



January 9, 2023

## **WOMEN'S LIBERAL CAUCUS SPONSORS POLITICAL PRISONERS IN IRAN**

*20 Liberal Members of Parliament call for the release of women and girls imprisoned by the Iranian regime*

**Parliament Hill** - We, the Members of Parliament of the Women's Liberal Caucus and steadfast advocates of the rights of women and girls both at home and abroad, hereby undertake the political sponsorship of a list of female individual detainees who are currently under threat by the Iranian regime for manufactured crimes against the state.

The widespread protests following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini - a young woman arrested for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic of Iran's compulsory veiling law - have evolved into a transformative national movement. Everyday acts of rebellion such as burning headscarves and cutting hair serve as symbols of resistance. The movement's rallying chant of "Woman, Life, Freedom" echoes in all corners of Iran and across the world.

The Iranian regime has responded to these peaceful protests with brutal state retaliation and repression, including the execution of Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavard and the arbitrary detention of countless other journalists, critics, artists, citizens, and human rights defenders. Many of these protestors remain at imminent risk of being sentenced to death without fair trial or judicial appeal. We stand with the United Nations Human Rights Council in calling for the immediate release of protestors who have been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty for the sole reason of exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly and for their actions to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means."

Further, we commit to maintain diplomatic pressure on the Iranian regime in the name of the following political protestors:

- **Aida Pourtaghi**, 21 of Zahedan, mathematical engineering student sentenced to 60 lashes and nine months in prison. Ms Pourtaghi has been endorsed by Rechie Valdez.
- **Alma Abdollahzadeh**, physical education student who is currently being held in Gharchak prison, known for its inhumane living conditions. Ms. Abdollahzadeh has been endorsed by the Hon. Karina Gould.
- **Bitva Veisi**, Kurdish university student arrested by Iranian officials on December 10. Ms Veisi has been endorsed by Arielle Kayabaga.
- **Elahe Mirmehdi**, artist art teacher, and activist detained in Golpayegan Prison and denied access to a lawyer. Ms. Mirmehdi has been endorsed by Annie Koutrakis.
- **Etham Modaressi**. 32 of Karaj, Kurdish artist who was kidnapped from her home tortured in confinement until she confessed, and is currently on a hunger strike. Ms. Modaressi has been endorsed by Emmanuella Lambropoulos.
- **Elham Zeratisheh**, lawyer and an active advocate for due process and equal rights, particularly through her Instagram page where she shares legal advice for prisoners, patriotism, and anti mandatory hijab posts. Ms. Zeratisheh has been endorsed by Pam Damoff.
- **Farbod Alavi**, Baha'i citizen currently detained in Evin Prison. Mr. Alav has been endorsed by Arielle Kayabaga.



- **Famous Farzan**, student at the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences in Tehran who was arrested on December 19<sup>th</sup> and taken to Evin Prison, despite severe medical concerns. Ms. Farzan has been endorsed by Sophie Chatel.
- **Hamideh Zerai**, 37, arrested after attending the funeral of slain protestor Hadis Najali and is currently on hunger strike while being held in Kachoui Prison. Ms Zerai has been endorsed by the Hon. Helena Jaczek.
- **Leila Hosseinzadeh**, student activist on a medication strike since December 20 to protest the lack of medical facilities in prison. Leila suffers from Crohn's disease and, despite severe pain, refuses to take her medication until she is afforded proper treatment by prison officials. Ms Hosseinzadeh has been endorsed by the Hon. Marci Len.
- **Mahsa Peyravi**, 25, sentenced to ten years in prison by the Iranian regime for waving her headscarf in the air in protest and "promoting corruption and prostitution." Ms. Peyravi has been endorsed by Ya'ara Saks.
- **Mahtab Ansarian**, 19 of Shahriar, student at Soore University in Iran. On November 14, she was arrested by the Iranian regime in Shahriar and sentenced to two years in prison. Ms. Ansarian has been endorsed by Soraya Martinez Ferrada.
- **Maryam Balalpour**, graphic design student who has been in solitary confinement since her arrest by Islamic Republic agents on December 12. Ms. Balalpour has been endorsed by Anita Vandenberg.
- **Melika Gharegozlou**, 19 of Tehran, journalism student at Allameh Tabataba'i University who was sentenced to four years and four months in prison for posting a video of herself without the state mandated headscarf Ms Gharegozlou has been endorsed by Rachel Bendayan.
- **Mina Alikhani** of Zanjan, arrested in December and is currently serving a one year prison sentence with 74 lashes for the crime of disrupting public order. Ms. Alikhani has been endorsed by Brenda Shanahan.
- **Nazila Marooftan**, student journalist from who has been imprisoned by the Iranian regime since October 30 for releasing an interview with Mahsa Amini's father despite being warned not to by regime officials. Ms. Maroolian has been endorsed by Julie Dabrusin.
- **Parisa Bani Asad**, pharmacy student at Tehran University who was last known to be imprisoned in Evin Prison's Ward 209, where political prisoners are often held. Since her imprisonment, her social media accounts have been deleted. Ms Bani Asad has been endorsed by Viviane Lapointe.
- **Parmida Mehdipour**, 19, kidnapped by Iranian plain-clothes officers and violently interrogated and raped by Iranian officials while detained. Ms Mehdipour has been endorsed by Lena Diab.
- **Rozhin Yousefzadeh**, sentenced to five years imprisonment and a bail of one billion toman for protesting with a sign that read "Mahsa Amini." Ms Yousefzadeh has been endorsed by Jenna Sudds.
- **Samaneh Asghari** of Tehran, children's rights activist and university student. She has dedicated her time and energy to volunteering with children's rights and welfare organizations. On October 19, Samaneh was arrested in her home and has been detained at Iran's Evin Prison. Ms. Asghari has been endorsed by Alexandra Mendes.
- **Soha Mortezaei**, former Tehran University student activist who has been repeatedly prosecuted for engaging in peaceful activism and protesting the state ban on her completing her Ph.D. in political science. She was physically and sexually assaulted while being transferred to Evin Prison. Ms. Mortezei has been endorsed by Valerie Bradford.
- **Zeynab Nasiri**, sociology student arrested and currently awaiting trial for her student activism and resisting compulsory hijab. Ms Nasiri has been endorsed by Julie Dzerowicz.



These protestors share the common background of being staunch opponents of the Iranian regime's state-sponsored gender-based discrimination and violence. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of these protestors from the custody of the Iranian regime. Until their release is secured and their charges withdrawn, we will be their voice. We will continue to say their names, ensure the Iranian regime knows that the world is watching their actions, and we will monitor the status of these women closely until they are released.

In addition to our advocacy for the political protestors named above, we call on the Iranian regime to end its arbitrary detentions, extra-judicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, and torture against all peaceful protestors.

Further, we call on the Iranian regime to end its state sponsored discrimination and violence against women and girls in public and private life.

As Parliamentarians, we will use our voices and digital platforms to seek justice for these political prisoners as well as to amplify the brave calls for freedom coming from within Iranian society. International advocacy efforts such as this are crucial in ensuring that the powerful voices of protestors are heard across the world, given the Iranian regime's restrictions on Internet and social media platforms which undermine the exercise of freedom of opinion, expression, and association by Iranian citizens.

In our mandate of advancing and upholding the rights of women and girls, it is our moral obligation as a caucus to speak out against the Iranian regime's ongoing state sponsored discrimination, persecution, and brutality against those women, girls, and allies who dare to seek freedom from the repressive Iranian regime.

We will use our collective voice to call for an end to the Iranian regime's brutal human rights violations and to support the Iranian people in their fight for hope and freedom.

Signed,

**Emmanuella Lambropoulos, M.P. and Caucus Chair**  
**Hon. Helena Jaczek, M.P.**  
**Hon. Karina Gould, M.P.**  
**Hon. Marci Ien, M.P.**  
**Rachel Bendayan, M.P.**  
**Valerie Bradford, M.P.**  
**Sophie Chatel, M.P.**  
**Pam Damoff, M.P.**  
**Julie Dabrusin, M.P.**  
**Soraya Martinez Ferrada, M.P.**  
**Alexandra Mendes, M.P.**

**Lena Metlege Diab, M.P.**  
**Julie Dzerowicz, M.P.**  
**Viviane Lapointe, M.P.**  
**Arielle Kayabaga, M.P.**  
**Annie Koutrakis, M.P.**  
**Ya'ara Saks, M.P.**  
**Jenna Sudds, M.P.**  
**Brenda Shanahan, M.P.**  
**Rechie Valdez, M.P.**  
**Anita Vandebeld, M.P.**