

# Support for Iran's Uprising

For the past five months, Iran has been the scene of a nationwide uprising that has spread to more than 280 cities. While the protests were sparked by the death in custody of a young Iranian Kurdish woman, Iranians from all walks of lives, especially women and young people, have risked their lives and come out onto the streets, calling for an end to the dictatorship. Their goal is a free and democratic Iran. Some 750 protesters, including 71 juveniles under the age of 18 and more than 60 women, have been killed by the regime's repressive forces, and more than 30,000 people have been arrested and subjected to brutal torture. One of the remarkable attributes of the nationwide protests is the leading role of the brave Iranian women, defying the misogynist regime and its brutal Revolutionary Guards (IRGC).

Forty-four years ago, millions of Iranians joined a revolution, which ousted the brutal dictatorship of the Pahlavi dynasty, seeking freedom and democracy that they had been denied under the one-party system of Monarchy. However, the Shah's police state had decimated the democratic opposition, killing or imprisoning its leaders and members, while co-opting the clerical establishment into colluding with it. This enabled Khomeini to take advantage of the power vacuum and usurp the leadership of the revolution and gradually impose the absolute rule of the clergy.

The people of Iran, however, have never submitted to religious dictatorship. For more than four decades they have continued their resistance, with great sacrifices. According to some estimates, 120,000 have been executed for political reasons, including 30,000 massacred in the summer of 1988, ninety percent of them, only because they remained steadfast in their support for the principal opposition group, People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK).

The current uprising is rooted in the four decades of organized resistance and sacrifices that had been made. The uniformity of the protesters' slogans and their tactics in defying and confronting the multitude of suppressive and security forces point to a significant degree of organization and coordination. The key to the longevity of the uprising have been the Resistance Units affiliated with the PMOI/MEK.

At the same time, the Iranian regime has engaged in a sophisticated campaign to mislead the world that a viable democratic alternative does not exist, spreading the fear that any change in Iran would lead to chaos. The flip side of this campaign has been propping up the remnants of the deposed and detested monarchy to undermine the unity of the opposition and tarnish its image and insinuate that any change in the status quo may bring back the pre-1979 dictatorship. However, as evident in the chants of "Death to the oppressor, be it the Shah or the Leader (Khamenei)" and "Neither Monarchy, nor theocracy, yes to democracy, equality" in universities and dozens of cities across the country, the people of Iran overwhelmingly reject the religious dictatorship in power now and the monarchic dictatorship that preceded it. For them the choice is not to jump from the frying pan into the fire, but rather they long for the establishment of a democratic and free Iranian republic based on the separation of religion and state.

For many years, on both sides of the Atlantic, Western governments pursued engagement with Iran in the futile hope to find a moderate faction within the regime whose empowerment would result in behavioral change. That policy has miserably failed. The missing link in that policy was listening to the voices of the Iranian people and their organized opposition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), whose President Maryam Rajavi has articulated a Ten-point Plan advocating gender equality, abolition of the death penalty, religious freedom and recognizes the equal rights of all ethnicities, including autonomy for nationalities such as Kurds within Iran's territorial integrity.

At this critical juncture in Iran's history, the United States and Europe must stand with the Iranian people and recognize their right to defend themselves by necessary means as they endeavor to topple this medieval and criminal regime and liberate their homeland. To this end, the international community must undertake concrete measure to hold the regime's leaders accountable for four decades of crimes against humanity and genocide that includes the violent crackdown on protesters and the barbaric torture of those detained during the protests.

For its part, Europe must join the U.S. in designating the IRGC as a terrorist organization for its atrocities at home, its export of terrorism to the Middle East, and, more recently, providing the Russians with drones in their war against Ukraine, which threatens European stability.

Furthermore, restrictive measures must be taken with respect to Tehran's diplomatic missions in Europe and elsewhere and its envoys and agents should be expelled.

### **First Signatories**

- **Janez Jansa**, former Prime Minister – Slovenia;
- **Geir Haarde**, former Prime Minister – Iceland;
- **John Bercow**, Speaker of the House of Commons (2009-2019) – United Kingdom;
- **Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield Jr.** – former Special Envoy and Assistant Secretary of State – United States;
- **Iveta Radicova**, Former Prime Minister of Slovakia;
- **Petre Roman**, former Prime Minister – Romania;
- **Avdullah Hoti**, former Prime Minister – Kosovo;
- **Audronius Ažubalis**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, MP – Lithuania;
- **Jan-Erik Enestam**, former Minister for Defence – Finland;
- **Kimmo Sasi**, former Minister of Transport and Communications– Finland;
- **Tonio Borg**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy – Malta;
- **Michał Kamiński**, Former Secretary of State for Media Relations in Chancellery of the President, deputy speaker of the Senate - Poland;
- **Marcin Świąćicki**, former Minister for Foreign Economic Cooperation, former Mayor of Warsaw – Poland;
- **Ryszard Kalisz**, former Minister of the Interior and Administration – Poland;
- **Enver Hoxhaj**, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo;
- **Anatol Şalaru**, former Minister of Defence – Moldova;
- **John Perry**, former Minister of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation– Ireland;
- **Wayne Easter**, 40th Solicitor General of Canada, former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture – Canada;
- **Edvard Julius Solnes**, former Minister of environment – Iceland;
- **Francis Zammit Dimech**, former Minister of foreign affairs – Malta;

- **Stanislav Pavlovschi**, Judge, former Minister of Justice – Moldova;
- **Giuseppe Morganti**, Former State Secretary for Education, Culture and University of San Marino;