



January/February 2018

# International Liberty Association Newsletter

Rowlandson House • 289-297 Ballards Lane • London N12 8NP

W: [www.iliberty.org.uk](http://www.iliberty.org.uk) • E: [info@iliberty.org.uk](mailto:info@iliberty.org.uk) • T: 020 8452 3481

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to 2018, a year full of promise for the cause of human rights in Iran. We little knew when we sent out our good wishes for the season with our last newsletter, that, even before the door had closed on 2017, the sparks of freedom and justice would ignite and spread like wildfire through Iran as the volcano fuelled by economic hardship and brutal repression erupted and huge numbers of people of all ethnicities, ages and walks of life spilled into the streets of 140 cities to demand their rights.

The unified nature of these protests attracted the world's attention in a way that did not happen after the rigged elections in 2009 and, although the crackdown was swift and brutal, a window to the world from Iran was opened that we trust can never again be closed.

Many died in the streets, there have been over 8,000 arrests and at least 10 deaths of young people under torture. The regime's ability to cut the people off from their most powerful medium of communication, the Internet, severely impacting their ability to organise, gives cause for concern and future consideration.

Sadly, the Members of the European Union, none more so than Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, closed their eyes as they continue to champion the nuclear deal and its path to trade with Iran, maintaining a policy of silence towards the protests and those still incarcerated.

In heart-warming contrast, Nikki Haley, US Ambassador to the UN, strongly condemned the brutal measures taken against peaceful demonstrators and

... continued on p.2

## THE PEOPLE OF IRAN RAISE THEIR VOICE AGAIN



Large numbers of people took to the streets to protest

### Just as 2017 was drawing to a close, a new wave of uprising and demonstrations swept across Iran.

The unrest started on 28 December in the north-eastern city of Mashhad, the second largest city in Iran after the capital, Tehran, and quickly spread to dozens of other towns and cities, reaching as far as Ahvaz in the south-west. Demonstrations started after a sudden rise in the price of essential goods, but the tone rapidly transformed into a call for regime change as “Down with Khamenei, Down with Rouhani”, the Supreme Leader and the President respectively, became the main slogan of the protests across the country. A brutal crackdown on demonstrators followed a cut in the internet services which protestors had been using very effectively to spread the news and encourage others to take part.

As the protests in Iran entered a second week, the US government, heeding the demands of Iranians all over the world, called for a UN Security Council meeting to discuss the situation. The US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, issued the following remarks on 4 January, the

day before the UNSC meeting on Iran: “Tomorrow the UN Security Council will discuss the troubling and dangerous situation in Iran. The world has witnessed the horrors that have taken place in Syria, which began with a murderous regime denying its people's right to peacefully protest. We must not let that happen in Iran. This is a matter of fundamental human rights for the Iranian people, but it is also a matter of international peace and security. It will be telling if any country tries to deny the Security Council from even having this discussion, just as the Iranian regime tries to deny its own people the ability to have their voices heard”.

And in the UNSC meeting on 5 January, Ambassador Haley said (*excerpts*): “The voices of the Iranian people should be heard. We have debated the proper role of human rights in the Security Council. Some of our colleagues believe that human rights have no place here. They believe human rights and fundamental freedoms are the business only of the governments that control them.

... continued on p.2



*continued from p.1*

succeeded in convening a UN Security Council session on the issue. To do so she cited the horrific example of Syria, "which began with a murderous regime denying its people's right to protest" and challenged the UN veto by saying "it will be telling if any country tries to deny the UN Security Council even having this discussion." On the day, she went further when she said "Some of our colleagues believe that human rights have no place here. They believe human rights and fundamental freedoms are the business only of the governments that control them." If not the UN, where, we can only wonder?

We are deeply grateful to Nikki Haley and the US Administration that supported her in her bold stance as for the first time in 40 years the cry of the people of Iran was echoed in the highest international chamber.

We thank all the MPs and MEPs who have spoken out strongly calling for measures to be taken to secure the release of the protesters and prevent brutal reprisals by the regime.

The fire lit in Iran is not going out. The people continue to protest, in smaller numbers, but equally determined, with demonstrations demanding unpaid wages, slogans written on walls and calls into the night, expressing unhappiness with a regime that brings only hardship and misery.

Regular rallies around the world show solidarity by keeping a spotlight on the situation and calling on governments to hold the Iranian regime accountable for the well-being of its citizens.

There is much to do but working together with you at our side we look forward to increasing our efforts on behalf of the people of Iran and to 2018 being a very special year in which we can and we do bring human rights and values to prevail in Iran.

*continued from p.1*

"The United States does not share that belief. Human rights are not the gift of governments. They are the inalienable right of the people themselves.

"Freedom and human dignity cannot be separated from peace and security. When the rights of the people are denied, the people rightly resist. If the concerns are not acknowledged, then peace and security are inevitably threatened. We have seen that repeatedly throughout human history. The case of Syria provides a horrible recent testament to this fact.

"And what is happening in the towns and cities across Iran right now bears out this fundamental truth...

"The Iranian people understand the nature of their regime...

"If you listen to the slogans they chant in the street, this understanding comes through loud and clear. The United Nations reports that the Iranian regime spends at least \$6 billion every year propping up the murderous Assad regime in Syria. The people of Iran know this. And so they are telling their government, 'Let go of Syria, think of us.'

"The Iranian regime spends millions on militias in Iraq each year.

It gives millions more each year to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, including sending them ballistic missiles to fire at other countries. Meanwhile, the average Iranian family is 15 percent poorer today than it was 10 years ago. So the Iranian people demand, 'think of us'.

"The regime gives low interest loans to the elite and well-connected. It rewards construction contracts to corrupt Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-affiliated firms. They construct buildings that skimp on safety. Thousands of these buildings collapsed during an earthquake. Hundreds died. And the Iranian people chant, 'think of us'...

"Every UN Member State is sovereign, but Member States cannot use sovereignty as a shield when they categorically deny their people human rights and fundamental freedoms. I call on all of my colleagues to join me in amplifying the message of the Iranian people. Once again, the people of Iran are rising up. They are asking for something that no government can legitimately deny them: their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

"If the founding principles of this institution mean anything, we will not only hear their cry, we will finally answer it."

## ACTIVISTS IN THE UK CALL ON THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO LINK DEALS WITH IRAN TO HUMAN RIGHTS



Campaigners carry the pictures of slain Iranian protesters

On 20 January, a rally was held in front of Downing Street, followed by a short march to Parliament Square, as human rights activists called on the British Government to link any deals with Iran to its human rights record and to call publicly on

the Iranian government to release recently detained protesters. Theresa Villiers MP addressed the rally and then joined a group of Iranian activists delivering a letter signed by 40 Anglo-Iranian associations to the Prime Minister.





## MASSIVE CRACKDOWN ON PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS

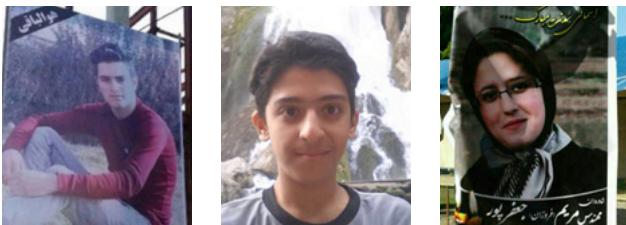


A massive crackdown on protesters started as soon as the regime was able to quell the demonstrations, which they did by cutting the Internet access which was the main medium of communication amongst the various groups and individuals. At least 30 were killed and thousands arrested during the demonstrations. The kidnapping and arrest of protesters and would-be

protesters at their homes or place of work or study, continued for days after the demonstrations subsided.

According to reports by various informed sources from inside Iran at least 8,000 people have been arrested. A regime parliamentarian from the city of Izeh revealed that the detainees are very young and mostly aged between 16 and 24. State officials agree that the average age is under 25.

Several of the arrested protesters have lost their lives in detention. Numerous reports from various cities alleging mistreatment of prisoners and the martyrdom of a number of them under torture makes it very essential and urgent for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Council to establish an investigative committee to deal with the arbitrary arrests and the reports of prisoners dying in the detention centres.



Some of the protesters known to have died. Left to right: Ali Momeni, Armin Sadeghi, Maryam Jaafarpour, Gholamreza Mohammadi, Sina Ghanbari and Mehdi Kehzai



## EU MUST NOT BE SILENT ABOUT BEHAVIOUR OF IRANIAN AUTHORITIES AGAINST PROTESTERS

In the wake of Iranian protest the Vice President of the European Parliament for the Czech Republic issued a statement in which he said: "I condemn all the violence that the Iranian authorities have committed in recent days against civilians expressing dissatisfaction with the regime".



Pavel Telička

Mr Pavel Telička, Vice-President of the European Parliament, who has recently taken responsibility for human rights issues, also said:

"The demands that people call for protest are understandable. I have long pointed out that there are

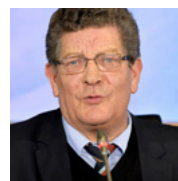
violations of basic human rights in Iran, executions are common. People live under a backward and repressive regime, the prisons are full of political prisoners. That's something we should not be indifferent to".



Ryszard Czarnecki

Also Ryszard Czarnecki, EP Vice-President from Poland, in a press statement issued on the third day of demonstrations said: "This uprising which began in Mashhad on Thursday 28 December has now extended to other big cities and

tens of thousands of Iranians, especially the younger generation and women, are at the forefront of these protests...



Gérard Deprez

"The European Union must condemn the violent reaction of the Iranian regime's security forces and the IRGC against the demonstrators."

At the same time, Gérard Deprez MEP, the President of Friends of a

Free Iran in the European Parliament that enjoys the support of many MEPs called on "the EU High Representative Ms Mogherini and the European governments to publicly express solidarity with the current uprising of the Iranian people and to strongly condemn the brutal reaction of the Iranian government and the security forces against the peaceful demonstrators."



Young protesters who have been arrested and imprisoned



# WILL THE UPRISING CONTINUE?

Many policy experts, analysts, and commentators view and describe the Iran uprising as a “watershed”, “landmark event” or a “turning point” in the period since 1979.

Here is a summary of some of these views which focus on the question ‘will this uprising continue?’

**Alireza Nader**, a senior international policy analyst at the RAND Corporation: “...a key barrier has been broken: Iranians are no longer contained by the wall of fear created by the Islamic Republic...Khamenei and Rouhani may blame foreign enemies for the rebellion, but their enemies are the hungry and oppressed people of Iran. They are awake. And they are legion.”

**RayTakeyh**, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations: “It is possible that an Islamist regime with little compunction about killing its own citizens will survive this latest challenge to its authority. Should it survive, the Iranian theocracy will not be the same...”

The gap between state and society has never been wider, as the public seeks a responsive democracy while the theocracy’s diminishing cadre insist on even more repressive and isolated government. Revolutionar-

ies who eschew reform and condemn pragmatism as sinful diversion from the path of God are destined for the dustbin of history.”!

**Reuel Marc Gerecht**, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies writing in the *New York Times*: “The longing for change among the Iranian people hasn’t abated, however. The 1979 revolution had two contradictory ambitions: clerical Islamism and democracy. As theocracy has lost its appeal, the attraction of democracy, ever more secular in its expression, has spread from the college-educated to the working class... Gradual change isn’t in the offing. The demonstrators in the streets of Iran today instinctively know this, which is why they rail against the system”.

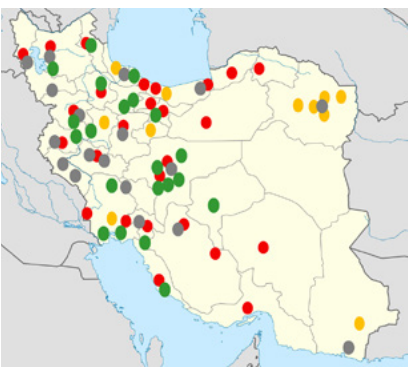
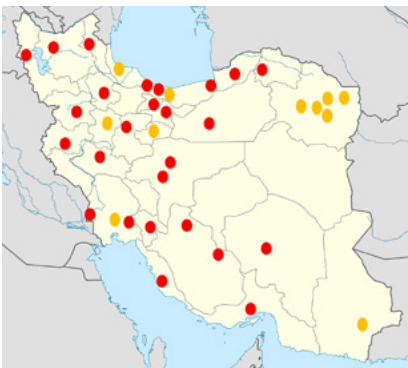
**Jamsheed Choksy**, Distinguished Professor of Global and International Studies and Professor of Iranian Studies at Indiana University and Carol Choksy Lecturer in Strategic Intelligence at Indiana University: “Indeed, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij paramilitary are being deployed to assist the police in beating up and arresting protesters. But with each set of uprisings, whether successful

or unsuccessful, the Iranian people are learning and adapting, and, as the past indicates, will return to their struggle until one day they succeed.”

**Roger Cohen**, the *New York Times* Foreign Affairs Columnist: “The demonstrations, this time, are different. They are smaller, but more widespread. They reflect the economic woes of the working class more than middle-class disaffection... They originated in Mashhad and went on to Qum, two traditional regime strongholds — a sign of the regime’s ideological bankruptcy. The West-leaning middle class, fed up with the hypocrisy of the mullahs, has long sought political change. But the working class has been a pillar of the regime — manipulated with handouts and slogans. If they have shifted now, all that is left is the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij...”

Still, the courage of Iranians should never be underestimated, nor the deep roots of their quest for freedom, and anything is possible”.

**Ilan Berman**, senior vice president at the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington DC: “Unlike in 2009, Iran’s current protests aren’t just about a rigged election,



The protest grows... Top left: Days 2–3 Yellow: 29th December (Day 2), Red: 30th December (Day 3) Above left: Days 4–5 Grey: 31st December (Day 4), Green: 1st January (Day 5). Above right: the major cities in Iran





or factional domestic politics. They reflect a fundamental loss of faith in the current regime's stewardship of the Iranian ship of state, and in the clerical political system as a whole. That loss of confidence, moreover, appears to cut across all economic strata; today's protests do not appear to be largely a middle-class affair. As a result, they may prove to be a good deal more difficult to suppress than their predecessors".

**David Ignatius**, *Washington Post* columnist: "The process of change has already begun. The regime will

use its instruments of repression, and the unrest may wane. But the protests have been so widespread... that it will be impossible to put the whole country back in a box... it's hard to imagine the theocracy prevailing indefinitely in a society so hungry for change".

**Benjamin Weinthal**, Research Fellow, Foundation for Defence of Democracies: "The mix of working-class Iranians and young people demanding an end to the regime is a breathtaking development. Widespread labour unrest in a largely

closed society like Iran is a salient example that the regime's foundation is on shaky ground. The chants voiced among the protesters suggest that the outrage is chiefly about human freedom..."

"If the worst case scenario succeeds and the current protests are smashed, there is still a strong basis for a new revolt... Put simply, ordinary Iranians loathe the regime of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The inherent potential of regime change will not vanish. In fact, it will increase".

## WHY I SUPPORT ILA

### EXCERPTS FROM A TALK BY ROSALIND TOPPING AT OUR EVENT IN KINGSTON



It is truly a privilege to know these wonderful and inspirational people and to join with them on occasions

such as this one, lending our support to their cause.

All of us here are in the business of changing the world ... for the better.

On the road which we are travelling, the one that leads to freedom and democracy for the people of Iran, we've so often been told that whatever we're doing, 'it's not possible'.

We were told that the Ashrafi would never get out of captivity in Iraq. It wasn't possible, they said. And of course the strongest voices saying this were those of the murderous regime in Tehran. Well that was made possible by a massive, sustained international campaign which triumphed and saw most of the brave Ashrafi relocated to safety in Albania.

But let us never forget the cost in human life and suffering that preceded their release.

In 1990, in different circumstances from those in which we see her in today, Aung San Suu Kyi gave a message which is equally relevant for all of us now, 'It is not enough merely to call for freedom, democracy and human rights. There

has to be a united determination to persevere in the struggle, to make sacrifices in the name of enduring truths'. That's why we are here.

With the campaign to bring the perpetrators of the 1988 massacre to justice, we see that the regime is over a barrel. We know from the mass of evidence collected, that over 30,000 political prisoners in Iran were executed in what Geoffrey Robertson, QC has described as 'the most heinous crime against humanity since the Second World War'. We also know that those responsible are holding high office within the regime today.

If you haven't already done so, please, please add your name to the campaign being run by the ILA: go to their website and sign up, and if you have already signed, get your friends and family to do the same. And ask your MP to raise the matter with Ministers. You can contact your MP through: [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

Times are hard, there is so much misery and downright evil in the world.

Writer Marilyn Robinson has said, 'Cultural pessimism is always fashionable. It has the negative consequence of depressing the level of aspiration, the sense of the possible. It is easy to forget that there are always as good grounds for optimism as for pessimism – exactly the same grounds, in fact, because we are human. We still have every potential for good we have ever had.'

And it's more than optimism, there's the belief in all the enduring truths that underlie the best of human nature. That belief has moved mountains along the path we had trod together.

There are more mountains ahead. These too will be overcome as we continue to stand up for peace, freedom and democracy for all people in a free Iran. *We can and we will.*







# OUR CHRISTMAS EVENT IN PICTURES

WE THANK OUR SUPPORTERS WITH A CHRISTMAS GATHERING IN LONDON







## LIFE INSIDE IRAN'S PRISONS

### EXCERPT FROM AN ARTICLE BY VICKIE OLIPHANT - THE DAILY EXPRESS

Jail sentences are harrowing experiences in Iran, where people are routinely locked up for minor indiscretions.

For British mother Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who was on holiday with her small child to visit her family, her supposed offence is spying on the Tehran regime - despite her insistence she was just on holiday.



Now Mr [Hamid] Bahraini, a human rights activist who recently left Iran and moved to Glasgow, has revealed the horrific extent of his harrowing experiences in prison - and what it may well be like for Nazanin.

Hamid was locked up in a section of Alf Ta, the central prison of Isfahan also known as Isfahan's Dastgerd Prison, on 17 Feb 2014 after he recorded a political protest against the governing regime.

Although only locked up for a week, he claims he suffered horrific treatment while inside - including depriving him of food, light and suffering from beatings.



Top: Hamid Bahraini Inset: Nazanin, currently in Evin prison

Speaking exclusively to Express.co.uk, Hamid said: "I was scared when I was told I was going to prison, especially when they repeatedly threatened to lash me.

"I was interrogated for hours and they said to me that I am arrested because of having the relationship with the democratic opposition PMOI.

"They also accused me of encouraging people to protest and insult Supreme Leader. Having relation with the PMOI cause death penalty in Iran.

"When I was in solitary confinement they attacked my home to get some evidence but fortunately, they took my nephew's laptop.

"Actually, I was lucky because if they had found my laptop I would have been faced with serious charges."

He said he was kept in solitary confinement for his whole sentence, and they didn't give him anything to eat and just water to drink.

He said: "The place was so small, two meters by two meters. I didn't know if it was day or night, dark and dirty but when birds started to sing I thought it was morning.

"They even didn't let me sleep.

"Every morning I heard that some people were lashed and screaming from another part of the prison. The lashing had continued until noon."

And he was repeatedly interrogated, with prison guards trying "to play good cop-bad cop role".

Although he was released after just a week, police raided his home repeatedly - and fled Iran after officers again attacked his home in March 2015, snatching "all my things such as the laptop, books, my writings, and personal things".

He knew then he could never go home again.

## MPs CALL FOR TERRORIST BAN AND SANCTIONS ON IRAN'S MILITARY GUARD

### EXCERPTS FROM AN ARTICLE BY EDWARD MALNICK IN THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Amber Rudd is facing calls to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organisation over its suppression of protesters and support for militants.

Dozens of MPs from across the Commons have backed a motion calling for the Home Secretary to include the regime's elite unit on an official list of proscribed organisations and impose sanctions on its officials.

The disclosure comes after the group, formally called the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), was deployed to put down anti-government unrest during a week of protests that left more than 20 dead.

Of 69 MPs backing the Commons early day motion, more than 30 are Labour backbenchers.

They include the former front-benchers David Lammy, Joan Ryan, and Frank Field. It calls on the Government "to include the IRGC on the list of proscribed organisations, impose punitive measures against its officials and to work with allies to expel the IRGC from Syria, Iraq and the Middle East."

Bob Blackman, a Conservative backbencher, who tabled the motion in October, before last week's unrest, described the protesters as "very brave individuals".

He warned that the unit, a branch

of the military which acts as a protection force to the regime, is also involved in "slaughtering the people of Syria" in order to keep Bashar al-Assad in power.

The motion states: "IRGC only answers to the Supreme Leader and is responsible for suppression of Iranian people including the 2009 uprising, crackdown on human rights defenders, activists, journalists and anti-death penalty campaigners as well as arbitrary arrests of dual citizens."

It has been signed by Conservative, Labour, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Liberal Democrat and Democratic Unionist Party MPs.



# WE MISS YOU RICHARD

Richard Kelly (4 June 1948 – 5 January 2018)



Richard Kelly, the magnificent artist and designer who produced almost every artwork, poster, booklet, flyer, Christmas card and, of course, this our monthly newsletter, for the ILA for many years, passed away in hospital on 5 January 2018, a short period after an unsuccessful surgical procedure.

Richard was a tower of strength to the ILA. His work is everywhere. Behind all our productions there is Richard, tirelessly creating art out of our words and pictures

He was indestructible, indefatigable, ready day and night to hold our thoughts, words and images and

mould them into something worthy of publication.

His attention to detail, his willingness to change a dot, or a cross, right up to the last minute of the printer's deadline, his understanding of colour and design have been such a boon to us.

He will be sorely missed, by us with whom he worked so hard to help us achieve our various publications and by the thousands who have seen and appreciated our publications and exhibitions and did not even know about this steadfast hand behind the scenes.

Richard fought cancer 15 years

ago and his larger than life attitude kept him going all these years after he lost his ability to eat or drink. He was feeding himself via a tube on his side without any complaint. His ability to cope with this condition was an inspiration for all who knew him. We shared his hopes that the recent operation would significantly improve his situation, but sadly that was not to be.

**Thank you Richard for all that you have done to help our message get seen and heard. The memory of your energy and expertise will be guiding us as we strive to create our future works.**

## UN ADOPTS RESOLUTION AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN IRAN

| Voting Results: |    |
|-----------------|----|
| IN FAVOUR       | 81 |
| AGAINST         | 30 |
| ABSTENTION      | 70 |

The United Nations adopted its 64th resolution against human rights violations in Iran on 19 December 2017. The resolution sponsored by Canada, was adopted with 81 votes for, 30 against, and 70 abstentions at the UN General Assembly.

This resolution specifically expresses concern about the extent that the death penalty is used- particularly for juveniles, the rate of forced confessions, and the number of falsely imprisoned dual nationals and foreigners.

The resolution urges Iran "to uphold, in law and in practice procedural guarantees to ensure fair trial standards, including timely access to legal representation of one's choice from the time of arrest through all stages of trial and all appeals, the right not to be subjected to torture, cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and consideration of bail and other reasonable terms for release from custody pending trial."

## OUR UPCOMING EVENTS:

**CAMBRIDGE SATURDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2018**

### Social Evening

Emmanuel United Reformed Church  
Trumpington Street, CB2 1AG

**OXFORD SATURDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2018**

### Social Evening

Wesley Memorial Church,  
New Inn Hall Street, OX1 2DH

**LONDON FRIDAY 9 MARCH 2018**

### International Women's Day

Hammersmith Town Hall, W6 9LE

**LONDON SATURDAY 21 APRIL 2018**

### Easter and NoRuz

Hammersmith Town Hall, W6 9LE

Entrance Fee for each event: £10

RSVP [info@ilibrary.org.uk](mailto:info@ilibrary.org.uk) or call (020) 8452 3481

**All events are held from 4:30pm-8:30pm**