

# International Liberty Association Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

We congratulate our supporters who have stood with us in our campaign for justice for the victims of the massacre in Iran in 1988 when 30,000 political prisoners were executed by the regime within a few months.

On Thursday 14 July, the Swedish court sentenced Hamid Nouri, one of the perpetrators of that massacre, to life imprisonment after two years of investigation, hearing the testimony of witnesses and victims.

For the criminals currently ruling Iran, suppressing and executing activists has long been part of their method of operation. The message of this court is clear: the long period of impunity is over and, while there may be some delay, they cannot escape from justice forever.

On streets and in workplaces across Iran, the reality is that the gap between the people and the government is getting wider day by day. People are fed up with the violations of human rights, torture, lack of justice, and unbelievable poverty despite the fact that Iran is one of the richest countries in the world due to its many mineral reserves. More than 80% of the people are now living below the poverty line. Many are even unable to buy bread to survive. ... continued on p.2

## MARCH IN STOCKHOLM: IRANIANS CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND JUSTICE



On Saturday 17 July, thousands of freedom-loving Iranians and their supporters held a rally in Stockholm, Sweden after the court there gave a life sentence for Hamid Nouri, one of the perpetrators of the massacre of prisoners in Iran

during the summer of 1988. This rally was also attended by several Swedish MPs and renowned European politicians.

Nouri was arrested in 2019 in Sweden in the context of Universal Jurisdiction for his ... continued on p.2

## UN CONDEMNS INCREASING USE OF EXECUTIONS BY THE REGIME IN IRAN



UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** has condemned Iran's increasing use of executions and the death penalty, including for children, in violation of international law. The secretary-general has submitted a report on the human rights situation in Iran to the UN Human Rights Council.

The secretary-general has deplored Tehran's increasing use of executions and the death penalty, saying they are based on charges that do not amount to the "most serious crimes" and are incompatible with fair trial standards.

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, **Nada al-Nashif**, who presented the report, said at least 570 people were executed in the past two years, many on drug-related charges. Those executed, she said, included at least fourteen women and more than a hundred people belonging to minority groups. ... continued on p.3

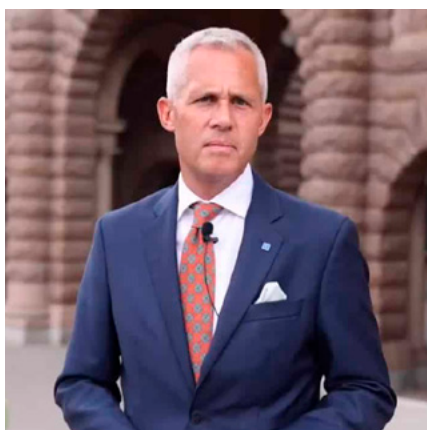


## March in Stockholm: Iranians call for Accountability and Justice

*continued from p.1*

participation in the 1988 genocide of 30,000 political prisoners. Nouri's trial featured harrowing accounts by survivors of the 1988 massacre of those dark days in Gohardasht prison in Karaj, west of Tehran, where Nouri was working as the deputy prison governor.

The core message of the rally was centred on the need to hold all perpetrators of the 1988 massacre accountable, including the regime's current president Ebrahim Raisi, a member of Tehran's "Death Commission", which was responsible for condemning prisoners to execution.



Swedish MP **Kjell Arne Ottosson** told the participants:

Many Iranians have come to voice their protest against the regime in Iran, which spreads terror and fear, and suppresses its population. The number of executions has increased in Iran,

and that is why you're here today to show your protest. In the Swedish Parliament, we support your cause for a free and democratic Iran.



Swedish MP **Ingemar Kihlström** said:

I want to voice my support for what you're doing for a free Iran. As a democrat, it is important for me to show my support for human rights. It doesn't matter where you live in the world. Iran's regime doesn't respect human rights.

Those who committed these crimes must stand trial. We must work so that the people of Iran can have freedom. Criminals must be prosecuted. In my parliamentary request, I am fighting for the women of Iran to have equal rights. Let's work together to restore human rights in Iran.

Former European Parliament VP **Alejo Vidal-Quadras** said:

This is a victory for justice and truth against opportunistic policies. I want to congratulate all of you freedom fighters, I want to congratulate the extraordinary team of lawyers led by **Kenneth Lewis** that presented to the court

undeniable evidence. I also want to congratulate **Maryam Rajavi** for her wise and brave leadership that took us through this trial. And I want to congratulate the families of the victims who have finally seen justice for their loved ones.

It was proven in court that the Iranian dictatorship is an outlaw political system that inflicts the worst atrocities to its people. No more appeasement. No more dialogue. No more negotiations. The rulers of Iran are a bunch of murderers that should not be accepted as members of the international community.

The message of the Stockholm court must be listened to by the Belgian Parliament that should not accept a treaty of impunity for another criminal, Assadollah Assadi. Assadi must stay in prison for the rest of his life. The days of the Iranian fanatic regime are numbered. The trial of Hamid Nouri proves it. We will go on with no hesitation for the freedom of the Iranian people until all criminals of the regime are brought to justice and given the punishment they deserve.



### Editorial *continued from p.1*

The cause of all this misery is the corruption and incompetence of the regime, made worse by hostile international policies that see the nation's wealth go towards exporting terrorism and fundamentalism. Also, to bolster their weakening grip on power, never-ending sums are spent beefing up suppressive forces in the country tasked with

silencing dissent and criticism, with particular efforts made to suppress free-thinking women.

We continuously call on the international community to stand with the victims and the people of Iran, and bring human rights violators to face justice. We call on governments to make any relations with the Iranian government conditional on improving the human rights

situation there.

Our commitment is to save the lives of prisoners, most of whom are unjustly detained for their thoughts, religion, or ethnicity, and to end the suffering of the Iranian people. This, we believe, is a prerequisite for peace in the region and the wider world. And we thank you for standing with us in this uphill struggle.





## UN condemns increasing use of executions by the regime in Iran *continued from p.1*

Al-Nashif decried the execution of at least two child offenders between August 2021 and March 2022, in violation of international law. She said more than 85 child offenders remain on death row.

“Patterns of arbitrary deprivation of life due to excessive force used by the authorities against border couriers, peaceful protestors, and those in detention, continued with impunity,” al-Nashif said. “The scale of deaths in detention, both as a result of violence and ill-treatment by officials and due to the lack of timely access to medical care, is of serious concern.”

The report accuses the Iranian government of keeping a tight grip on its population through increasingly repressive measures. It says the government maintains total control through restrictive legislation, the use of violence and widespread violations of people’s human rights.

Al-Nashif cited a series of legislative measures with detrimental consequences for peoples’ reproductive rights and uncensored access to the internet. However, she said, the laws fail to criminalise violence against women and they undermine minority rights, particularly of the Baha’i religious minority.

“Civic and democratic space continues to be

restricted with human rights defenders and civil society actors operating within a coercive environment where violations are committed with impunity,” al-Nashif said. “In April and May of 2022, at least 55 individuals – teachers, lawyers, labour rights defenders, artists, and academics – were arrested during protests.”

As usual, Iran’s deputy permanent representative in Geneva, Mehdi Ali Abadi, denounced the report as an appalling and disgraceful political tool used by the United States and Canada against his country. He said the report was biased and based on false allegations. He shamelessly said Iran’s regime was “fully committed to the protection and promotion of human rights and respected its international obligations.”



## 1700 WOMEN SUMMONED FOR IMPROPER VEILING IN KERMANSHAH ALONE

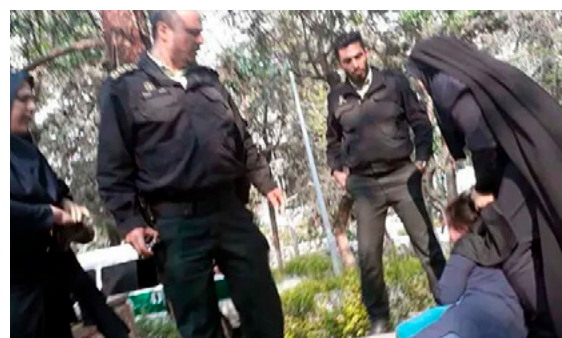
Some 1,700 women have been called to the province’s police stations for improper veiling since March 2022. The police chief of Kermanshah Province in western Iran, announced during a news conference.

Ali Akbar Javidan said more than 22,000 public notices had been given concerning moral security, failing to observe the mandatory hijab, improper veiling, or falling back on the regime’s dress code in three months and 20 days. Furthermore, 230 vehicles were seized and sent to the parking lot in the province during the same period, because women in the cars were deemed ‘improperly’ veiled.

Javidan said, “The police will not allow for a few people to promote improper veiling with any sort of excuse or pretext.”

He also pointed out that numerous public sites have been under surveillance since October. These sites include leisure, historical, tourism, commercial, civic service centres, and even travel agencies and sightseeing tours. However, the police chief admitted that the regime’s 26 agencies enforcing the mandatory hijab had failed to do their job.

Javidan said, “26 organizations are directly involved, and six others are working indirectly to impose the mandatory hijab. Undoubtedly, we would have witnessed better conditions if they all had fulfilled their duties.” He insisted that: “The police know they must fulfil their duties regarding the hijab and chastity... The police will act as a custodian to establish order and security in society.”







## GLOBAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST BELGIUM–IRAN PRISONER EXCHANGE DEAL



On Thursday, 7 July 2022, a global campaign was launched by freedom-loving Iranians and their supporters in opposition to a shameful deal between Belgium and the Iranian regime, when it was revealed that the Belgian government is trying to pass it as a bill in the parliament.

Tehran is seeking to exchange a Belgian citizen currently kept hostage in Iran with Assadollah Assadi, the convicted diplomat-terrorist serving a 20-year prison sentence in Belgium for his role in a foiled bomb plot that targeted an Iranian opposition rally near Paris in 2018.

On 6 July, the Belgian Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, following two heated debate sessions over the government's prisoner swap bill with Iran's regime, voted to approve the treaty and sent the text to the parliament for a final vote scheduled for 14 July.

Iranian expatriates responded by attending rallies outside Belgian diplomatic missions across the globe and conveying their protests through letters and emails to Belgian embassies and consulates. In parallel to demonstrations in Brussels, freedom-loving Iranians held similar gatherings outside Belgian embassies in other capitals, including Stockholm, Berlin, Vienna, Washington and London. Protest rallies have also been reported in other countries including France, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Luxembourg.

Campaigners have also been encouraging Members of Parliaments, political dignitaries, Nobel Laureates and scientists to write letters to Belgian government officials and

the speaker of the Belgian Parliament and voice their protests to this deal and demand the treaty be voted down.

According to European and international media reports these letters and messages have been placing enormous pressure on the Belgian Government.

The pro-appeasement circles in the West had gone to great lengths to keep a lid on this treaty and intended to wrap up the entire approval process in the Belgian Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee and the parliament floor in just two days. However, Iranian activists with their vast network of supporters throughout the globe went all out to prevent this shameful deal from going through.

The impact has been significant, to say the least. While the Belgian Government's treaty gained a vote of approval in the Belgian Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee, those opposing this bill voiced harsh criticism targeting the Belgian Justice Minister who was representing the government in the session of parliament.







A Dutch newspaper, *de Volkskrant*, referred to these remarks with sarcasm: “The Justice Minister wanted to say there are times when you need to dirty your hands by reaching a deal with the Iranian regime!”

Belgian MPs pressured their Justice Minister to place at their disposal all the protest letters and messages from across the globe sent to the Belgian Government. The Minister acknowledged that several hundred letters and emails had been received and pledged to make them available to the MPs as they had demanded, and finally, the government made a commitment to publish all documents related to the deal with Tehran.

The campaign had already obtained a major victory at this point by attracting global attention to a deal between Brussels and Tehran that was meant to remain low-profile.

As a result, if the two governments remain hell-bent on seeing this agreement through, it will come at a heavy price for the reputation of the Belgian Government and Parliament.

Obviously the campaign will continue with the broader aim of bringing an end to the West’s policy of appeasement that has encouraged the mullahs’ regime to expand its support for global terrorism and use innocent citizens as bargaining chips.

A large rally was held in Brussels on 14 July, when the voting on the bill was supposed to have taken place, during which **Mrs Rajavi** made a televised speech. Excerpts from her message follow:



Fellow compatriots, dear activists, I salute you, the harbingers of Iran’s freedom and the standard-bearers of the global campaign against the clerical regime’s shameful treaty with the Belgian Government. A treaty, whose actual substance and name amounts to granting impunity to the religious fascism’s terrorism and to the mullahs, who were about to carry out a mass killing in Paris, making the biggest terrorist incident in Europe.

However, with your round-the-clock efforts, you, and other conscientious people, particularly in the Belgian

Parliament and other countries, exposed the scandalous conspiracy internationally in a short period of time.

You exposed a decision that extends the greatest encouragement to terrorism and crime on European soil, on the world stage.

The campaign against appeasing the unbridled terrorism of the ruling mullahs, just like the campaign to expose their secret nuclear facilities and projects, is not only defending the Iranian people’s highest interests but also is a great service to global peace and security.

Dear friends, indeed, you inspired a global front against this collusion. Senator Bob Menendez, chair of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said: “Iran must be held to account for backing terrorism and taking hostages for leverage”.

Prominent international jurists, including Professor Eric David, said, “Allowing Assadi, in violation of the UNSC 1373 Resolution, to serve the remainder of his 20-year sentence in Iran, the state which was responsible for the attempted terrorist bombing, would make a mockery of the rule of law and foster further impunity for the Iranian government and its officials involved in terrorism and crimes against humanity.” Professor John Mather, the Senior Project Scientist for the James Webb Space Telescope, also pointed out that this “unethical and scandalous treaty” would make “a mockery of the rule of law” and defeat “the world’s efforts to fight terrorism”.

And Professor Richard Roberts and other Nobel Laureates declared that the treaty would “set a dangerous precedent”.

In the face of Iranians’ solidarity in Belgium, your campaign, and your global front, the advocates of appeasement and back-door deals have now turned the hostage-taking of Belgian citizens in Iran into a tactic against victims of terrorism.

In blatant sophistry, instead of blaming the hostage-takers and adopting a stronger stance against the executioners, they want to appease them with the victims’ blood. They say, what is wrong with sending a terrorist diplomat to a regime that sent him on a bombing mission? In return, they would free our hostage!

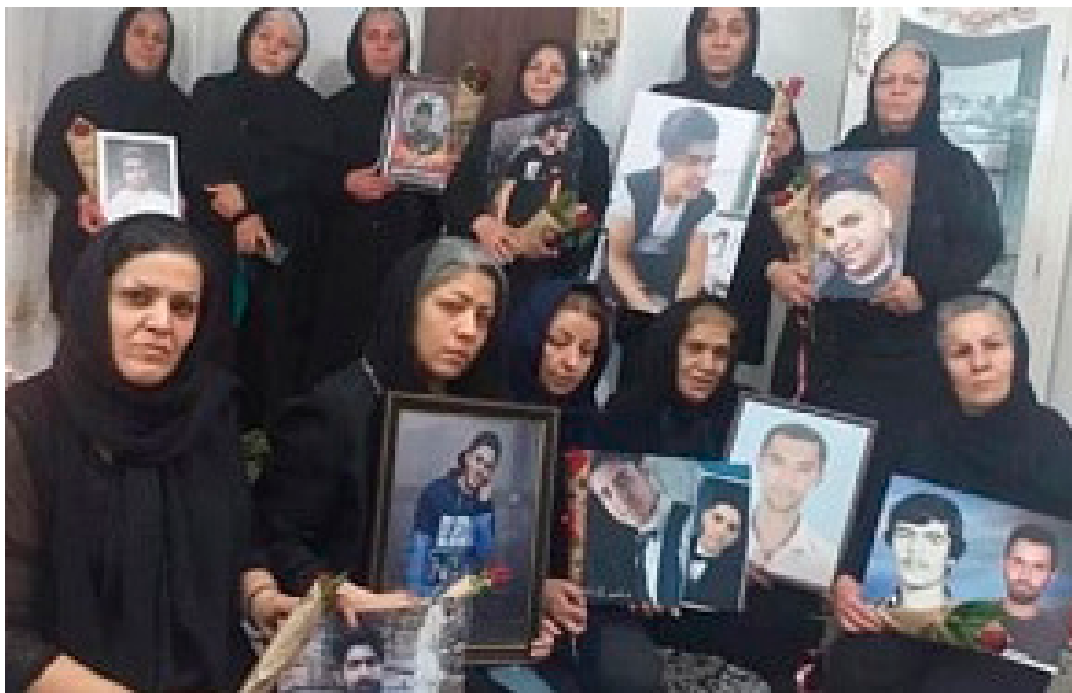
The fight will continue in all political, international, and legal arenas. I urge all my compatriots and friends to assist us in this endeavour. Our guiding principle is relying on ourselves. I say with deep conviction that when you tirelessly exhaust all options and do not give up, you will definitely be triumphant. Hail to all of you!

The voting in the Belgian Parliament was postponed again due to heated debate ensuing from the campaign to expose the evil side of the deal. Finally on Wednesday 20 July the bill was passed with the narrowest margin enforced by government whip. Obviously this is not the end of the case. The legal battle has now started to stop handing a terrorist mastermind disguised as diplomat over to his masters.



## MASS ARREST OF MOURNING MOTHERS AND OTHER ACTIVISTS

On 11 July, the Iranian regime's intelligence and security forces detained dozens of mothers and relatives of the November 2019 protests' victims, along with women's rights, labour, cultural, and social activists, as well as several filmmakers and bloggers. The regime has also arrested several Christians and Baha'is and managers of several Telegram channels.



Justifying the arrests, Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Eje'i said, "Some of the sworn enemies to the state promote vulgarity and indecency in society, and addressing such issues needs intelligent efforts. Prosecutors, judicial officials, and the intelligence system should adopt legal approaches against people who engage in offences and crimes in public. They should diligently do their best to discover organised movements that promote indecency in society at the behest of foreign intelligence apparatuses."

Since the bloody November of 2019, Iranian society has been dealing with a new movement of mourning mothers and relatives of more than 1,500 innocent people, who were savagely murdered for protesting petrol price hikes. Since then the "**November Mothers**" have continually voiced their protest against the authorities' culture of impunity.

The regime faces a stalemate: on the one hand, authorities are incapable of applying excessive suppression against these brave women due to their social base; while on the other hand, the mullahs cannot and will not tolerate the November Mothers' inspiring justice-seeking activities.

These mothers, joined with relatives of other victims, particularly the **Khavaran families** – relatives of the victims of the 1988 massacre of prisoners – and have organised themselves well against the regime's oppressive propaganda machinery. Given their just cause, they have also received favourable news coverage from media abroad. The main factor in their perseverance is their bravery: "We have nothing to lose; the regime has killed our loved ones; what else could it do with us? We will never be silent until avenging our loved ones and overthrowing the regime," they publicly say.

Just moments before she was detained in the Tehran subway station on 11 July, **Mrs Mahboubeh Ramezani** said, "I'm the mother of **Pejman Gholipour**, who was killed by five shots. I seek justice for my innocent child's blood. I fear nothing! Rise up; slavery is enough!"

**Mrs Sakineh Ahmadi**, mother of the late **Ebrahim Ketabdar**; **Mrs Rahimeh Yousefzadeh**, mother of the late **Navid Behboudi**; **Nahid Shirbisheh** and **Mehrdad Bakhtiari**, the late **Pouya Bakhtiari**'s mother and uncle; and **Mrs Somayyeh**

**Jafarpanah**, the sister of the late **Mohsen Jafarpanah**, are also among the detainees.

After detaining the women, the oppressive agents also severely beat other relatives, including the late Navid Behboudi's younger brother. Footage circulated on social media shows the regime agents breaking furniture in the homes of detainees.

A few minutes before being arrested, Mehrdad Bakhtiari stated, "Security forces raided my brother's home, detaining his wife ... Pouya Bakhtiari was killed on the tarmac; my brother [Manoucher] is in jail for two and a half years, but we fight for freedom."

Two days before the women were detained, the regime had already arrested two famous filmmakers, **Mostafa al-Ahmad** and **Mohammad Rasoulof**, for their social media protest against police violence. It is worth noting that Rasoulof is a Berlin Golden Bear Winner for the film *There Is No Evil* in 2020.

Authorities also arrested prominent critic, film director, screenwriter, and film producer **Jafar Panahi** on 11 July for signing an open letter to protest the detention of al-Ahmad and Rasoulof.





## PROTESTS ON THE RISE IN SEVERAL CITIES ACROSS IRAN



**Arak: Food vendors protest**

Despite intense repression and increasing numbers of arrests, protests across Iran are continuing.

Bazaar merchants in Arak continue protesting high prices, economic recession, and heavy taxes. Food vendors and wholesalers gathered in front of the provincial tax administration offices to protest the plundering taxes.

Kazerun Bazaar closed completely in a strike for the second day in a row. In Isfahan, home appliance sellers closed shops. Traders and bazaar merchants in Minab staged a protest gathering outside the city's tax office to protest the government's heavy taxes. In Shiraz, merchants in Vakil Bazaar closed their shops and staged a protest march. In Boroujerd, traders and bazaar merchants went on strike. In Najafabad, all shopkeepers in the

mobile phone market closed their shops.

Pensioners held demonstrations in cities, including Ahvaz, Shush, Doroud, Zanjan and Kermanshah. Retirees chanted: "High prices and inflation are a disaster for the people", "Our radio and television are a disgrace", "Our dinner tables are empty, enough of empty promises." In Mashhad, the State Security Force used brute force to prevent retirees from gathering.



**Doroud: Pensioners protest**



**Ahvaz: Pensioners demonstration**



**Minab: Traders and bazaar merchants protest**



**Kermanshah: Pensioners protest**

## ILA THANKS FUNDRAISING VOLUNTEER LYNETTE



A Summer Solstice Sleep Out in a peaceful Quaker garden on Saturday 25 June raised £725 in sponsorship for International Liberty Association.

The sleep out by 81-year-old Lynette Edwell was held at Newbury Quaker Meeting House. The money will go especially to help women prisoners with their legal costs and to support their dependent families.

Mrs Edwell, who thanked her husband Bob Edwell and friend Lorna Richardson for sharing the vigil, said: "It took courage to ask people to sponsor me, but I approached everybody I knew – my family, friends, neighbours – in fact almost everybody on my email list. And I would like to thank them for their generosity.

"The International Liberty Association is a small charity, helping people who live in a country far away that not many of us in Britain know much about, and it raises awareness of the breaches there of women's rights, exploitative child labour and mistreatment, the high numbers of prison executions including those of children, and demands justice for the 30,000 political prisoners executed in 1988. They deserve all the support they can get.

"I am proud to have contributed something towards their great ongoing work and look forward to the time when Iran is a free, just and happy nation."



## AL-BIRUNI, FATHER OF MODERN GEODESY AND THE FIRST ANTHROPOLOGIST



**Abu Rayhan Mohammad Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni**, also known as **Abu Rayhan-e Biruni**, or **al-Biruni** for short, was a scholar and polymath during the Islamic Golden Age. He was one of the well-known figures associated with the court of King Mahmood Ghaznawi, a famous Muslim king of the 11th century AD.

Al-Biruni was a versatile scholar and scientist who had equal facility in physics, metaphysics, mathematics, geography and history.

Born in the city of Kath (in modern day Uzbekistan) in 973 AD, al-Biruni was a contemporary of the well-known physician Ibn Sina.

At an early age, the fame of his scholarship went around and when Sultan Mahmood Ghaznawi conquered his homeland, he took al-Biruni along in his several journeys to India. Thus, al-Biruni

had the opportunity to travel all over India during a period of 20 years. He learnt Hindu philosophy, mathematics, geography and religion from the pundits to whom he taught Greek and Arabic science and philosophy. He died in 1048 AD at the age of 75, after having spent 40 years gathering knowledge and making his own original contributions to it.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni has been called variously the “founder of Indology”, “father of comparative religion”, “father of modern geodesy”, and the first anthropologist.

Al-Biruni was well versed in physics, mathematics, astronomy, and natural sciences, and also distinguished himself as a historian, chronologist, and linguist. He studied almost all the sciences of his day and was rewarded abundantly for his tireless research in many fields of knowledge.

Royalty and other powerful elements in society funded al-Biruni’s research and sought him out with specific projects in mind. Influential in his own right, al-Biruni was himself influenced by the scholars of other nations, such as the Greeks, from whom he took inspiration when he turned to the study of philosophy.

A gifted linguist, he was

conversant in Khwarezmian, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, as well as Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac.

In 1017 he travelled to the Indian subcontinent and wrote a treatise on Indian culture entitled *Tārīkh al-Hind* (History of India), after exploring the Hindu faith practiced in India.

He was, for his time, an admirably impartial writer on the customs and creeds of various nations, his scholarly objectivity earning him the title *al-Ustad* (“The Master”) in recognition of his remarkable description of India.



The statue of al-Biruni at the United Nations Office in Vienna – part of the Persian Scholars Pavilion

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Online weekly Zoom meetings

Every Saturday 5pm to 6pm

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