



September 20, 2022

In solidarity with the Iranian academics' petition in response to the unfolding events in Iran

We write on behalf of the Association of Iranian Studies (AIS) and its Committee for Academic Freedom (CAF) to express our solidarity with the Iranian academics who have courageously signed a [petition](#) in response to the unfolding events in Iran. The petition strongly condemns the death in custody of Ms. Mahsa (Zhina) Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman – arrested by the “morality police” of the Islamic Republic of Iran enforcing a government-mandated ultraconservative Islamic dress code – and the brutal response by security forces to ensuing protests, including protests by university students. Ms. Amini’s murder in the hands of the Islamic Republic’s morality police on charges of breaking strict hijab rules is a clear example of the systemic and systematic oppression and exploitation of Iranian women over the past 43 years under the rule of the Islamic Republic.

AIS is a private, non-profit academic society founded in 1967 to support and promote scholarship and research on Iran and the Persianate world at the international level. An independent, non-partisan, non-political, and multidisciplinary international community, the association publishes *Iranian Studies*, the principal journal in the field. AIS membership includes over 500 scholars, students, and academic and professional researchers. We are committed to encouraging the free exchange of ideas and freedom of speech, both within and beyond the geographical boundaries of Iran. AIS’s CAF has been closely following the tragic news of Ms. Amini’s forceful detention, which led to her death, and the government’s violent crackdown on the protesters, which includes university students, across the country.

On September 13, Ms. Amini was traveling to Tehran to visit relatives. She was accompanied by her brother when she was detained by the “morality police” for failing to meet the country’s strict dress code for women. According to eyewitness reports, during her detention, Ms. Amini was beaten on the head several times and subsequently slipped into a coma at Vozara Detention Center. Her family was notified after she was transferred to Kasra Hospital without vital signs. In an official letter to Dr. Mohammad Raiszadeh, the Head of the Medical Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Hossein Karampour, who heads the Medical Council’s Bandar Abbas branch, also noted that Mahsa Amini’s symptoms were consistent with symptoms of concussion and internal bleeding as a result of blows to the head.

Shortly after Ms. Amini was pronounced dead on September 16, the police released a montage of closed-circuit footage from the police station, which shows the moment Ms. Amini collapsed, in order to argue that she had a pre-existing health condition. Over the past three days, government officials have tried to deny her murder by distorting the reality of her death and stating that she died of natural causes. Ms. Amini's family have repeatedly denounced such claims and have stated that she was a perfectly healthy, 22-year-old woman with no preexisting health issues. On September 17, Ms. Amini's body was transferred to her birthplace of Saghez, in the northwestern Kurdistan province where she was laid to rest.

Ms. Amini's tragic murder has triggered a nationwide and international outcry against the violent treatment of women by the Islamic Republic's morality police. Over the past few days, the peaceful protesters have chanted: "Woman, Life, Freedom" in streets of the capital and other major cities across the country. The slogan clearly manifests the public demand for the basic human rights of women that have been systematically denied and violated over the past four decades. In response to the peaceful protests, the security forces have opened fire on unarmed protesters and have so far killed at least four people in the Kurdistan province.

We add our voice to those of our colleagues in Iran in condemning this violence. We call on international human rights organizations to investigate the tragic death of Ms. Amini and the government's violent suppression of protesters. We further call for probes into the illtreatment of Iranian women who, in recent months, have been the targets of a statewide crackdown on "improper" hijab, and have fallen victim through mass arrests and fines, forced confessions, imprisonment, torture, and now, extra-judicial killing.

The Association of Iranian Studies stands in solidarity with the petition signed by the Iranian academics, which stresses the right of Iranian women to freely choose their own dress code; calls for abolishing the morality police; and supports the protection of citizenship rights for all Iranians.