of Women's Studies, Barnard College, New York, USA
65. **Ghazaleh Motamed**, set costume designer, feminist activist in the "Me Too" movement, France
66. **Negar Mottahedeh**, Professor of Comparative Literature, Duke University, USA
67. **Hafez Mousavi**, poet, writer, Iran
68. **Nima Naghibi**, Professor of English Studies, Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada
69. **Shiva Nazar Ahari**, former political prisoner, founding board member and spokesperson of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters, Slovenia
70. **Mohammad Reza Nikfar**, philosopher, Germany
71. **Farhad Nomani**, Professor Emeritus of Economics, American University of Paris, France

72. **Kambiz Norouzizadeh**, former political prisoner, human rights activist, Iran
73. **Nader Ossareh**, former political prisoner, political essayist, France
74. **Saeed Paivandi**, sociologist, Director of the LISEC Research Center, University of Lorraine, France
75. **Pouya Pour-Amin**, former political prisoner, composer, sound designer, Norway
76. **Nazanin Pouyandeh**, painter, France
77. **Anahita Rahmani**, former political prisoner, Canada
78. **Saeed Rahnema**, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, York University, Canada
79. **Hossein Razzagh**, former political prisoner, political activist, Germany
80. **Abdollah Rezaei**, former political prisoner, teachers' union activist, Iran
81. **Mona Roshan**, former political prisoner, Canada
82. **Somayeh Rostampour**, researcher of social sciences, Kurdish feminist activist, France
83. **Mihan Roust**, advocate for the rights of political prisoners, member of a family of people executed in the 1980s, Germany
84. **Ali Sabouri**, former political prisoner, poet, Iran
85. **Khosrow Sadeghi Boroujeni**, writer, journalist, Iran
86. **Shadi Sadr**, former political prisoner, international human rights lawyer
87. **Shokoufeh Sakhi**, former political prisoner, Lecturer in Gender Studies, University of Toronto, Canada
88. **Hossein Sarbandi**, former political prisoner, political activist, Iran
89. **Parisa Sardashti**, writer, feminist activist, France
90. **Nastaran Saremy**, feminist and environmental activist, PhD student, Simon Fraser University, Canada
91. **Faraj Sarkohi**, former political prisoner, journalist, Germany
92. **Khashayar Sefidi**, former political prisoner, student movement activist, Iran
93. **Asad Seif**, writer, researcher, Germany
94. **Siyavash Shahabi**, journalist, social activist, Greece
95. **Fatemeh Shams**, poet, feminist activist, Professor of Literature, University of Pennsylvania, USA
96. **Mansoureh Shojaee**, former political prisoner, writer, women's rights activist, Netherlands
97. **Roozbeh Sohani**, former political prisoner, poet, Iran
98. **Nasim Soltanbeygi**, journalist, Iran
99. **Amir Soltani**, writer, social activist, advocate for political prisoners, USA
100. **Nahid Taghavi**, former political prisoner, women's rights activist, Germany
101. **Jinoos Taghizadeh**, activist, visual artist, Canada
102. **Mona Tajali**, women's rights activist, researchere in Women's Studies, Stanford University, USA
103. **Manijeh Tam**, cultural activist, France
104. **Taghi Tam**, former political prisoner, reired, France
105. **Nayereh Tohidi**, women's righs activist, Professor Emeritus of Women's Studies, California State Univerity, USA
106. **Mehrdad Vahabi**, Professor of Economics, Sorbonne Paris North University, researcher at Paris Dauhine University, FRance
107. **Saeed Yousef**, former political prisoner, poet, Germany
108. **Shirin Zakeri**, researcher, adjunct professor of Iranian Studies, Sapienza University, Italy,
109. **Sara Zeri**, poet , critic, labor rights activist, Iran

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