



International Liberty Association Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

The rift between the Iranian people and the government under fundamentalist laws is widening.

The people suffer from human rights abuses, torture and injustice. Despite the fact that Iran is one of the richest countries in the world due to its oil reserves, more than 85% of the population live below the poverty line. They blame the government for corruption and spending their wealth on terrorism.

The collapse of a building in Abadan, which killed dozens of people, was due to government corruption and the violation of proper construction standards. The building was designed to have four floors yet six more were added during construction.

Its collapse sparked fury in Abadan and other cities and triggered protests throughout Iran. Although the regime tried to suppress the protesters by violence, the Iranian people have not given up. They are rejecting the regime openly and their defiance can even be seen in prisons, evident from the letters they smuggle out.

During these years, we have made every effort to highlight the issue of human rights in Iran worldwide, and not a day goes by without actions, demonstrations and meetings to attract public attention. ... continued on p.2

PROTESTS ACROSS IRAN FOLLOWING BUILDING COLLAPSE IN ABADAN



On Monday, 23 May 2022, a ten-storey building, known as Metropolis, which was under construction, collapsed in the city of Abadan in Khuzestan Province. Dozens of people were killed, injured or trapped in the rubble.

Following the collapse of the building, citizens in Abadan and other cities across Iran, including Ahvaz, Shahin-Shahr, Shahr-e Rey, Andimeshk and Khorramshahr, demonstrated against the government. ... continued on p.2

PREVIOUSLY UNDISCLOSED INFORMATION ON IRANIAN REGIME'S JUDICIARY EXPOSED



Compiling information and documents about the regime's judiciary, particularly facts about what goes on in the regime's prisons, is vital because they can be brought to the attention of the

public, the UN, and other human rights organizations, so as to inform the world about the situation of human rights abuses inside Iran.

Iranian activists and opposition forces inside Iran recently gained access to a large volume of documents belonging to the regime's judiciary sources.

On Friday, 13 May, Iran's opposition activists held a press conference in Paris, making the information public.

Behzad Naziri, a former prisoner, pointed ... continued on p.3



Protests across Iran following building collapse in Abadan

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Protesters chanted slogans deploring corruption, low safety standards, and mismanagement.

People protested against the authorities and influential individuals whose corruption and incompetence contributed to the disaster. They also blamed equipment shortcomings and lack of swift action in rescue operations for such a high death toll.

A large number of protesters were arrested during these protest rallies. Repressive forces were present on the scene immediately after the collapse of the building, turning peaceful protests into a violent showdown.

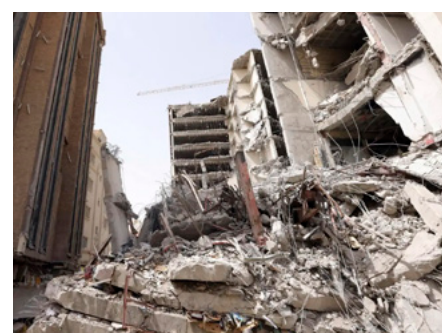
The experts of the Abadan Engineering Organization had already warned about the safety deficiencies and had called for construction to be stopped until safety standards were met. But the authorities ignored all the warnings and, as usual, branded the whistle-blowers as enemies of the state forcing the journalists who had reported these deficiencies to leave the country.

Although the causes of the collapse have not yet been investigated, many argue that the lack of construction oversight by the municipal officials, who are themselves the shareholders of this project, led to this disaster.

Moreover, the government's failure to provide an adequate



emergency response and proper rescue equipment sparked anger and criticism toward the officials. According to some victims' families and protesters, the officials' failure to provide the required equipment hindered the operation to remove debris, which led to the death of more people who were trapped under rubble.



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We have repeatedly called on the international community to help victims and their families to get justice. The people of Iran want world leaders to make every relationship with the Iranian government conditional on the improvement of human rights.

Over the years, we have done our best and with the help of

our readers have succeeded in saving the lives of many innocent people. We can and should take bigger steps to save the lives of more brave men and women.

We have to consider the desperate position of the Iranian regime and its urgent need to maintain relations with Western countries. Holding them accountable is the first step.

Undoubtedly, the Iranian people will never forget those who stand by them in their struggle for justice and human rights.

While thanking every one of our readers for their input in our campaigns, let us pledge to continue to work together to advance human rights and achieve a brighter future for Iran and hence the wider world.



Previously undisclosed information on the Iranian regime's judiciary exposed

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to the recent demonstrations in dozens of Iranian cities over the country's worsening economic situation, and the nationwide protests by teachers, and revealed that Iran's ruling theocracy has arrested "hundreds of young people during the recent protests, as well as dozens of teachers". He presented a video showing the names of more than 33,000 regime prison officials, including top authorities, interrogators, torturers, intelligence agents, executioners, guards, and mercenaries, and over 22,000 of their pictures.

"The Prisons Organization is one of the most horrific and criminal organs of the religious fascism ruling Iran to conduct repression, torture, and execution", Mr Naziri said.

He also referred to Iran's deteriorating human rights situation since Ebrahim Raisi became the regime's president. Raisi played a key role in the 1988 massacre of over 30,000 political prisoners in Iran.

Mr Naziri emphasized that since Mohseni Ejei became the regime's Judiciary Chief, "the killing of prisoners under torture has continued. In many cases, the judicial authorities claimed that prisoners had

committed suicide, or had tried to present their death as a natural death."

He also presented over one hundred pictures of overcrowded cells in 23 out of 31 provinces across the country.

This damning revelation once again underlines the need to hold Iran's regime accountable for its human rights abuses.



IRAN'S REGIME USES DEATH PENALTY AS MEANS OF REPRESSION



In its annual review of the death penalty, **Amnesty International** reported that 2021 saw a worrying rise in executions and death sentences as some of the world's most prolific executioners returned to business as usual and courts were unshackled from Covid-19 restrictions.

At least 579 executions were known to have been carried out across 18 countries last year – a 20% increase on the recorded total for 2020. Iran accounted for the biggest portion of this rise, executing at least 314 people (up from at least 246 in 2020), its highest execution total since 2017. It is worth noting that these are the statistics that the government of Iran has offered to state-run media, and the actual number of executions in Iran in 2021 is undoubtedly higher. Iran claims most of these executions have been due to a marked increase in drug-related cases – a flagrant violation of international law that prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes other than those involving intentional killing.

Iran maintains a mandatory death penalty for possession of certain types and quantities of drugs – with the number of executions recorded for drug-related offenses rising more than

five-fold to 132 in 2021 from 23 the previous year. The known number of women executed also rose from nine to 14. At the same time, the Iranian authorities continued their abhorrent assault on children's rights by executing three people who were under the age of 18 at the time of their crime, contrary to their obligations under international law.

A review of Iran's death penalty practice suggests that religious and political accusations are employed in a relatively arbitrary fashion to silence dissidents.

On May 25, the Iranian regime executed at least eight prisoners in Karaj. The rise in the number of executions in Iran and the regime's insistence on holding its ground despite international outrage against it reveals a plain and simple reality: The mullahs' regime is on the verge of collapse and the rulers under the illusion that sending Iranians to the gallows would prolong their rule.



ILA NORUZ AND EASTER EVENT IN LONDON

On 7 May we held our first **Noruz** and **Easter** event since the pandemic. It was well attended and jubilant. We had four speakers at the event. Excerpts of their speeches follow:



Roger Lyon, Former General Secretary of Amicus

Thank you for inviting me here tonight. In the past 12 months there have been 780 strikes. Since 2018 there's been 4,000 labour protests across Iran, including 1,169 strikes. That's why support for our Iranian people and the work of the ILA is so important, important to ensure that human rights and human progress remain on the agenda and get promotion in every way possible. The plight of the oppressed workers and their families is something that we should never, ever allow to come off the agenda. We have to keep it there, and I praise the ILA for the work it does in keeping human rights on the agenda. It's true that it's difficult with a tough regime like the Iranians to change their policies, but they are responding at the moment to the campaigns.

There have been more responses in the newspapers to the campaigns being undertaken, and I can assure those of you who've been involved in campaigning, you are being listened to. There is a response. It is something worth doing. It is vitally important. It keeps the morale up of those at the coalface of the struggle. The regime's anti-union, anti-ILA, anti-human-rights policy is being argued over and being chipped away at.

In the past four years, the regime has executed, per capita, more people than any other country in the world; although China actually executed more people, Iran unfortunately executes more per head of population, and that's a very sad record to have. It makes me really, really sick, and I'm sure all of you will campaign to have that changed as soon as possible. Now we've tried to build a trade union organisation in Iran, but the regime consistently smashes any organisation. That's why they've arrested the teachers' representatives. That's why they arrest bus drivers' representatives. That's why they arrest anybody who looks like they are forming a union anywhere in Iran. They think it's serious for the future of their regime. They think forming a union and campaigning for human rights could be the beginning of the end for them. And they're right! And we will continue to try

and organise protests and actions for human rights *[applause]* with as much solidarity as we can. I can assure you that in all the fields I can influence, we will continue to recognise the work of the ILA and we will spell out, in every way possible and in every international organisation, including the UK Government which needs to do more, people have a right to freedom in this day and age and we will campaign to win it.



Dr Davina Lloyd

Thank you, and can I say what a privilege it is to be here with so many friends, to see you all in 3D. I'm a teacher, and I want to talk to you about the plight of teachers in Iran. I'm also an activist, and I'm very, very keen on the education of girls, and as a teacher I feel particularly that I want to support the work that the organisation does for teachers in Iran, and I was very very pleased to hear from the TUC point of view that workers actually support the teachers' rights, and I know that very many workers have been out on the teachers' protests, and supporting them in





their protests in Iran. On the first of May, International Labour Day, in over a hundred cities across Iran, not that the teachers were out protesting, but they were supported by other union workers, by other workers as well. And what is interesting about the teachers, and this is my final point, is that they speak truth to power, and therefore they get arrested, and they get thrown into prison. And two things have struck me about that is their immense bravery as they continue to go to the streets. I've been in protests in my life, but I know I can go out on the streets, I can say the truth and not be fired at, not be killed, not be beaten, not be thrown into prison. They are, and yet they still protest across the whole country, they still say "No, no, this is not right and we are going to protest." What immense bravery! Thank you very much.



Malcolm Fowler – Solicitor

I'm honoured to be given this brief opportunity to talk to you. Hope is what enriches us. Hope is the one thing no government, however despotic, can ever try to take away from us. And so, I don't have a rabbit and I don't have a hat, but I do have three quotations for you. They seem to me particularly apt. I think it was in the early hours of the morning that they occurred to me as being apt. It was Daniel Defoe, and he was quoted in *Enemies of the Ayatollahs*, a book written by Mohammad Mohaddessin, he said this:

"Of all the ills with which mankind are cursed, ecclesiastic tyranny is the worst."

How true it is. It was true then, it's true now.

Winston Churchill, during the Second World War years, far more than once said this: "Never, never, never give up."

And the final one, I promise you: "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph." We all need to be humble and to recognise that every single nation, every, every single group of people who inhabit this planet, are entitled to freedom, to hope, and to equality of treatment. The ILA do so much towards that. So do all of you. Let's do more. Thank you so much.



Hon. Dr Jocelyne Scutt – Senior Fellow at the University of Buckingham

Those who are subject to war, those who have been killed, those who, like the women in Iran, are struggling against a despotic regime, are suffering torture, are suffering death. When generally in a setting like this we reflect on those circumstances, we ask for a minute's silence. I don't ask for a minute's silence. I ask for a minute's speech. I ask for an hour's speech. I ask for a day's speech, so that the voices of the women can be heard. No more silence. No more silencing women.

It's the voices of women who need to be heard, just as we know that is the situation in and for Iran. There is a recognition that women should take leadership roles, that women must take leadership roles, and that when freedom and justice come to Iran it will be a freedom and a justice that is a consequence of the leadership of women.

What we know and what we see when we see the women of Iran standing up for their rights, refusing

to be trampled on, refusing to obey the mullahs, we see the strength, the power, the fortitude of women, a strength, a power and a fortitude that is too often unrecognised, too often ignored, too often downplayed, too often denied.

I see the strength of the women of Iran and I end on this note: the famed feminist, a United States one this time, Susan B. Anthony, said: "Failure is impossible." I say to you today, I say to you this evening, I say to you in this joint festive occasion that we celebrate today, that failure is impossible, the women of Iran, working together with the men of Iran, and working with our global support, for their strength, for their fortitude, for their power, I say: failure is impossible. We will see a free and just Iran.



From top: Ukrainian singer, Galina Balaban; Mary Banks and Shirley Vaughan; Hamid Taherzadeh and Ali Torshizi (Maestros of Persian instruments)



LETTERS FROM PRISON



Hashem Khastar is a representative of teachers who has been arrested and imprisoned many times over the years and is currently being held in Mashhad Prison.

In a long and detailed open letter that he managed to smuggle out of prison, fearless Hashem Khastar expressed his profound support for the people's protests and exposed the crimes committed in Iran by the ruling dictatorship of the mullahs.

Here is a summary of his letter:

In a part of his letter, he wrote that a teacher who was forced to fight tyranny and dictatorship could not find a better place than prison to



learn more about the crimes of mullahs in Iran, especially the massacre of 1988 and others, including theft and looting. He said that Khamenei himself is the king of thieves and the king of repression for freedom seekers.

Raisi is one of the judges of the massacre of 33,000 political prisoners in 1988, for whose crimes he was rewarded by Khamenei, who first became the head of the judiciary and then the president.

In the same prison of Mashhad in the summer of 1988, 850 young people were executed. One of the victims was **Kazem Parsi**, a teacher who lived in this very prison with his wife and two young children.

Amir Akbar Oghli, a young patriot who did not show up during his military service, fought with his Kurdish compatriots and left there, and then tried to get public aid for the earthquake victims. Just as the victims of the French Revolution belong to all of humanity, the martyrs of the 1988 massacre also belong to all of humanity because they were martyred in defence of human values.

Europe first deposed the church and then the king's power and gave power to the parliament and the people's republic.

We, the people of Iran, ousted the Shah first, and now it is the turn of the clergy that we must oust and return the government to the people and the people's parliament, a government where women and people are equal and religion is separate from the government.

In democracies, all accounts and books are audited annually, but in Iran, under the rule of the mullahs, there are no accounts and books. The property of the people is looted by the heads of government and their families.

But the people have made their decision and soon the people will get freedom and they will end this dictatorship.

In March, authorities transferred **Maryam Akbari Monfared** from Evin Prison to a prison 124 miles from her family, in retaliation for an open letter she wrote accusing the government of depriving prisoners of medical care. Maryam has been in prison for almost 12 years without even a single day off. This is punishment for seeking justice for her brothers and sisters, executed in 1988.

Yet again, in an open letter smuggled out of Semnan Prison dated 13 May 2022, she expressed solidarity with people's uprisings and wrote: "For many years we are giving our lives for bread and water. From border porters in Kurdistan to fuel peddlers in Baluchistan and now all over Iran; a rich country like Iran, where its earth and sky has been plundered.

"This is the voice of all of us rising in Izeh and will soon cover the whole of Iran.

I salute these brave people and along with my fellow women prisoners in Semnan Prison yell: Tomorrow is ours!"



Maryam Akbari Monfared. Maryam's daughters are suffering their mother's detention too.



BRAVE LADY FROM ABADAN TEACHES LESSONS

An old lady from Abadan had an interesting conversation recorded on her phone while she was courageously standing up to the State Security Forces. As she walked down the street, she kept filming the oppressive security forces who were dispatched to crack down on peaceful protesters in her city. She told them that they are all captives of this regime and that they are doing nothing for the country, other than to fatten themselves on the people's misery.

When a bystander asked her to call "death to Abdolbaghi!", referring to Hossein Abdolbaghi, the corrupt owner of the Metropol Complex that collapsed and killed more than 30 innocent people, the brave lady replied: "Why shall I say 'death to Abdolbaghi'? You have to shout 'Death to Khamenei!'"

Following that conversation and repeating her slogans against the regime, she was attacked and someone was recorded trying to grab her phone.

She goes on to explain what had happened to her and that she is determined to keep fighting and defying the riot police and the regime.

The footage, though short and unprofessional, reveals a great deal about the situation in Abadan in



After the collapse of the building the regime sent forces of suppression to Abadan instead of rescue teams.

particular, and what is going on in Iranian streets in general.

The first lesson is that the security forces are not local and do not have local dialects. One of the guards who smiles and greets the old lady doesn't even seem to be of Iranian descent.

The lady walks among the security forces and starts challenging them and some of them lower or shake their heads and don't seem to be pleased with their job.

One can learn that the continuous state of the uprisings will take its toll on the oppressive forces and even though they are recruited and sent on missions

far from home, the geographical expansion of the protests will test their resilience.

Even though she openly chants "Death to Khamenei!" she manages to walk away eventually.

While the slogan is becoming the new normal in Iran, this wasn't the case in the past four decades and tens of thousands of people have languished in the regime's dungeons for daring to chant the same in previous protests. Hence one can conclude that, while the regime is not even close to letting down its guard, the people are becoming more defiant and fear seems to be changing fronts, slowly but surely.

POLITICAL PRISONERS DEFY THE MULLAHS' JUDICIARY CHIEF IN HIS VISIT TO QARCHAK



Women political prisoners detained in Qarchak prison boycotted the visit by Gholam Hossein Ejei. They bravely chanted, "Down with

Khamenei!" (the mullahs' supreme leader). Many political prisoners refused to face him.

Qarchak's warden, Soghra Khodadadi, described Ejei as a guest. However, political prisoners cried out, "We do not want a criminal guest." The prisoners sang a song in unison, saying, "Burn the cage and let the birds go free."

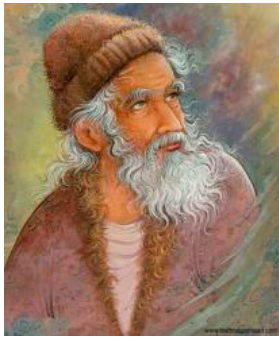
Khodadadi was outraged and attempted to intimidate the detainees. The prisoners reacted angrily and told Khodadadi and

other visiting officials to leave as soon as possible. They shouted, "You criminals, why did you start your killing machine? Why did you execute **Ladan Molla Saeedi** a few days ago?"

The mullahs' Judiciary Chief and his companions quickly left the ward of political prisoners following their protests. Ordinary prisoners also followed suit with political prisoners and told Ejei that the prison authorities did nothing for the inmates.



GETTING TO KNOW IRAN'S LITERARY GIANTS: BABA TAHIR



Baba Tahir, or **Baba Taher Oryan Hamedani**, was an 11th century Persian

poet from Hamedan, Iran, who lived during the reign of Tughril of the Seljuk dynasty over Iran. This is almost all that is known of him as he lived a mysterious lifestyle.

Although the prefix “Baba” (roughly meaning “The Wise” or “The Respected”) has been treated as part of his name in all known sources, his nickname “Oryan” (meaning “The Naked”) did not appear until about 17th century.

The nickname was probably attributed to him because he seemed to lead a very spiritual and stoic lifestyle and so figuratively was not clothed with worldly and material needs.

His poetry is written in the Hamedani dialect of the Persian language. According to L.P. Elwell-Sutton he probably wrote in the Hamedani dialect, adding: “Most traditional sources call it loosely Luri, while the name commonly applied from an early date to verses of this kind, Fahlaviat, presumably

implies that they were thought to be in a language related to the Middle Persian language. Rouben Abrahamian however found a close affinity with the dialect spoken at the present time by the Jews of Hamedan.” According to The Cambridge History of Iran, Baba Tahir spoke a certain Persian dialect.

The dates of his birth and death are unknown. One source indicates that he died in 1019. If this is accurate, it would make Baba Tahir a contemporary of Ferdowsi and Avicenna and an immediate precursor of Omar Khayyam. Another source reports that he lived between 1000 and 1055, which is unlikely. It is said that Baba Tahir lived for seventy-five years. Rahat al-sodur of Ravandi, whose work was completed 1206, describes a meeting between Baba Tahir and the Seljuk conqueror Tughril. At the time when Baba Tahir lived, in the 11th century, there were great changes occurring in the development and growth of literature and art. Medieval artists and poets in Persia were greatly respected and valued and had the right to express their thoughts freely. According to L. P. Elwell-Sutton: “He could be described as the first great poet of Sufi love in Persian literature. In the last two

decades his do-baytīs have often been put to music.”

Baba Tahir's poems are recited to the present day all over Iran accompanied by the setar, the three-stringed viol or lute. This style of poetry is known as Fahlaviat and it is very ancient. The quatrains of Baba Tahir have connotations which are more amorous and mystical than philosophical. Many of Baba Tahir's poems are of the do-baytī style, a form of Persian quatrain, which some scholars regard as having affinities with Middle Persian verses.



Mausoleum of Baba Tahir in Hamadan

**Join us for 'An Hour With ILA'
Online weekly Zoom meetings**

Every Saturday 5pm to 6pm

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