Against the Hierarchy of Lives — a Call for an Internationalism from Below

written by Roud Media Collective | September 12, 2026

From a collective of Iranian leftist activists and supporters.

Against the Hierarchy of Lives —

a Call for an Internationalism from Below

To the authors and signatories of the open letter in support of prisoners' resistance against executions in Iran, and to the awakened consciences of the world:

As collectives from the Iranian left-wing spectrum, we are sending this open letter to convey our gratitude and solidarity for your courageous and enlightening action. First and foremost, your letter represents an effort to honor the lives of prisoners and all those whose humanity is being devalued from all sides and for various reasons amid the current climate of war: It is devalued by the Iranian regime to sustain a state of emergency and public terror; by imperialist centers of power, where human lives are reduced to numbers used as instrumental tools to justify war against Iran and the continuation of military aggression in the Middle East; and by a multitude of forces and political currents that, in the name of defending the oppressed, effectively align with states. Driven by a flawed understanding of the complexities of contemporary imperialism and a simplistic view of anti-imperialism, these groups call for silence on the executions and state brutality in Iran, believing they face a more pressing historical imperative.

Because some of us have personally experienced imprisonment in Iran, some have survived the mass executions of political prisoners in the summer of 1988, and others have been active in the struggle against prison and execution, and as part of the justice-seeking movement, we are aware what the prison experience in Iran entails. Given the relentless wave of executions, which has escalated horrifically over the past two years alongside the intensification of the war climate, we recognize the historical and heroic significance of resisting execution, especially from within Iranian prisons.

A prominent example of this resistance is the 'No to Execution Tuesdays' campaign, which marked its 135th weekly hunger strike, with members across 61 prisons in Iran taking part in the resistance through hunger strikes. Therefore, in our view, your open letter is a responsible step toward recalling and highlighting the importance of defending these lives and supporting the ongoing resistance of prisoners—a step worthy of appreciation, accompaniment, and solidarity.

Second, we appreciate your initiative because your open letter was published in a historical context where raising such a concern demands not only radical analysis, but also political and moral courage. In today's deeply polarized political and media landscape, including within the left sphere, there is immense pressure to take a side in the conflict, lest one be accused of appeasing the opposing pole. As a result, many choose silence over being misunderstood or accused of holding positions they do not believe in. Yet, despite the acute hazards of this toxic atmosphere, you expressed your independent stance beyond the prevailing binary logic. You insisted that the criteria for political judgment, responsibility, action, and internationalist solidarity must start with prioritizing human life and the right to exist, rather than the conflicting political claims of actors

within the global order.

Over the past year or two, during our political activities against war, imperialist aggression, warmongering, and state repression, we (like you and many other comrades) have constantly faced similar accusations: that we are drawing a false equivalence between the opposing sides of this war; that we are passively playing it safe by sitting between two stools; or that our critical stance against the Iranian government inherently downplays or justifies US-Israel imperialist aggression (not to mention disgraceful labels like “pro-NATO left,” “pro-Zionist left,” “Islamophobic,” etc.). We fully understand the bitterness of the accusations recently directed at you following the publication of your open letter, and we deeply regret them. Yet, this is precisely the proof of your moral courage and sense of responsibility: despite knowing in advance that you would face such unfair treatment, you refused to retreat to a safe space or remain passive onlookers in this toxic environment, as many figures of radical thought have done.

The unique value of your action also lies in the fact that many of the authors and signatories themselves come from the traditions of radical Black liberation, anti-racist, and anti-colonial struggles, as well as movements against prisons, repression, and fascism. In a climate where the value of human life is categorized in the name of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles—mirroring the very logic of state killing, where certain systematic state murders are ignored or even justified—your letter demonstrated that a true commitment to anti-colonial and anti-repressive struggles requires avoiding contradictions that lead to assimilation into the logic of the ruling order.

With this open letter, you showed that anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle requires fidelity to the whole of Frantz Fanon’s approach (not a selective reading of it)—one that, while wholeheartedly defending the rights of the colonized to resist and fight, warns that if they adopt the logic of the colonizer during this struggle, they are defeated in advance.

This critical insight—which constitutes our third reason for writing to you and to all free consciences—holds strategic importance in our view. We have painfully witnessed how approaches that confront colonialism/imperialism from a state-centered logic, even while claiming to defend the oppressed, ultimately yield to mere reactivity on a playing field whose rules are dictated by colonial and imperialist logic. Consequently, if we are to move toward building a liberating internationalism, we undoubtedly need a new starting point based on the total rejection of domination and oppression (rather than selective, stereotypical instances of them).

Your letter and your enlightening endeavor to unconditionally stand against dehumanizing practices, along with all the struggles and activists sharing these same concerns and goals, give us hope that forging such an alternative path is possible: a necessary and viable path whose concise name is ‘**internationalism from below**‘.

August 25, 2026

Signatory Iranian Collectives:

Roud Collective (IG: roudcollective.global)

Prison’s Dialogue (http://dialogt.eu/)

Flüchtlingscafé Göttingen

Anti Colonial Iran (IG: anticolonialiran)

Hydra (IG: hydra.media.iran)

Osyan Women Collective (IG: maosyangarim)

Democratic Association of Iranians in Venice (IG: assodemiraniani)

Iranische Aktivistinnen im Exil (IG: iranischeaktivistinnenimexil)

Jin* Jiyan Azadi – NRW

collectif98

Burn the Cage Campaign

Komitee zur Unterstützung der politischen Gefangenen in Iran-Berlin e.V.

Another way for Iran Collective – Montreal

Iranischdeutscher Frauenverein Köln

Collettivo Rivoluzionario Jina (crj)

Transnational Iranian Anti-Fascist Collective

Toronto-Canada Iranian Republican Association (TIRA)

International Emergency Campaign to Free Iran's Political Prisoners Now (www.FreeIransPoliticalPrisonersNow.org)

Roja Collective – Paris

Full list of signatories available here: https://cloud.systemli.org/apps/collectives/p/Xa4QxgNANbXjrwS/RoudCollective-955