

# **We Stand in Solidarity with Iranian Women and Protesters**

## **October 2022**

We, the undersigned feminist and human rights organizations, stand in solidarity with the courageous women in Iran who have taken to the streets to peacefully protest the death in custody of Mahsa Amini and to demand their bodily rights.

We also express our profound sympathy to the families of the incredible Iranian protesters who have lost their lives to the ongoing brutal police crackdown in response to peaceful demonstrations. We urge all feminists and women human rights defenders, and their organizations in different countries and particularly in the MENA region, to stand in solidarity with Iranian women and amplify their voices through all means possible, especially now that Iran's government has severely limited internet access across the country.

The weeks have witnessed unprecedented scenes of protesting in Iran. For the past four decades, the Iranian government has violently imposed mandatory hijab and other laws to limit women's social and economic participation in society and force them out of the public space. Despite violent crackdowns against women who have consistently and peacefully expressed demands for change, we are now witness to the Kurdish motto of "Women, Life, Freedom!" being chanted by Iranians across the country.

Protests broke out in Iran following the September 16 death of Mahsa (Zhin) Amini, a 22-year-old woman, in police custody three days after she was arrested by "morality" police for allegedly wearing her headscarf loosely. Mahsa was on a family trip to Tehran, but within a few hours of going out with her brother, she was in a coma in a hospital bed due to sustained brain injury and never recovered. Despite threats by intelligence forces for a quick burial in silence, Mahsa's family refused to succumb and took her body to Saqqez, her hometown. Women at her funeral took off their headscarves and widespread protests in Kurdistan province were ignited. This collective mourning of a life lost so soon and so unjustly, escalated into countrywide protests with women at the forefront of every demonstration.

In recent months, Iran's government has ramped up arbitrary arrests and judicial harassment of civil society activists, especially women's movement activists, in a blatant attempt to silence those who speak up against systematic discrimination and repression. At the same time, we have witnessed increased violence from the so-called "morality" police patrols toward women. The case of Sepideh Rashnou from July of this year was a vivid example of these often violent encounters. Sepideh was arrested soon after her verbal argument on a bus with a mandatory hijab enforcer went viral. Sepideh was violently arrested, kept in solitary confinement for weeks, and released after she had to make a forced televised confession where she clearly had a bruised face and was in poor health.

Iran's recent protests are referred to as a feminist revolution. Young, fearless women in the streets are taking off their headscarves and setting them on fire right in front of massive line-ups of riot police forces and demanding freedom. These protests have now gone beyond all divides, and men

in large numbers are supporting these fierce women. Even in small cities with more traditional beliefs, everyone is chanting "Women, Life, Freedom!"

Many women are sharing videos of themselves cutting their hair to protest Mahsa's killing. Several women Iranian artists and celebrities forced to comply with mandatory hijab have joined the movement by posting videos in which they take off their hijab despite the repercussions that this might have on their careers. Celebrities and athletes are among others who are supporting Iran's first-ever feminist revolution by stepping down from their sports teams or supporting protestors in interviews.

As the protests continue, the government has escalated its massive crackdown, and scores of women human rights defenders, journalists, students, human rights lawyers, and ordinary protestors have been arrested. Based on recent reports from human rights groups, over **100** protestors have been killed by security forces. The government has also imposed another internet blackout to block people's access to social networks and messaging apps to suppress the protests. This is similar to the pattern used in the 2019 uprisings, which blocked communication in social networks and messaging apps to stop people from sharing images from protests and images of the violent and bloody police crackdowns. However, the voices of women and feminist groups are amplified by their sisters and peers in many countries. They have stood in solidarity by organizing protests and publishing videos supporting the movement in Iran.

We, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with Iranian women who are protesting the unjust killing of Mahsa Amini and who are demanding democracy as well as rights to bodily autonomy and fundamental freedoms all over Iran. Furthermore, we urge our feminist sisters in international organizations and regional groups to show their solidarity in any way possible.

### **Our Demands and Recommendations:**

- We urge the UN Human Rights Council to condemn the violent actions of the Iranian government against women and hold them accountable for the suppression and killing of protestors.
- We urge UN member states to support calls for a UN led investigative mechanism on Iran through the adoption of a resolution during an urgent session of the ongoing 51st regular session of Human Rights Council.
- We urge the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, the Special Rapporteur on Elimination of Violence against Women, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, the Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly, and other UN mandate holders to investigate and report on the systematic violation of the rights of Iranian women and protestors by the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- The UN and member states should work with the government of Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government to ease border crossing restrictions for those rights defenders fleeing to safety and should work to ensure the safety of HRDs in these countries. Governments and the UN should facilitate and expedite refugee status and the repatriation processes of Iranian HRDs, and especially WHRDs, in neighboring countries who are at risk of extrajudicial retaliation by Iranian authorities.
- We urge the governments of countries with diplomatic ties to Iran, especially Global South and non-aligned states, to summon the ambassadors of the Islamic Republic of Iran and

express their concerns over the killings of protesters, the violence being used against protesters, and the widespread arrests of human rights defenders, journalists, student activists and political activists.

- Donors should consider expanding urgent support funding for human rights defenders, especially women human rights defenders facing threat and risk, including fellowship and respite opportunities that are more flexible and easy to access.
- We ask international and regional human rights organizations to take a stance on the recent events in Iran, to follow up on the situation of those detained, press for their release, and demand that Iranian authorities ensure their safety and health while in detention.
- We ask the international and regionally focused journalist associations and unions to condemn the arrests and arbitrary detention of Iranian journalists in recent days, especially the female journalists who have been at the forefront of reporting on recent developments.
- We ask feminist groups and organizations to continue supporting Iranian women and their demands for rights and bodily autonomy through protests, peaceful gatherings, statements, production of artwork, and through other means.

## List of signatures

- Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, US
- Advancing Knowledge in Democracy and Law Initiative, Malaysia/Southeast Asia
- Afghanistan Women Protesters, Afghanistan
- Aliansi Perempuan Bangkit / Emergence Women Alliance Indonesia
- All Women's Action Society (AWAM), Malaysia
- Arab Digital Expression Foundation, Egypt - Regional Mandate
- Arab Watch Coalition, MENA Region
- Article 19, Global
- Artistic Freedom Initiative, United States
- Arts for Women Indonesia, Indonesia
- Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, MENA Region
- Asociación Ciudadana ACCEDER, Costa Rica
- Association el-Karama, Tunisia
- Association for Monitoring Gender Equality, Turkey
- Association of Women Lawyers Sel & FT, Malaysia
- Association Suisse pour les Droits des Femmes, Switzerland
- Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates , Tunisie
- Association d Environnement et Developpement Durable , Tunisie
- AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development), Global
- Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud, Mexico
- Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), India-South Asia
- BMMA, India
- Cairo Foundation for Development and Law, Egypt
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), MENA Region
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW), Canada
- CCMW Niagara Chapter, Canada
- Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, Egypt
- Center for Human Rights in Iran, United States
- Center for Human Rights Studies, University of Surabaya (CHRS Ubaya), Indonesia
- Center for Reproductive Rights, Global
- Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, Germany
- Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), Malaysia
- Channel Foundation, United States
- CIVICUS, Global
- Coalition for Sexual & Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), Indonesia
- Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Global
- Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Canada
- Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces, United States
- Congrgacion Del Buen Pastor , Chile
- CREA, Global
- Culture Action Europe, Europe
- Daraj Media , Lebanon
- Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), MENA Region
- Demokratik Emekliler Sendikası (DEM-SEN) , Turkey
- Deutscher Frauenring e.v, Germany
- Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF), Nigeria
- Ecumenical Community for Contemplative Engagement
- Equality Fund, Global
- Equality Watch Women's Group - Eşitlik İzleme Kadın Grubu (EŞİTİZ), Turkey
- ERA - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey
- Erktolia, Turkey

- Fe-Male Feminist Collective, Lebanon
- FEDERA, Poland
- FEMENA, MENA Region
- Femmes et Droits Humains, Mali
- FIDH-MENA, MENA Region
- Forum Tunisien pour Is Droits Economiques et Sociaux , Tunisie
- Foundation Innovation Social Development, Sri Lanka
- Free Women Writers, Afghanistan, USA
- Fund for Congolese Women, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Fundacion Justicia y Genero, Latin America
- GAMCOTRAP, Gambia
- Gender and Democracy Centre, Indonesia
- Gerakan Perempuan Peduli Indonesia [Indonesian Women Awareness Movement], Indonesia
- Good Shepherd International Foundation, Italy
- Good Shepherd Mission Hub, Malaysia
- GreeneWorks, United States
- Hawaa Organization for Relief and Development, Iraq
- Human Rights Activists (in Iran), United States
- Human Rights Sentinel, MENA Region
- Human Rights Watch, Global
- IFEX, Global
- Indonesian Legal Aid Association for Women (APIK), Indonesian
- Inkyfada/Alkhatt, Tunisie
- Institute of the Third Space, Indonesia
- International Alliance of Women (IAW), Global
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Global
- International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP AP), Malaysia
- Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms, Tunisia
- Iraqi Women Network, Iraq
- IRIS Women Watch, Turkey
- Isha Lisha- Haifa Feminist Center, Haifa
- Islamic Development and Relief Agency, South Sudan
- Jamaity, Tunisia
- Jeunes femmes pour la démocratie , Marocco
- Jurnal Sang Pemula, Malaysia
- Justice for Iran, Iran-UK
- Kaos GL, Turkey
- Kawaakibi Foundation, Norway
- KEDV, Turkey
- Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centrem, Palestine
- Kirmizi Biber Dernegi, Turkey
- KPI-LJSP Cabang Jember , Indonesia
- Kun Organization, Libya
- League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI), Iran-France
- Legal Dignity, Malaysia
- MADRE, Global
- MAJU, Malaysia
- Manushya Foundation, Southeast Asia
- Marta Abrantes Mendes, Marta Abrantes Mendes
- MenEngage Global Alliance, Global
- Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, Mesoamerica
- Miaan Group, United States

- Musawah, Malaysia
- Muslims for Progressive Values, United States
- Mwatana for Human Rights, Yemen
- National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, United States
- National Observatory to Defend the Civility of the State, Tunisia
- No Peace Without Justice, Global
- No Sanctions on Iran, United States
- Noor, MENA Region
- Open Society Foundations, Global
- Organisation Contre la Torture en Tunisie , Tunisia
- PASS Foundation- Peace for Sustainable Societies, Yemen
- Passon Legal Organization, Afghanistan
- Peace Track Initiative, Yemen-Canada
- Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor, Malaysia
- Persatuan Warisan Wibawa , Malaysia
- Political Well-Being, Turkey
- Programme Against Custodial Torture and Impunity (PACTI), India
- Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), MENA Region
- Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, United States
- Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ), Global South
- Réseau National des Jeunes Filles et Femmes Rurales du Mali ( RENAJFFERM), Mali
- Rosa Women's Association, Turkey
- Rumpun Indonesia, Indonesia
- Saiamak Pourzand Foundation, Iran-US
- Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, Yemen
- Secularism Is A Women's Issue, Global
- Sekolah Damai Indonesia (SEKODI) Bandung, Indonesia
- Sisters in Islam (SIS), Malaysia
- Sisters of the Good Shepherd-New York/Toronto Province, United States
- Sisters of the Good Shepherd, New Zealand, Australia
- Society for the Improvement of Rural People, Nigeria
- Society for the Promotion of Human Rights (Proham) , Malaysia
- Sonke Gender Justice, South Africa
- Southern and Eastern Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Uganda
- Sukaar Welfare Organization, Pakistan
- Suluh Perempuan Indonesia , Indonesia
- The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Asia-Pacific
- The Association for Struggle Against Sexual Violence, Turkey
- The Awakening - A Member of Men Engage Alliance Pakistan, Pakistan
- The Freedom Initiative, United States
- The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), MENA Region
- The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation , Global
- The Munathara Initiative, MENA Region
- Turkish Council of Women, Turkey
- United for Iran, Iran-US
- Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights, United States
- Väter Aktiv, Italy
- Vigilance for Democracy and the Civic State, Tunisia
- Virtual Activism, United States
- WHRD MENA Coalition, MENA Region
- Women for Human Rights, Single Women Group (WHR), Nepal
- Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways, Turkey
- Women's Rights Center, Montenegro

- Women's March Malaysia, Malaysia
- Women's Council Denmark, Denmark
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Global
- Yayasan Penghapusan Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan "Mitra Perempuan" [The Foundation For Elimination of Violence Against Women "Mitra Perempuan"], Indonesia
- Yayasan Perlindungan Insani Indonesia, Indonesia
- Yemen Future for Media and Culture Development, Yemen