

Our Support for the Open Letter Titled: To Iran's political prisoners, trapped 'between two blades of a scissors'

written by anti colonial iran | September 8, 2026



(Photo by Kena Betancur / AFP)

As migrants and refugees in diaspora and in exile from Iran, who have our loved ones suffering in the Iranian state's prisons and facing its gallows, we salute the signatories of the open letter To Iran's political prisoners, trapped 'between two blades of a scissors', published in The Guardian on 20 August 2026. With us stand comrades and organisations from across the world who see this struggle as bound up with their own.

The open letter was signed by a number of current and formerly incarcerated political prisoners, political organisers and scholars, including Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Yasin al-Haj Saleh, Ricardo Jiménez, Michael Löwy, and Walden Bello, among others, who wrote to incarcerated people in Iran, "we stand in solidarity with you". In response to the letter, some on the left have since called on signatories to withdraw, describing the letter as "imperialist-sympathetic", and three names have been removed. We wanted to respond with an open letter, demonstrating the widespread support from people across the world for those who stand unapologetically with the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated political prisoners of Iran.

As collectives and individuals who have for years organised against western and Zionist imperialist wars and occupations, as well as against the Islamic Republic's state violence inside and outside Iran's borders, we know how difficult it is to step outside mainstream geopolitical framings, familiar but dehumanising, and stand in solidarity with communities whose reality and struggle do not fit the binaries of "good vs evil", "us vs them", "west vs the rest". Yet the communities across the globe who are oppressed by multiple local-global forces at once cannot afford the privilege of choosing between their oppressors as the "lesser evil".

At a time when the historical struggle for collective liberation across Iran is besieged by the US imperialist Zionist war and the Iranian government's mass executions on one side, and pro-war Iranian monarchist zionism led by Reza Pahlavi on the other, the international solidarity articulated by the statement has brought an unexpected fresh breeze of hope and opened new horizons of liberation beyond borders, especially coming from current and formerly incarcerated political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Yasin al-Haj Saleh and Ricardo Jiménez, among others.

As is to be expected, the open letter has led to a wave of condemnations from vanguards and gate keepers of “anti-imperialism” who have long abandoned the very basic principles of the anti-imperialist tradition: international solidarity in support of lives crushed under the hammer of global capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. Instead of calling for the abolition of capital punishment, these vanguards justify the mass imprisonment, torture and executions of our people.

In the midst of US military and economic war on Iran, the Iranian state has been intensifying the execution of prisoners as a matter of “national security”, by framing the imprisoned protestors as “foreign agents” and “spies” without providing any evidence except forced confessions under torture.

Meanwhile the real “foreign agents” and collaborators have been operating from within the top layers of the IRGC ruling class, providing US and Israel with intelligence regarding the location of assassinated officials and their meetings. This is not a conspiracy, it has been admitted publicly by high ranking officials such as Araghchi who framed it as an ongoing “security breach” within the system. In other words, in a classic scenario scripted by ruling classes, the wretched of the earth in Iran are being scapegoated and sacrificed as “foreign agents”, so a new arrangement of power in the region could be built on the blood of the oppressed and the colonised.

The minoritised communities in Iran bear the heaviest brunt of Iranian carceral and border violence. Nearly two million Afghan migrants and refugees have been deported from Iran since the 12-day Zionist war on Iran. The government used the Zionist war as a pretext to intensify the racist and xenophobic campaign of mass deportation against Afghans, committing to the ethnic cleansing of a people who have lived and moved on these lands long before the establishment of the Iranian nation-state and its borders.

While the prison system in Iran affects the poor and marginalised from all communities, prisoners from minoritised, racialised and internally colonised regions such as Kurdistan, Balochistan, Ahwaz, and Lurestan, are disproportionately targeted by the Iranian state’s system of mass incarceration and executions. In a manner that is not dissimilar to the US where Black, Latinx, Muslim and Indigenous communities are targeted disproportionately by the white supremacist settler colonial patriarchal dual system of mass incarceration and racial capitalism.

While our position against US imperialism and IRI executions may seem unusual to some, it is in fact a common position among labor unions, student collectives, feminist, racialised and minoritised groups inside Iran and in exile. The most recent statement by the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company reads as follows:

Today, as our country struggles under the weight of devastating economic crises, runaway inflation, the collapse of rial, U.S. and Israeli military attacks, the continuation of a devastating war, economic sanctions, widespread and severe repression, and warmongering policies, the authorities are once again responding to people’s demands for bread, work, justice, freedom, and human dignity, with the most brutal instruments of terror and intimidation: the gallows.

The statement ends by declaring:

The death penalty must be abolished immediately! Political prisoners must be released! No to war, intervention, military aggression, and warmongering policies! The path forward for workers and the toiling people is unity and organisation.

A day doesn’t pass without the families and supporters of prisoners on death row risking safety to gather in front of prisons pleading to stop the execution of their loved ones. Mostly to no avail.

Between 13 to 28 July 2026, as US bombs were falling on the already racialised and marginalised southern regions of Iran, over 1,500 brave prisoners from Ghezelhesar prison held a mass hunger strike against executions of their fellow prisoners. This happened alongside the weekly prisoner strikes of the “No-To-Execution Tuesdays” campaign, which has been ongoing for 134 weeks across more than 60 prisons, demanding an end to all executions.

On 28 July, the site of public execution in Isfahan turned into a spontaneous popular protest by people who had gathered to prevent the execution. The protest was suppressed and the execution took place. Even though the executions have continued, the prisoner’s hunger strike together with the families brave resistance and spontaneous protests in Isfahan have empowered a fast growing movement for the abolition of the death sentence, as a unifying demand among different social and political movements inside and outside Iran even as US bombs fall.

The confidential information published by The Intercept regarding ICE and Iranian state collaboration on deportation in the midst of the war, reveals how police-states work together, and hold diplomatic talks behind closed doors to coordinate mass deportations of migrants and refugees, even as they wage war against each other. The same point holds for recent normalisation of relations between European powers and the Taliban and Al-Sharaa regimes, with the aim of deportations of Afghans and Syrians from fortress Europe.

Lastly we want to affirm the simple and universal truth that the collective liberation of all war torn, occupied and colonised communities of the MENA/SWANA region and beyond are interconnected.

From the Palestinian liberation struggle against genocidal Israeli settler-colonialism backed by western and US imperialism, to the Sudanese revolutionary struggle against the RSF’s genocidal and SAF’s counter-revolutionary war, backed by different regional and global imperial powers, to the Afghan liberation struggle against the Taliban put back in power by the US after 20 years of “war on terror”, to the Kurdish anti-colonial struggle for self-determination, to the Baloch anti-colonial struggle against Pakistani and Iranian colonial occupations, to the Ahwazi Arab anti-colonial struggle for self-determination, to Congo’s struggle against Rwanda’s military invasion and imperial extractivism, to Haiti’s historical struggle against slavery, debt, and terror backed by western colonialism and imperialism, to Venezuela’s struggle against US neocolonialism and state authoritarianism, to the Zapatista struggle against Mexican mal gobierno (bad government) and US imperialism, to Lebanon and Syria’s struggle against Israeli colonial expansion and sectarian political elites, to West Papua’s struggle against Indonesian colonialism backed by imperial powers, to the Saharawi struggle against Moroccan colonialism backed by Israel, to the Uyghur struggle against the Chinese state’s mass incarceration and surveillance, to the Rohingya struggle against Myanmar’s military genocide, to the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination against Indian and Pakistani military states, to the Ukrainian struggle against Russian imperialism and invasion, European self-serving hypocrisy, and the Ukrainian state’s anti-worker policies; these and all other struggles for collective liberation are inherently interconnected.

For us the popular slogan “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free” means forging, articulating and building solidarities that may seem to some confusing or unusual in a world where hegemonic and normative politics is defined by a multipolar, (neo)colonial and patriarchal capitalist nation-state system and its borders, borders that have been, and continue fragmenting, dividing, conquering, hierarchising the lands and the peoples of our planet.

Fannie Lou Hamer’s statement “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free” means rejecting hierarchies of liberation and selective solidarities, even when violent binaries present themselves as common sense. A new world requires new solidarities, rooted in revolutionary imagination and radical love beyond borders and prison walls!

We take up the demands of the Tehran Bus Drivers and of prisoners organising across Iran: an immediate end to the war and to sanctions, the abolition of the death penalty, and the release of every political prisoner. Each demand needs the other.

Long live peoples' struggles everywhere against imperialism, colonialism, statism, capitalism, patriarchy and militarism of all colours!

Freedom for all prisoners facing tortures and executions in the prisons of Iran, Israel, US, China, Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia!

Freedom for Mumia Abu Jamal, Fred "Muhammad" Burton, Veronza Bowers and all other Black and Indigenous prisoners in Turtle Island!

Freedom for Varisheh Moradi, Pakhshan Azizi, Zeinab Jalalian and all imprisoned revolutionary Kurdish women!

Freedom for Mahrang Baloch and other revolutionary Baloch prisoners in the colonial prisons of Pakistan and Iran!

Freedom for Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, Khalida Jarrar, Marwan Barghouti and all other Palestinian prisoners fighting for liberation from inside colonial Zionist prisons!

Freedom for Saadia Mosbah and all other prisoners in Tunisia fighting against the Tunisian state's anti-Black and anti-migrant policies dictated by European extractivism and border imperialism!

Freedom for all South Asian & Filipino migrant and domestic workers affected by the war in the region!

No to war! No to genocide!

No to executions! No to prisons!

No to militarism! No to imperialism!

No to zionism! No to patriarchy!

No to campism! No to statism!

No to imperialist regime change, yes to revolution from below!

Yes to international solidarity!

Yes to collective liberation!

Yes to peace, justice and self-determination for all colonised, oppressed and exploited people globally!

Yes to Land Back!

Jin Jiyan Azadi!

See the list of signatories or add your own name here

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