



January 2024

International Liberty Association Newsletter

Churchill House • 120 Bunns Lane • London NW7 2AS

W: www.iliberty.org.uk • E: info@iliberty.org.uk • T: 020 8452 3481

EDITORIAL

Happy 2024.

As we leave behind 2023, one of the most difficult years for justice and human rights, we take pride in our collective efforts to highlight the role of the regime ruling Iran in creating chaos and mayhem in the Middle East region and the wider world (terrorism abroad and providing killer drones to Putin to use in Ukraine), as well as abysmal human rights violations inside Iran.

In order to prevent brutal executions that the Iranian regime has escalated while the world's attention is on Gaza, Iranian communities and human rights activists have initiated various campaigns to save the lives of political prisoners facing the threat of execution in Iran.

Activities include holding a conference in the British parliament attended by Professor Javād Rehman, the UN Rapporteur for the human rights situation in Iran; a lawsuit by Iranians in Switzerland against the president of the Iranian regime as one of the key perpetrators of the 1988 massacre (Raisi had intended to travel to Geneva but cancelled his trip for fear of arrest); the appeals court confirmation in Sweden of the sentencing of Hamid Nouri to life imprisonment as one of the officials involved in the 1988 massacre; and most importantly, the preparation

ILA CHRISTMAS EVENT



International Liberty Association held a special event for the occasion of Christmas in December 2023 at the ILEC Conference Centre in London. The event was well attended and participants enjoyed a range of musical performances and talks by ILA supporters in addition to the Christmas dinner and artistic exhibitions.

Among the speakers at the event was former MP **Mark Williams**, who represented the Welsh Ceredigion constituency from 2005 to 2017. Excerpts of his speech appear below:

“Sitting there, I reflected – I’m sure you were reflecting too – on why we are here. We come, we know, as a diverse group of people.”

... continued on p.2

UK PARLIAMENTARIANS CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



In a meeting in the UK's Houses of Parliament building for the occasion of **International Human Rights Day** (10 December), a cross-party coalition of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords voiced their concern for the abysmal human rights situation in Iran, the rising number of executions by the regime, and the lack of accountability in the international arena regarding one of the worst human rights violators of the century.

... continued on p.3



ILA Christmas Event *continued from p.2*

I've come from West Wales; many of you have come long distances to be here today, but all united in celebrating diversity, celebrated and united in the love of Iran, a love of human rights and a passionate belief that wherever we are in this world of ours, we are all entitled to the same basic human rights. We're here, with Christmas fast approaching, and I will be celebrating (with my family) the sense of togetherness, bringing people together, our families and our friends, and I can't help but think of those families who have been separated by the tragedy that has been the story of Iran for the last 40 years and before that too. I cannot comprehend the heartbreak of the separation of so many Iranian families throughout the world. People here today, volunteers with the ILA, many of them are known to us. Let us think of those brave people in their forced separation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we gather today, but in celebration and recognition [of] tomorrow, that it is **Human Rights Day**, and we must continue to address the human rights abuses faced by the people of Iran perpetrated by their own government; and it is important for us to reflect on the principles laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, principles that have been systematically violated by the Iranian government, by that oppressive regime ever since its inception. Iran, with its rich



culture, history – and we've seen some of that in the exhibition today – is home to a brave population that yearns for freedom and democracy and justice. Now, we in the West may often complain about the operation of our own democracy, but it pales into insignificance when we reflect on what the people of Iran have endured. Their calls for freedom, those aspirations, an entitlement for all, have been stifled by a theocratic dictatorship with its narrow interpretation of Islam controlling every aspect, every aspect of public and private life; a regime which employs fear and intimidation and violence to maintain its rule, leaving no room for free dissent or free criticism, the hallmark of our democracy.

The poignant example of that [has been], since September 2022, sparked by the tragic death of **Mahsa Amini**, with the 750 protesters who have been killed by the regime, the injured thousands, the arrest of tens of thousands, including 71 children, 20 young girls, amongst the victims of the repression of that regime. A crackdown which is extended to intensified censorship, the surveillance of the internet, and creating an internet and information blackout to control its atrocities, to conceal its atrocities to the people of Iran and to people like you and me throughout the world. It is horrific, and those responsible, ladies and gentlemen, must be held to account.

... continued on p.4

Editorial *continued from p.1*

of reports that led the United Nations, for the seventieth time, to condemn the Iranian regime for gross human rights violations.

These successful initiatives undoubtedly contribute to preventing executions in Iran.

Preventing the regime's president Raisi, from travelling to Geneva illustrates the

effectiveness of collective efforts to launch human rights campaigns that narrow the field for human rights violators and increase the cost of execution and torture for them, prompting them to refrain from further executions and torture.

Our Christmas event last December which brought together people from all walks

of life to share their experiences while enjoying special food, music and an exhibition, was a powerful instrument in attracting attention to our collective efforts in this field and can be seen as a spring board for the body of work that we have to do together in 2024 to make our world a better place for everyone.



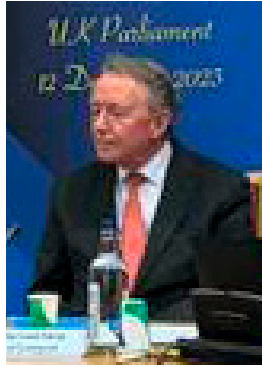
UK parliamentarians call for accountability

continued from p.1

Below are excerpts from some of the speeches that were given.

Lord David Alton of

Liverpool said: “It’s 40 years



since I first organised a meeting at a political conference on behalf of the Iranian resistance and it’s been an

honour for me over the years but it’s also been dispiriting at times to think how difficult it is to make progress on this hugely important issue.

We have a privilege, we have an opportunity of speaking out and we must do that particularly at this time as we commemorate over this last weekend two hugely important documents passed within 24 hours of one another linked by a sort of umbilical cord, one being the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its 30 articles which enumerate, adumbrate the huge human rights issues that had come to the fore, not least through the Holocaust and all the other horrors the world has experienced, and the need to say this should not only not happen again but these are the ingredients that will make for a free and good society...

I urge our government to set an example globally by cutting diplomatic relations with a regime that continues to carry out the kind of obscenities that we have seen over this last year until it ends executions, releases all political prisoners, releases detained protesters and dual citizens and verifiably scraps the discriminatory and repressive laws against women and the Iranian people.”

Lord Alex Carlile of

Berriew: “I’ve never been to



Iran. I love Iranians. I do not love the Iranian government. I deplore it. I do not believe that it represents

Iranians and above all I do not believe that it represents in the remotest way the interests of women and girls in Iran. Iran has a long and great record of being a country in the forefront of producing professional women. Doctors, lawyers, diplomats, academics of all kinds, scientists, and in recent years that has all been put on hold, effectively because women and girls are not entitled properly to exercise the rights which we in this country at least believe they should all have, and that is in the forefront of my determination that one day we should all be sitting at a meeting like this but, unlike this, a meeting in Tehran where we might be enjoying a good dinner afterwards celebrating the return of Iran to the democratic and free world.”

MP Liam Fox: “I grew up



with free speech. I grew up in a rule of law that was genuinely independent. I grew up with the ability

to elect my own government, and these were my birth rights. But they are also the birth rights of every man and woman in Iran.

It’s just that your birth rights have been stolen by a vicious and disgraceful regime. And I agree that we have to act. I agree that we need to outlaw the IRGC. We

also need to act against Iranian banks in the United Kingdom. We also need to act against Iranian airlines in the United Kingdom. But there’s one other thing that I just wanted to add, that we need to also raise public awareness about the abuses by the Iranian regime, and we need to provide moral support to those who have the courage themselves to take on that regime inside their own country. And too often in the past, we’ve been silent when we should have been vocal in that support. And we need to make it very clear that we have no quarrel with the Iranian people. The Iranian people are our friends and we are their allies, but we need to make it very clear to the Iranian regime that we find them an obscenity in a civilized world and make them know that when the time comes, we will stand with the Iranian people.”

MP Steve McCabe: “I first



started campaigning for a free Iran in this parliament, and I do have to say I had hoped that we

achieved our goal by now, but I think the starting point is to say very clearly, however long it takes, we won’t give up. We won’t give up. We won’t desert our friends, but we must be willing to do more because this is a regime that will stop at nothing. It’s a brutal and vicious regime, and if I’ve learned anything over the last 26 years, it is that they won’t respond to anything that people regard as normal politics and normal diplomacy. The only thing they understand is strength. And of course, what we’re seeing at the moment is that they are continuing to encourage war and suffering on all fronts.”



ILA Christmas Event *continued from p.2*

Once again, at this time of year, a time of hope, real hope, I want to express my gratitude on your behalf to the ILA, but also to everybody here who has committed themselves in a dedicated way to support the cause of human rights. Our efforts have undoubtedly saved lives in Iran and exposed the true nature of the evil regime.”



Canon John Hadley was another speaker at the event. Excerpts of his inspiring remarks appear below:

“What a wonderful sight! It’s lovely to be here and thank you all very much for your invitation and for the wonderful Iranian hospitality which I’ve already

begun to enjoy, despite only arriving ten minutes ago. It’s lovely to be here, well I presume, amongst so many nationalities and so many faiths. I’ve had a lot to do with other faiths, a lot of contact with other faiths in the course of my life, the course of my ministry as a priest which is now coming up to an extraordinary 50 years. I know that there are some Christian people, and probably people of other faiths as well, who don’t approve of meeting together and sharing with people of different faiths. They think it’s a sort of betrayal, a sort of denying our own faith if we’re going to admit that there’s anything in any of the other faiths. That is absolutely not my experience. My experience is that meeting other faiths has always enriched my own faith. It’s always enabled me to go deeper, to see things from a different perspective, and to enjoy God more; and I hope that sometimes other people have learnt and been enriched by my and other people’s Christian faith. I think we have something to offer and I think this is a sign of what we have to offer: Christmas. The Christmas story, I’m not referring to it as something I want to foist upon you or make you believe in some impossible way, but as a gift. It’s a gift for the whole world.

It’s lovely to tell the stories. It’s lovely for us Christians to tell and to hear the stories again. But in the end, it’s not the stories that matter. What really matters is what lies behind the stories, the truth, the wisdom, the mystery, which the stories reveal. And if we look at the Christmas story, what it reveals is

a God who gives peace (the angels sang ‘Peace on earth’), a God who gives joy, a God who gives hope to the world and goodness knows we need peace and joy and hope in our world at the moment, and goodness knows that you who are Iranian need peace and joy and above all, hope, when such terrible things continue to happen in your country.”



Suzy Johnston: “I really pay homage to the volunteers of the ILA who are so dedicated in the service of a better future for Iran. We are the world together; we are all connected.

I am a former books publisher. I now do volunteer work in a primary school in South

London. Daily, I am lucky to witness children learning and growing. Then, I think about society in Iran and what life must be like for those citizens where the government twists things according to their whim, so it really is very simple: in conclusion, the experiment has gone so wrong under the mullahs that the whole world is now watching, all while the people claim the streets and the women remove their hijabs. I salute them all and I invite you to join me in supporting them.”



Azadeh Hosseini, a head teacher in London, was the other speaker at the event who shared her moving life story with the audience.

The event was also filled with musical performances including the **Emily Sax Quartet** who played very entertaining

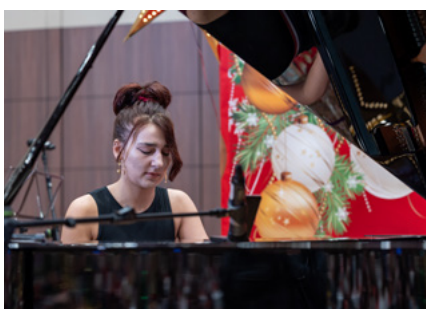
music on their saxophones; **Elisabeth Pion** played the piano; **Maria Danishvar** sang



soprano beautifully; and **Phillida Thompson** played the flute while husband, (Robert) **Bunny Thompson** played the piano.

At some point in the middle of the programme the audience danced with John Lennon's song calling for peace, justice, kindness, love, and cooperation; much-needed traits at this time of hardship for so many across the world.

May 2024 bring peace and comfort to all, particularly to those suffering.



Elisabeth Pion, piano



Phillida Thompson, flute



Maria Danishvar, soprano



UN SPECIAL RAPPOREUR: IRANIAN REGIME MUST BE HELD TO ACCOUNT



In a meeting in the UK Parliament for the occasion of the **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women** in November, the UN's special rapporteur for the situation of human rights in Iran, **Professor Javād Rehman**, addressed a cross-party delegation of members of both houses of parliament and called for action by states to bring the regime ruling Iran to account for its crimes against the people of Iran.

Excerpts of his long speech appear below.

“Ever since I took over the mandate as the United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran in July of 2018, one of my principal concerns has been the almost complete absence of accountability and the prevailing culture of impunity in the Iranian constitutional, legislative and administrative framework. This is evidenced in my most recent report to the UN General Assembly, which I presented to the assembly in New York just last month. While in New York, I also spoke on a side event on the subject of the 1988 massacres and the continuing impunity, which is the subject of our discussion today. I have

addressed the subject of absence of accountability in significant detail on various occasions and in my many previous reports. For example, in my report to the UN Human Rights Council of March 2022, after having examined the absence of accountability, I informed the UN Human Rights Council that while accountability for serious human rights violations represents a core obligation of states under international law, that was unfortunately not the case in Iran.

“The absence of accountability derives from various deficiencies within state structures, including negation of the principles of rule of law and the principle of separation of powers.

My deep concerns as regards institutional impunity and the absence of a system of accountability were sadly once again proven correct with the tragic death in custody of the morality police of the 22-year-old **Jina Mahsa Amini** last year. And more recently, it was shocking to note the death of the 16-year-old **Armita Geravand**, who was hospitalised after collapsing on a subway in Tehran on the 1st of October just last month, allegedly following an altercation about failing to wear the headdress or hijab. There

have been no investigations, and unfortunately and tragically, there's been no accountability, and it is unlikely that there will be any accountability for her death as well.

“The absence of accountability

and the culture of impunity prevalent in the Iranian legal, judicial and administrative system has a deeply unfortunate and painful history going back to at least the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

I have consistently called for accountability with respect to longstanding emblematic events that have been met with persistent impunities, including the enforced disappearances and summary and arbitrary executions of 1988 and the protests of November 2019. As an international community, we must demand an end to the culture of impunity for the Iranian regime, demanding justice and accountability for the victims.”

Geoffrey Robertson KC, who has investigated the 1988 massacre of prisoners in Iran, told the audience:

“We have the great honour of having undoubtedly the best special rapporteur on Iran since 1988. You haven't got into Iran. They haven't allowed you in...

“I think that there is something to be said for a trial in absentia, a fair trial, using our modern methods, and to put [on trial] Raisi and most of the others, most of them in high positions.

“After all, with good judges, you would get an authoritative record of what actually happened.”



NEWS IN BRIEF

MOTHER OF TWO EXECUTED AFTER 12 YEARS IMPRISONMENT



Samira Sabzian, a 30-year-old mother of two, was hanged in Qezalhesar Prison in Karaj early on Thursday, 29 December. Her children are 11 and 15 years old.

Samira was born in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan Province in Western Iran, and fell victim to child marriage and was forced to marry at the age of 15.

The Iranian regime holds the record for the highest number of female executions in the world.

KURDISH ACTIVIST LANGUISHES IN PRISON WITHOUT TRIAL



Varisha Moradi, a Kurdish women's rights activist from Sanandaj, was kidnapped

on 1 August 2023 and viciously tortured in the detention centre of the Sanandaj Intelligence Department to make confessions against herself. An informed source reported that in one instance, she vomited blood and went completely unconscious under torture.

Varisha was subsequently transferred to ward 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran and has been imprisoned there without a trial.

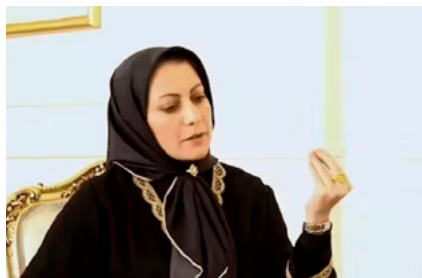
IRAN'S REGIME CONFISCATES MAHSA AMINI'S SAKHAROV PRIZE

Security officials confiscated **Saleh Nikbakht's** passport and phone, as well as the Sakharov Prize plaque that he received from the European Parliament on behalf of the family of **Zhina Mahsa Amini** at a ceremony at the European Parliament on 12 December 2023.



The clerical regime's authorities banned the family of Zhina from travelling to Strasbourg to receive the award granted to their slain daughter; so their lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, travelled on their behalf.

JOURNALIST SENTENCED TO PRISON OVER A TWEET



Sara Massoumi, the editor in chief of the Iranian Diplomacy news site, posted on X (formerly Twitter) and was sentenced to six months in prison and banned from working in media for two years.

Massoumi's lawyer, **Ali Mojtahedzadeh**, confirmed her conviction to the news outlet Shargh. Mojtahedzadeh criticised the conviction, saying it violated Massoumi's journalistic rights.

The conviction relates to an October post Massoumi wrote

on X about the death of **Armita Geravand**.



The 16-year-old girl entered a subway car in Tehran on 1 October 2023 and was carried off by friends shortly after.

A witness has claimed that after Geravand entered the subway car a hijab enforcer started arguing with her because she was not wearing a headscarf. Geravand was physically attacked and fell, hitting her head.

She fell into a coma, and state television reported on 28 October 2023 that she had died of brain damage.

RAISI CANCELLED HIS TRIP TO GENEVA AFTER CAMPAIGN



Ebrahim Raisi, president of the Iranian regime, cancelled his trip to Geneva, Switzerland, due to a request for his arrest. He was due to participate in the UN Global Summit for Refugees in Geneva.

A Swiss news agency, citing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, wrote: "Raisi was scheduled to speak at the summit on Thursday [12 December]."

However, three Iranian dissidents residing in Switzerland have requested his arrest from the federal prosecutor's office. This request is supported by 330 individuals, including five Swiss, including parliamentarian **Philipp Nantremoud**."



**We want to warmly invite you to our in-person
update events in the north of London.**

**We would be delighted to host you with Persian cuisine
and Persian hospitality.**

Time: 1pm to 4pm

Dates: Thursday 25th and Saturday 27th of January

Venue: NW London (exact details will be provided upon your response)

Nearest station: Brent Cross West (newly opened!)

Please contact ILA by email or telephone to book your place

Email: info@iliberty.org.uk Tel: 020 8452 3481

