

International Liberty Association Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

In our last newsletter we celebrated the Persian New Year, NoRuz, and Easter, and mentioned the unusual nature of this year, 2021, which not only brought NoRuz close in date to the Christian moveable feast of Easter, but also to the Jewish moveable feast of Passover and, a much more rare conjunction, to Ramadan, the Muslim lunar month of fasting, which seldom occurs in April, as it steps through the whole twelve months of the year.

Inspired by this rare and powerful coincidence of events, a major interfaith solidarity conference was held on 14 April at the beginning of Ramadan. With 2,000 virtual Zoom locations in 40 countries and an impressive list of speakers representing all the Abrahamic faiths plus many other humanitarian activists, it made a clarion call for solidarity between the different faiths and the need to spotlight and counter fundamentalism and extremism, especially where it is in control centre stage as with the Iranian regime.

By any yardstick the Iranian regime lacks the core religious value of piety, rather misusing religion to institutionalise misogyny, repress and impoverish the people and carry out unspeakable atrocities, while accusing, torturing and executing innocent men and women of faith as the “enemies of God” and “hypocrites”. The religious leaders of the world must stand together and make it crystal clear where the truth lies, to strip the Iranian regime and the many religious extremist groups it funds of any legitimacy for using this vile interpretation.

This Inter-faith conference set a powerful stamp on the new Persian year, which is also the start of a new Persian century. Leaving behind the 1300s, an era of increasingly brutal despotism, and turning the page to 1400 gives a boost to our

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EX-UN OFFICIALS URGE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS TO LAUNCH INQUIRY INTO IRAN'S 1988 MASSACRE

More than 150 former United Nations officials and renowned international human rights and legal experts wrote to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights **Michelle**

Bachelet on Monday 3 May, calling for an international Commission of Inquiry into the 1988 massacre of thousands of political prisoners in Iran.

Signatories to the open letter include former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Irish President, **Mary Robinson**, former UN Deputy Secretary-General, **Lord Mark Malloch-Brown**, as well as 28 former UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights and the chairs of previous UN Commissions of Inquiry into human rights abuses in Eritrea



Mary Robinson and Lord Mark Malloch-Brown

and North Korea.

Distinguished legal professionals signing the appeal include the former Chief Prosecutor of the UN International Criminal Tribunals for the former

Yugoslavia and Rwanda, a former Special Prosecutor at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and the first President of the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Altogether, 45 of the signatories have previously held UN-affiliated positions.

European judges supporting the appeal include a former Vice President and a former judge of the European Court of Human Rights, plus three former judges of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Other notable ...continued on p.2

INTERFAITH SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE FOR THE OCCASION OF RAMADAN



Anwar Malek

On Wednesday, 14 April 2021, at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, a panel of international dignitaries joined an online conference declaring interfaith solidarity in the face of extremism and

intolerance that has been promoted by the mullahs' regime in Iran.

The prominent Algerian author, **Anwar Malek** (left), was the moderator of the International Conference.

This conference connected over 2,000 locations in 40 countries together. **Mrs Maryam Rajavi**, the President-elect of Iran's parliament in exile, joined the conference from her residence in France. ...continued on p.3



Ex-UN officials urge inquiry into 1988 massacre *continued from p.1*

signatories include **Baroness Boothroyd**, former Speaker of the British Parliament, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, **Dr Rowan Williams**, former Canadian Prime Minister, **Kim Campbell**, as well as six Nobel Laureates, including 1996 Nobel Peace Prize winner and former President of Timor-Leste, **Jose Ramos-Horta**.

The open letter was also signed by 24 international NGOs including Justice for the Victims of the 1988 Massacre in Iran (JVMI), International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), and the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights.

The open letter states that on 3 September 2020, seven UN Special Rapporteurs wrote to the Iranian authorities stating that the 1988 extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances of thousands of political prisoners “may amount to crimes against humanity.”



Ad Melkert and Jean Ziegler



Betty Boothroyd and Dr Rowan Williams

In 1988, Iran’s first Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa (religious decree), ordering the execution of all political prisoners affiliated to the opposition.

“There is a systemic impunity enjoyed by those who ordered and carried out the extrajudicial executions”, the UN Special Rapporteurs said, adding: “Many of the officials involved continue to hold positions of power including in key judicial, prosecutorial and government bodies.” They include the current Judiciary Chief and Justice Minister.

“We appeal to the UN Human Rights Council to end the culture of impunity that exists in Iran by establishing a Commission of Inquiry into the 1988 mass extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances. We urge High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet to support the establishment of such a Commission,” the open letter states.

Former UN human rights official **Tahar Boumedra** says: “This marks the first time that such a



Kim Campbell and Geoffrey Robertson QC

distinguished array of former UN officials are appealing directly to High Commissioner Bachelet to hold the perpetrators of the 1988 massacre accountable. She can remedy the regrettable failure of the relevant UN bodies to investigate this horrific atrocity and hold those responsible in the years past and put an end to the ongoing torment of the victims’ families. They have a right to the truth and to justice through a UN-led investigation. The witnesses are still alive. The evidence is at hand. Justice delayed is justice denied. The failure to act now will only embolden the regime to continue its cover-up and evade accountability.



Michel Forst and Tahar Boumedra

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sense that there is a change in mood with increased energy and growing determination to push through not just on highlighting, but also addressing, human rights abuses and other unacceptable behaviour, from regimes and individuals.

In this regard, we take great cheer from the worldwide support to bring the perpetrators of the 1988 massacre to account. The regime continues to try to cover its tracks, most recently by forcing the Baha’i religious minority to bury their dead in the mass graves used in 1988, to abuse the Baha’i and obliterate the 1988 connection.

But, 150 former UN officials, legal experts and human rights individuals and organisations have written to the

High Commissioner of Human Rights at the UN calling for an International Commission of Inquiry into the 1988 massacres. With many of the perpetrators still holding high office, it is clear that holding them to account for past crimes against humanity is a powerful step towards stopping further executions and human rights abuses in the present.

At the same time, more than 225 members of Congress, a bipartisan majority, have endorsed HR 118, a resolution urging the Biden administration to hold Iran’s corrupt regime accountable for its crimes against its people and its continued sponsorship of global terrorism. This has sent a strong message to the Biden administration about harbouring any

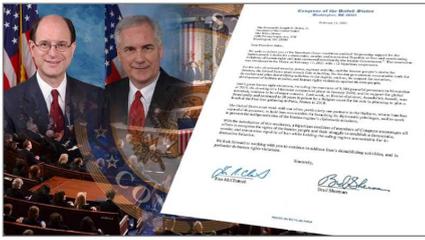
thoughts of a return to unconditional appeasement.

We are delighted that the EU has also stepped up and for the first time since 2013 added names to their sanctions list, in the form of key members of the IRGC, for their role in the deaths of 1500 protesters in November 2019.

We welcome all these collaborative moves to amplify the pressure for action. In addition our ongoing campaigns to highlight the plight of the children of Iran and to save prisoners of conscience from execution are gathering momentum. Our grateful thanks to all who continue to support us and we enter 1400 with hope and optimism for it being a year of positive progress towards our goals.



BIPARTISAN MAJORITY IN US CONGRESS CALL ON PRESIDENT BIDEN TO HOLD IRAN'S REGIME TO ACCOUNT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES



Leaders of the US Congress urged President Joe Biden and the UN Security Council to hold Iran accountable for its abuse of human rights as well as exploitation of diplomatic freedoms to support terrorism.

More than 225 members of Congress, a bipartisan majority, have endorsed HR 118, a resolution expressing support for “the Iranian people’s desire for a democratic, secular, and non-nuclear republic of

Iran” while condemning “violations of human rights and state-sponsored terrorism” by Tehran.

The Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) hosted a public Zoom conference supporting the resolution.

“HR 118 delivers a truly urgent message to the Biden administration within its first 100 days, that the Congress urges it to hold Iran’s corrupt regime accountable for its crime against its people and its continued sponsorship of global terrorism,” said Republican sponsor Tom McClintock (R-CA), who noted that more than 120,000 civilians have been murdered by the Iranian regime.

“This resolution expresses self-evident truths, not wishful thinking, into the discussion over Iran’s

conduct against its own people as well as against the peaceful nations of the world. It cites so many instances of human rights abuses and terrorist acts.”

Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA) praised the efforts of the OIAC and said: “HR 118 calls for the United Nations Security Council to work with the US partners and allies to condemn the ongoing human rights violations perpetrated by the Iranian regime and establish a mechanism by which the UN Security Council can monitor human rights violations”. He continued: “With such overwhelming support, Congress is sending a strong message to Iran that the US does not tolerate the ongoing human rights violations perpetrated by the Iranian regime.”

Interfaith Solidarity Conference

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In the conference titled “Solidarity of all faiths against extremism”, dignitaries and distinguished religious leaders worldwide spoke. They included, **Sid Ahmed Ghozali**, former Algerian Prime Minister; **Bassam Al-Omouh**, former Jordanian Minister and Jordan’s Ambassador in Tehran; **Anwar Malek**, writer and president of the Algerian human rights watch; **Elona Gjebrea**, Secretary of the Albanian Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee and former Deputy Interior Minister; **Riyad Yassine**, former Yemeni Foreign Minister and Ambassador to France; **Khaled Alyamani**, former Yemeni Foreign Minister; **Mohamed Askar**, former Yemeni human rights Minister; **Ahmad AbouHashish**, Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian Parliament; **Taisir Altamimi**, former Palestinian Chief of Justice; **Tahar Boumedra**, former UNAMI representative in Iraq; **Bishop Jacques Gaillot** from France; **The Rt Revd John Pritchard**, former Bishop of Oxford; **Rabbi Moshe Levin**, Vice President of the European Rabbi Conference and Spokesman for the Grand Rabbi of France; as well as leaders of Moslem communities in France and representatives from the parliaments of Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt; **Struan Stevenson**, former MEP and President of the



European Iraqi Freedom Association (EIFA); **Marc Ginsberg**, former US Ambassador to Morocco; and **Walid Phares**, Co-Secretary General of the Transatlantic Parliamentary Group on Counterterrorism.

In her remarks to the conference, **Mrs Maryam Rajavi** said:

“Today, the pandemic has changed the face of many countries but Iran’s case is different. The regime ruling Iran has deliberately been seeking massive human casualties to prevent popular protests. It has used the Coronavirus as a shield to fend off uprisings to the extent that the mullahs’ supreme leader Ali Khamenei declared a ban on the purchase of vaccines from the US, Britain, and France. The ruling mullahs turn a blind eye to the warnings and requests of specialist physicians meant to confront the

Coronavirus and to reduce the fatalities it causes.

“In reality, the Iranian people simultaneously face two monsters: the virus of religious fascism and the Coronavirus. Iran’s ruling mullahs lack the very value that is the criterion for human dignity, the value that the Quran has emphasised, namely, piety.

“The mullahs’ evil ideology consists of exporting terrorism and fundamentalism to countries in the region to preserve the regime’s internal and external balance of power. They have imposed compulsory religion and a series of religious forms of discrimination. They have established misogyny and gender apartheid. They have monopolised the country’s economy and engaged in savage plunder and exploitation. *...continued on p.4*



INTERFAITH SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE FOR THE OCCASION OF RAMADAN

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Bassam Al-Omouh



Sheikh Tassir Tamimi

“Their four-decade-long record of crimes and oppression exposes them. The execution of 120,000 political opponents, the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners, and the slaughter of at least 1,500 young men and women during the November 2019 uprising.

“No one has forgotten the regime’s chants and cries in support of the ‘oppressed’. Now, look at the extensive plunder and corruption they have imposed on Iran... Indeed, who has said that Islam means keeping millions of Iranians hungry in order to set up an arsenal of missiles and develop a nuclear bomb? Is brutalising Afghan refugees, throwing them into rivers, and burning them in their cars Islamic?

“Is it not true that the Quran says the aim of fasting is to obtain liberating piety?

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may [learn] self-restraint.

“So, fasting with the criterion of piety is not only for Muslims, it has been there even before Islam and it is a common ritual among followers of all monotheistic religions. So, all Abrahamic religions focus on resisting and fighting the internal and external influencers that enslave human beings.

“These religions emerged at various junctures of human history in long intervals. Each had its own prophet or messenger. Nevertheless, they are united in their essence and spirit. This essence is the emancipation of mankind and the emancipating evolution of human communities.

“This interpretation completely rejects the behaviours of individuals who exploit religion to deceive and oppress people.”

The speakers at the conference emphasised the importance of solidarity between different faiths and the need to stop extremism as the most imminent threat against mankind.



Rabbi Moshe Lewin, spokesperson of the Chief Rabbi of France, told the conference:

“Today, when the world is threatened by fundamentalism, it’s more important than ever to have this inter-religious dialogue. You are all dear to me and I know how hard you work to have Iran become a democratic country, and how hard you fight against

fundamentalism. And this is why I will always be at your side. Iran needs a society at peace that enables each Iranian citizen to live decently.



The Rt Revd John Pritchard speaking at the Ramadan Online Conference said: “The regime is misusing religion to carry out atrocities. Activists of all sorts are being arrested and sentenced to long periods of prison or even executed over bogus charges of ‘waging war against God’. Christians are not allowed to observe their

faith in public. Their homes are raided and belongings are confiscated simply because they are Christian.

“We reaffirm our belief in freedom of religion in Iran, which is enshrined in Madam Rajavi’s ten-point plan. We call on the international community to take action for the release of all those who are being held in Iran’s prisons unjustly.

“We stand in solidarity and we highlight these abuses and call for a fact-finding mission to travel to Iran and inspect prisons and meet with prisoners and prisoners of conscience. The regime’s leaders must be held to account for their atrocities.”

Walid Phares, Co-Secretary General of the Transatlantic Parliamentary Group on Counterterrorism, said:

“Today the Iranian regime is putting a lot of pressure on the governments in the region. They say that they represent the Muslim countries and they are the protector of Islamic countries but that is far from the truth. The truth, however, is that the Iranian regime is the oppressor of Muslim people. We have seen what the Iranian regime has done in Syria, how Hezbollah has destroyed Lebanon and of course every day we hear about the destruction that is taking place in Yemen by the Houthis. We must not be fooled by this claim that the Ayatollahs represent the Shiites, they represent themselves and wage war against all Muslims. They claim they are the protectors of Shiite Islam and yet we have seen how they have killed and slaughtered the people of Iraq who are majority Shiite.

“The truth is that most of the Muslims in the region, Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Kurds, know the danger of this regime and so I want to emphasise at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan that the whole world should stand with the people of Iran in their struggle for democracy, peace and justice.”



IRAN FORCES BAHÁ'IS TO BURY THEIR DEAD IN MASS GRAVE SITE



Members of Iran's Baha'i religion are being forced by Iranian authorities to bury their dead in mass graves originally used for burying political prisoners massacred in 1988.

Iran's Baha'is are a persecuted minority. Numbering just around 350,000, they face systematic abuse

and repression as the Shia state considers their religion heretical.

They are among Iran's many religious minorities who routinely suffer harassment, prosecution and imprisonment by authorities solely for practising their faith, as well as having their

places of burial regularly destroyed, according to various human rights groups.

Baha'is had been accustomed to burying their dead alongside Hindus and Armenian Christians in a cemetery southeast of Tehran, but recent orders have forced them to

change this practice.

Baha'i families told the BBC that Iranian authorities ordered them to start using the nearby site of a mass grave from 1988, initially created when the former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the execution of thousands of political prisoners detained by the state in the tumultuous years following the Iranian revolution.

The families and human rights activists fear that by burying people at the site, the Islamic Republic is attempting to erase evidence of the executions, which remain a sensitive issue in Iran even today. The site has been bulldozed multiple times in recent decades.

EU SANCTIONS IRAN'S OFFICIALS OVER PROTEST CRACKDOWN

The European Union has added key Revolutionary Guards to its list of sanctioned individuals for the first time since 2013.

The EU has imposed sanctions on the leader of Iran's Revolutionary Guard along with seven other top commanders.

The EU sanctions are imposed on these individuals for their role in the 2019 crackdown of popular protests.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson said Tehran "strongly condemned" the sanctions and that it was considering responding in kind.

The EU accused the head of the Revolutionary Guards, Hossein Salami, of being responsible for the violent response to protests.

"Hossein Salami took part in the sessions that resulted in the orders to use lethal force to suppress the November 2019 protests. Hossein Salami therefore bears responsibility for serious human rights violations in Iran," the EU communiqué said.

Three prisons were also hit with asset freezes since they had been used to detain activists and protesters under harsh and torturous conditions including deliberately wounding the prisoners with boiling water and denying them medical treatment.

The Iranian regime responded to two weeks of protest against a hike in fuel prices in November 2019 with a brutal crackdown. Based on reports from Iranian interior ministry officials



Hossein Salami, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps

Reuters reported at the time that some 1,500 protesters were killed during the unrest.

NINE BAHÁ'I WOMEN ARRESTED AT THEIR HOMES



Iran's security forces ransacked the residences of at least 19 families residing in Baharestan county in Isfahan, central Iran, and arrested nine Baha'i women during violent raids which started at 6 a.m. and lasted until 1 p.m.

The nine Baha'i women were **Roya Azad-Khosh, Maryam Khorsandi, Sara Shakib, Firouzeh Rastinejad, Sanaz Rasteh, Azita Rezvani, Mojgan Pour-Shafi, Nasrin Khademi, and Noushin Hemmat.**

The security forces also confiscated these families' belongings, including their computers, mobile phones, books and pamphlets on their faith, family photos and CDs.

Ms Maryam Khorsandi has been undergoing chemotherapy and security forces did not allow her to take her medication with her. They also confiscated \$50,000 belonging to Ms Khorsandi's brother.

Ms Azita Rezvani had contracted Covid-19 and was under treatment at home.

For more than four decades ethnic and religious minorities have been the target of systematic repression and violent crackdowns.



VICTIMS' FAMILIES URGE INVESTIGATION INTO 1988 MASSACRE AS IRAN MOVES TO DESTROY GRAVES



To stop executions in Iran permanently, the world should hold the Mullahs to account for the 1988 massacre

A group of Iranian expatriates have written a letter to United Nations Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres**, reiterating a longstanding call for the international body to launch an investigation into a massacre of political prisoners that took place more than 30 years ago in Iran. The letter was motivated by reports of the Iranian regime's latest efforts to destroy evidence of the 1988 massacre by paving over the mass graves in which the victims' bodies are buried.

Nearly all of the estimated 30,000 victims were sentenced to death by hanging after being interrogated before "death commissions" that were assembled in various Iranian prison facilities in response to a fatwa from the regime's founder and then supreme leader, Ruhollah Khomeini.

The letter from victims' families points out that Iranian authorities have already "destroyed or damaged the mass graves of the 1988 victims in Ahvaz, Tabriz, Mashhad, and elsewhere." Now, the regime has evidently set its sights on mass graves that are reputed to exist in Tehran's Khavaran Cemetery. Plans have reportedly been announced which could lead to the imminent destruction of existing markers at the site, as a precursor to it being paved over and built upon. Previous projects have concealed mass graves beneath parks, roadways, and commercial buildings.

As an explanation for the renewed push to conceal evidence, the letter describes the Iranian regime as being "paranoid of the repercussions of international scrutiny" of its past crimes and atrocities. The letter states, "The Iranian public and all human rights defenders expect the United Nations, particularly the UN Security Council, to launch an investigation into the massacre of political prisoners and summon the perpetrators of this heinous

crime before the International Court of Justice."

The letter also emphasizes that the destruction of gravesites and the suppression of public discourse over the massacre constitutes ongoing crimes against humanity, involving the psychological torture of thousands of individuals who survived the systematic executions or lost loved ones to them.

At times, the pressure on those individuals has even turned physical, as when memorial gatherings at known and suspected gravesites were forcibly disrupted by security agencies and the IRGC. Such gatherings constitute another likely motivating factor in the regime's push to destroy evidence since the remembrance of martyrs is often a starting point for new social demonstrations in Iran.

By requesting that the international community help to prevent the further destruction of mass graves, advocates for the victims of the 1988 massacre are not only keeping open the window of opportunity for a thorough investigation into that incident, but are also helping to safeguard sites that may have powerful symbolic significance to the people of Iran as well as to the families of the victims.

Clearly holding the regime to account for its past crimes against humanity is a prerequisite for stopping further executions and human rights abuses.

Over the past few years protests have erupted in a large number of cities across Iran. Even the coronavirus pandemic lockdown has not stopped the popular anger and frustration as shown in these demonstrations. Protesters risk their lives when they come to the streets to cry out their pain. They need and deserve our support and international protection.



NEWS IN BRIEF

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RELEASED AFTER INTENSE CAMPAIGN



Arash Sadeghi (seen here with his father outside prison), was released from Raja'i Shahr Prison on 1 May 2021 after five and a half years in detention.

While in prison Arash Sadeghi was denied the right to visit or call his wife, **Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee**, currently detained in Amol Prison.



Arash went on a hunger strike for 72 days in October 2016 to protest the arrest of his wife who is imprisoned

for writing an unpublished story about stoning discovered during the search of their house.

In prison Arash Sadeghi was diagnosed with bone cancer but the prison authorities disregarded medical advice which recommended his immediate transfer to a facility specialising in cancer treatment.

After his release Javaid Rehman, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, said: "While noting the release of Mr Sadeghi, I maintain grave concerns for individuals arbitrarily detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including human rights defenders."

IRANIAN ACTIVISTS SENTENCED TO FLOGGING

An Iranian appeals court has upheld the prison and flogging sentences against Azerbaijani Turkic activists, **Meysam Jolani** and **Ali Khairjou**.

The pair, charged with "participation in disrupting public order", were sentenced to eight months in prison and 40 lashes last December. Their upheld sentence is suspended for a year.

They were arrested at their homes in October 2020, with unidentified

security agents raiding the place and beating them, for participating in a rally in Ardabil's Jiral Park.



REMEMBERING THE MOTHERS OF PROTEST IN IRAN

On 27 April 1981, brave Iranian mothers risked their lives to expose the Revolutionary Guards' crimes in suppressing dissent. They staged a peaceful rally to protest the attacks on and killings of activists by the IRGC and other militias that were working on the orders of regime founder Ruhollah Khomeini.

Over 200,000 people from all walks of life took part in the demonstration organised by the Association of Mothers.



But the IRGC attacked the mothers and those who came out in their support. Several elderly women were doused in tear gas, which nearly killed them.

Still, the IRGC could not stop the protest march. The women wanted to expose their crimes more than they cared about living or dying.

IRANIAN CHRISTIAN CONVERT SENTENCED TO TEN MONTHS IN PRISON



An Iranian Christian convert was sentenced to ten months in prison by the Revolutionary Court in Karaj, near Tehran, in April.

Hamed Ashoori was previously detained and interrogated in Karaj's Ghezal Hesar prison in 2018.

TRIAL OF GERMAN-IRANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST BEGINS

Nahid Taghavi, 66, was arrested in Tehran in October while on a family visit and spent nearly five months in solitary confinement in the capital's notorious Evin prison, in a case rights groups say amounts to politically motivated hostage taking.



"Today was the first hearing of Nahid Taghavi. Another trial day is scheduled, date unknown," her daughter Mariam Claren wrote on Twitter on 28 April.

Taghavi, an architect who has lived in Cologne, Germany, for nearly four decades, was actively supporting women's rights and freedom of expression in Iran.

IRANIAN WORKERS ANGER ON EVE OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

Iranian workers used the International Workers' Day to protest their living below the poverty line.

Iran's labour community, with 14 million workers and their families, numbers more than 40 million. Iranian society as a whole and especially the labour community is now in an explosive state. With the approval of a meagre minimum wage for this year, a large segment of the Iranian working community will live their lives below the poverty line.





GETTING TO KNOW IRAN'S CULTURAL HERITAGE: RUMI



Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, also known as Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi, and more popularly simply known as Rumi, was a 13th century Persian poet, Islamic scholar and Sufi mystic originally from Khorasan in Iran. He was born 30 September 1207 and died 17 December 1273, aged 66.

Rumi's influence transcends national borders and ethnic divisions. Iranians, Tajiks, Turks, Greeks, Pashtuns, other Central Asian Muslims, and the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy for the past seven centuries. His poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages and transposed into various formats. Rumi has been described as the "most popular poet" and the "best selling poet" in the United States.

Rumi's works are written mostly in Persian, but occasionally he also used Turkish, Arabic, and Greek in his verse. His Masnavi (Mathnawi), composed in Konya, is considered one

of the greatest poems of the Persian language.

His works are widely read today in their original language across Greater Iran and the Persian-speaking world. Translations of his works are also very popular, most notably in Turkey, Azerbaijan, the United States, United Kingdom and South Asia. His poetry has influenced not only Persian literature, but also the literary traditions of the Ottoman Turkish, Chagatai, Urdu, Bengali and Pashto languages.

Rumi lived most of his life under the Persianate, Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, where he produced his works and died in 1273 AD. He was buried in Konya, and his shrine became a



Bowl of Reflections with Rumi's poetry, early 13th century

place of pilgrimage. Upon his death, his followers and his son Sultan Walad founded the Mevlevi Order, also known as the Order of the Whirling Dervishes, famous for the Sufi dance known as the Sama ceremony.

Rumi's longing and desire to attain this ideal is evident in the following poem from his book the Masnavi.



Statue of Rumi in Buca, Turkey

*I died to the mineral state and became a plant,
I died to the vegetal state and reached animality,
I died to the animal state and became a man,
Then what should I fear? I have never become less from dying.
At the next charge (forward) I will die to human nature,
So that I may lift up (my) head and wings (and soar) among the angels,
And I must (also) jump from the river of (the state of) the angel,
Everything perishes except His Face,
Once again I will become sacrificed from (the state of) the angel,
I will become that which cannot come into the imagination,
Then I will become non-existent; non-existence says to me (in tones) like an organ,
Truly, to Him is our return.*

Join us for 'An Hour with ILA'

Online weekly Zoom meetings

Every Saturday 5 to 6pm

Please send an email to info@iliberty.org.uk so that we can send you details for connection