

Chapter 5

Woman, Life, Freedom, the 2022 – 2023 Mass Protests

On September 13, 2022, Mahsa Amini and her younger brother walked out of the subway station in Tehran. Mahsa was arrested by the Morality Police for not wearing her hijab properly. She was in police custody for about two hours. According to other women in custody, Mahsa was beaten by the police. Mahsa was taken from the police station to a hospital a few blocks away. When she arrived at the hospital, Mahsa was brain-dead. She was pronounced dead on September 16. After the news of the event was published by a brave female journalist, people gathered at the hospital. Mahsa Amini's murder in the custody of the Morality Police became the spark that triggered the explosion. The brave resistance by her mother, father, and younger brother to regime threats and demands, and their courageous determination to bury Mahsa in their small town and hold a public funeral on September 17, served as the trigger for the mass protests. Next came the brave actions of her relatives and the people of Saghez, her hometown. Saghez is a small town in the Eastern Azerbaijan province whose population comprises mostly Sunni Kurds.

Less than two weeks away from celebrating her 23rd birthday, Mahsa was on her trip to Tehran. Mahsa became every woman, perhaps because she was not an activist.¹ Like millions of women in Iran, she was minding her own business when she was suddenly plucked for what the Morality Police considered insufficient hijab. Few hours later, she was taken to a hospital. She was pronounced dead a few days later. Why did Mahsa's death spark such widespread protests all over Iran? In this chapter, I argue that her death was the last straw that broke the proverbial camel's back. If the last straw is the 100th, this means that we have to understand the 99 straws that came before in order to understand the trigger that the 100th straw would be.

¹ Mahsa Amini's parents wanted to name their daughter "Zhina" but because that is a Kurdish name, the fundamentalist regime official responsible for registering births ordered them to choose a Persian name for her. At home she was called Zhina.

5.1 The Straws Before the Final Straw that Broke the Camel's Back

In the previous chapters, I explained the history and causes of the major protests. In this chapter, I discuss those factors that directly led to the protests in 2022. As demonstrated throughout this book, the fundamentalist regime has always been terribly repressive. However, there have been increases and decreases of levels of repression in one or more areas (e.g., women's hijab, censorship of newspapers, book, and movies, civil society organizations, opposition groups, ethno-sectarian minorities). After 1997, when the reformist and expedient members of the fundamentalist oligarchy held the presidency there were often reductions in repression in some areas.

After Ebrahim Raisi assumed office in August 2021, the regime drastically increased repression on all fronts. Increase of repression had begun earlier, but due to Rouhani's presidency, there was no uniform regime action. To attract votes, Rouhani had promised to stand up to the hardline elements. Therefore, he owed his social base to, at a minimum, not cooperating with extreme harsh repression. However, increased repression was a reality. At the same time, the regime, including segments that were under the control of the Rouhani government, was engaging in harsh repression. This was evident not only during the violent repressions during the mass protests of December 2017–January 2018 and November 2019, but also regime repression during various small protests.

The disappointment with Rouhani's government led to a massive boycott of the June 2021 election and allowed Raisi to easily become President. As soon as Raisi was inaugurated in August, there was a drastic increase in repression. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for appointing provincial governors and city governors. These officials are responsible for security in provinces and cities, and coordinate repression by regime elements that are under the control of the Supreme Leader such as police, IRGC, IRGC-Intelligence Organization, *Basij*, plain-clothes forces, and Morality Police. The Ministry of Intelligence is constitutionally under the control of the President but in reality works under the control of both the President and the Supreme Leader. The officials and offices of the Ministry of Intelligence in each province and city also work under the coordination provided by provincial governors and city governors.

By and large Rouhani had appointed technocrats with university degrees as provincial and city governors. Raisi appointed mostly high-ranking IRGC officers to these crucial offices. The appointment of IRGC Gen. Ahmad Vahidi is a prime example. Vahidi is the former Head of the IRGC-Qods Force and the person responsible for the terrorist bombing of AMIA, the Jewish center in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, which caused the deaths of 85 people and injured over 200. The posture of

the new appointments by the Ministry of the Interior is unmistakably militaristic. The obvious message to the population was that under a uniform hardline regime, there will be more extreme hardline conservative policies and that they will be harshly and violently enforced.

Repression of human rights lawyers increased with the jailing of prominent lawyers such as Nasrin Sotoudeh and Narges Mohammadi. Many prominent independent and pro-democracy leaders of civil society organizations (e.g., teachers' associations, labor organizations, retired people's associations, "*mal-bakhtegan*," women's groups, and university students) that had been harassed and jailed periodically, all of a sudden were dragged into courts and prisons.² The regime began with executing a large number of prisoners who had been in jail for many years for drug smuggling or armed robbery and had been given death sentences, but their sentences had not been carried out.

During this period, the regime also used violence in Khuzestan and Isfahan provinces to repress those protesting lack of drinking water as well as Isfahan farmers who were not given their water rights.³ When a high-rise under construction by a regime insider in Abadan collapsed on May 23, 2022 and killed at least 41, the regime sent large numbers of police and anti-riot forces to violently suppress the protesters who were peacefully protesting and complaining about collaboration of officials and the builder against the technical recommendation of the safety official.⁴

5.2 Women's Oppression Under the Fundamentalist Regime

Fundamentalists are by far the most misogynist and patriarchal group within Iran's political groups.⁵ As soon as Khomeini came to power, he and his supporters imposed terribly misogynist policies. By 1979, Iranian women were university pro-

2 The term "*mal-bakhtegan*" refers to people who lost their money in financial institutions and the stock market. Both then-President Rouhani and Supreme Leader Khamenei had publicly encouraged the people to invest in these institutions, which promised high returns on their investments.

3 Mohammad Salami, "The Water Crisis and the Decline of Legitimacy in Iran," Trends Research and Advisory (October 6, 2022), <https://trendsresearch.org/insight/the-water-crisis-and-decline-of-legitimacy-in-iran/>.

4 Associated Press, "Death Toll From Iran Building Collapse Rises to 41" (June 5, 2022), <https://www.voanews.com/a/death-toll-in-iran-building-collapse-rises/6604340.html>.

5 Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Shirin Ebadi and Azadeh Moaveni, *Iran Awakening: One Woman's Journey to Reclaim Her Life and Country* (New York: Random House, 2007); and Kazemzadeh, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, op cit.

fessors, students, physicians, nurses, schoolteachers, lawyers, civil servants, even members of the parliament and cabinets. Therefore, it was not easy for the fundamentalists to impose their patriarchal policies without incurring major costs. The fundamentalists' policies elicit responses from women and opposition groups. When in March 1979, Khomeini ordered all women to wear hijab, there were massive protests by tens of thousands of women. Political parties and major figures, although opposed to the compulsory hijab, tended to place opposition to the fundamentalists' misogynist policies such as dismissal of females from paid employment, university education, and custody of children at the top of their agenda.

For the fundamentalists, hijab served several objectives. First, for fundamentalists' interpretation of Islam, women had to wear hijab as a religious duty. Second, hijab served as the obvious and glaring symbol of the fundamentalists' successful domination of the polity. Due to major costs, the fundamentalists were willing to retreat on several parts of their misogynist policies such as women's access to most university majors, civil service employment, even to membership in the Majles and cabinet. The fundamentalists were even willing to use loopholes and make changes in women's rights in custody of children in divorce against the Shia version of Sharia. The hijab was a major issue that the fundamentalists were not willing to abandon, although they were willing to tolerate less draconian versions of it. Hijab, then, came to serve as the symbol of women's acceptance of, or at least acquiescence to, fundamentalist rule. For the conservative social base of the fundamentalist regime, including both male and female, the imposition of the hijab became the public symbol of their power, domination, and satisfaction of their ideological domination.

5.3 The Emergence of Prominent Female Leaders

Since 2000, many Iranian women have assumed roles as national leaders. I will mention several, that, in my opinion, have played truly major roles.

5.3.1 Shirin Ebadi

Shirin Ebadi is the 2003 Iranian Nobel Peace laureate. She was a judge before the revolution. After the revolution, she was dismissed from being a judge because, according to the fundamentalist interpretation of Shia Islam, females lack the ability to be judges. She became a secretary in the same court where she had served as the presiding judge, where she had to teach the Shia clergy judge how to conduct the court. She founded the Defenders of Human Rights Center, which concentrated

on women's and children's rights, and provided pro bono defense of political prisoners. Due to threats to her life after she was awarded the Nobel Peace prize, she had to leave Iran. From exile, she has continued her work on human rights, despite threats against her.

5.3.2 Nasrin Sotoudeh

A prominent human rights lawyer, Ms. Sotoudeh was among the main founders of the Defenders of Human Rights Center. Like Ebadi, Sotoudeh has been an admirer of Dr. Mossadegh and close to the pro-democracy Iran National Front. Ms. Sotoudeh has been repeatedly sent to prison merely for defending political prisoners and women's rights activists. She has remained in Iran despite maltreatment of her, her husband, and her children. Sotoudeh's brave activities have made her an iconic figure among vast swathes of the population that oppose dictatorship. Her intellect, erudition, bravery, and decency have made her the favorite choice to become the first President of Iran if there is a transition to democracy. During the 2022 protests, she was a political prisoner.

5.3.3 Narges Mohammadi

Ms. Mohammadi is another human rights lawyer. Ms. Mohammadi was Deputy President of the Defenders of Human Rights Center. She managed the center after Ebadi was forced to leave Iran. Articulate and brave, she has defended political prisoners and has been sent to jail merely for doing so. During the 2022 protests, she was a political prisoner. Her supportive husband is Taghi Rahmani, who is also a prominent pro-democracy activist. Mr. Rahmani is part of the Melli-Mazhabi group. In order to protect their two children from maltreatment, Mr. Rahmani and their children have left Iran and live in France.

5.3.4 Parastoo Forouhar

Ms. Forouhar is the daughter of Dariush Forouhar and Parvaneh Eskandari. Forouhar and Eskandari were the leaders of the Iran Nation Party, one of the constituent parties of the Iran National Front, and close friends of Dr. Mossadegh. Agents

of the Ministry of Intelligence murdered them in November 1998.⁶ Parastoo Forouhar showed great courage in persistently following up on the murders, demanding truth as well as organizing annual commemoration of the murders. Although she lives in Germany, she has traveled to Tehran virtually every year to organize the commemorations, despite death threats and harassment by the fundamentalist coercive apparatuses.

5.3.5 Darya Safai

By 2005, many young women also wanted to have the right to enjoy sports and enter stadiums to watch sports. A movement emerged among many young women demanding to enter stadiums. Virtually all political parties and feminist leaders ignored that demand. There were few exceptions. A major exception was Ms. Darya Safai. After leaving Iran, she began a lonely campaign of going around the globe and holding a banner demanding the right for Iranian women to enter their stadiums. Safai's persistent, courageous efforts produced results. FIFA forced the regime to allow women to enter soccer stadiums and watch games. Safai is a dentist. She was elected to Belgium's parliament.

5.3.6 Masih Alinejad

By 2015, another major leader had emerged. Her name is Masih Alinejad. Born into a poor family in a village, she became a reporter inside Iran and supportive of reformist policies and politicians. She currently resides in New York. She began several public campaigns for women inside Iran. She got her own program on VOA. The program has become hugely popular among young people and women. Alinejad began a campaign she called "White Wednesdays," where women in Iran would take off their hijab, video themselves, and send the videos to her. Alinejad broadcast these videos to millions of people inside Iran. Then, she came up with a campaign of women holding their hijab on a stick in a public place and waving it defiantly. Several brave women did so. They were arrested and assaulted by the regime.⁷ Several received prison sentences of 20 years. The first such woman, Vida Movahedi, escaped Iran and currently lives in Canada. Many women who had been harassed and humiliated by the Morality Police responded to Alinejad's

⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Iran National Front*, op cit.

⁷ See Alinejad's website at <https://www.mystealthyfreedom.org/topics/news/white-wednesdays/>.

calls. Alinejad popularized public opposition and protest against hijab, an issue neglected by political parties, feminists, and women's rights activists until September 2022.

The fundamentalist regime recognized Alinejad's threat very early. The regime began a major propaganda campaign to silence her. In one case, the regime's television station falsely reported that she had been raped in front of her son. In another case, it brought her sister to publicly condemn her. The regime's attempts to force her parents and brother to condemn her did not work. In another case, the regime attempted to lure her to Turkey to kidnap her by having her parents tell her to go to Turkey for a reunion. The regime's attempt failed when her brother revealed the trap to Ms. Alinejad, for which he was sent to prison, where he remains as of this writing. The FBI foiled an attempt by the IRGC to kidnap Alinejad and take her to Iran. Another law enforcement agency arrested a man outside her home that was there to assassinate her.⁸ None of these attempts silenced Alinejad. But they made her more famous and popular among vast sectors of the Iranian population, particularly young women who came to consider Ms. Alinejad their voice, inspiration, spokeswoman, and leader.

5.3.7 Sepideh Gholian

Ms. Gholian was born in Dezful, a medium-sized city in the northern part of Khuzestan province in southwest Iran, a province which contains much of Iran's oil and gas fields with many refineries and factories. Although a university student, she was a truly brave human rights activist concentrating on labor issues. Despite repeated arrests, maltreatment, and threats, Gholian remained defiant and courageously spoke against dictatorship. Gholian lives in Iran and during the protests was in jail for her human rights and labor rights activities. She became a symbol of resistance to dictatorship, which undermined the regime's atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Gholian's bravery became an example that was emulated repeatedly during the protests.⁹

⁸ Rachel Pannett, "Man with Assault Rifle Arrested Near Iranian American Writer's Brooklyn Home," *The Washington Post* (August 1, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/08/01/iran-journalist-masih-alinejad-ak47-brooklyn/>.

⁹ Masih Alinejad, "Sepideh Gholian is Exposing Abuse in Iranian Prisons," *The Washington Post* (October 14, 2021), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/10/14/26-year-old-woman-is-exposing-abuse-iranian-prisons/>.

5.3.8 Atena Daemi

Ms. Daemi is a brave prominent human rights activist. She was born in 1988. She was arrested in November 2016 for her human rights activities and sentenced to seven years in jail. She was released in January 2022. She was held in solitary confinement for long periods in order to break her.¹⁰ She played a major role during the 2022 mass protests, making public statements on social media and elsewhere supporting the protests and criticizing entities that support the fundamentalist regime.¹¹

5.3.9 Faezeh Hashemi Rafsanjani

Unlike the other female leaders mentioned above, Ms. Rafsanjani comes from inside the fundamentalist regime. Her father, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, was one of the founders of the regime and one of its top leaders. Ms. Rafsanjani was elected to the Majles and was regarded as a reformist. She was sent to prison for her criticisms of the regime. She has been outspoken and brave. Some of her comments are intra-regime criticisms, that is, as a regime insider expressing worries and recommending policies to save the regime. However, she has increasingly been expressing serious criticism of the regime. After the protests began in mid-September 2022, the regime arrested her and put her in jail. Ms. Rafsanjani represents a faction of the regime that believes the regime will collapse sooner or later. Therefore, Ms. Rafsanjani could play a role in leading a faction of the fundamentalist oligarchy to leave the regime and side with the opposition. Ms. Rafsanjani is not alone in that role. There are other members of the fundamentalist oligarchy, such as Mir-Hussein Moussavi, that may also play that role.

5.4 Brilliant Women as Role Models

The women profiled above are only the most famous cases. There have been many more women who, through their actions and activities, have inspired millions of Iranian women to look at them as role models, to realize that they do not have

¹⁰ United for Iran, “Atena Daemi” (September 2020), <https://united4iran.org/wp-content/uploads/Atena-Daemi-Fact-Pattern-and-Legal-Analysis-September-2020.pdf>.

¹¹ Yaghoub Fazeli, “Iran Rights Activists Spurn Iranian-American Group NIAC as Regime ‘Lobby;” AlArabiya News (October 19, 2022), <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/10/19/Iran-rights-activists-spurn-Iranian-American-council-NIAC-as-scarlet-letter->.

to submit to the fundamentalist regime's ideology of submission, that they deserve better conditions and to feel confident that they could and should fight for their rights. Among such figures one may mention Ladan Boroumand, Roya Boroumand, Shadi Sadr, and Raha Bahreini. The two Boroumand sisters have founded the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, named after their father, who was assassinated by the fundamentalist regime in France in 1991. They have been documenting the regime's human rights violations and assassinations abroad.¹² Ms. Sadr is a lawyer and human rights activist and founder of Justice for Iran, which has been organizing tribunals on the regime's crimes against humanity.¹³ Raha Bahreini is a researcher on Iran for Amnesty International. She frequently appears on satellite television programs. She is young, articulate, erudite, compassionate, and honest.

5.5 Courage Under Repression by Men

Large numbers of men have continued to publicly stand up to the regime despite repeated arrests, torture, and maltreatment. One prominent example is Mr. Hashem Khastar. Mr. Khastar has been a high school teacher and leader of a teachers' association. Despite repeated prison sentences, he has refused to be intimidated into silence. A supporter of Dr. Mossadegh and the INF, he and his supportive wife have continued their brave resistance.

Keyvan Samimi is one of Iran's most prominent dissidents and journalists. He was born in Abadan in 1949. He has been a political prisoner under both the Shah's dictatorship and the fundamentalist regime. One of his brothers was executed by the Shah and another by the fundamentalist regime. He is a supporter of Dr. Mossadegh and close to *Melli-Mazhabi* [Religious-Nationalist] group.¹⁴ He has been a brave public intellectual, publishing articles critical of dictatorship and in support of freedom and democracy despite constant pressures and incarceration.

Another courageous person was Navid Afkari, a wrestling champion who had participated in the mass protests in 2019. He was executed for what pro-democracy activists consider to be trumped up charges of murder. Afkari was severely tortured, and he refused to recant his opposition to the regime.

¹² See their website at <https://www.iranrights.org/>. Dr. Abdorrahman Boroumand was a prominent leader of the INF until late 1978, when he and Dr. Bakhtiar split from the INF.

¹³ The organization's website is at <https://justice4iran.org/>.

¹⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Iranian Journalist Samimi Released From Prison" (January 1, 2023), <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-journalist-samimi-freed/32203118.html>.

Still another prominent brave pro-democracy activist is Majid Tavakoli, a student from the University of Tehran. Despite maltreatment and prison, Mr. Tavakoli remained defiant and continued to express his opposition and criticisms of the regime. During the 2022 protests he was a political prisoner.

There is also Hussein Ronaghi. He had been jailed and tortured before the 2022 protests began. After they began, he refused to be silent and supported the protests. He was arrested and the torturers broke both his legs to force him into public confessions.

A dissident rapper, Toomaj Salehi, has made very popular rap songs encouraging resistance to the regime. He has been arrested several times for his songs. He was very active in encouraging the people to participate in the mass protests. He was arrested on October 29 or 30.¹⁵

Several other men outside Iran have played major roles in undermining the regime: Hassan Dai, Ruhollah Zam, Ali Javanmardi, Dr. Hamid Akbari, Dr. Hamed Esmaeilion, Dr. Kamran Matin, and Mehdi Nakhli-Ahmadi.

Mr. Dai is a pro-democracy and human rights activist. He emerged publicly around 2007–2008 by publishing scathing articles against the fundamentalist regime as well as individuals and groups he considered to be pro-IRI lobbyists, and those promoting and funding appeasement of the fundamentalist regime.¹⁶ The National Iranian American Council (NIAC), a group regarded by many Iranian and American observers as a lobby for the fundamentalist regime, sued him for defamation, a tactic that the group has used to intimidate others into silence (i. e., not to call it a lobby group for the Iranian government).¹⁷ Not only was Dai not intimidated into silence, but he was also able to defeat the lawsuit.¹⁸ The court ordered NIAC to pay \$183,480.09 to Mr. Dai. NIAC appealed the court's decision, and the appellate court upheld the decision of the district court and strongly criticized Mr. Trita Parsi (founder and then-President of NIAC) for various actions.¹⁹ In my opinion, the case made Mr. Dai a hero to many opponents of the fun-

15 Iran International, "Islamic Republic's Security Forces Arrest Dissident Rapper" (October 30, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202210306648>.

16 See Dai's group website at <http://iranian-americans.com/about/>.

17 Eli Lake, "Exclusive: Iran Advocacy Group Said to Skirt Lobby Rules," *The Washington Times* (November 13, 2009), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/nov/13/exclusive-did-iranian-advocacy-group-violate-laws/>.

18 Masoud Kazemzadeh, "On the Lawsuit 'Trita Parsi and NIAC v. Hassan Daieoleslam,'" Iranian.com (September 15, 2012), <http://iranian.com/main/blog/masoud-kazemzadeh/lawsuit-trita-parsi-and-niac-v-hassan-daieoleslam-0.html>.

19 Armin Rosen, "America's Most Prominent Group Advocating Engagement with Iran was Hit with a Rough Court Decision," *Business Insider* (March 5, 2015), <https://www.businessinsider.com/>

damentalist regime for his willingness to stand up to the regime and a group regarded by large numbers of Iranian Americans as its lobby in the United States.²⁰ Since then, Dai has appeared on numerous satellite TV programs providing his analysis of the fundamentalist regime and supporters of the regime in the West. Until around 2017, Dai was among few public intellectuals in the U.S. that publicly advocated the replacement of the fundamentalist regime with democracy. Since 2017–2018, Dai’s views have become widespread inside and outside Iran. Dai has published more research on the fundamentalist regime’s networks of lobbyists, influencers, and supporters than any other person or group. He is very articulate and brave. Dai is very popular among Iranians who oppose the regime inside and outside Iran.

Mr. Zam was the son of a clerical leader of the fundamentalist regime. He became a journalist and critic of the regime. He left Iran and went to France. Zam had many connections to many members of the fundamentalist intelligence agencies. These members of the intelligence agencies trusted Zam and gave him top secret intelligence about other high-ranking members of the fundamentalist oligarchy in order to undermine their rivals within the regime. The Ministry of Intelligence was able to deceive Zam and convince him to go to Iraq for a meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The regime then kidnapped Zam, took him to Iran, tortured him, broadcast his confessions, and then executed him.²¹

Mr. Javanmardi is a prominent journalist who was working for the VOA. In addition to his reporting from Iraqi Kurdistan for the VOA, Javanmardi began broadcasting his own news and analysis on his site and various TV programs. Javanmardi’s commentaries became popular because he is very intelligent and articulate and intimately familiar with Iranian politics. He was forced to leave the VOA. Javanmardi, who is Kurdish, advocates a free, democratic, and unified Iran that would respect the civil rights of all groups. The fundamentalist regime had been portraying Kurds as secessionist and communist. Javanmardi’s very popular programs undermined the regime’s propaganda. The regime have made several attempts to assassinate Javanmardi, who lives in Iraqi Kurdistan and Washington, D.C.

Dr. Hamid Akbari is Dean of the School of Business at Carroll University in Wisconsin, United States. He has been one of the most active pro-democracy think-

americas-most-prominent-group-advocating-engagement-with-iran-was-hit-with-a-rough-court-decision-20153.

²⁰ Kazemzadeh, “On the Lawsuit,” op cit.

²¹ Amnesty International, “Iran: Execution of Journalist Rouhollah Zam a ‘Deadly Blow’ to Freedom of Expression” (December 12, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/12/iran-execution-of-journalist-rouhollah-zam-a-deadly-blow-to-freedom-of-expression/>.

ers and activists in the past 30 years. His tireless work organizing conferences and giving talks on democracy paved the way for the “democratic discourse” to replace the “reforming within the fundamentalist regime” discourse that had dominated intellectual debates before 2017.

Dr. Esmailion is a dentist and author of several books of short stories and novels. He was not a public figure until the IRGC shot down the Ukrainian passenger airplane over the skies of Tehran on January 8, 2020. Esmailion is the founder of the Association of Victims of Flight PS752.²² Esmailion, whose wife and daughter were on the plane, has emerged as an articulate spokesman for the families of the victims. The organization was highly effective in pressuring various governments to investigate and publicize how the IRGC shot down the passenger airplane. Moreover, he has expressed solidarity with all other victims of the fundamentalist regime and has successfully organized and mobilized support for protests in Canada and elsewhere against the regime’s brutality and dictatorship. He has played a major role organizing support and solidarity with the 2022 mass protests inside and outside Iran. He was responsible for organizing a march on October 1 at Richmond Hill, Canada that over 50,000 people attended and a march on October 22 in Berlin, Germany that over 80,000 people attended.²³

Dr. Kamran Matin is a Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Sussex.²⁴ Dr. Matin has been a frequent commentator and analyst at Iran International satellite TV, appearing about five times a week. He is brilliant and articulate. He is also a Kurd. The fundamentalist regime has been demonizing Kurds as secessionist, violent, and communist. Although Dr. Matin is a Marxist, he advocates political freedom, human rights, and civil rights. His views and analysis are fair and sophisticated. He advocates a unified Iran with freedom for all Iranians. Millions of Iranians who have been watching Dr. Matin’s analysis for several years have seen for themselves the utter falsity of the fundamentalist regime’s racist propaganda against the Iranian Kurds.

The fundamentalist regime has been portraying various ethno-sectarian groups in Iran as secessionists that pose a major threat to other Iranians; and thus, its massive oppressive measures are the only way to protect the territorial integrity of Iran. The appearances of several Iranian scholars and commentators

22 See the group’s website at <https://www.ps752justice.com/>.

23 Isaac Callan, “More Than 50k Attend Richmond Hill, Ont. Protest against Iranian Government,” *Global News* (October 1, 2022), <https://globalnews.ca/news/9169782/richmond-hill-iran-protest/>; and Leon Malherbe and Paris Hafezi, “Tens of Thousands March in Berlin in Support of Iran Protests,” *Reuters* (October 22, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-guards-warn-cleric-over-agitating-restive-southeast-2022-10-22/>.

24 Dr. Matin’s faculty webpage is at <https://profiles.sussex.ac.uk/p138207-kamran-matin>.

from these ethno-sectarian groups on various satellite TV programs broadcast to millions of Iranians for several years have undermined the fundamentalist regime propaganda.²⁵

The fundamentalist regime has been demonizing the Iranian Balochis as Sunni extremists, violent and secessionist. The most prominent Baloch intellectuals and political leaders, however, are very moderate, democratic, and highly supportive of Iran. Among them are Mehdi Nakhli-Ahmadi, Ebrahim Ahrari, Dr. Reza Hussein Bor, and Fariba Baloch. Nakhli-Ahmadi is a sophisticated pro-democracy Baloch analyst and commentator. He has given many interviews and analyses on various TV programs. Ahrari is one of the anchors and producers at the Kalame television program. Dr. Hussein Bor is a monarchist, although a very atypical one. He works closely with republicans and advocates of ethnic rights. Ms. Fariba Baloch is a human rights advocate. The appearances of these sophisticated, moderate, and democratic intellectuals, highly supportive of Iranian territorial integrity, on satellite television programs have eviscerated more than 40 years of the fundamentalist regime's propaganda, demonization, and ethno-sectarian bigotry against Iranian Balochis.

5.6 2019 – 2022: The Worst Years for Fundamentalist Intelligence Agencies and Military Apparatuses

On November 27, 2020, Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, assassinated Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the father of the fundamentalist regime's clandestine nuclear weapons program. He had over a dozen bodyguards when he was assassinated. This was neither the first nor the last incident in Mossad's highly successful campaign of assassinations and sabotage of the regime's nuclear personnel and facilities. Between 2012 and 2014, Mossad carried out half a dozen assassinations of top regime officials directly involved in the fundamentalists' clandestine nuclear weapons program. Under pressure from the Obama administration, which was involved in negotiations with the regime, the Israelis had to put an abrupt end to their assassinations. With a green light from the Trump administration, the Israelis carried out a highly effective campaign of sabotage of nuclear facilities and assassinations of nuclear officials as well as IRGC-Qods force personnel tasked with retaliation against Israelis such as assassinations of Israeli tourists and officials in Turkey. Mossad's infiltrators inside the regime's intelligence entities also told Mos-

²⁵ On the role of satellite TV, and particularly Iran International TV see below.

sad about many attempts by the regime to carry out terrorist actions in Europe and the U.S., which were thus foiled due to Mossad's intelligence.

On August 7, 2020, Mossad assassinated Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah. Abdullah was residing in Tehran and was considered al Qaeda's number two leader, after Ayman al-Zawahiri. Abdullah was one of the founding members of al Qaeda and the mastermind of the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed 224 people on August 7, 1998.²⁶ The fundamentalist regime has denied that it had provided safe haven to Abdullah, a terribly embarrassing fact, and claimed (falsely) that Abdullah had been a Lebanese history professor. The fundamentalist regime has allowed large numbers of al Qaeda operatives to move about freely in Iran, raise money, and plan operations as long as they target Saudis and the Americans. Mossad had carried out this assassination for the United States.

On January 31, 2018, Mossad agents broke into a warehouse in Turghoozabad, a village outside of Tehran, and seized half a ton of Iran's secret nuclear documents, including 50,000 pages and 163 compact disks of files. After the July 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, the regime had decided to store its nuclear secrets in that place rather than provide them to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).²⁷ Some of the secrets, for example, included details of the regime's clandestine nuclear weapons program, including facilities where enriched uranium was stored, and nuclear tests conducted. The regime's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, and the Deputy Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, denied the existence of that warehouse and ridiculed the Israeli announcement made by Prime Minister Netanyahu. Araghchi and Zarif claimed that the Israelis were lying in order to influence the upcoming decision by Donald Trump whether to stay with or leave the nuclear deal.²⁸ Subsequent investigations by the IAEA and other experts vindicated the authenticity of the archives.²⁹ The investigation by the IAEA of the infor-

26 Adam Goldman, Eric Schmitt, Farnaz Fassihi, and Ronen Bergman, "Al Qaeda's Number 2, Accused in U.S. Embassy Attacks, Killed in Iran," *The New York Times* (November 13, 2020, updated September 14, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/13/world/middleeast/al-masri-abdullah-qaeda-dead.html>.

27 *Haaretz*, "How the Mossad Broke Into an Iranian Facility and Stole Half a Ton of Nuclear Files" (July 16, 2018), <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2018-07-16/ty-article/how-the-mossad-broke-into-an-iranian-facility-and-stole-nuclear-files/0000017f-db07-d856-a37f-ffc7b14c0000>.

28 *Times of Israel*, "Iran Dismisses Netanyahu's Nuclear Exposé as 'Childish' and 'Ridiculous,'" (April 30, 2018), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-dismisses-netanyahus-nuclear-expose-as-childish-and-ridiculous/>.

29 David Albright and Sarah Burkhard, "Highlights of *Iran's Perilous Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons*," (August 25, 2021), https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Highlights_of_Irans_Perilous_Pursuit_of_Nuclear_Weapons_August_25%2C_2021.pdf; and Aaron Arnold et al., *The Iran Nuclear Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Universi-

mation revealed from the archives found traces of enriched uranium in three undeclared secret sites and natural uranium in one undeclared site.³⁰ These sites are Turghoozabad, Abadeh, Varamin, and Marivan. The fundamentalist regime has not provided any scientifically plausible response to the IAEA for the existence of traces of uranium at these sites.

Another embarrassing operation was Mossad's apprehension and interrogation of two IRGC-Qods Force officials inside Iran, taping of their confessions, and then their release. One such operation led to the foiling of the fundamentalist regime's plan to assassinate an Israeli in Turkey, an American General in Germany, and a journalist in a third country. When the IRGC-Intelligence Organization sent a large group to Istanbul to assassinate any Israeli tourist they could find, as well as a former Israeli ambassador on vacation in Istanbul, Mossad's intelligence was shared with Turkish officials, who apprehended the group of IRGC assassins. In apparent retaliation, on May 25, 2022, Mossad assassinated Col. Sayad Khodayee, who was the Deputy Head of the IRGC-Intelligence Organization responsible for clandestine operations abroad. Khodayee was tasked with planning and carrying out the assassinations of Israelis in Istanbul.³¹

In addition to Mossad's highly successful operations inside Iran, the Israeli Air Force has carried out over 1,000 operations in Syria, killing large numbers of military personnel from the IRGC, IRGC-Qods Force, Lebanese Hezbollah, and IRI's radical Shia proxies there, and destroying military bases and hardware.³²

Since 1979, the fundamentalist regime had created an image of the IRGC, IRGC-Qods Force, IRGC-Intelligence Organization, and the Ministry of Intelligence as all-knowing, all-powerful, highly competent, brutal, and fearsome entities. Members of these entities were recruited from among the most extreme, ideological, and loyal fundamentalists. The fundamentalist regime had wanted to sow fear among its opponents. The operations by Mossad and the Israeli military vaporized the image the fundamentalist regime had worked so hard to propagate and incul-

ty, April 2019), https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/The%20Iran%20Nuclear%20Archive_0.pdf.

30 BBC, "IAEA Urges Iran to Explain Uranium Particles at Undeclared Sites" (June 7, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57386296>.

31 Farnaz Fassihi and Ronen Bergman, "Israel Tells U.S. It Killed Iranian Officer, Official Says," *The New York Times* (May 25, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/25/world/middleeast/iran-israel-killing-khodayee.html>.

32 Aljazeera, "Major Destruction after Israel Targets Missile Facility in Syria" (August 28, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/28/israel-targeted-missile-facility-in-syria-war-monitor>; Su-leiman Al-Khalidi, "Israeli Strikes Hit Iranian Targets Near Russian Mediterranean Base," Reuters (August 14, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syrian-state-media-says-israel-targets-coastal-province-tartous-2022-08-14/>.

cate. The situation had gotten so bad that on June 23, 2022 it was announced that the regime had dismissed Hussein Taeb, the Head of the IRGC-Intelligence Organization, widely regarded as the third most powerful figure in Iran after Supreme Leader Khamenei and his influential son Mojtaba Khamenei.³³ Taeb was a trusted man for Khamenei and the man who had been close to Mojtaba and believed that he would work hard to maneuver to make Mojtaba the next Supreme Leader after his father's demise. Taeb's dismissal was a shock to the system. By August 2022, the Iranian people were making jokes about the intelligence and coercive apparatuses of the fundamentalist regime.

5.7 Celebrities Speak Up

Until mid-2021, with very few exceptional cases, celebrities were silent. By and large, the bulk of celebrities cozied up to those in power and were handsomely rewarded with astronomical financial rewards. Some celebrities publicly supported reformist and expedient members of the oligarchy during elections: a safe path which allowed both access to regime largesse and popular support. In 2021 a new phenomenon emerged: celebrities bravely standing up to the regime and willing to incur the violent wrath of the regime. Iranians revere their top athletes and singers, as well as movie directors, actors, and actresses.

First and foremost was Ali Karimi, one of Iran's most beloved soccer superstars, former captain of Iran's national soccer team and Persepolis (one of Iran's top soccer teams). Karimi first showed his political leanings in 2008 when he wore green armbands during the mass protests in a public show of solidarity with the Green Movement and the masses on the streets. He also endorsed Hassan Rouhani for the presidency. By 2021, he had retired from professional soccer. Karimi spoke out after the IRGC used two missiles to attack and down a Ukrainian passenger airplane taking off from Tehran's international airport, killing all 176 people onboard. Among the victims were a son and daughter of a former Deputy Minister of Health. The former official and his wife revealed that a high-ranking IRGC official gave them their condolences and told them that if the IRGC had not downed the airplane then there would have been a war between the U.S. and Iran and 10 million Iranians would have died. On January 8, 2020, the regime had fired 12 ballistic missiles at an American airbase in Iraq in retaliation against

³³ Reuters, "Iran Replaces Powerful Chief of Guards' Intelligence Unit—State TV" (June 23, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-dismisses-taeb-head-revolutionary-guards-in-telligence-unit-state-tv-2022-06-23/>.

the U.S. killing of IRGC-Qods Force Head Qassem Soleimani. The regime wanted to look tough in front of its supporters in Iran and the region but was afraid of the American response. Therefore, it downed the passenger airplane to create a diversion that would draw sympathy. The regime wanted the people to think that either the U.S. hit the airplane, or that it fell due to mechanical problems. The regime harshly repressed the families of the victims of the Ukrainian passenger plane. In that milieu, Karimi spoke out and defended the rights of the families. This was in January 2020 and Rouhani was still President; conditions, although gradually becoming worse, had not yet reached their peak of repression. After August 2021, there were a number of protests against the high prices and water shortage in Khuzestan and Isfahan provinces. Karimi courageously condemned the regime's violent repression of unarmed peaceful protesters. By September 2022, Karimi was living in Dubai and relatively safe from regime violence. So, when Mahsa Amini was killed, Karimi spoke out courageously and strongly condemned the regime, fully siding with Mahsa's family and the protesters on the streets. As the most beloved soccer superstar of his generation, Karimi was admired and loved by millions of ordinary Iranians who did not like the regime but would not take any action against it. Karimi not only provided inspiration and support to the people, but he also called for protests and even told them what to do and what not to do. Karimi compared the protests in 2022 with the protests against the Shah's dictatorship, thus providing great legitimacy to the people and placing the regime as the tyrannical oppressor of the people. Regime officials publicly called for the arrest and punishment of Karimi until they found out that he was in Dubai. Regime officials called for seizure of his assets. Then the regime publicly confiscated his house in Tehran. The people in soccer stadiums wore Karimi's jersey, shouted his name, called him their hero and leader. Other top athletes publicly sided with Karimi, such as Karim Bagheri, the former captain of Iran's national soccer team; Rasool Khadem, Iran's Olympic gold medal wrestling champion and former Head of the Iran National Wrestling Federation; and Ali Dai, former top star of the national soccer team.

Beginning in 2021, Voria Ghafouri, a top player in Iran's national soccer team and the captain of Esteghlal, one of the top soccer teams in Iran, began publicly criticizing the regime and supporting the people. He was expelled from the national team and his contract with Esteghlal was not renewed. Ghafouri knew full well that his public criticisms would bring harsh punishments, but nevertheless he courageously sided with the people on several cases. People shouted his name during games that he was allowed to play as well as during games that he was not allowed to play.

The brave public positions of Karimi and Ghafouri, as well as the support given them by other athletes and the public appreciation and support they re-

ceived, made many other athletes who had either been silent or even supportive of various fundamentalist officials to publicly distance themselves from the regime and support the people. Sardar Azmoun, a member of the national soccer team, is a prime example of this. Ali Dai is another example of such figures. Ghafouri was arrested on November 24, 2022, after he made harsh criticisms of the regime and the national soccer team. He was released after public furor.

Movie directors, actors, and actresses are hugely popular with average Iranians. The regime monitors those in the film industry very closely. The regime bans any director, actor, or actress that is critical of the regime. The regime also rewards those who support the regime with funds and permits. Therefore, because they require permits to make movies as well as to act in them, those in the film industry keep their views to themselves. Many who oppose the regime have chosen to leave Iran. In 2021, something new occurred. Jafar Panahi and Mohammad Rasoulof organized a public statement entitled “Put Your Rifles Down,” which was signed by over 100 directors, actors, and actresses that asked those in the coercive apparatuses not to shoot the unarmed protesters after the regime shot and killed many unarmed protesters in Abadan, Ahvaz, and Isfahan. The regime arrested Panahi and Rasoulof, and threatened other signatories that if they did not withdraw their signatures they would be banned from movies and/or arrested by the regime. It was not clear whether they would be intimidated into silence or not. In September 2022, in reaction to the murder of Mahsa Amini, many in the film industry made the decision to stand up to the regime and re-issue their earlier statement asking the coercive apparatuses to put their rifles down and not to shoot unarmed peacefully protesting citizens.

After the revolution many top singers left Iran. Although many were socially conscious and opposed both the Shah’s dictatorship and the fundamentalist regime, they tended not to be overtly political. For the first time in 2022 many such singers took unprecedented positions and publicly called for active protests against the regime. One such figure was Dariush Eghbali, one of Iran’s most beloved singers since the early 1970s. He publicly called for Iranians inside and outside Iran to participate in protests against the regime. Others included Faramarz Aslani and Googoosh.

5.8 The Role of Satellite Television and Social Media

During the 1977–1979 revolutionary process, Iranians used several entities to organize and mobilize the masses. The opposition groups used copy machines to copy their “*elamieh*” [statement, declaration] calling for protests. These one-page calls were distributed by sympathizers in universities, bazaars, workplaces,

schools, and mosques. Ayatollah Khomeini, who was residing in Najaf, Iraq, also tape recorded his fiery speeches, and his supporters smuggled them into Iran, and through mosques and seminaries spread them to his followers throughout the country. What was highly crucial was that BBC Persian radio made the decision to broadcast Khomeini's messages on an almost daily basis after Khomeini went to Paris, France, directly into the homes of millions of Iranians. This allowed Khomeini to have direct access to millions of Iranians on an almost daily basis. Whatever Khomeini said was broadcast by BBC Persian radio as news.

The Iranian people had been using social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate and organize protests between 2009 and 2020. By 2020, other social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram were also used extensively to organize protests. The role that BBC Persian played in the 1979 revolution is being played by Iran International satellite television.

5.8.1 Iran International Television

Iran International is a 24-hour satellite television station, which broadcasts about 6–8 hours of live television programs and then rebroadcasts them the rest of the day.³⁴ Its main studios are in London and Washington, D.C. It began operations in 2017 and emerged as the top satellite television station among Iranians inside and outside Iran. It has recruited some of the best journalists from BBC Persian, Voice of America, and Radio Farda. During the 2022 mass protests, Iran International had 24-hour coverage. Iran International has also been able to hire exceptional journalists and commentators. Its news programs are highly professional and reliable. Its commentaries are highly sophisticated and scholarly. Its commentators and guests include those pro-democracy and the anti-democratic opposition (e. g., monarchists, PMOI, communists), as well as supporters of the fundamentalist regime. Many pro-democracy leaders have criticized Iran International for not interviewing their spokespersons while providing extensive coverage to the anti-democratic monarchists.

Iran International has played a truly unique role in Iranian politics since 2020. Many officials inside the regime who oppose either some policies or the whole regime send the regime's secret documents to Iran International. Hackers who gain access to the regime's ministries, agencies, prisons, surveillance cameras, and other sites provide Iran International the data and tapes. The journalists at Iran

³⁴ Its website is at <https://www.iranintl.com/>. Its YouTube page is at <https://www.youtube.com/c/IRANINTL>.

International also have done large numbers of exceptional investigative reports exposing financial corruption by regime officials and their relatives.

Iran International regularly features Iran's top scholars such as Dr. Kamran Matin, Dr. Mansour Farhang, Dr. Touraj Atabaki, and Dr. Afshin Shahi, to name just a few. During the mass protests, Iran International brought more top scholars of Iran to analyze the political situation, such as Dr. Nayereh Tohidi, Iran's top feminist sociologist; Faraj Sarkohi, Iran's top socialist literary critic and one of Iran's most influential socialist public intellectuals; and Dr. Majid Mohammadi, Iran's most respected neo-conservative sociologist.³⁵ Iran International regularly features Farzin Nadimi, Iran's top expert on Iran's military doctrine. Iran International has Iran's top journalists and commentators such as Mehdi Mahdavi Azad, Jamshid Barzegar, and Kambiz Ghafouri, who regularly present truly sophisticated analyses of the political situation.

As soon as Mahsa Amini was killed, Iran International began providing 24-hour special coverage of the protests. Thus, Iran International became the best source of accurate reporting and analysis of Iranian politics. The persistent exposure of regime cruelties and hypocrisies by Iran International have greatly undermined regime propaganda and legitimacy. The constant access that Iran International provided opposition groups and commentators further galvanized opposition and gave hope to the Iranian people.

Iran International's coverage of the collapse of the high-rise in Abadan, and various protests in Isfahan and Ahvaz was both professional and emotional. The coverage factually demonstrated the utter lack of basic competence of the regime's officials as well as their utter lack of care for human lives. The commentaries, then, showed the human costs that such regime policies have caused the Iranian people. The coverage of Sepideh Reshno's cruel treatment by the IRGC caused great outrage among vast numbers of viewers. The coverage of the regime's foreign policies clearly showed how the regime repeatedly undermined Iran's national interests for the sake of promoting the regime's ideological beliefs.

Iran International's coverage of Mahsa Amini was truly exceptional. Within hours, Iran International's honest investigations exposed the lies of the regime again and again. When hackers gained access to CT scans of Mahsa's head and torso, Iran International brought in top Iranian physicians who clearly explained that the regime was lying, and that the CT scan clearly showed that her skull was fractured due to being struck by hard objects. Iran International brought in commentators who asked the people to show their opposition to what the regime had

³⁵ Tohidi's faculty webpage is at <https://www.csun.edu/humanities/gender-womens-studies/nayer-eh-tohidi>.

done to Mahsa. Iran International broadcast calls by various figures to protest the regime's oppressive and violent actions.

Iran International broadcast videos sent by people inside Iran to millions of its viewers. It broadcast the views of athletes, movie directors, and political activists, as well as various government officials around the world and non-Iranian celebrities. Pink Floyd, the progressive British rock group, is hugely popular among Iranians, and Iran International repeatedly broadcast its interview with Roger Waters (co-founder and -composer of the group), who strongly condemned the regime's repression and sided with the Iranian people. Iran International also mentioned the support and solidarity of Justine Bieber, Dua Lipa, and Yungblud. To many of the protesters, who are between 15 and 30, support from these popular international artists is heartwarming and further encourages them to struggle for their freedom.

Iran International did great service to the cause of non-violent methods of struggle by interviewing Iran's top scholar of non-violence, Dr. Amaar Maleki (Political Science Professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands) and Arash Aramesh (a top scholar of international law and national security). Aramesh argued what actions would harm the cause of non-violence and how Iranian Americans could best influence their senators and representatives.

The fundamentalist regime and its supporters have been attacking Iran International and trying to silence it. On November 7, 2022, Iran International released a statement about specific threats to two of its journalists by the IRGC that the Metropolitan Police in London had shared with it. The statement read:

Iran International, the independent UK-based Farsi-language news channel is shocked and deeply concerned by the credible threats to life its journalists have received from the IRGC.

Two of our British-Iranian journalists have, in recent days, been notified of an increase in the threats to them. The Metropolitan Police have now formally notified both journalists that these threats represent an imminent, credible and significant risk to their lives and those of their families. Other members of our staff have also been informed directly by the Metropolitan Police of separate threats.

Our journalists are subject to abuse 24/7 on social media. But these threats to life of British-Iranian journalists working in the UK mark a significant and dangerous escalation of a state-sponsored campaign to intimidate Iranian journalists working abroad. These lethal threats to British citizens on British soil come after several weeks of warnings from the IRGC and Iranian government about the work of a free and uncensored Farsi-language media working in London.³⁶

³⁶ Iran International, "Statement on Formal Threats to the Life of Journalists on UK Soil" (November 7, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211076450>.

Supreme Leader Khamenei has called the 2022 mass protests a “hybrid war” organized by the U.S., the U.K., Israel, and Saudi Arabia. The official website of the Supreme Leader published a long interview with the Minister of Intelligence, Hojatoleslam Val Moslemin Esmail Khatib, on November 10, 2022.³⁷ Khatib said:

In addition to the control of satellite networks by intelligence agencies, there are numerous reports of the activities of various counter-revolutionary groups in the media, which carry out their activities under the direction of hostile intelligence agencies. The most significant of these has been the direct intervention of the United States in coordinating some counter-revolutionary terrorist groups with the Iran International network, which in practice has formed the International Terrorist Organization. In some cases, the Zionist regime has also communicated with and guided some members of terrorist groups. ...

According to the statements of the Leader of the Revolution, the US, England, and Saudi Arabia played an obvious role in fueling the recent unrest in the country. What plans do the security agencies and Ministry of Intelligence have to compensate for these attempts being made to disrupt security? ...

As for the US regime, in addition to all the hostilities, damages and blows that it has directly and indirectly inflicted upon the Iranian nation, this terrorist regime is the official murderer of the great leader of the Resistance, Martyr Lieutenant General Haj Qasem Soleimani. The position of the US is declining in facing a strong Iran. I say with certainty and decisively that the United States is not capable of a face-to-face military war with us. Therefore, it either joins up with a terrorist group and officially carry [sic] out assassinations [and of course receives a crushing, clear, appropriate, military response in return] or it goes behind the scenes and engages in hybrid warfare, soft warfare and starts provoking others. It has always received responses in these cases and it will continue to receive the same.

As for England, their case as a country that takes the approach of a wily old fox that has never stopped its troublemaking against the Islamic Republic of Iran is different. Currently, the media in England is seeking to create and spread riots in Iran. Both in the past and in the present, their media outlets have stepped beyond the field of directing riots and are seeking to organize malicious movements and acts of terrorism inside the country. These are actions that England has taken. In the past, Iran has repeatedly been a prevention to acts of terrorism against European countries. However, England and a number of European countries have not stopped their hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Without a doubt, unlike England, we will never support acts of terrorism and the creation of insecurity in other countries. However, we also have no obligation to prevent insecurity in these countries either. Therefore, England will pay for the actions it has taken to try to make the great country of Iran insecure.

Unfortunately, the British government, which operates the BBC and Iran International satellite stations with its support and within its media framework, has taken on a terrorist role today. And this means they are crossing the red line of the Islamic Republic of Iran's security. I would like to state here that the Iran International satellite network is recognized by

³⁷ Esmail Khatib, “Interview with the Website of the Supreme Leader” (November 10, 2022), <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/9277/Minister-of-Intelligence-analysis-of-recent-hybrid-war-against>.

Iran's security agency as a terrorist organization. Its operatives and affiliates will be pursued by the Ministry of Intelligence. And from now on, any kind of connection with this terrorist organization will be considered to be tantamount to entering into terrorism and a threat to the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran.³⁸

London Metropolitan Police stationed armored police vehicles outside the offices of Iran International on November 19, 2022, after Scotland Yard and MI5 discovered threats to the television station by the Iranian government.³⁹ According to MI5, between January and November 2022, British law enforcement officials foiled at least 10 attempts by the Iranian government to kidnap or kill British citizens, Iranian dissidents, and journalists in the U.K.⁴⁰

The fundamentalist regime had earlier designated the German government's official broadcasting agency, Deutsche Welle Farsi and German newspaper *Bild* as terrorist.⁴¹ It has long been the policy of the fundamentalist regime to designate any entity that criticizes it or publishes critical reports about the regime as terrorist.

5.8.2 Voice of America Television and Radio Farda

Although Iran International TV Has played the bigger role during the 2022 mass protests, one should also emphasize the great roles that the VOA and Radio Farda have been playing for about 40 years in undermining the fundamentalist regime's monopoly of news and analysis, as well as providing objective news and sophisticated analyses. VOA and Radio Farda are broadcasting outlets of the U.S. government. Their missions are to provide objective news and sound analyses, which they usually do. During the past several years and particularly during the 2022–2023 mass protests, several of their journalists have provided excellent programs and analyses. At VOA, one may mention Mehdi Falahati and Siamak Dehghanpour. The producers at VOA, such as Hooman Bakhtiar, have done a truly excellent job inviting some of Iran's top scholars to present their analyses to millions of Irani-

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Iran International, "UK Police Positions Armed Vehicles Outside Iran International Building," (November 19, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211198849>.

⁴⁰ Iran International, "MI5 Names Iran as Major Security Threat for UK" (November 17, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211176309>.

⁴¹ Deutsche Welle, "Tehran Sanctions DW Farsi for Coverage of Iran Protests" (October 26, 2022), <https://www.dw.com/en/iran-sanctions-dw-farsi-for-coverage-of-protests/a-63562810>.

ans. At Radio Farda, one may mention Ms. Fahimeh Khezer-Heidari for her excellent reporting.

5.9 The Final Straw

From June 2021, the regime drastically increased not only what constituted proper hijab but also drastically increased violent treatment of women. Before August 2021, as long as a woman had covered much of her hair, it was tolerated. But after August 2021, extremely violent measures were used to more strictly enforce the more draconian version of the hijab law. Before Raisi, the Morality Police would verbally warn women and as soon as they complied would let them leave. After Raisi, the Morality Police would arrest women and drag them into police vans, take them to police stations, and issue hefty fines. The Morality Police (composed of both female and male officers) would use extreme violence against women, publicly beat them up, and force them into police vans. Dozens of videos of these arrests and women's resistance were posted on social media and broadcast on Iran International.

Before Raisi it was uncommon to witness regular fundamentalist women go around and order women to adhere to the more extreme version of hijab. Since Raisi, all of a sudden many videos were posted on social media of fundamentalist women clad in black chador ordering and threatening women (who already had hijab) that their hijab was not sufficient and that they should cover more.

On July 16, 2022, two women in the female section of a bus approached a woman and warned her and videoed her and told her that they were going to give the video to the IRGC. That woman and many other women on the bus resisted the two fundamentalist women and forced them out of the bus. Within hours the woman who had refused to comply was arrested by the IRGC: she was severely tortured to gain a public confession, then the confession was broadcast on state television. The woman, Sepideh Reshno, appeared on television, with her face bruised and purple, in full hijab, confessing. Right after her tortured confession Ms. Reshno was taken to the emergency room and treated for internal bleeding and injuries due to severe beatings and torture.⁴²

⁴² Rosie Swash, "Arrests and TV Confessions as Iran Cracks Down on Women's 'Improper' Clothing," *The Guardian* (August 23, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/23/arrests-and-tv-confessions-as-iran-cracks-down-on-women-improper-clothing-hijab>; and Iran International, "Detained Hijab Protester Beaten Into 'Forced Confessions'" (August 5, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202208052017>.

Many feminists and human rights activists believe that many women have been killed by the Morality Police and buried, and their families threatened into silence. However, Niloufar Hamedei, a brave female journalist, was able to go to the hospital, document, take photos, and write reports on the case of Ms. Mahsa Amini.⁴³ And, just as significantly, Mahsa's parents refused to remain silent and ignored the threats from the officials, and talked with Ms. Hamedei. Hamedei had earlier reported on Ms. Sepideh Reshno as well. Ms. Hamedei was arrested for reporting the case of Ms. Amini and charged with crimes of photographing and publishing an article for the paper, *Shargh Daily*, that she worked for. The punishment for the crime of reporting could be execution.

5.10 Chronology of the 2022 – 2023 Mass Protests

For 43 years, the fundamentalist regime had demonized Sunni Kurds as secessionist, anti-Iranian, violent, dangerous, and communist. During Mahsa's public funeral, the people of Saghez utterly vaporized 43 years of propaganda and demonization. Videos of the funeral showed the grieving of Mahsa's loved ones, from her parents, brother, uncles, and aunts. There was not a single call for secession, not a single utterance against Iranians, or Shias, or calls for communism. Most women at the funeral took off their hijab in protest against the murder of Mahsa.

Someone wrote the slogan "*Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*" [Woman, Life, Freedom] and the mourners began shouting this slogan. The slogan had its origins in the PKK, a radical leftist guerrilla group from the Kurdish population of Turkey and had spread to the Iraqi Kurdish region. Kurdish women from Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran had joined various armed groups and had fought bravely against ISIS. The slogan has been embraced by large segments of the Iranian population. This slogan perhaps has a different meaning for the Iranian people than the original meaning of the PKK.

The Iranian people, who have been reeling from 43 years of ultra-misogynist and oppressive rule, condemn the oppression of women. Mahsa could have been any (non-fundamentalist) Iranian woman. To non-fundamentalist women, Mahsa was them. To non-fundamentalist men, Mahsa could have been their sister, mother, wife, or daughter. The people opposed the utter lack of concern for human life under the fundamentalist regime. By "life" the people mean "normal life" like

⁴³ *Shargh Daily*, "Niloufar Hamedei, Khabarnegar Shargh Bazdasht Shod" [Niloufar Hamedei, Shargh's Reporter Was Arrested] (September 22, 2022), <https://www.sharghdaily.com/fa/tiny/news-856872>.

all other people in this world: to pursue what makes them happy. They want to smile, dance, walk in the park holding the hands of loved ones, party with the opposite sex, enjoy public water fights in a park, all activities that are banned and severely punished by the fundamentalist regime. For over 120 years, a substantial segment of the Iranian population has been struggling for “*Azadi*” [freedom]. The demand for freedoms of speech, the press, and political parties were violently repressed by the monarchists and fundamentalists. In recent years the demand for freedom has been embraced by large swathes of the people. Thus, the call for “*Azadi*” resonated with virtually all Iranians (except fundamentalists, monarchists, and Stalinists).

The public reactions among Iranian women and men were immediate and strong. Iranian women grieved publicly, and their anger erupted in mass protests. The fundamentalist regime has imposed a grotesquely oppressive rule on the Iranian people. The murder of Mahsa Amini by the Morality Police triggered an emotional response among non-fundamentalist Iranians, who form the overwhelming majority of the population. The collective lumps in their throats that had been simmering for many years burst into tears. And their silent anger that had been smoldering beneath the surface for these years erupted into protests. After enduring years of discrimination and humiliation by the ultra-reactionary totalitarian theocratic regime, vast swathes of the population have had enough of living on their knees as slaves and have chosen to stand up, fight back, and live and die as free women and men.

The regime responded with massive violence. The regime arrested thousands of protesters, particularly those who acted as leaders. In one infamous case, Nika Shakarami, a 16-year-old female, was arrested during the protests. Her last text to her mother said that the security forces were following her, and she was escaping from them. The police returned her body to her parents 10 days later.⁴⁴ The regime broadcast reports on state TV reporting that Nika had committed suicide on September 30 by falling from the fifth floor of a building. The regime then stole the corpse from the family and buried it in a distant village. The regime arrested and tortured Nika’s uncle and aunt and forced them to make false confessions on television and threatened to do the same to her grieving mother as well. A CNN investigative report studied 50 videos of September 30 protests in Tehran and spoke to six witnesses that had seen Nika that night. According to the CNN investigation and the videos, Nika had taken a leading role in the September 30 pro-

⁴⁴ Martin Chulov, “Mother Says Police Beat Daughter to Death in Iranian Protests,” *The Guardian* (October 8, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/08/mother-says-police-beat-daughter-to-death-in-iranian-protests>.

tests and thrown stones at the coercive apparatuses, and was then trying to leave the scene while being chased by the coercive apparatuses. She was finally cornered and caught and taken into custody. The coroner’s report stated that she died due to her head being in contact with a hard object. The CNN investigation with the videos clearly proved that the regime had lied all along.⁴⁵

It appears that picking, arresting, and torturing the individuals that the regime considered to be leaders was a main tactic of the coercive apparatuses. The regime then spread false stories claiming that those it had murdered had died due to suicide, or underlying conditions unrelated to the protests or the regime’s coercive apparatuses’ actions.

In another tactic, the regime simply massacred the protesters, a tactic that it had used during the November 2019 protests. This occurred in Zahedan on September 30, 2022. After Friday prayers, the worshipers marched toward the police station. The police chief was reported to have raped a 15-year-old girl in custody, a practice that has been done by the coercive apparatuses since 1981 to create an atmosphere of fear among the population and the dissidents. Subsequently the report of the rape of the 15-year-old girl was substantiated and the regime began arresting Balochis who reported the case. According to Amnesty International’s investigations, the coercive apparatuses gunned down the protesters, killing 66 unarmed protesters. Another 16 people were killed shortly afterwards as protests spread.⁴⁶

On Friday October 28, after Friday prayers, the people of Zahedan went on a peaceful protest march to condemn the massacre of September 30. The regime killed four of the protesters and wounded many. Among the main slogans were: “Woman, Life, Freedom,” “Death to the Dictator,” and “*Az Tehran Ta Zahedan, Janam Faday Iran*” [From Tehran to Zahedan, My Life for Iran]. The fundamentalist regime had attempted for over 40 years to portray the Sunni Balochi population as Sunni extremists who are anti-Iranian, and supportive of secession. The peaceful protests calling for freedom and unity of all Iranians undermined 40 years of propaganda and demonization. The Iranian protesters throughout Iran condemned the regime’s violence against the people of Zahedan and shouted slogans such as “*Zahedan Cheshm Va Cheragh Iran*” [Zahedan is Eyes and Light of Iran].

45 Gianluca Mezzofiore, Katie Polgese, and Adam Pourahmadi, “What Really Happened to Nika Shahkarami? Witnesses to Her Final Hours Cast Doubt on Iran’s Story,” CNN (October 27, 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/27/middleeast/iran-nika-shahkarami-investigation-intl-cmd/index.html>.

46 Amnesty International, “Iran: At Least 83 Balochi Protesters and Bystanders Killed in Bloody Crackdown” (October 6, 2022), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/iran-at-least-82-balochi-protesters-and-bystanders-killed-in-bloody-crackdown/>.

Again, on Friday November 4, the Baloch people went on peaceful protests in Baloch-majority cities. In the small city of Khash, the coercive apparatuses killed at least 16 protesters. The highest-ranking Sunni Baloch cleric, Mowlavi Abdol-Hamid, gave a sermon on November 4 to tens of thousands of worshippers. He said: “We do not have Sunni and Shia in Iran, we do not have ethnic groups in Iran, we are all Iranians, we are all one for Iran.”⁴⁷

In Iranian culture, people gather at the gravesite of a loved one 40 days after the burying of the loved one to commemorate his or her life. The gathering is called “*Chehelom*” [Fortieth]. The regime threatened the family of Mahsa to make them announce that they would not be holding Mahsa’s *Chehelom*. The family refused the regime’s threats. The coercive apparatuses showed up in force to prevent the gathering of the people for Mahsa’s *Chehelom* at her gravesite in Saghez. Film footage of the crowds shows massive participation. Some estimates indicate that somewhere between 80,000 and 100,000 people went to Saghez to participate in Mahsa’s *Chehelom*. Mahsa’s mother posted a brief message thanking the Iranian people. She explicitly referred to Mahsa as “*Dokhtar Iran*” [Daughter of Iran] and added that her death brought together people from all regions and ethnic groups from Iran to support Mahsa and grieve for her. Mahsa’s mother’s words are politically greatly significant. She did not refer to Mahsa as daughter of Kurdistan but daughter of Iran, and moreover she wrote that all ethnic groups were together for the struggle. Her message is a nightmare for the fundamentalist regime whose strategy was to demonize the protest as secessionist, Sunni, communist, and anti-Iranian.

Another tactic that the fundamentalist regime has used to intimidate the people into submission is rape of male and female protesters. On November 21, 2022, CNN published an investigative report on this tactic during the 2022 mass protests.⁴⁸ The fundamentalist regime has used this tactic extensively since 1980.⁴⁹

Iranians in the diaspora also have played major roles in supporting the mass protests in various ways. They have organized mass protests that have informed the people and political leaders around the globe of the true nature of the fundamentalist dictatorship. Thanks to these actions, many have reassessed their policies from those that assist the fundamentalist regime to those that side with the Iranian people. For example, on October 1, 2022, more than 50,000 people participated

47 Iran International, “News” (November 4, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/202211041399>.

48 CNN, “How Iran’s Security Forces Use Rape to Quell Protests: Covert Testimonies Reveal Sexual Assaults on Male and Female Activists as a Women-Led Uprising Spreads” (November 21, 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2022/11/middleeast/iran-protests-sexual-assault/>.

49 Kazemzadeh, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, op cit.

in marches in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, and about 80,000 people participated in marches in Berlin, Germany.⁵⁰

The 2022 mass protests have continued almost non-stop. There have been more activities on certain days and less on others. The *Chehelom* of Mahsa witnessed a major increase in protests despite the regime's threats and preparations to stop the commemorations in various cities. An unexpected increase in protest activities occurred on November 3. Protests occurred in more cities and more people participated in protests. Moreover, there was a major difference in the attitudes of the protesters. In previous protests, there were only a handful of cases where the people attacked the coercive apparatuses. On November 3, there were many cases where the people fought back against the coercive apparatuses, took their weapons from them, and then used the weapons against the coercive apparatuses. Several members of the coercive apparatuses were injured, and the regime evacuated them with helicopters.⁵¹ There are also videos of helicopters that appear to show them used to attack the protesters with "objects and tear gas."⁵² Even seasoned observers who were reporting the change in the behavior did not know the reasons for the major change.⁵³

Several events occurred on previous days that might have caused the surge in protests and the increased assertiveness of the protesters. On October 30, IRGC Supreme Commander, Gen. Hussein Salami made his infamous threat declaring that "as of today all protests will cease."⁵⁴ On November 1, Khamenei made his most threatening speech until then. On November 2, the U.N. held a public hearing on the Iran protests where Javed Rahman, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Iran's human rights violations, gave a strong speech condemning the fundamentalist regime for the extreme use of violence against unarmed protesters, including killing dozens of children as young as 12. According to Rahman, the regime has killed at

50 Isaac Callan, "More than 50k Attend Richmond Hill, Ont. Protest against Iranian Government," *Global News* (October 1, 2022), <https://globalnews.ca/news/9169782/richmond-hill-iran-protest/>; and Leon Malherbe and Paris Hafezi, "Tens of Thousands March in Berlin in Support of Iran Protests," *Reuters* (October 22, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-guards-warn-cleric-over-agitating-restive-southeast-2022-10-22/>.

51 Iran International, "News" (November), <https://www.iranintl.com/202211031228>.

52 Ibid.

53 Iran International, "News Report" (November 3, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEo0hh4k6i4&t=1s>.

54 IRNA, "*Emrooz, Rooze Payan Eghteshashat Ast*" [Today, is the Last Day of the Riots] (October 30, 2022), <https://www.irna.ir/news/84925031/%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2-%D9%BE%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>.

least 277 protesters and arrested over 14,000 people, including human rights activists, lawyers, students, and journalists. That speech was followed by two very strong and effective speeches by Shirin Ebadi and Ms. Nazanin Boniadi. With the exceptions of ambassadors from China and Russia, all other ambassadors from the U.N. Security Council strongly supported the protests by the Iranian people. The words from the ambassador from Albania, who was one of the two ambassadors sponsoring the meeting, were particularly heartwarming. He said that Albania also suffered from a terrible totalitarian dictatorship. But the people resisted and fought until their country became free. That if the Iranian people continued their protests, they too would become free.⁵⁵ And during the previous days, more and more people, and commentators inside and outside Iran, began referring to the mass protests as revolution and revolutionary uprisings.

It appears that for the first time, many people have come to believe that it is possible to overthrow the regime; therefore, the risks are worth their efforts. In other words, as the protests continue, it shows that the regime is unable to crush the protests; therefore, the regime looks weak, which in turn changes the calculations of many to the benefit of the people. Also, as more world leaders publicly side with the people and condemn the fundamentalist regime, more people in Iran come to believe that their efforts are worth the risks. As the likelihood of regime collapse increases, more people join the protests.

It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people oppose the regime, but most are not willing to risk their lives, liberties, wealth, and jobs by joining the protests. Political scientists call this the free-rider problem. Most people in Iran want to live in a democracy but are not willing to pay with their lives and liberties to get it. They hope that others will risk their lives. Once the fundamentalist regime has been overthrown, then we will witness that tens of millions will come to the streets to celebrate the overthrow of the fundamentalist regime and the establishment of democracy.

There are also large numbers of individuals who are opportunists who simply side with whomever is in power. In Iran they are called “*Hezb Baad*” [Party of the Wind]. These individuals have no ideology or partisan attachments or principles. Their primary motivation is connection to power for personal financial gain. These opportunistic individuals leave the regime as soon as they come to believe that the regime might collapse.

Unlike the previous mass protests, the 2022 protests look more and more like a revolution that might overthrow the regime. The longer the protests continue and

⁵⁵ The video of the U.N. Security Council’s informal meeting is available at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k11/k119xlbjct>.

the stronger the global support for the Iranian people, the weaker the fundamentalist regime will become. Once it appears that the overthrow is highly likely, the collapse will come very fast.

The fundamentalist regime appears to be very concerned about being overthrown. Many believe that the regime's missile and drone attacks on the headquarters of several Iranian Kurdish groups (e. g., Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and Komala) in the Iraqi Kurdish region are carried out by the regime in order to divert attention from the mass protests. The regime also sent the military to attack and occupy the Kurdish-majority city of Mahabad on November 20, 2022.⁵⁶ Many believe that the fundamentalist regime is deliberately attempting to provoke the Iranian Kurdish parties to retaliate and use armed struggle to defend themselves and the Iranian Kurds from the terribly violent attacks by the fundamentalist regime.⁵⁷

A major factor that would increase the likelihood of success of the movement to overthrow the regime would be increased divisions among the fundamentalist elites and major segments of the fundamentalist elites breaking away from the regime and siding with the opposition. On February 4, 2023, Mir-Hussein Moussavi released a statement announcing that he now opposes the fundamentalist regime and the fundamentalist constitution.⁵⁸ Moussavi is one of the top leaders of the fundamentalist regime and one of the top two leaders of the reformist faction of the oligarchy. Moussavi's support for a referendum and free elections for a constituent assembly to write a new constitution based on democracy and human rights is highly significant. Moussavi enjoys great support among the social base of the fundamentalist regime, including among the rank-and-file members of the IRGC and Ministry of Intelligence. It is highly likely that Moussavi would chisel away a segment of the fundamentalist base and bring them to the democratic opposition. Moussavi's decision greatly increases the likelihood of regime collapse and greatly increases the likelihood of success of the democratic opposition.

A major piece of evidence that the 2022 mass protests have drastically increased internal divisions may have surfaced on March 19, 2023. A secret document was provided to Iran International and Iran Wire. It is not clear whether the docu-

⁵⁶ Iran International, "Islamic Republic Steps Up Military Crackdown in Kurdish Cities" (November 20, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211207781>; and Iran International, "Islamic Republic Deploys Military to Quash Protests in Kurdish City" (November 21, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211206594>.

⁵⁷ Iran International, "Islamic Republic Intensifying Attacks on Kurdish Targets in Iran and Iraq" (November 21, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211215732>.

⁵⁸ Maryam Sinaee, "Former Iran PM Turned Opposition Has Believers and Critics," Iran International (February 8, 2023), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202302071911>.

ment was leaked by a member of the fundamentalist oligarchy or hacked by a spy agency. If the document is genuine, it is one of the most significant secret documents from the IRI that has become public. According to the document, there was a secret meeting on January 3, 2023, on the anniversary of Gen. Soleimani's death, between high-ranking military and intelligence officials and Khamenei. The secret document was written by someone at the Supreme Leader's Office and is a summary of the minutes of the meeting. The officials talked for about two hours. Then, Khamenei talked briefly. The document is 44 pages long.⁵⁹

According to the document, 45 high officials, including 32 generals and admirals, 8 colonels, and 5 clerics (who were top security and intelligence officials) spoke during the meeting. Among them were: Gen. Hussein Salami, the Head of the IRGC; Gen. Esmail Qaani Akbarnejad, the Head of the IRGC-Qods Force; Gen. Gholam-Ali Rashid, the Head of Khatam al-Anbia Unified Command and former Deputy-Head of the General Command of the Armed Forces of the IRI; Admiral Ali-Reza Tangsiri, Head of the IRGC-Navy; Gen. Mohammad Hussein Nejat, Deputy Head of the Sarallah Command (the IRGC unit responsible for the security of Tehran); Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the Head of the IRGC Aerospace Force; Admiral Ali Shamkhani, current Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, former Minister of Defense and former Head of IRGC-Navy, and one of the top promoters of acquisition of nuclear weapons; and Gen. Mohammad Kazemi, Head of the IRGC-Intelligence Organization. Most of the other generals and colonels are combatant commanders in various provinces and cities. The clerics include: Hojatolislam Mahmoud Mohammadi Shahroodi, the Head of *Basij* Clergy, the hardline clerics and seminary students; Hojatolislam Abdollah Haji-Sadeghi, the Representative of the Supreme Leader at the IRGC; Hojatolislam Ali Saeedi Shahroodi, former Representative of the Supreme Leader at the IRGC and current Head of the Political-Ideological Bureau of the Supreme Commander; Hojatolislam Esmail Khatib, Minister of Intelligence; and Hojatolislam Ali-Asghar Hejazi, the Head of the Security and Political Bureau of the Office of the Supreme Leader.

According to hardline Hojatolislam Mohammadi Shahroodi, “more than 5,000 *Basiji* seminary students have abandoned their studies. ... They have ideological problems with the [fundamentalist] regime, many insult the Supreme Leader.” According to Hojatolislam Abdollah Haji-Sadeghi, “many high-ranking clerical teach-

59 The document in Persian is at https://static.prod.iranwire.com/pdfcomponent/Final_pcSv.pdf#view=fitH. Also see Iran Wire, “Exclusive: IRGC Commanders Warn Khamenei About Implosion” (March 19, 2023), <https://iranwire.com/en/politics/114906-exclusive-irgc-commanders-warn-khamenei-about-implosion/>; and Maryam Sinaee, “Leaked Document Reveals Loss of Loyalty, Insubordination in IRGC,” Iran International (March 20, 2023), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202303192652>.

ers at the seminaries insult the Supreme Leader.” Haji-Sadeghi added that it is true that there has been substantial abandonment of the fundamentalist regime among the coercive apparatuses, including fights among the forces. Haji-Sadeghi said that there are about 600,000 members of the coercive apparatuses. That not supporting the regime does not mean that they will fight against the regime. Haji-Sadeghi said that various reports indicate that from 12% to 68% of the members of the coercive apparatuses have abandoned the regime. Haji-Sadeghi said that they could rely upon a little more than 50% of the members of the coercive apparatuses to support the regime. According to Hojatolislam Khatib, there have been about 20,000 members of the coercive apparatuses that have had issues that the Ministry of Intelligence had to investigate and send reports to other entities about them. Khatib added that the youth are showing great courage in confronting the coercive apparatuses.⁶⁰

According to Col. Ehsan Khorshidi, many of his soldiers are sympathetic to the protesters. Some stole food from the IRGC facility and distributed it among the poor in the city of Karaj. Col. Khorshidi added that many of the IRGC members have their own family members among the protesters. He said that: “This morning at least six of my IRGC members came to me and asked that I intervene and release their family members who have been arrested during the protests.” Gen. Rahim Noee-Eghdam reported that many of his Qods Force troops in Syria have problems with both economic issues and ideological issues: “Many have been selling our intelligence to Israel which it uses to trap and kill our forces.”⁶¹ Gen. Hussein Hekmatian Raz said that his troops included many ethnic groups who fight bravely against foreign forces but refuse to fight against the protesters and have disobeyed orders to suppress the people. Gen. Rashid said that there have been several major disobediences by the troops, including three occasions that a group planned to use artillery to bomb various places in Tehran including the Residence of the Supreme Leader. Gen. Ghodrattollah Karimian said that his troops have fought bravely against foreign forces, but they will not shoot at women and poor people who lack food. There is a difference between rioters and protesters, and his troops will not shoot at protesters. Gen. Nejat said that half of the members of the coercive apparatuses want to leave the forces. Gen. Mahmoud Chahar-baghi said that one of his top commanders in Syria left the battlefield and came back to Tehran because his wife had been arrested by the IRGC during the protests and is in Evin prison. Gen. Kazemi, the Head of the IRGC Intelligence Organization, said that there are about 4 million youth between 14 and 18 years of age who strongly

⁶⁰ Ibid. All direct words cited are my translation.

⁶¹ Ibid. All direct words cited are my translation.

oppose the regime and show courage in their fight against the regime. Gen. Kazemi added that in cities up to 55% of the people stood up to the coercive apparatuses and that in certain neighborhoods up to 79% of the people stood up to the coercive apparatuses.⁶²

Khamenei then spoke and ordered increase in salaries for the members of the coercive apparatuses. Shortly thereafter, the budget for the coercive apparatuses was increased by 52%. Members of the *Basij* were exempt from income taxes as well as ever paying for utilities such as water, electricity, gas, and the like. He also ordered the judiciary to be lenient toward family members of the coercive apparatuses who had been arrested during the protests. He also said that those members of the coercive apparatuses who had disobeyed orders to suppress the protesters should be won back by increasing their salaries.⁶³

On February 14, 2023, a charter was published by 20 of Iran's most prominent and active civil society organizations and syndicates resisting the fundamentalist regime.⁶⁴ These 20 organizations included two teachers' syndicates, nine workers' unions, two university student groups, one high school student group, two women's organizations, three pensioners' groups, and one human rights organization. All these groups are independent of the state and represent people in their areas of vocation. These grassroots organizations have been organizing their constituents in the previous years to protest the policies of the regime. Many of their leaders and members have been arrested, incarcerated, and tortured by the regime. The text of the charter is clearly social democratic and against the dictatorships of the fundamentalist regime and the Pahlavi regime.

Within hours of the publication of this charter, Iran's main pro-democracy and progressive parties and organizations published their full support of the charter and the civil society organizations behind it. These parties include the Iran National Front-Organizations Abroad, Iran National Front-Europe, the Left Party of Iran (LPI), United Republicans of Iran, and Solidarity of Iranian Republicans.⁶⁵ The Iran National Front is Iran's main, oldest, and largest pro-democracy political party and is a coalition of liberal democrats and social democrats. The LPI is the largest leftist party of Iran. The United Republicans of Iran and the Solidarity of Iranian Repub-

62 Ibid.

63 Iran Wire, "Exclusive: IRGC Commanders Warn Khamenei About Implosion" (March 19, 2023).

64 "*Manshoor Motalebat Tashakolhay Mostaghel Senfi Va Madani Iran*" [Charter of Demands of the Independent Organizations of Civil Society and Syndicates of Iran] (February 2023), <https://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news1/more/106294/>.

65 "*Bayaniyeh Jamee Az Sazemanha Va Ahzab Jomhurikhah Va Secular Democrat*" [Statement of a Group of Republican and Secular Democratic Organizations and Parties] (February 16, 2023), <https://melliun.org/iran/352267>.

licans are the two main organizations of democratic republicans. These parties constitute Iran's main pro-democracy coalition.⁶⁶ The LPI had been working closely with the INF in order to create a broad-based pro-democracy coalition. On March 9, 2023, these five democratic republican parties and groups announced the formation of their coalition.⁶⁷ These five groups had been closely working with each other for the previous five years. This coalition has the potential to attract other forces, such as the 20 civil society organizations. If it is able to do so, it will become the main alternative to the fundamentalist regime and guarantee that the post-fundamentalist Iran will be a democracy.

5.11 Characteristics

There is widespread consensus among observers inside Iran that the objective of the 2022 mass protests is to overthrow the regime. Leaders and top members of all fundamentalist factions (hardline, expedient, reformist) have opposed the mass protests.⁶⁸ By and large, hardliners have strongly condemned the protests, while expedients and reformists have condemned the protests or remained silent or made suggestions on how to save the system through reform. Khamenei has publicly characterized the mass protests as a hybrid war orchestrated by the U.S., Britain, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, with the objective to overthrow the fundamentalist regime. Former President Mohammad Khatami has also expressed opposition to the 2022 mass protests, as he did with the mass protests during 2017 and 2019. In his Instagram account, Khatami wrote: “overthrow is neither possible nor desirable; however, with the continuation of the current situation, every moment will increase the condition for social collapse.”⁶⁹ Obviously, for members of the fundamentalist oligarchy overthrow of their regime is not desirable. However, for the opponents of the fundamentalist dictatorship, the replacement of the fundamentalist dictatorship with secular democracy is highly desirable. Not only the democratic opposition considers democracy preferable to the fundamentalist dictatorship, but also the non-democratic opposition considers democracy to be more desirable than the fundamentalist regime. The only groups in Iran that do not consider the replacement of the fundamentalist regime to be desirable are supporters

⁶⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Iran National Front*, op cit.

⁶⁷ See the announcement at <https://melliun.org/iran/355228>.

⁶⁸ There are only a handful of exceptions, such as Mir-Hussein Moussavi and Faezeh Hashemi Rafsanjani.

⁶⁹ Mohammad Khatami (November 14, 2022) https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck7-Ru9sdgd/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=ba244963-52c6-4f2b-9804-af1daf4170b5.

of the fundamentalist dictatorship, which include all three main fundamentalist factions.

Outside Iran, however, the supporters of the fundamentalist regime portray the 2022 mass protests (as well as the mass protests of 2017–2018 and 2019) as reforms within the system. In other words, the supporters of the fundamentalist regime, including non-Iranian promoters of appeasement of the fundamentalist regime, argue that the objective of the mass protests is not overthrow, or revolution. The supporters of the fundamentalist regime and the non-Iranian pro-appeasement individuals argue that the objective of the 2022 mass protests is merely to change the law on compulsory hijab.

The best research that debunks the falsehoods of the supporters of the fundamentalist regime has been published by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.⁷⁰ Cooperating with the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN), the most reliable public opinion research institute on the attitudes of the Iranian people, the study convincingly demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people oppose the fundamentalist regime and have been struggling to change the regime to a democratic secular political system.⁷¹ According to this study:

Young people are not the only group who oppose the compulsory hijab. Polling found that 78 per cent of respondents aged between 20 and 29, 68 per cent between 30 and 49, and 74 per cent aged over 50 are against the mandatory imposition of the hijab.

Men support Iranian women and stand against the mandatory imposition of the hijab. Through polling Iranians, we found that 71 per cent of men and 74 per cent of women disagree with the mandatory imposition of the hijab.

Iranian society has experienced mass secularisation, which cuts across Iran's rural–urban divide. Only 26 per cent of urban Iranians pray five times a day while 33 per cent of rural Iranians follow the same Islamic prescription. Similarly, only 28 per cent of rural Iranians and 21 per cent of urban Iranians believe in the practice of wearing the hijab. ...

Protests against the compulsory hijab are about regime change. Of those who are against the compulsory hijab, 84 per cent also want to live in a secular state. As a secular state is impossible under the Islamic Republic, this is indicative of the demand for regime change among the people.⁷²

⁷⁰ Kasra Aarabi and Jemima Shelley, “Protests and Polling Insights From the Streets of Iran: How Removal of the Hijab Became a Symbol of Regime Change” (November 22, 2022), <https://institute.global/policy/protests-and-polling-insights-streets-iran-how-removal-hijab-became-symbol-regime-change>.

⁷¹ GAMAAN's website is at <https://gamaan.org/>.

⁷² Aarabi and Shelley, “Protests and Polling Insights,” op. cit.

GAMAAN conducted a comprehensive survey of Iranians inside and outside Iran between December 21 and 31, 2022.⁷³ According to this survey:

In response to the question “Islamic Republic: Yes or No?” 81% of respondents inside the country responded “No” to the Islamic Republic, 15% responded “Yes,” and 4% were not sure. Of the Iranian respondents abroad, 99% responded “No,” opting against the Islamic Republic.

Those who answered “No” to the Islamic Republic or “I do not know” in the question on a referendum about the Islamic Republic were asked a follow-up question about their preferred democratic and secular alternative regime type. Of those, 28% inside Iran and 32% outside Iran would prefer a presidential republic, 12% inside Iran and 29% outside Iran would prefer a parliamentary republic regime type, and 22% inside Iran and 25% outside Iran would prefer a constitutional monarchy.

Regarding the nationwide protests of the past months, 80% of those inside the country support the protests; 67% believe the protests will succeed, while 14% think they will not succeed. Around 15% of the population inside the country oppose the protests. Respondents outside the country overwhelmingly support the protests; of these, 90% think they will succeed, and only 9% think they will not succeed.

In response to a question about their political orientations, 60% of respondents inside the country describe themselves as proponents for regime change as a precondition for any meaningful change; 16% are proponents of a structural transformation and transition away from the Islamic Republic; 11% are proponents of the principles of the Islamic Revolution and the Supreme Leader; 6% are proponents of gradual reforms within the framework of the Islamic Republic; and 6% don’t identify with any of these political orientations. In comparison with GAMAAN’s previous surveys, after the 2022 nationwide protests the percentage of those who support regime change increased by 20%.⁷⁴

According to the December 2022 GAMAAN survey, about 15% of Iranians inside Iran support the fundamentalist regime and only about 1% of Iranians outside Iran support the fundamentalist regime. About 11% of the population inside Iran support Khamenei and the hardline faction while between 4 and 6% of the population support the reformist faction; all the fundamentalist factions constituting about 15% of the population. About 81% of Iranians inside Iran oppose the fundamentalist regime, and about 4% were not sure. About 99% of Iranians outside Iran oppose the fundamentalist regime. Of the 85% of Iranians inside Iran who oppose the regime or are not sure, a total of 40% support a democratic republican form of regime for the post-fundamentalist system while 22% support monarchy.

⁷³ Ammar Maleki and Pooyan Tamimi Arab, “Iranians’ Attitudes Toward the 2022 Nationwide Protests,” GAMAAN (February 4, 2023), <https://gamaan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GAMAAN-Protests-Survey-English-Report-Final.pdf>.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Of the 99% of Iranians outside Iran who oppose the regime, about 61% support a republican form of system while 25% support monarchy.

One of the most reliable sources for collection of data on the 2022 protests is the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), which includes the work of all the major Iranian human rights organizations.⁷⁵ According to HRANA, between September 17 and November 20, 2022, the regime killed at least 419 protesters, including at least 60 children under 18 years of age, and arrested at least 17,451 people, including at least 540 university students. According to HRANA, protests occurred in 155 cities and 142 universities.⁷⁶

In mid-November, the hacktivist group Black Reward was able to gain access to files of the Fars News Agency, which is the IRGC's media arm and staffed by many intelligence officers from the IRGC-Intelligence Organization. The Black Reward shared the files with Iran International. In one file, the Deputy Commander of the *Basij*, IRGC Gen. Qassem Qoreishi, was speaking with hardline media managers associated with the IRGC discussing the mass protests for about two and half hours.⁷⁷ Iran International has made available the audio file as well as Persian and English excerpts of the talk and discussion between Gen. Qoreishi and the media managers. One of the main topics of discussion is the morale of the coercive apparatuses. They express worries that the coercive apparatuses are exhausted, unhappy, and their confidence shaken. The report states:

It is also revealed in the file that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has complained about the silence of the members of the Expediency Council regarding the protests. According to one of the speakers, Khamenei in his meeting with Police Chief Hossein Ashtari has warned that "You must not lose your confidence." The managers of the state-affiliated media have also demanded a pay raise for special police forces, warning, "There is no good news about police forces. They are exhausted and so unhappy, especially after the events happened [sic] in Sistan and Baluchestan."⁷⁸

The Black Reward hackers also gained access to a 123-page top-secret report on the 2022 mass protests that the Fars News Agency had prepared for IRGC Gen. Hussein

⁷⁵ Its website is at <https://www.hra-news.org/>. The website's English-language page is at <https://www.en-hrana.org/>.

⁷⁶ See a summary of HRANA's report (November 21, 2022) at <https://melliun.org/iran/340164>. HRANA posts its daily count on its Telegram social media. See <https://t.me/hranews/75723>.

⁷⁷ Iran International, "Hacked Audio File Reveals Concern About Failure to Stop Iran Unrest" (November 28, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211282012>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Salami, the Head of the IRGC.⁷⁹ The top-secret report was completed on November 24, 2022. The report was made solely for Gen. Salami and was not submitted to any other official. According to this secret report, the regime has arrested over 30,000 protesters, including 115 members of the coercive apparatuses for their support for the people. Although not presenting a number, the report states that the number of deaths of protesters has been several times that of the deaths of the 2019 mass protests. It is significant that the internal secret numbers of the regime for those killed and incarcerated have been much higher than those published by civil society sources. It is also significant that the regime's publicly stated numbers are vastly less than the numbers the regime includes in its secret documents. According to the report, about 600,000 people had participated in the mass protests. The report also cites several polls taken by various fundamentalist entities (e.g., the Ministry of the Interior). According to one poll cited, 84% of the respondents said that the mass protests will have positive ramifications. About 70% of the respondents said that they would not participate in pro-regime rallies. According to the report, the biggest victory for the opposition is that the people's fears of the coercive apparatuses have evaporated.

Although the protests since 1981 share many characteristics, each set of protests has also had its unique features. The following characteristics distinguish the 2022–2023 protests from earlier protests.

5.11.1 Women's Revolution

Large numbers of women participated in these protests. Moreover, women took leadership roles in these protests. Men strongly supported women in these protests. In other words, while women were asking for their rights, men stood shoulder to shoulder with them supporting equal rights for women.

5.11.2 Widespread Participation by Young Women

For the first time since 1981, large numbers of female high school students participated in these protests. The protests coincided with the opening of schools in Iran, which open on September 23. The sheer numbers and their courage had not been seen since 1981. High school teachers had been protesting for better pay during the

⁷⁹ Iran International has posted the secret report (November 24, 2022) at https://issuu.com/iranintl/docs/b29_2_1.

previous year and they called upon their students to support the protests after Mahsa's murder, which might have played a role, but that role was minor. Young females have enthusiastically participated in the 2022 protests. The regime has violently attacked female high schools and arrested large numbers of students and sent them to mental institutions. Despite extremely violent attacks by the regime, the continued brave resistance of young high school female students is one of the major surprises of the 2022 mass protests.

The fundamentalist regime has had a program to brainwash children from kindergarten to high school through textbooks, ideological lectures, songs, and the like. The widespread participation of young females and males in the 2022 mass protests clearly shows that the regime's brainwashing programs failed badly.⁸⁰ According to IRGC Adm. Ali Fadavi, Deputy Commander of the IRGC, the average age of those arrested during the mass protests is 15 years of age.⁸¹ The coercive apparatuses have attacked high schools and rounded up large numbers of students and sent them to mental institutions to teach them to conform to the fundamentalist rules.⁸²

There are many reasons why the fundamentalist regime's intense brainwashing programs at schools failed. One, a major reason is the overall failure of the fundamentalist regime, as discussed earlier in this book. Two, many non-fundamentalist parents teach their children values in contradiction to the fundamentalist values. Three, because of the internet and social media, students have access to information, values, and lifestyles that they find contrary to and far more attractive than the reactionary and oppressive ideology of the fundamentalist regime. Four, many teachers and administrators in schools from 1st to 12th grades actually love to teach students rather than to indoctrinate them in fundamentalist dogma. Students tend to respect such teachers who truly care for them and respect them rather than the fundamentalist apparatchiks and enforcers at schools.⁸³

⁸⁰ Nadeem Ebrahim, "Iran Faces Dilemma as Children Join Protests in 'Unprecedented' Phenomenon," CNN (October 17, 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/17/middleeast/iran-school-children-protests-mime-intl/index.html>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Iran International, "Special Coverage of the Protests" (October 19, 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyIQzC_kA_Q.

5.11.3 Youth's Revolution

For the first time, young people have participated in very large numbers. The regime has also systematically targeted the youth.⁸⁴ The regime's coercive apparatuses shoot children in the head and heart to kill them. By November 21, the regime had killed at least 60 children under 18 years of age. The youngest is Kian Pirfalak, a nine-year-old boy killed by the regime in the city of Izeh in Khuzestan province.⁸⁵

5.11.4 Ethno-sectarian Minorities as Pillars of a Pluralistic Iran

Men and women from all ethnic groups participated in these protests. In some earlier protests only people from Persian provinces were protesting, for example, while the others tended to remain silent, or protests were occurring in Kurdistan or Baluchistan and other ethnic-majority provinces were silent. The fundamentalist regime has pursued a policy of sowing fear and hatred among various ethno-sectarian groups and presenting its (despotic) rule as necessary for preserving the territorial integrity of Iran. In the 2022 mass protests, protesters in Khuzestan province shouted slogans in Azerbaijani to send their solidarity to the people of Azerbaijan when the regime was using extremely violent repression. And the people in Azerbaijan shouted slogans in Kurdish to show their solidarity with the people in Kurdish regions. And the Kurds shouted slogans in Persian to support people in Persian-majority provinces and Balochis in the Balochi regions. In the 2022 mass protests, the Iranian people explicitly rejected the fundamentalist regime's ideology of hatred and division.

The fact that the 2022 mass protests have been explicitly inclusive of all ethno-sectarian groups in Iran is significant. The slogans have been consciously for freedom and democracy for Iran. Not a single call for secession has been made, no racist slogan has been shouted. This has great significance for the success of the mass protests. The fundamentalist regime had relied upon the fear of the population of secession, civil war, and bloodshed to both justify its repression and convince the population to submit to its dictatorship. The fundamentalist regime's Shia fundamentalist constitution, laws, and policies explicitly discriminate against the non-Shia population. The regime has pursued terribly bigoted propaganda against Iran's ethno-sectarian minorities such as Kurds, Balochis, Turkomans, and Arabs

⁸⁴ Iran International, "News" (November 20, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/202211217863>.

⁸⁵ Babak Dehghanpisheh, "The Killing of a 9-Year-Old Boy Further Ignites Iran's Anti-government Protests," *The Washington Post* (November 18, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/11/18/iran-protests-izeh-kian-pirfalak/>.

in conjunction with its violent suppression and oppression of these minorities. The 2022 mass protests demand freedom, democracy, and secularism for all Iranians. This movement totally removes any notions of ethno-sectarian identity and considers all Iranians equal before the law. It demands human rights, civil liberties, and democratic rights for all Iranians. Moreover, the demands are modern, secular, feminist, democratic, and pluralistic.

This movement reflects a seismic shift in Iranian politics. There have been ethnic parties among some ethnic groups in Iran that were based on ethnic demands. For example, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK) made demands for autonomy right after the revolution. Around 2000–2001, the DPIK modified that position and began demanding “*federalism bar asas meliyat*” [federalism on the basis of nationality] in Iran. To many, such demands appear more like confederation than federal systems in the U.S. or Germany. Moreover, many fear that such demands may lead to civil war and secession. In 2022 sentiments and politics have changed greatly. The ethnic-nationalist demands were based on several assumptions. One, most Kurds in Iran want to have a Kurdish autonomous region. Two, non-Kurds discriminate against Kurds. Three, Kurds in Iran have more in common with Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria so that a great Kurdish state encompassing all Kurds in the Middle East is both feasible and desirable.

Although the DPIK has great support among the Kurds, most Kurds in Iran do not support it. The Kurds constitute about 8–10% of Iran’s population and about 40–45% of Iranian Kurds are Shia. The dominant sentiment of Shia Kurds has always been for Iran and against secession. The Shia Kurdish regions have always been strongholds of the Iran National Front, which advocates democracy for Iran and full legal equality for all Iranians. For example, the number one leader of the INF was Dr. Karim Sanjabi (between 1977 and the 1990s), who was elected to the Majles from Kermanshah, whose population is primarily Shia Kurd. The same is true for Dr. Ali Ardalan.⁸⁶ Moreover, many Sunni Kurds have also been members and leaders of the INF. For example, Dr. Ali Mehrasa, the mayor of Sa-ghez after the revolution, has been a top leader of the INF. The same is true for Hormoz Chamanara.

To the shock and horror of many Iranian Kurds, some Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria have good relations with the fundamentalist regime that has been oppressing and brutalizing Iranian Kurds. For example, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the second largest party among Iraqi Kurds, has had close relations with the fundamentalist regime, receiving funds and weapons from the IRI, and has had close collaboration with the IRGC. The largest party among Kurds in Turkey has

⁸⁶ Kazemzadeh, *The Iran National Front*, op. cit., p. 45.

been the PKK, a far-left militant party. The PKK has had a long and strange relationship with the fundamentalist regime. When the IRI has had bad relations with the government of Turkey, the IRI has provided funds and weapons to the PKK and has allowed it to use Iranian territory to carry out violent attacks on Turkey. The PKK has collaborated closely with the IRGC in cornering and violently attacking the DPIK. However, when the IRI has had good relations with the Turkish government, then the PKK has allowed PJAK (its Iranian Kurdish affiliate) to carry out attacks against the Iranian government inside Iran. PJAK has refused to cooperate with other Iranian Kurdish groups.

It appears to me that the vast majority of the Iranian Kurds have come to view Iran as their true home, particularly in recent years. Furthermore, they have come to realize that there have not been serious conflicts between the Iranian Kurds and other ethnic groups in Iran. Rather, the violent conflicts have been instigated by the Pahlavi regime (Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah) and the fundamentalist regime, regimes that have also oppressed and brutalized all other ethnic groups in Iran including Persians.

In sum, the secessionist sentiments among Iranian Kurds have been diminishing drastically in recent years. The deep grieving, outpouring of emotion, and reactions of all Iranian ethno-sectarian groups for Mahsa's death have cemented the emotional bonds between Iranian Kurds and the rest of the population. The Iranian Kurds saw the outrage, uprisings, struggles, and mass protests by all Iranians. These reactions proved the love and unity that all other ethno-sectarian groups in Iran have for Iranian Kurds. It appears to me that the vast majority of the Iranian Kurds want to be part of a free and democratic Iran where all citizens are equal before the law and there would be no ethnic or sectarian discrimination. Under such popular sentiments, the DPIK may change its demands and embrace a unitary system in Iran with decentralization whereby people would in democratic elections choose their provincial governors and mayors. Such a position would pave the way for a broad-based alliance between national political parties and ethnic-based parties, which would not only expediate the overthrow of the fundamentalist regime but also virtually guarantee the establishment of democracy in the post-fundamentalist Iran.

There are historical reasons for optimism that the DPIK may evolve in this direction. When the revolution occurred in 1977–1979, the DPIK was a conventional pro-Moscow Communist Party working closely with the Tudeh Party. However, under the able leadership of Dr. Abdul Rahman Qassemlou, its long-time Secretary-General, the DPIK gradually moved away from being a Stalinist party to Euro-

communist, then democratic socialist, and finally a social democratic party.⁸⁷ As of March 2023, the DPIK refers to Iranian Kurds (and other ethnic minorities in Iran) as “*mellat*” [nation] and not “*ghom*” [ethnic group]. This is politically significant and sensitive. A nation is associated with a state of its own, whereas many ethnic groups coexist in one state. To consider Kurds in Iran an ethnic group, means that one calls Iran its nation and that one supports a unified Iran. Whereas to consider Kurds in Iran (and Balochis, Turkmans, Azerbaijanis, Arabs) a nation may mean that each of these groups may secede. And as of March 2023, the DPIK has not modified its demand for a “federalism based on nationalities.”

We observe an interesting evolution in the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, the second largest ethnic party among Sunni Kurds. Under the leadership of Abdullah Mohtadi, the Komala, which was an extremist Maoist party in 1979, has abandoned extremism and dictatorship and has embraced social democracy. Whereas in 1979–1985, there were armed clashes between DPIK and Komala, today the two parties work closely together.⁸⁸ In January and February 2023, Mohtadi began working closely with Reza Pahlavi and others attempting to organize an alternative to the fundamentalist regime. In early March 2023, Mohtadi began using the term “*ghom*” rather than “*mellat*” for Kurds in Iran.⁸⁹

5.11.5 From Small Towns and Rural Areas to Large Cities

People from small towns, medium-sized cities, and large cities participated in these protests. In the 2009–2010 protests, although millions were participating, the protests tended to occur in the five largest cities.

5.11.6 Multi-class Mass Participation

The protests occurred among the working classes, lower middle classes, middle classes, and upper middle classes. In 2009–2010, the protests largely came from middle classes in large cities. In the protests during 2018 and November 2019, the overwhelming majority of the protesters were from the working classes. The middle classes were conspicuous by their absence between 2017 and 2019. The 2022 mass protests have truly been multi-class protests.

⁸⁷ The party's website is at <https://pdki.org/english/>.

⁸⁸ The party's website is at <https://www.komalainternational.org/>.

⁸⁹ See his views at Iran International, “*Chashmandaz*” (March 11, 2023), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzTKvruDLjE>.

Workers in the oil refineries and petrochemical industries participated in the 2022 mass protests. This category had not participated in mass protests since the 1979 revolution. Significantly, the workers did not go on strike for personal financial benefit; rather, they said they were going to strike to express solidarity with the mass protesters and put pressure on the fundamentalist regime's coercive apparatuses to stop using violence against the people. Workers in other areas have had major strikes since 1979 and some of them began strikes in solidarity with the mass protesters and the oil and petrochemical workers. A major example is the workers in the Haft-Tapeh Sugar Cane Company in Khuzestan province, Iran's largest sugar cane agrobusiness enterprise. Esmail Bakhshi, the leader of the workers at the Haft-Tapeh company, said that the primary reason that the workers were protesting was to express their solidarity with the mass protesters and the workers in the oil industry.⁹⁰

By late November, workers and employees from several major industries were also on strike; some made explicit political demands while others made only economic demands. Among these were a steel mill in Isfahan, aluminum factory in Fars, diesel factory in Qazvin, and one of only two syringe factories in Iran.⁹¹

Keepers of small shops in the traditional bazaars in several cities (e. g., Mashhad, Tehran) also participated in the 2022 mass protests. With a few minor exceptions, the bazaar shop keepers had not participated in mass protests since the 1979 revolution. The only places that had witnessed participation of shop keepers in protests between 1979 and 2022 had been in Kurdish areas. According to hardline media managers associated with the IRGC, on November 15 the strikes by shop keepers were highly successful. According to these sources: "In the meeting, state media managers say 22 provinces were the scene of strikes on November 15, adding that around 70 to 100 percent of markets and bazaars were shut down on that day. Based on the file, most of the closures were in [the] capital Tehran and in some cities almost 100 percent of the shops and businesses were closed."⁹²

For the first time since 1981, university professors have joined the protest movement. Before 1981, Iranian university professors (along with their students) had been at the forefront of all liberal and progressive movements in Iran. This

⁹⁰ Iran International, "*Tadavom Eatesab Kargaran Peymani Palayeshgaha Va Tajamoe Karkonan Sherkat Neishekar Haft-Tapeh Dar Rooz Seshanbeh*" [The Continuation of the Strikes by Contract Workers at Refineries and Assembling of Employees of Haft-Tapeh Sugarcane Company on Tuesday] (October 18, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/202210182107>.

⁹¹ Iran International, "News" (November 23, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211231359>.

⁹² Iran International, "Hacked Audio File Reveals Concern About Failure to Stop Iran Unrest" (November 28, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211282012>.

was particularly the case during Dr. Mossadegh's government (1951–1953), when professors and students were one of the main pillars of the pro-democracy movement and the Iran National Front (1960–1963).⁹³ In the 1970s and 1980s, university professors tended to be liberal while university students tended to join more radical groups (usually on the far-left communist or far-right Islamist). From 1981, university professors kept their views private because they were worried about being fired or arrested by the intelligence agencies. For the first time since 1981, during the 2022 protests university professors supported their students and condemned the repression of the regime.

Historically, large numbers of physicians in Iran have been strong supporters of democracy, modernity, personal freedoms, civil liberties, and civil rights. The Physicians' Organization of the INF is one of its strongest groups, and early on it published a statement supporting the mass protests. The fundamentalist regime had engaged in several activities that particularly angered and enraged physicians. For example, the regime was using ambulances to surreptitiously take its coercive apparatuses into areas under the control of the protesters and then they would arrest protest leaders and take them in the ambulances to prison. This illegal use of ambulances greatly upset the physicians. The regime also barged into emergency rooms to arrest injured protesters who were being given medical care. The regime has also forced the physicians at the coroners' offices to write false reports on the deaths of the protesters and dissidents, a practice that physicians find despicable, and which undermines their credibility and honor.

In October physicians gathered in major cities such as Mashhad, Shiraz, Tehran, and Isfahan in major protests.⁹⁴ They shouted anti-dictatorship slogans and supported the mass protests. Some of the slogans included: "*Azadi Azadi*" [Freedom Freedom], "*Kurdistan, Zahedan, Cheshm Va Cheragh Iran*" [Kurdistan and Zahedan, Eyes and Lights of Iran], "*Az Shiraz Ta Kurdistan, Iran Shodeh Ghabrestan*" [From Shiraz to Kurdistan, Iran Has Become a Graveyard], "*Hokomat Bacheh-kosh, Nemikhahim Namikhahim*" [We Do Not Want a Regime That Murders Children], and "*Marg Bar Dictator*" [Death to the Dictator].⁹⁵ In Tehran on October 26, 2022, the regime used guns with pellets to shoot the physicians, beat them up with batons, arrested many of them, and used tear gas against the rest. According to Dr. Hussein Moussavian, who was present at the protest, there were about 3,000

⁹³ Kazemzadeh, *The Iran National Front*, op. cit.

⁹⁴ Iran International, "*Ba Vojod Hamleh Beh Tajamo Shiraz, Pezeshkan Baray Tajamo Dar Tehran Va Isfahan Farakhan Dadand*" [Although the Gathering Was Attacked in Shiraz, Physicians Called for Meetings in Tehran and Isfahan] (October 24, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/202210240128>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

physicians at the protest.⁹⁶ One female surgeon physician, Dr. Parisa Bahmani, was killed, and many others suffered serious injuries.⁹⁷ The people joined the beleaguered and stunned physicians and pushed back the coercive apparatuses. On October 27, 2022, in Isfahan, the regime roughed up physicians and arrested them.

Such use of violence against physicians has no precedence in Iran. The Shah's regime also feared physicians, but its methods were very different. The Shah's regime usually sent its coercive apparatuses to the clinic or house of dissident physicians, took them to the interrogation place, threatened them, and then let them leave when they agreed to cease political activities.

5.11.7 Monarchists Vs. Democrats

Iranian people and politics are very fragmented and polarized. The opposition to the fundamentalist regime includes many groups. One major divide is between the monarchists who want the return of the Pahlavi regime and those who want to establish a democratic secular republic. The democratic forces include the secular liberal democrats and social democrats of the Iran National Front, various republicans, and *Melli-Mazhabi* [nationalist religious] groups, as well as former communists who have abandoned their support for dictatorship and embraced a secular democratic republican system.⁹⁸ In addition to the pro-democracy groups, there are other non-democratic opposition groups that also oppose the monarchists, such as the PMOI and communist groups. There are also ethnic parties whose positions are not clear.

Unlike the protests during 2017–2018 and 2019, where some shouted slogans in support of the monarchy, in the 2022 protests there were virtually no such slogans by the protesters in Iran. During the 2017–2018 and November 2019 protests some (a minority of the protesters) shouted slogans such as “*Reza Shah, Rouhat Shad*” [Reza Shah, Bless Your Soul] and a handful “*Javid Shah*” [Long Live the King]. Both the causes and consequences of this phenomenon are of great significance.

⁹⁶ Hussein Moussavian, “Interview with Radio Farda” (October 27, 2022), <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32102030.html>. Dr. Moussavian is the number one leader of the INF.

⁹⁷ Iran International, “*Etesab Pezeshkan Dar Shahrhay Mokhtalef Dar Eteraz Beh Koshteh Shodan Yek Pezeshk Dar Hamleh Mamouran*” [Physicians Go on Strike in Various Cities in Protest of the Killing of One Physician by the Authorities] (October 29, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/202210291552>.

⁹⁸ For an analysis of the conflicts between the INF and the monarchists, as well as brief discussions of other pro-democracy and progressive groups, see Kazemzadeh, *The Iran National Front*, op. cit.

The 2017–2018 and November 2019 protests were primarily over economic issues. Some people made a simple comparison between the terrible economic conditions and the economic conditions before the revolution. There is no doubt that the fundamentalists have badly managed the economy and the Iranian people have been suffering under the utter lack of economic competence of the fundamentalist regime. The economic situation before the revolution was much better for virtually all classes, including the working classes. And when the fundamentalist coercive apparatuses came to violently suppress the protesters, many shouted the slogan “Reza Shah, Bless Your Soul.” Since 1979, the fundamentalists have consistently and emotionally attacked Reza Shah for his violent suppression of clerics as well as expelling the Shia clerics from control of education and the judiciary, two lucrative and powerful positions they held. The slogan praising Reza Shah reflects the emotional hope of large segments of the population of a strong violent man standing up to the fundamentalists and violently putting them down and repressing them.

The 2022 protests began with the fundamentalist police beating a Sunni Kurdish woman to death over her hijab. Reza Shah had ordered his police to use batons and beat up women who were wearing hijab and violently take off their hijab. There exists a clear similarity between Reza Shah and the fundamentalist regime: both used violence against women to impose the regime’s view of what women should wear. Both Reza Shah and the fundamentalist regime deny women the right to choose whether to wear hijab or not. Both Reza Shah and the fundamentalists use police violence to force women to submit to their orders about women’s clothing. Another major demand of the 2022 protests is freedom. There existed no freedoms of thought, expression, the press, political parties, or elections under the two Pahlavi kings and the fundamentalist regime. By the word “*azadi*” [freedom] the people are demanding both freedom and democracy. Both the fundamentalist regime and the two Pahlavi kings were terribly dictatorial and repressive. Unlike the (bulk of the) Iranian people, who want freedom and democracy, the monarchists praise the terribly tyrannical rule of the two Pahlavi kings.

The 2022 protests explicitly condemn discrimination against various ethnic minorities and fully support equal rights for all Iranians. Both Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi terribly discriminated against ethnic minorities and harshly and violently repressed ethnic minorities. A major segment of the monarchists publicly express violent Persian chauvinist views that many Iranians consider reprehensible. A mass movement that advocates equal rights for all ethnic groups could not logically embrace chauvinist programs.

On June 3, 2022, Reza Pahlavi gave a press conference, and he presented himself as the spokesman of the opposition and condemned all the other opposition groups.⁹⁹ There were strong reactions by almost all other major opposition groups. The Iran National Front, the main and largest pro-democracy political party, along with several other parties issued a strong statement categorically condemning Mr. Pahlavi. They stated that Mr. Pahlavi is the leader of the monarchists, he is not the leader of the opposition.¹⁰⁰ Several far-left parties issued a joint statement strongly condemning Mr. Pahlavi as well. Several Kurdish and Baloch ethnic parties also issued statements condemning Mr. Pahlavi, who referred to various ethnic groups as “*ghabayel va ashayer*” [tribes and clans].¹⁰¹

Until March 2022, non-monarchist opposition groups had, by and large, ignored Mr. Pahlavi and the monarchists. Due to the pro-monarchist slogans that were shouted during the 2017–2018 and 2019 protests, it became clear that Mr. Pahlavi and his supporters were pouncing to declare Mr. Pahlavi the sole leader and spokesman for the opposition. Many monarchists were publicly threatening various opposition groups with punishment for their opposition to monarchy in 1979, as well as for their current activities if these activities were not under the leadership of monarchists. Some major monarchists were publicly arguing that after the overthrow of the fundamentalist regime it was necessary to have a period of authoritarianism to last about 10 years, so that law and order could be created, and good economic systems re-established for the prosperity of the country. In August 2022, former empress Farah Pahlavi gave an interview with Italian publication *Libero*, where she claimed that the people want the monarchy to come back and that, if so, she is ready to go back and re-establish the Pahlavi monarchy, Reza Pahlavi would be king, and that his daughter, Noor, would become his successor.¹⁰² Ms. Farah Pahlavi’s words provoked strong reactions and were ridiculed and condemned by many people inside and outside Iran.

99 Iran International, “Iran’s Exiled Prince Calls for Coordinated Front Against Islamic Republic” (June 3, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202206030892>.

100 “*Bayanieh Moshtarak 6 Sazeman Democrat Va Jomhurikah*” [Joint Statement of 6 Democratic and Republican Organizations] (June 9, 2022), <https://melliun.org/iran/317844>.

101 The technical term used by scholars as well as most political parties and groups to refer to various such groups in Iran is “*ghom*” [ethnic group] or “*ghomiyat*” [ethnicity]. Several ethnic parties usually use the term “*mellat*” [nation] and “*melliyat*” [nationality] to refer to their group. Clearly, Reza Pahlavi’s use of the terms “tribe” and “clan” was insulting. It is not clear whether Mr. Pahlavi was ignorant of the debates on this crucial issue or purposefully wanted to insult such minority groups.

102 Iran International, “Exiled Queen Says Ready to Return Home After Iran Is Free” (August 17, 2022), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202208176071>.

The words of Mr. Reza Pahlavi and Ms. Farah Pahlavi came across as arrogant and condescending. For many years, both publicly and privately, monarchists have been asking and pressing Reza Pahlavi to take the role of leader, galvanize the people, overthrow the fundamentalist regime, and re-establish the Pahlavi monarchy. When Mr. Pahlavi did what his supporters had been asking him to do, there was widespread strong condemnation by the non-monarchist segments of the population and opposition groups that form the overwhelming majority of the population.

Numerous comments in the comments sections of online media contain vulgar insults and personal attacks by the monarchists. Although many well-known monarchist personalities use such language, less extreme monarchists claim that the bulk of such venomous comments are by the fundamentalist cyber army to make the monarchists look dictatorial, violent, and intolerant. Some believe that the fundamentalist regime wants to frighten the people with the possibility of the return of the Pahlavi dictatorship, so that its agents, acting as *agents provocateurs*, have pretended to be monarchists, and shouted pro-monarchy slogans during the protests in order to discredit them and cause many pro-democracy segments of the population not to join the protests. There is no doubt that a large minority of the Iranian population supports the return of the Pahlavi dictatorship. There is also no doubt that many monarchists hold the portraits of Reza Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah, and Reza Pahlavi during their protests outside Iran and publicly shout slogans for the return of the Pahlavi monarchy. Therefore, it is plausible that monarchists inside Iran would also shout monarchist slogans. Although it is plausible that the fundamentalist regime has been engaging in operations pretending to be monarchists to make the monarchists look bad and to undermine support from the people for the protests, actual evidence that such operations have occurred was very thin.

The situation changed drastically by mid-January 2023. In early January 2023, in a gathering in Izeh, several monarchists held signs in support of the monarchy. One sign said: “*Marg Bar Seh Fased: Mullah, Chapi, Mojahed: Javid Shah*” [Death to the Three Bad: Clergy, Leftist, Members of the PMOI: Long Live the King]. Violent and genocidal threats, slogans, and views are very common among the monarchists. What was uncommon was that Ms. Yassemin Pahlavi, the wife of Reza Pahlavi, the claimant to the throne and the leader of the monarchists, re-tweeted the tweet containing the slogan in an unmistakable sign of support.¹⁰³ On January 8, in a protest march in London organized by non-monarchists, the monarchists arrived

¹⁰³ The *Independent Persian* paper, which tends to be supportive of the Pahlavi monarchists, posted the re-tweet at <https://twitter.com/indypersian/status/1611166819360075777>.

and began chanting this slogan. The monarchists also had a new slogan: “*Harki Nageh Javid Shah, Ajnabieh*” [Whoever Does Not Say Long Live the Shah, is a Non-Iranian].¹⁰⁴ From then on pro-democracy forces, including liberal democrats, social democrats, and leftists, began more vigorously and publicly criticizing the monarchists. The pro-democracy forces condemn the monarchists’ slogans as further signs of the brutal and violent dictatorial politics and policies of the monarchists.

Most opposition groups had ignored the monarchists because they consider the main enemy to be the fundamentalist regime although many monarchists had constantly attacked various opposition groups in the past 40 years. By early February 2023, it was clear that the monarchists and Mr. Reza Pahlavi want to impose Reza Pahlavi’s leadership on the opposition. This caused a huge backlash against the monarchists and tremendously escalated the conflicts between the monarchists and all other opposition groups. On the streets of Iran and abroad, new slogans were shouted: “*Marg Bar Setam-gar, Cheh Shah Basheh Cheh Rahbar*” [Death to the Oppressor, Whether it is the Shah or the Supreme Leader]; “*Na Shah, Na Rahbar, Democracy, Barabari*” [No King, No Supreme Leader, Democracy, Equality]; “*Na Shah Mikhahim Na Akhund, Laanat Beh Har Do-ta Shoon*” [We Neither Want a King Nor a Supreme Leader, Curse Upon Both of Them].

The conflicts between the monarchists and other opposition groups reached new heights and vitriol after photos of Parviz Sabeti were published by his daughter attending a rally in either Los Angeles or Miami on February 11, 2023.¹⁰⁵ Mr. Sabeti is one of the most despised figures of the Pahlavi regime. He was Deputy Director of SAVAK and one of the most extreme, violent, and dishonest officials of the Pahlavi dictatorship. The worst abuses of human rights during the Shah’s dictatorship occurred under the leadership of Mr. Sabeti. For example, between 1970 and 1976 about 80% of all the people incarcerated by SAVAK were university students whose sole crime was possession of banned books.¹⁰⁶ Many such students were severely tortured during this period.

104 The word “*ajnabi*” has a negative connotation and means “foreigner” or “stranger.” It is used the way the term “Un-American” is used in the United States to refer to enemies of the people.

105 Golnaz Esfandiari, “Hands Are Stained With Blood: Iranians Outraged After Shah-Era Secret-Police Official Attends U.S. Rally,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (February 15, 2023), <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-sabeti-us-protest-savak/32271395.html>.

106 For example, Mehdi Fatahpour, who was a political prisoner in the 1970s. He was arrested for protesting while he was a university student. He was tortured by SAVAK. According to Fatahpour, about 80% of those incarcerated by SAVAK were there for the sole crime of possession of banned books. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ugbjK8ol4o>.

Mr. Sabeti also targeted leaders and members of the INF, who were non-violent secular liberals and social democrats who were asking the Shah to respect the 1906 constitution. The Shah sent about 300 SAVAK agents in plain clothes to beat up INF members when they had gathered at a private garden called Bagh Golzar in Karvansarae Sangi on the outskirts of Tehran on November 22, 1977. SAVAK agents broke the windows of the building and severely damaged about 300 autos of the attendees in the parking lot. About 30 were seriously injured and were taken to hospitals. SAVAK agents broke Abdul-Karim Anvari's hip and knee, broke Shapour Bakhtiar's arm, and bludgeoned Dariush Forouhar's head.¹⁰⁷ After President Carter praised the Shah profusely on December 31, 1977, at the New Year's Eve party in Niavaran Palace in Tehran,¹⁰⁸ the Shah's campaign of terror against the INF became more violent. On April 8, 1978, SAVAK bombed the homes and offices of Dr. Karim Sanjabi, Dariush Forouhar, and Mahmoud Manian, as well as several close to the INF such as Mehdi Bazargan.¹⁰⁹ SAVAK also bombed the homes and offices of other liberals and social democrats close to the INF, such as Dr. Matin-Daftari, Dr. Hassan Nazih, Dr. Abdol-Karim Lahiji, and Moghadam Maraghei.¹¹⁰

According to Ervand Abrahamian, one of the most prominent historians of Iran, from 1971 SAVAK's tortures became far worse. Abrahamian writes:

Brute force was supplemented with the bastinado; sleep deprivation; extensive solitary confinement; glaring searchlights; standing in one place for hours on end; nail extractions; snakes (favored for use with women); electrical shocks with cattle prods, often into the rectum; cigarette burns; sitting on hot grills; acid dripped into nostrils; near-drownings; mock executions; and an electric chair with a large metal mask to muffle screams while amplifying

107 Abdul-Karim Anvari, *Talash Baray Esteghlal: Khaterat Siasi* [Struggle for Independence: Political Memoirs] (London: Self-Publication, 2015), pp. 173–174. Anvari's injuries were so severe that even today, after 42 years, he has to walk with crutches.

108 Andrew Glass, "Carter Lauds Shah of Iran, Dec. 31, 1977," *Politico* (December 30, 2018), <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/30/this-day-in-politics-december-31-1077103>.

109 Abdol Hussein Azarang, "Jebhe Melli Iran, Bozorgtarain Eatelaf Nirohayeh Siasi Iran Dat Tarikh Moaser Iran Ta Pish Az Enghelab Islami 1357" [Iran National Front, the Largest Coalition of Political Forces in Iran's Contemporary History Until the Islamic Revolution of 1979], *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (no date). <https://web.archive.org/web/20150318064343/http://www.encyclopaediaislamica.com/madkhal2.php?sid=4503>.

110 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 508. Also see Hassan Nazih, "Interview," Harvard University, Iranian Oral History Project, Paris (April 3, 1984), https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/iranian-oral-history-project/catalog/32-nazih_hassan01. All these individuals had been strong supporters of Dr. Mossadegh and had been a member of or close associate of the INF.

them for the victim. ... Prisoners were also humiliated by being raped, urinated on, and forced to stand naked.¹¹¹

SAVAK under Sabeti's leadership also engaged in severe torture for the sole purpose of forcing public confessions on television. Among those that were so tortured was Dr. Gholam-Hussein Saedi, Iran's foremost playwright. Dr. Saedi was a psychiatrist and a social democrat. According to Abrahamian:

Sa'edi did not speak of his own prison experiences until 1984—when in Paris dying from cirrhosis of the liver. There he revealed for the first time how he had been kidnapped, taken to Evin, and subjected to days of “nightmarish tortures”—all for the purpose of extracting an “interview.” He reported, “I kept pleading that if they had any charges against me they should try me in court. They kept retorting that they were interested not in a trial but in a television interview.” The interrogator admitted that he wanted Sa'edi to be publicly humiliated because mere imprisonment would make him into a public hero—a mistake made with previous writers. Sa'edi mentions in passing that his body still bore the marks of these tortures.¹¹²

SAVAK also engaged in the murder of opponents of the Pahlavi dictatorship. In one case, on April 19, 1975, under the leadership of Mr. Sabeti, SAVAK agents murdered nine political prisoners claiming that they were escaping Evin prison. The prisoners were the top leaders of two leftist guerrilla organizations that had been given prison sentences. After the revolution, SAVAK agents who carried out the murders testified on their role. According to these testimonies, the order to kill the political prisoners had come from the Shah and Sabeti organized the murders.¹¹³

SAVAK also threatened non-political persons. For example, Mr. Sabeti himself interrogated Behrouz Vossoughi, one of Iran's top actors in the 1970s. Not only was Vossoughi non-political but he had close relations with the royal court. After he played the leading role in *Gavaznha* [The Deer], he was interrogated by Sabeti. According to Vossoughi, Sabeti told him that if he accepted a role in another movie like that “one night returning from a party at 12 or 2 [a.m.] when no one is around, he would be hit by a truck and crushed to the wall. A bottle of alcoholic drink would be put in his car. The next morning [the mass circulation dailies] *Kayhan* and *Etellaat* would report that the previous night he died in an accident driving drunk.”¹¹⁴

111 Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 106.

112 Ibid., pp. 118–119.

113 Ibid., pp. 107–108.

114 See Behrouz Vossoughi's recollections at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NSzqqj5V9Y>.

Pro-democracy, human rights, and leftist activists consider Mr. Sabeti to have committed large-scale murder and torture and want him to be tried for crimes against humanity, while monarchists consider him a hero.¹¹⁵ Hundreds of victims of SAVAK torture under the leadership of Sabeti have signed petitions to organize efforts to bring Sabeti to trial for crimes against humanity, including murders and tortures.¹¹⁶

Some monarchists say that those who opposed the Shah were terrorists and that SAVAK had to undermine and eliminate them. They say that Mr. Sabeti was right to use violence against all those who opposed the Shah. Many monarchists further add that the Shah and SAVAK did not use enough violence against the opponents of the Shah and that the Shah and SAVAK were too lenient. They say that after they come to power again, they will punish all those who opposed the Shah. Some monarchists say that Mr. Sabeti should be given a high-level position after the overthrow of the fundamentalist regime. Some monarchists, including Mr. Sabeti, deny that SAVAK used torture, and describe the testimonies and evidence of torture by SAVAK as lies and propaganda.¹¹⁷

Within days of Sabeti's appearance at the February 11, 2023 protest, monarchists were hoisting large portraits of Sabeti alongside those of Reza Pahlavi in their rallies. For example, on February 19, 2023, in a protest in Munich, monarchists held a portrait of Sabeti with the caption "*Kaboos Terrorist-hay Ayandeh*" [Nightmare of Future Terrorists].¹¹⁸

Mr. Pahlavi has refused to explicitly condemn Parviz Sabeti or his supporters for hoisting Sabeti's photos. Mr. Sabeti's photos were posted on social media by his daughter, Dr. Pardis Sabeti, a Professor at Harvard University. Pardis Sabeti is a

115 For example, see the views of Iran's highly respected experts such as human rights lawyer Pegah Bani-Hashem, sociologist and human rights activist Dr. Kazem Kardavani, and progressive human rights and transitional justice activist Ladan Bazargan at VOA, "*Sezaye Shekanje-garan Va Naghesan Hoghogh Bashar Chist?*" [What are Punishments for Torturers and Violators of Human Rights?] (February 20, 2023), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zn4yOHu3R0>.

116 Radio Zamaneh, "*Asghar Izadi: Parviz Sabeti Kesi Ast Keh Shekanjeh Rah Beh Nezamyafteh Va Beh Maharat Tabdil Kard*" [Asghar Izadi: Parviz Sabeti is the Person Who Made Torture Institutionalized and an Expertise] (March 1, 2023) <https://melliun.org/iran/354076>; and see the petition at <https://www.daadkhast.org/petition/258887>.

117 See monarchists' views at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS6FAc217TM>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-m3VKVOXQc>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZKsE9Qgoew>, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ugbjK8ol4o>.

118 Hossein Daei Alislam, "Posters of Parviz Sabeti at Pahlavi Rally," National Council of Resistance of Iran (February 19, 2023), <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/iran-resistance/demonizing-mek/posters-of-parviz-sabeti-at-pahlavi-rally-scaring-off-tehran-or-dissent-thereof/>.

member of the Advisory Council of NUFDI, which is a monarchist lobby organization in Washington, D.C.¹¹⁹

A reporter from Radio France International directly asked Pahlavi about Mr. Sabeti.¹²⁰ Pahlavi avoided a direct response and did not even mention Sabeti's name. Rather, he made general remarks condemning anyone who undermines unity and insults others. And, adding insult to injury, he directly blamed the fundamentalist regime's cyber element for purposefully using this controversy to sow divisions. The case was very clear. Sabeti shows up in a protest organized by Pahlavi's supporters, Sabeti's daughter posts photos of Sabeti on social media, monarchists hoist Sabeti's photos in the monarchist rallies, and there are strong condemnations by pro-democracy and progressive groups and the actual torture victims of SAVAK. There is no moral equivalency in this case. There is no moral equivalency between those who direct torture and murder and those who condemn these. To condemn those who order torture and murder is not to insult and sow division. Pahlavi refused to condemn Sabeti, the notorious man responsible for the torture of thousands of people, including innocent high school and university students for merely possession of books. All Mr. Pahlavi had to do was to say something to the effect that he condemns Parviz Sabeti for the gross violations of human rights of dissidents, for grotesque tortures and murders that he committed, and that he condemns his father's dictatorship for authorizing Sabeti to carry out such atrocities.

As of this writing, I have not seen NUFDI, or any other monarchist organization, publicly condemn Mr. Sabeti. The monarchists have either been highly supportive of Parviz Sabeti or silent on his crimes. This is yet another indication that not only are the monarchists unrepentant of their crimes against humanity and brutal dictatorship but remain highly supportive of the man who orchestrated those cruel and barbaric tortures under the Shah tyranny.

119 NUFDI, "Pardis Sabeti Joins Advisory Council" (November 1, 2022), <https://nufdiran.org/pardis-sabeti-joins-advisory-council/>.

120 Radio France International, "*Vakonesh Reza Pahlavi Beh Ekhtelafha Bar Sar Parviz Sabeti: Az Havadaran Fahash Va Nefaghankan Faseleh Migiram*" [Reaction of Reza Pahlavi to the Events Over Parviz Sabeti: I Distance Myself from Supporters who Insult and Create Divisions] (February 23, 2023), <https://www.rfi.fr/fa/%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86/20230222-%D9%88%D8%A7%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%B4-%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D9%BE%D9%87%D9%84%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%BE%D8%B1%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%B2-%D8%AB%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%81%DA%A9%D9%86%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%86%D8%AF>.

Mr. Sabeti is not the only terribly violent monarchist that the monarchists praise. Many monarchists also consider Mr. Shaaban Jaafari, better known as Shaaban *Bi-Mokh* [Shaaban the Brainless], to be their national hero. Mr. Jaafari was leader of a violent gang that beat up others. He was part of a conspiracy to murder Dr. Mossadegh in 1953. He made an assassination attempt on the life of Dr. Hussein Fatemi after the coup and knifed him several times, but Dr. Fatemi survived the assassination attempt.

Mr. Reza Pahlavi claims that he supports a democratic constitutional monarchy. However, the overwhelming majority of the pro-democracy forces do not trust Mr. Pahlavi. Moreover, the pro-democracy forces do not trust the majority of the monarchists. There is little doubt that a large minority of the population supports the re-imposition of the Pahlavi monarchy and Mr. Reza Pahlavi. It is also clear that most of the monarchists are terribly dictatorial and violent. The INF and other major pro-democracy and progressive forces consider the monarchists to constitute a major obstacle to the establishment of democracy in Iran after the overthrow of the fundamentalist regime. It is painfully obvious that the existence of a major anti-democratic force in the opposition harms the movement to fight against the fundamentalist regime. The pro-democracy forces believe, with good reason, that the monarchists and Reza Pahlavi want to establish their dictatorship. The democratic forces believe it would be unwise to cooperate with a terribly dictatorial group. Considering the fact that both Pahlavi kings were extremely dictatorial and that the overwhelming majority of the monarchists strongly admire these tyrants, makes any cooperation with the monarchists hard for democrats. The INF as well as most other pro-democracy and progressive forces believe that the two Pahlavi kings were enemies of freedom, democracy, independence, human rights, popular sovereignty, and national sovereignty of the Iranian people. Therefore, when Reza Pahlavi and the monarchists praise these dictators and hold up their portraits, the pro-democracy forces conclude that the current monarchists continue those policies.¹²¹

The position of monarch is an unelected, life-term, and inherited position, which makes it an anti-democratic position. A political system that contains a monarch could be a democracy only if the monarch has no real political power. A political system is democratic to the extent that the people through their elected representatives in a parliament have the power of government. To the extent that a monarch has power, to that extent that system is non-democratic. A constitutional monarchy is democratic not because of the monarchy, but despite it. In other words, monarch is an anti-democratic position, whose powers have to be con-

¹²¹ Kazemzadeh, *The Iran National Front*, op. cit.

tained through various mechanisms (e. g., parliaments, free press, courts, political parties, political culture) for a political system to be democratic. Constitutional monarchies in Europe were the result of many centuries of political struggles where gradually the people were able to force the monarch to concede power to the people. It would be utter folly, in a country that lacks a monarch, to re-create that anti-democratic position, and then attempt to create mechanisms to contain that anti-democratic position and its powers. For analogy, in a body that contains a deadly virus, we would want to come up with a mechanism to contain the effect of that virus. However, it is utter folly for a body that lacks that deadly virus, to first introduce that virus and then attempt to contain the harmful effect of that virus by attempting to create various mechanisms.

The fundamentalist regime has been so oppressive and brutal that many Iranians want regime change at any cost. They know that the monarchists will be dictatorial, but they think that the situation would be far less bad than life under the fundamentalist regime. Many also know that the Pahlavi kings were puppets of the British and the United States. They also believe that Reza Pahlavi would also be a puppet of the United States. The fundamentalist regime has been so oppressive that many Iranians support a forceful regime change to life under the fundamentalist tyranny. Thus, many prefer an American military invasion and Pahlavi dictatorship to living under the rule of the fundamentalist regime. For many, if there are only two options, living under the fundamentalist regime or forceful regime change and monarchical dictatorship, they would choose Pahlavi dictatorship.

Pro-democracy forces (e. g., the INF), most other democrats, and progressives oppose the fundamentalist regime. They also oppose the re-establishment of the Pahlavi dictatorship. The INF has explicitly stated that it opposes the return of the monarchy, that it regards the monarchists as dictatorial, and that it will not cooperate with Reza Pahlavi. This position is shared by other major pro-democracy groups such as United Republicans of Iran and Solidarity of Iranian Republicans and the Left Party of Iran, which is the largest leftist party of Iran. All the major leftist groups strongly oppose the monarchists and consider them fascist. The Secretary-General of the DPIK, Mostafa Hejri, said in an interview with BBC Persian on February 21, 2023, that the DPIK “is absolutely not prepared to cooperate with Reza Pahlavi.”¹²² The PMOI has also explicitly condemned the monarchists as a dictatorial group that it would never work with.

All the above opposition groups and parties consider the monarchists to be extremely tyrannical. They believe that the fundamentalist regime is weak and on its way to being overthrown sooner or later. They believe that the monarchists want to

¹²² See the comments of Hejri, <https://twitter.com/KavehGhoreishi/status/1627664618465161219>.

re-establish their brutal fascistic dictatorship. They believe that if the monarchists succeed, then Iran will suffer from another 50 years or more of brutal tyranny. These opposition groups do not want to replace one form of dictatorship with another form of dictatorship. By March 2023, the opposition to monarchists was so intense that during the mass protests on March 23, 2023, the main slogan was “*Marg Bar Setam-gar; Cheh Shah Basheh, Cheh Rahbar*” [Death to the Tyrant, Whether the Shah or the Supreme Leader].¹²³

GAMAAN’s survey of Iranians inside and outside Iran clearly shows the primary dilemma of the opposition to the fundamentalist regime. Although 40 % of Iranians outside Iran who oppose the fundamentalist regime support a democratic secular republican form of government, only 22 % support monarchy; and while 61 % of Iranians outside Iran support a democratic secular republican political system only 25 % support monarchy.

Mr. Reza Pahlavi is the single most popular figure among all those who oppose the regime. Mr. Pahlavi’s popularity is primarily due to astronomical funds spent to promote him. He was born as Crown Prince in October 1960. The Shah’s regime spent great amounts of funds and efforts promoting him as the next king until the regime fell in 1979. Since 1979, the monarchist groups and media have spent virtually all their funds and energy promoting him and attacking other opposition groups. For many years, the CIA provided huge funds and efforts promoting Mr. Pahlavi. It is widely believed that the governments of Saudi Arabia and Israel have been providing enormous funds to monarchist groups and satellite television stations that support the monarchists. Despite 62 years of massive investments of funds and energy, only a minority of Iranians support the return of the monarchy. This clearly shows that the Iranian people are too smart and sophisticated to be brainwashed and manipulated by the monarchist propaganda. Although the funds spent on Mr. Pahlavi have been a thousand times those spent on the democratic secular republicans, the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people support democracy and oppose monarchy. The massive efforts and propaganda have made Mr. Pahlavi popular among certain segments of the population despite Mr. Pahlavi’s lack of leadership abilities. Ironically, the more assistance is provided to Mr. Pahlavi and the monarchists, the more intense opposition of pro-democracy forces and the progressives to the monarchists has become, further dividing and weakening the opposition to the fundamentalist regime, and thus benefiting the fundamentalist regime.

¹²³ See the videos, photos, and commentaries from Radio Farda and Iran Wire, re-published at Mellium (March 3, 2023) <https://melliun.org/iran/354285>. Also see <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32042577.html> and <https://iranwire.com/fa/news-1/114389>.

The tragedy of Iranian politics is that while most Iranians want democracy, the democratic forces have not been able to produce a leader with wide support while the dictatorial opposition possesses one figure that enjoys the support of a substantial segment of the population. Although the GAMAAN survey found that Mr. Pahlavi is the most popular figure, that constitutes a minority. The majority of the Iranian people want a secular democratic republic.¹²⁴

Monarchists are extremely intolerant and aggressive against anyone who is not monarchist. Since at least 1984, I have observed on numerous occasions monarchists disrupt, threaten, and use violence against liberals, democrats, and leftists in protests in Los Angeles. On many occasions, the Los Angeles police had to intervene and take them away. The monarchists even disrupted the speech of Masih Ali-nejad, a close collaborator of Reza Pahlavi, while giving a speech at a rally on February 20, 2023, in Brussels, Belgium. The monarchists kept shouting: “*Masih, Begoo Javid Shah*” [Masih, Say Long Live the Shah].¹²⁵ This case clearly shows that even before they have power, the monarchists in Europe want to impose their views on an ally that is not a monarchist. For the pro-democracy forces, this case clearly shows that the monarchists have become even more intolerant and violent than they were before 1979.

Monarchists have been attempting to convince Western audiences by saying that they wish to establish a constitutional monarchy similar to those in Britain and Western Europe. Their actual behavior, however, shows that they remain as dictatorial as when they ruled Iran between 1926 and 1979.

5.11.8 Slogans of the Protesters

The slogans of the 2022 protests are unmistakably for freedom and democracy. The most common slogans have been: “*Marg Bar Dictator*” [Death to the Dictator], “*Marg Bar Khamenei*” [Death to Khamenei], “*Marg Bar Asl Velayat Faqih*” [Death to the Principle of Rule of the High-Ranking Shia Clergy], and “*Zendani Siasi Azad Bayad Gardad*” [Political Prisoners Have to Be Freed], slogans that have been used for many years in previous protests. The unique slogan of the 2022 protests has been: “*Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*” [Woman, Life, Freedom], which became the

¹²⁴ Ammar Maleki, “Iranians’ Attitudes Towards Political Systems,” GAMAAN (2022), <https://gamaan.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GAMAAN-Political-Systems-Survey-2022-English-Final.pdf>, p. 12, figure 6. This survey was conducted February 17–27, 2022.

¹²⁵ BBC Persian, “*Dar Oppositioun Padeshahikhah Cheh Migozarad?*” [What is Going on in the Monarchist Opposition?] (March 8, 2023), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqx-BPdW2Js>.

most frequently used slogan. Also, one of the most frequently used slogans has been “*Azadi Azadi Azadi*” [Freedom Freedom Freedom].

Other slogans include: “*Toop Tofang Feshfesheh, Basiji Bayad Gom Besheh*” [... *Basiji* Should Get Lost]; “*Akhund Bayad Gom Besheh*” [Shia Clerics Should Get Lost]; “*Jomhuri Islami Nemikhahim*” [We Do Not Want the Islamic Republic]; “*Mijangim, Mimirim, Iran Ro Pas Migirim*” [We Will Fight, We Will Die, We Will Get Iran Back]; “*Emsal Sal Khoneh, Seyyed Ali Sarnegoneh*” [This Year is the Year of Bloodshed, Khamenei Will Be Overthrown]; and “*Natarsid Natarsid, Maa Hameh Ba Ham Hastim*” [Do Not Be Afraid, We Are All In This Together]. University students use the slogans “*Daneshjoo Mimerad, Zelat Nemipazirad*” [Students Will Die, But Will Not Submit to Humiliating Oppression] and “*Daneshjoo Zendani Azad Bayad Gardad*” [Incarcerated Students Should Be Released]. Protesters also shout “*bi-sharaf*” [lacking honor] at the fundamentalist coercive apparatuses when they attack the protesters.

For the first time on October 27, 2022, during the 40th day commemoration of the death of Nika Shakarami, who was beaten to death around the head by the IRGC, the mourners shouted the slogan: “*Marg Bar Sepahi*” [Death to the IRGC]. The regime not only had murdered Nika but broadcast news that she had committed suicide by falling from a fifth floor building. The video of this 16-year-old high school student had captured the hearts of the people. And the regime pressures on her family to deny the fact that she was participating in the protests when she was arrested were considered most odious. Within hours, the slogan “Death to the IRGC” and “*Marg Bar Basiji*” [Death to *Basiji*] were shouted in protests throughout Iran.

There have also been slogans calling for “*Jomhuri Irani*” [Iranian Republic], which is used in contradiction to the fundamentalist regime title of “*Jomhuri Islami*” [Islamic Republic]. By this slogan, the people express their demand for the replacement of the fundamentalist regime with a democratic secular republic form of government.

In interviews, many protesters say that they are outraged by the utter lack of respect for their dignity by the fundamentalist regime. The Iranian people want respect for their basic human dignity. For 43 years, their basic human rights have been violated by a backward, reactionary regime. They believe that a backward regime is simply not compatible with a dignified life in the 21st century. They want a political system that simply respects them as human beings. The vast majority of the population has come to the conclusion that the only way to gain a normal life, a dignified life, would be to replace the fundamentalist regime with a secular democratic political system. And many are willing to risk their life and liberty to gain freedom for the people. Slogans that reflect this are: “*Na Roo-sari, Na Toosari, Azadi, Barabari*” [No to Headscarf, No to Hit on the Head, Free-

dom, Equality] and “*Daneshjoo Mimirad, Zellat Nemipazirad*” [Students Will Die, But Will Not Accept Living With Humiliation].¹²⁶

Another slogan shouted by women usually right after the slogan “Woman, Life, Freedom” is “*Mard, Mihan, Abadi*” [Man, Country, Prosperity]. By this slogan, women are expressing their support of men who support women’s equality and freedom. The Iranian feminist movement is not anti-men; rather, it wants a system of equality, freedom, and dignity for all. By using the term “*mihan*” [country], they support the modern attachment to Iran rather than the pre-modern attachment of the fundamentalists to Shia Islamic *Ummah*. By the term “*abadi*” they want a modern economic system that would provide them what they see in advanced prosperous countries.

In late October, a new slogan emerged. Apparently in a university in Shiraz, a fundamentalist woman and a fundamentalist man attacked a protesting female student and called her “*harzeh*” [lewd, whore]. She yelled back “*Hiz Tuee, Harzeh Tuee, Zan-e Azadeh Manam*” [You are Lewd, You are Whore, I am a Woman Who Fights for the People’s Liberation and Freedom].¹²⁷ By November 2, this slogan had spread all over Iran and it became one of the most popular slogans.

Shervin Hajipour’s song “For” has become the 2022 mass protest movement’s anthem, sung by the people at universities, high schools, factory yards, balconies, rooftops, and on the streets.¹²⁸ Hajipour had collected the lyrics from tweets by young protesters during the first few days of the protests. Right away, Hajipour was arrested by the regime and charged with “propaganda against the system” for making this song. The lyrics of his song are:

For dancing in the streets
 For the fear [from the Morality Police] when kissing [in public]
 For my sister, your sister, our sisters
 For changing fossilized brains
 For the shame of lacking money
 For the yearnings for a normal life
 For the kid who gets into garbage dumps for food, and his or her dreams
 For this economy ordered by decrees from above
 For this polluted air
 For Valiasr Street and its old trees

¹²⁶ One of the main slogans of the fundamentalists since 1979 has been “*Ya Roosari, Ya Toosari*” [Either Headscarf or Hit on the Head]. And fundamentalists would actually beat up women who did not cover their head.

¹²⁷ Translations of the Persian words “*harzeh*,” “*hiz*,” and “*zan-e azadeh*” to English are not easy. My translations of these terms attempt to convey the spirit and true meanings of these terms rather than the literal translations that a dictionary would convey.

¹²⁸ The song is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8xXi9yfbg0>.

For Pirooz [cheetah cub] and his possible extinction
For the forbidden and innocent dogs [that the regime kills]
For the endless tears

For the imagery that should never happen again [grieving of Hamed Esmailion after the
downing of the Ukrainian passenger airplane by IRGC missiles which killed all 176 onboard
including his wife and daughter]

For faces with smiles
For students, for future
For this compulsory heaven [life under the fundamentalist regime]
For our brilliant students in jails
For Afghan children [refugees in Iran]
For all these “for”s with no repeats
For all [the regime’s] worthless slogans
For the wreckage of collapsing houses [in Abadan]
For feeling tranquility
For the sunrise after long nights
For pills for anxiousness and insomnia
For man, homeland, prosperity
For the girl who wished to be a boy [to attend a soccer game or ride a bicycle]
For woman, life, freedom
For freedom
For freedom
For freedom