

interrupted lives

Interrupted Lives: Portraits of Student Repression in Iran

Exhibition Companion Book

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship.”

—Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Throughout the more than 30-year history of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there have been thousands of cases of human rights abuse. Students have been among those tortured, arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned, and executed. Whether treated as political pawns, punished for expressing their opinions, or refusing to recant their beliefs, these students were kept from pursuing the development and free exchange of ideas—the hallmarks of education. Their lives were cut short or irrevocably altered. The individual profiles in this exhibition bear witness to the interrupted lives of these students. Focusing on seminal events over the past three decades, the following pages provide further historical and political context for their stories.

ایران، آزادی، عدالت

l'vda



Kargar Avenue, Tehran, July 9, 1999

The Cultural Revolution 1980–1982

“Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit...No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”

—Universal Declaration of Human Rights

“The university is a bastion of freedom. We are ready to die to protect it.”

—Tehran University Students, April 1980

“All those who care for this country, who care for their nation, must rally their strength to reform universities. The danger from universities is greater than the danger from bombs...They must be purged.”

“Universities constituted the root of all the misfortunes that have befallen humanity.”

—Ayatollah Khomeini

When the Islamic Revolution ousted the Shah on February 11, 1979, Iran's universities were centers of political activity. Leftist groups, pro-revolution groups, and religious political groups all had offices on campus and worked to engage students. As Ayatollah Khomeini consolidated his power and worked to create a strict theocratic government, universities became the scene of daily confrontations between pro-Khomeini and dissenting students.

The Cultural Revolution began after the Ayatollah gave a speech in March 1980 calling universities “propaganda arenas” lacking in Islamic morality. On April 18 the Council of the Islamic Revolution declared all dissident political groups obstacles to the transformation of higher education in Iran. Along with libraries and arts and sports clubs, these groups were given three days to disband.



Political gathering,
Tehran University, 1979



Ayatollah Khomeini

صفحه ۶
یکشنبه ۳۱ فروردین ماه ۱۳۵۹ -
جمادی الثانی ۱۴۰۰ - شماره ۲۵۷



اق بدستان
رها همان
نی هستند
ده مردم
ف خود را
اه و
خورده
می کنند
دانشگاه
علم است و
مشغول
مردم

Several universities experienced violent outbreaks between pro-regime students and targeted groups. Many students died as even more were wounded or arrested.

On April 21, 1980 all Iranian universities were closed in order to purge dissenting professors and students from campus. They remained closed for two years.

Student clashes at Tarbiat Moallem University, April 1980, *Jomhuri Eslami*

The Islamic regime grew increasingly intolerant of political dissent during this time period. No longer able to attend school, many students remained active. They held meetings and created publications.

Many participated in demonstrations initiated by groups such as the Mojahedin Khalq Organization, most notably in June 1981. During the early 1980s the Revolutionary Guard and other paramilitary forces intimidated, beat, and arrested countless youth.

Reports from the CIA (above right) and *The New York Times* (below right) on the conflict between the government and students in Iran

The clashes are spreading beyond the campuses as Muslims organize a general attack on the left. In Tehran, Muslim extremists reportedly burned down the office of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party newspaper on Saturday. The Tudeh has agreed to close its offices at universities but is criticizing the regime for purging the campuses.


At least one person has died in Tehran where leftist Mujahedin students early today agreed to end their sit-in which was intended to prevent the government from closing their political offices. In Mashhad, 350 people were injured and the Mujahedin headquarters was surrounded; it too will be vacated today. Groups at Shiraz University, where some of the most serious fighting had taken place, have turned the college over to university officials. In Abadan, an agreement has also been reached. President Bani-Sadr and Revolutionary Council spokesman Habibi met yesterday with the heads of various colleges to discuss the situation. (U)

TEHERAN, Iran, April 22--New outbreaks of political violence took place at two Iranian universities today, leaving at least 10 people dead and more than 100 injured. The clashes, similar to the disorders yesterday at Teheran University, took places in the western city of Ahwaz and the northern city of Resht. In each case, groups of civilians following the instructions of Islamic clergymen stormed university buildings occupied by leftist student groups in an effort to force them off the campuses." -- The New York Times, April 23, 1980



After the Cultural Revolution, it was mandatory for female students to wear black veil.

From 1981-82 thousands of young people crowded Iran's prisons as newspapers, television and radio stations issued nearly daily reports of executions. The accused—sometimes brought before a single judge and court secretary—were deprived of the right to legal representation and a fair trial. This severe crackdown effectively disbanded many groups and dampened significant independent student activism until the late 1990s.



“There is no room in revolutionary courts for defense lawyers because they keep quoting laws to play for time, and this tries the patience of the people.”

Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali, itinerant judge and head of Iran's Revolutionary Courts, 1979



Portraits of students executed
in the early 1980s





Portraits of students executed
in the early 1980s





Childhood photograph of
Ali Sirani, killed in 1981 at
the age of 17



Ladan Bayani, age 23,
executed August 29, 1981

Mass Executions of Political Prisoners 1988

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

“Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.”

—The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

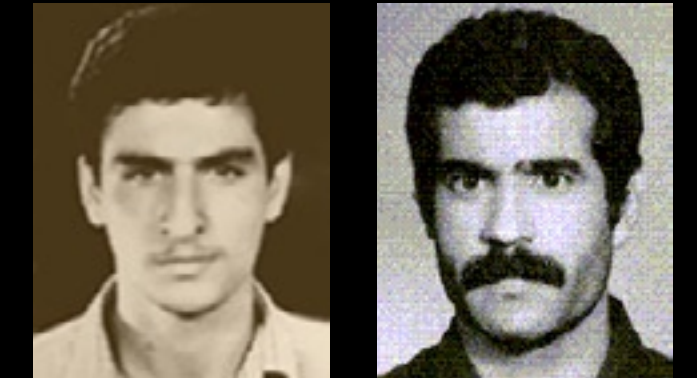
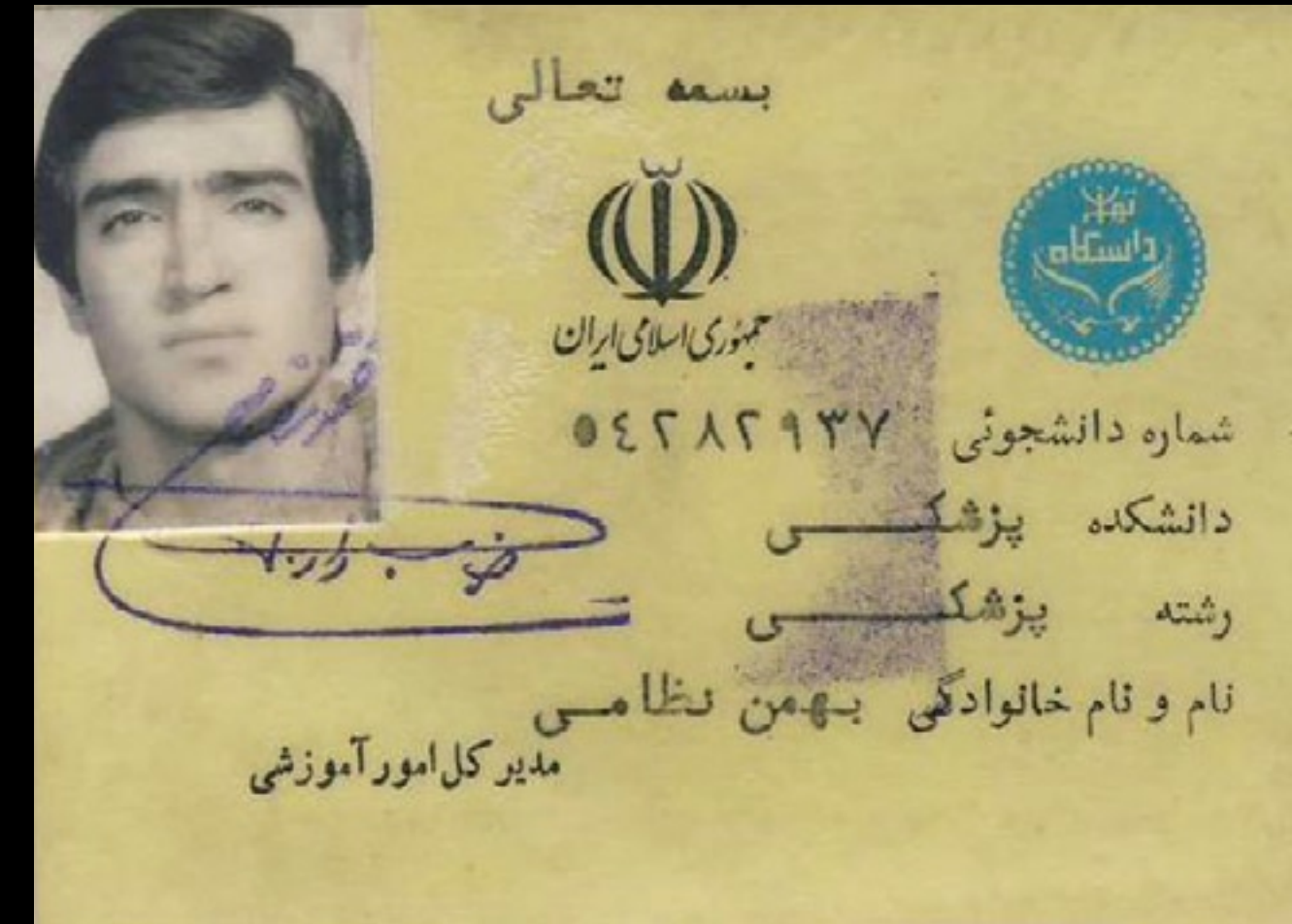
“The Iranian who has risen against the people, in the name of ‘Mojahed-e Khalq’ or ‘Fada’i-e Khalq,’ is an Iranian but not a human being.”

—Ayatollah Khomeini

From August to September 1988, Iran's security forces summarily executed thousands of political prisoners. The majority of these prisoners were sympathizers of leftist organizations, such as the Fadaiyan Khalq Organization, the Tudeh Party, or the Mojahedin Khalq Organization (MKO).

Many were arrested in the early 1980s during the crackdown on political dissent. Some had already completed their prison sentences but were kept in prison because they refused to publicly denounce their beliefs.

Through reports of family members and former cell mates a grim account emerges. Prisoners were rounded up, blindfolded, and led by Revolutionary Guards to a hearing with a religious judge, a public prosecutor, and a counterintelligence chief. Still blindfolded, prisoners accused of being MKO-sympathizers were asked whether they would recant their beliefs in the group.



Communist prisoners were asked “Do you pray? Are your parents good Muslims?” Those who refused to give up their beliefs or were found to be apostates were charged with “war on God” and sentenced to death.

These unfair judicial proceedings were typically over in a few short minutes. Often hung or brought before a firing squad, these prisoners were denied the dignity of a proper burial. Under the cover of night they were buried in a mass grave in Khavaran cemetery near Tehran or at similar sites across Iran.

Informed months later, family members were instructed not to mourn the departed. Many traveled to Khavaran and placed memorial headstones only to have them routinely shattered and destroyed.





گرای باو یاد
مکاسعلی
ممنشی رودسی
(بانو-بیرن-بهاره)

Families commemorating the victims of the 1988 mass killings of Iranian political prisoners in Khavaran cemetery

18 Tir Protests July 1999

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought,
conscience and religion.”
— Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In the late 1990s independent political activity began to emerge on Iran's campuses after a nearly 15-year hiatus. Many students were too young to remember the violence of the early 1980s and President Khatami's new government held the promise of restoring civil rights.

The reform movement, which advocated for a degree of civil rights and rule of law, was beginning to take hold among students, journalists, and even members of the government. Then, in July 1999, the government forced the reformist newspaper *Salam* to close.

Following an investigation into the 1998 murder of elderly dissidents and political leaders Dariush and Parvaneh Foruhar, *Salam* uncovered a shocking series of secret murders of the intellectual elite. The killers, agents of Iran's Intelligence Ministry, were reportedly tied to high-ranking government officials.

Late in the evening of July 8, 1999, a group of students gathered outside their dorms at Tehran University and protested *Salam's* closure.

The students peacefully marched and chanted slogans as they moved to the streets just beyond the university.

Once the students returned to their dorms in the early hours of July 9 (18 Tir by the Iranian calendar), an anti-riot force and plain-clothes militia forced entry.

The security forces brutalized the students and wrecked the premises. They threw students from windows, stabbed and beat them, and set rooms on fire.

When the news of the attack spread in the morning, outraged students took to the streets to protest. Several days of protests followed, during which hundreds were injured and thousands were arrested.



Ransacked student dorms, Tehran University, July 9, 1999



Ransacked student dorms, Tehran University, July 9, 1999



An injured student carried through the streets of Tehran.



Kargar Avenue, Tehran

Protesters face a barrage of security forces.



Student arrested during the protest.



Security forces outside
Tehran University



Though many students reportedly died, the government has only confirmed the death of a recent law graduate, Ezzat Ebrahimnejad. Following his death, Ezzat was criminally charged with throwing stones and participating in the protests. Yet no one has been held accountable for the 18 Tir attacks.



Soldiers standing trial for the 18 Tir attacks.
All were acquitted but one, who was charged for stealing a razor.



Two students hold *Khordad*, a banned pro-reform newspaper, December 1999

Since 1999, the annual anniversary of 18 Tir has provided an opportunity for students to air grievances and stage peaceful demonstrations. They gather to ask for freedom of speech and association. They speak up for an end to discrimination. Every year paramilitary forces disrupt the demonstrations and arrest dissenting students.

Every year paramilitary forces disrupt the demonstrations and arrest dissenting students. The Judiciary and universities' disciplinary committees summon, suspend, ban from graduate studies, and expel students for participating in protests or expressing critical views. Over the years thousands of students around the country have been deprived of their right to education and academic freedom.



Student protest, Tehran University, 2000



Student protest, Tehran University, 2000



Students bring complaints to a Zanzan University official, 2000



Shiraz University students protest the forced retirement of professors and corruption amongst university administration, February 2008

Various student groups—pro-reform and secular—also use the annual Students Day as an opportunity for visible demonstrations. A pro-government rally since the revolution, the early December gathering was reclaimed by students in the late 1990s. Demonstrations and subsequent arrests still occur on Students Day. One case capturing significant attention and response from other students was Majid Tavakoli, a pro-democracy student activist. Majid was arrested shortly after delivering a speech during a large anti-government rally on December 7, 2009. The Fars News Agency published photographs of him wearing a woman's clothing and head scarf. The government claims he wore the outfit as a disguise, while opposition members contest he was forced to pose in the outfit. Hundreds of photographs of men in women's coverings soon appeared online as the students and bloggers mocked the government. In January 2010, Islamic Revolution Court condemned Majid to eight and a half years in prison for insulting the authorities, acting against national security and propagating against the regime. No lawyer was present during his trial.



2009 Election and Protests

“Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”

— Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Rally for presidential candidate Mehdi Karoubi

The June 2009 election campaigns, generally free from police and militia interference, created a hopeful and joyous atmosphere that mobilized a great number of Iranian students and youth.

The aftermath of the post-election protests that broke out across Iran following President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's successful re-election bid poses a significant challenge to the regime's authority. With students at the forefront of the growing opposition movement, thousands have been detained and tortured alongside prominent dissenting government leaders.

Revealing cracks within the ruling elite, senior clerics, notably the now-deceased Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, publicly condemned the leadership's use of violence against opposition protestors.

Slogans in one of the presidential candidate Mousavi's headquarters:

- “1.” Democracy begins at home.
- “2.” We have not learned thermodynamics, differential equations, or biochemistry to stay in our kitchens.



An election rally, Enqelab Square, Tehran, June 2009



The announcement of President Ahmadinejad's re-election unleashed a wave of protests across Iran. With candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi considered strong heading into the June 12, 2009 election, the speedy announcement of Ahmadinejad's victory seemed to indicate a fraudulent election.

Before appeals from the other candidates could be investigated, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, publicly congratulated Ahmadinejad, effectively putting an end to any formal appeal process.

June 15 marked the height of a week of demonstrations with a reported estimate of three million people filling the streets of Tehran. People took to the streets chanting slogans, carrying posters, and dressed in green, which has become the symbolic color of groups seeking change for Iran.





At least 70 people were killed, many of them students, during the post-election demonstrations. Actual numbers are believed to be much higher as security forces are notorious for coercing family members to remain silent. Many more protestors have been injured, arrested, or have disappeared.



Plain-clothes and uniformed forces such as the Basij, Revolutionary Guard, and other paramilitary groups attacked the demonstrators. They rode motorcycles and wielded sticks, clubs, and knives in a violent attempt to quell the protests.



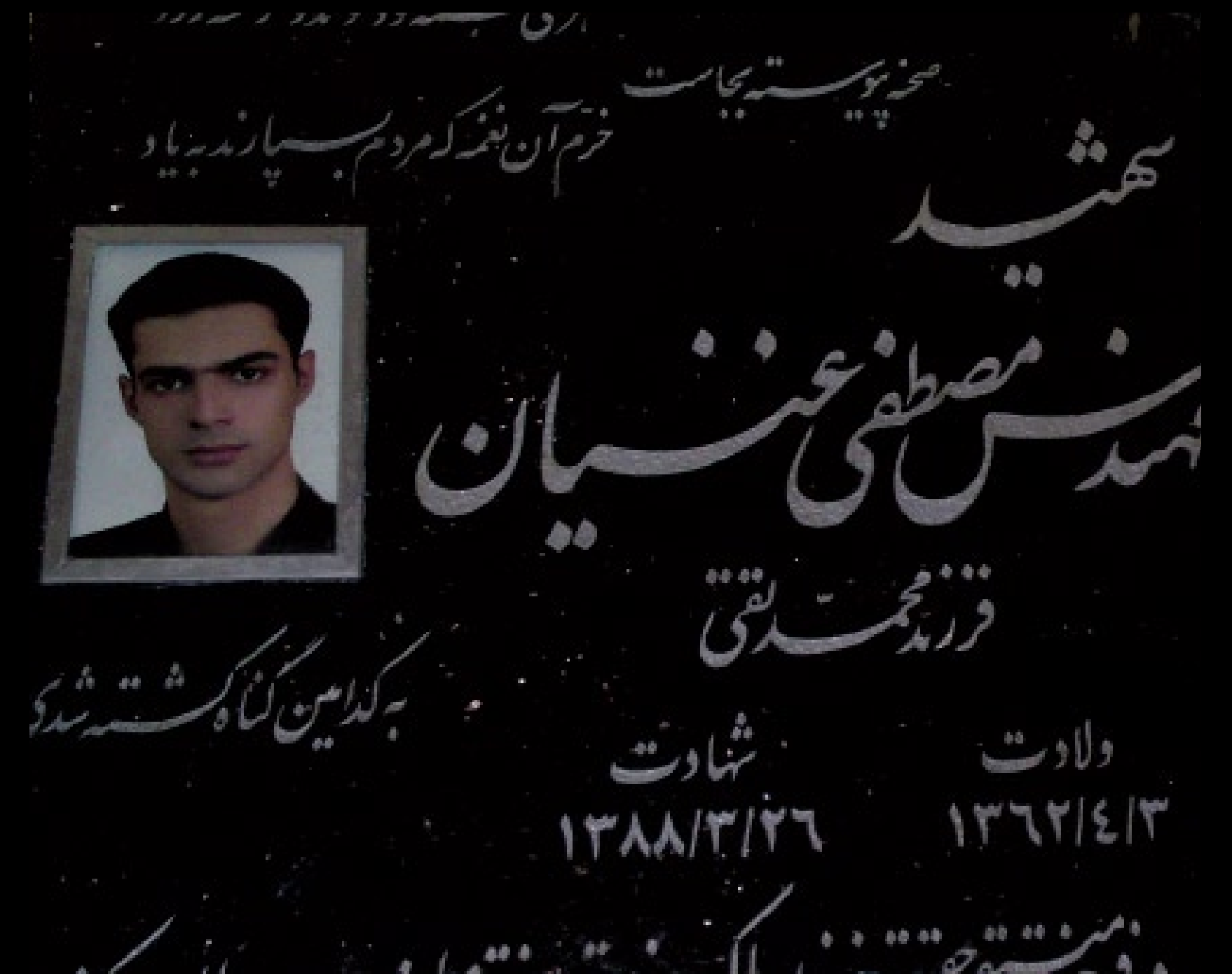
With foreign journalists expelled from Iran, eyewitnesses armed with cell phones, cameras, and Internet connections serve as de-facto reporters. Despite Iran's best efforts to block text messages and Internet access, messages and videos sent via blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter continue to transmit proof of the government's crackdown.



Students use these same online tools to organize and plan additional demonstrations, most notably in July, November, and on December 7, Iran's annual Students' Day.



Mohsen Ruhol-Amini, a 25-year-old demonstrator, died from torture while in detention.



Mostafa Ghanian, a 25-year-old agriculture student was killed during protests in Tehran.



A post-election protest, 2009

Months into 2010 students continue to broadcast news of their government's abuses to a worldwide Internet audience.

They seek solidarity from the international community and from Iranians abroad. Government forces continue to arrest, punish, and silence these students.

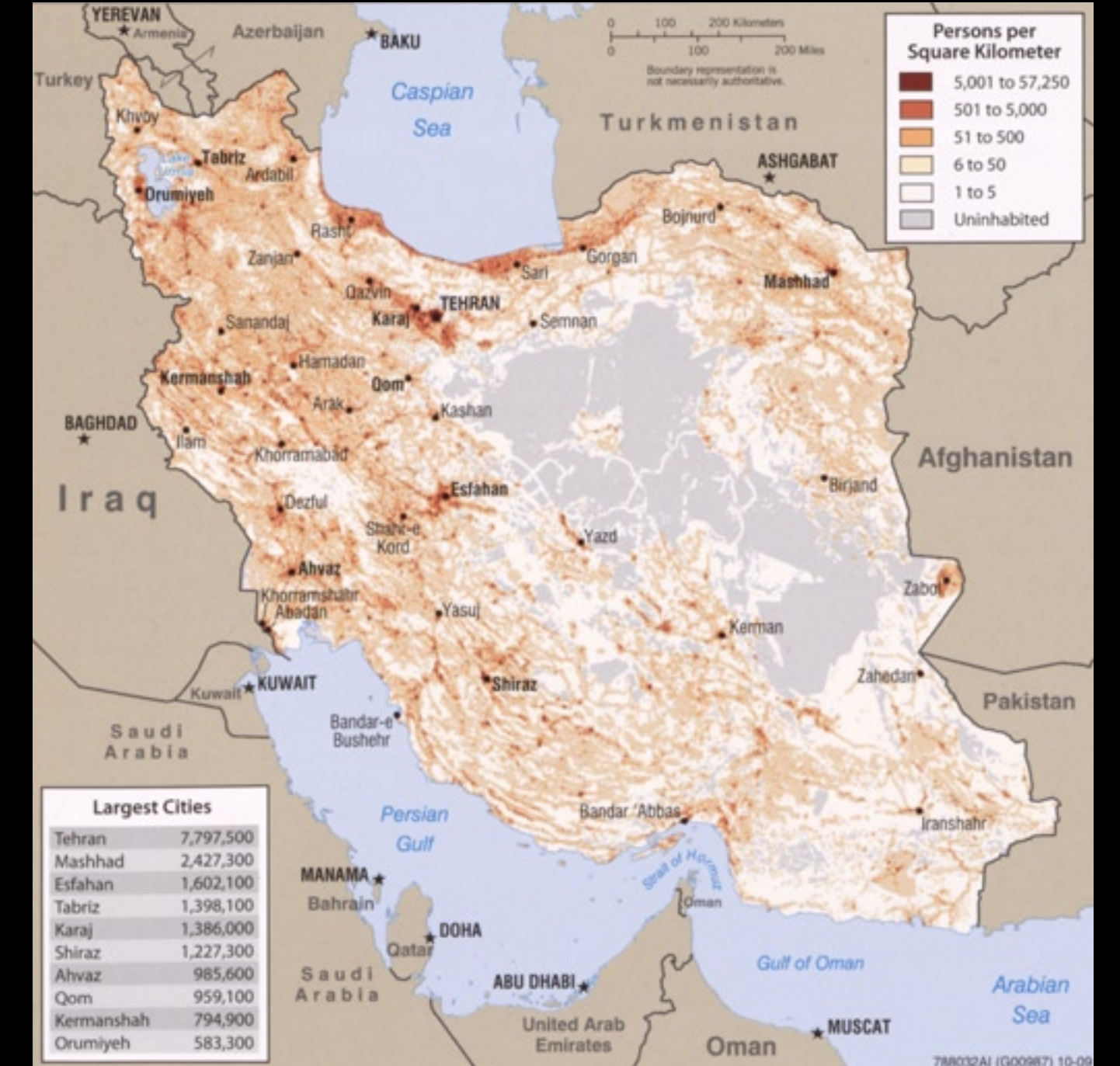


Attack on dormitories, June 2009

Appendix



Regional overview of Iran and its bordering countries



Overview of Iran's population density

Both maps courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Glossary

Human Rights & Advocacy Groups

Baha'i Students' Committee

Established in early 2009, the Baha'i Students' Committee works on behalf of Baha'i students dismissed from universities and advocates for their return to school. Founded in the 19th century from a Shiite branch of Islam and approximately 300,000 members strong, the Baha'i community is Iran's largest non-Muslim minority. However, the government does not recognize the religion and systematically persecutes its adherents. From the early 1980s until 2004, the Baha'i were only allowed to study in Iran's universities if they kept their religion secret. The university entrance exam required applicants to check a box for religious affiliation. In 2004 this requirement was removed from the exam. In 2006 at least half of the approximately 200 enrolled Baha'i students were expelled. A year later approximately 800 students were unable to retrieve their entrance examination scores. Letters and personal appeals from these students and the international community have gone unanswered.

Of the estimated 15,000 Baha'is deprived of higher education since the Cultural Revolution, the Students' Committee has more than 3,000 members. The first meetings took place on May 5, 2009, in Isfahan, Tehran, and Shiraz. As of March 2010, eight of the Committee's members were in prison, while the others were hiding in Iran or seeking asylum outside Iran.

Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR)

The Committee of Human Rights Reporters, previously known as Students' Committee of Human Rights Reporters, was established in March 2006 by university students with members and collaborators in several Iranian cities. For the first two years of its existence, the group concentrated on raising awareness and disseminating information about political prisoners through the Internet. In 2008 the Committee began to report on social issues and human rights violations committed against religious and ethnic minorities as well as activists for women's rights, children's rights, and labor rights. Following the 2009 post-election protests, eight out of its eleven known members inside Iran were arrested. Authorities have told two of the CHRR detainees that the charge pending against them is "enmity with God."

Council to Defend the Right to Education

In 2006 a number of students banned from continuing their studies founded the Council to fight for the right to education for all Iranian citizens. In particular, the group focuses on the hundreds of students who have been victims of politically motivated suspensions and expulsions. The group raises awareness through its blog, meetings, letters to authorities, conferences, and protests. Its last event was held a few days before the 2009 presidential election. The majority of the Council's members were arrested after the 2009 election.

Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRAI)

Founded by former political prisoners in March 2006, HRAI promotes human rights and democracy in Iran. The group covers a wide range of issues such as ethnic and religious minorities, prison conditions, labor, and student-related concerns. HRAI works as a membership-based organization and has chosen to publicly identify its members to avoid accusations of illegal underground activities. In 2009 the organization created a news agency, HRA-NA. Many of the organization's members and collaborators are student activists. The authorities have targeted the organization due to HRA-NA's reporting during the post-election protests in summer 2009. As of early March 2010, more than 40 of its members and collaborators are in prisons around the country.

Student Organizations

National Association of Students and Graduates

[Anjoman-e Daneshjuyan va Daneshamukhtegan Melli]

Founded in 1997, the National Association of Students and Graduates was an independent secular and nationalist student association. The group joined the United Students Front and was active in organizing meetings and protests to give visibility to students' grievances and demands. During the 1999 protests the leaders of the association were arrested and sentenced to death. Their sentences were later commuted. Years of imprisonment resulted in the death of one founder. The other escaped from prison and from Iran, leading to the de facto dissolution of the group inside Iran.

Office for Consolidating Unity (OCU)

[Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat]

Founded in 1979, the Office for Consolidating Unity is the largest student group in Iran, with branches at all Iranian universities. It is an umbrella student organization with 70 university Islamic Associations. Islamic Republic leaders created the organization to counterbalance the influence of secular student groups. The group was originally named the Office for Consolidating Unity Between Universities and Theological Seminaries. The organization played a central role in purging non-Islamic students and professors from universities during the 1980s as part of the Cultural Revolution.

In 1997, with the election of President Mohammad Khatami, the OCU presented pro-reform electoral lists for the parliamentary and city council elections. During and after the 1999 student protests, the organization split with many members as OCU distanced itself from political groups and became more independent. Over the past ten years, many OCU members were arrested and sentenced to prison and many university Islamic Associations were closed down. Today the organization includes a politically diverse membership and actively promotes a reformist, human-rights-centered, and democracy-seeking agenda. The government has failed to harness this movement and return it to the regime's initial purpose. The OCU members are directly elected by students in their respective universities and serve one-year terms. Many OCU members and former members have been arrested since the 2009 presidential election.

United Students Front [Jebheh-e Motahed Daneshju'i]

A coalition of students and graduate groups formed the United Students Front in 1997 during the relatively open period that followed the presidential election. The group promoted democracy and forged the way for independent student associations. The founding members belonged to the Union of Student Islamic Associations [Etehadieh Anjomanhaye Eslami Daneshju'i va Daneshamukhtegan], the Intellectual Students Group [Goruh Daneshjuyan Roshanfekar], and the Association of Azad University Muslim Students [Anjoman Daneshjuyan Mosalman Daneshgah Azad]. Other groups, such as the Student Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners [Komiteyeh Daneshju'i Defa' az Zendanyan Siyassi], National Students and Graduates Organization [Sazman Meli Daneshjuyan va Danesh Amukhtegan], and Student Union of Azad University [Etehadieh Daneshju'i Daneshgah Azad], joined the coalition.

From 1998 until the summer of 1999, the United Students Front organized student protests and published a newspaper that gave voice to the independent student movement. Following the July 1999 student protests, many of the coalition's members were arrested and sentenced to prison. Many were forced to seek asylum outside Iran. Over the next few years, the coalition's continued criticism of the Islamic Republic's policies led to the closure of member groups' offices. The Islamic Revolutionary Court ultimately banned the United Students Front in 2004.

Political Organizations and Parties

Communist Unity Organization

[Vahdat-e Komonisti Organization]

Upon their return to Iran, many students educated abroad came together with other political activists to form Vahdat-e Komonisti in November 1978. They identified themselves as supporters of the "political-military struggle for the preparation and accomplishment of a Socialist revolution." Chief among their activities was publishing *Raha'i* with critiques of the ideological standpoints of Iranian political organizations. The organization split into various factions during the government crackdown on opposition groups in 1981. Members of the Communist Unity Organization outside Iran continued their activism until 1986 through the publication of *Andisheh Raha'i and Bultan-e Akhbar-e Iran (Bulletin of Iranian News)*.

Fadaiyan Khalq Organization (FKO)

Inspired by the Cuban Revolution and the urban guerrilla movements of Latin America, two communist groups opposed to Shah Pahlavi's regime formed the FKO in 1971. The Marxist-Leninist group renounced armed struggle. Following the 1979 Revolution, the FKO split over their support of the Islamic Republic and the Soviet Union. The Minority faction opposed the Republic and was active in the political arena and the labor movement. The FKO Majority supported the Islamic Republic and considered the regime revolutionary and anti-imperialist. A number of the organization's members who did not renounce armed struggle formed the Fadaiyan Khalq Guerrillas (Ashraf

Dehqan Branch). Yet another branch formed when the Keshtgar or 16 Azar faction split from the Majority branch on December 7, 1981, due to its opposition to uniting with the Tudeh Party.

Forqan

Inspired by Iranian intellectual Ali Shari’ati, the group formed in 1977 and ascribed to a modern interpretation of the Quran and Islamic ideology. Forqan supported social justice and opposed the involvement of the clergy in the government and the particular interpretation of Islam implemented by the Islamic Republic. The group assassinated several members of the new ruling elite and was accused of armed robberies. Most of the known Forqan members were executed or killed in clashes with Islamic Revolutionary Committee forces, leading to the total elimination of the group in January 1980.

The Green Movement

Long a symbolic color in Islam, green was used in the campaign paraphernalia of presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi. As the leading opposition candidate, Mousavi was the initial focal point for the protests following the presumably fraudulent 2009 election. Mousavi supporters and other protestors donned green as they took to the streets. As the outcry against the regime has grown in the months following the election, green has become the color of an opposition movement advocating for social and political change, justice, and the cessation of widespread human rights violations. The movement is a loose coalition of presidential candidate supporters, secular opposition

groups, civil society groups, and non-affiliated individuals. Students are at the forefront of the movement and have suffered at the hands of security forces. The authorities have used excessive force against protestors and arrested thousands. Hundreds of students have been arrested and scores sentenced to prison terms in sham trials. Others are awaiting trial or held without charges. Many are in hiding or have braved the danger of illegally crossing the border to seek asylum outside Iran.

Iran Democratic Front (IDF)

The Iran Democratic Front was established in 2000 to promote a secular democratic regime. IDF is a loose coalition of several student organizations that concluded in the late 1990s that major constitutional and structural obstacles prevented significant reform in Iran. They called for fundamental constitutional changes and rallied around Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, the IDF secretary general and a former Islamist militant who converted to democratic ideals in the late 1990s. Tabarzadi spent nine years in detention as a prisoner of conscience. He was re-arrested in late 2009 and is still in prison as of March 2010.

Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI)

A socialist party, PDKI was founded in 1945 and works to gain autonomy for Kurdistan, the territory in the northwest region of Iran. After the Revolution the new central Shiite government monopolized power, and the new constitution denied Kurds equal rights. Sunni Muslims and the largest religious minority in Iran, Kurds were not permitted to participate in public affairs or exercise any degree of autonomy. As early as the summer of 1979, fighting broke out between Kurdish forces and the Revolutionary Guards. Ayatollah Khomeini called the PDKI the “party of Satan” and declared it “unofficial and illegal.” Mass executions followed and fighting continued for several months, killing a number of civilians. PDKI had lost much of its territorial control over the region by 1983, and many of its leaders were assassinated outside Iran in the 1990s. Currently based in Iraqi Kurdistan, the Party has renounced armed struggle.

Kurdish Independent Life Party (PJAK)

An armed group formed in 2004, PJAK aims to create a democratic system in Iran and self-rule for Kurdistan. Its initial goal is to limit the authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to democratize the state into a self-governing institution. PJAK maintains it does not believe in military struggle as the primary course of action. However, the party states that when unable to carry out its democratic activities, and when mass killings and destruction are inflicted on its people, PJAK is well within its strategic framework to use legitimate self-defense to shield and protect its nation. The PJAK reportedly carries out

armed attacks against Iranian forces. Although American officials have condemned PJAK, Iranian authorities insist the PJAK is linked to the U.S. government. According to Amnesty International, as of January 2010, there were 17 ethnic Kurds who were condemned to death for “enmity against God” for their alleged affiliation with Kurdish armed groups, most notably PJAK.

People’s Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI)

[Mojahedin Khalq Organization (MKO)]

Founded in 1965 with Islam and Marxism as its ideological inspiration, the MKO engaged in guerrilla warfare against the monarchy. Over the ensuing years, many members were imprisoned and others killed during clashes with security forces. In January 1979 a number of MKO leaders were released from prison, and the group was able to reorganize. They recruited new members, many from high schools and universities. After the 1979 Revolution the MKO accepted the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini and was eager to be positioned within governmental institutions. However, the MKO failed to gain political power. On June 20, 1981, they called for a demonstration protesting the ban on their political activities and the impeachment of MKO ally President Banisadr. The MKO then declared an armed uprising against the regime. A large number of the June 20 demonstrators were arrested and executed in the following days and weeks. Thousands of imprisoned MKO supporters were killed during the mass executions of political prisoners in 1988. Since the late 1980s MKO activities in Iran have decreased dramatically. Today the MKO continues its activities outside Iran. Within

Iran supporters remain, but the level of their activities is unknown.

National Front of Iran [Jebhe Melli]

In the late 1940s secular Iranian leaders with nationalist, liberal, and social-democratic leanings mobilized a protest against electoral fraud in Tehran. This protest served as the catalyst for the founding of the National Front, a political coalition. Leading groups in the National Front were the Iran Party, the Toilers Party, the National Party, and the Tehran Association of Bazaar Trade and Craft Guilds. The coalition promoted free elections and the rule of law and played a key role in the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. Its leader, Mohammad Mossadegh, was the head of government from 1951 until 1953, when he was ousted by a U.S. and British-supported coup d'état. The National Front was officially banned from political activities but continued as an opposition group. Shortly after the 1979 Revolution, the group's leadership disagreed over whether to support Ayatollah Khomeini. The group came under attack from the revolutionary leadership for its opposition to the constitution and the new Islamic penal code. In the two decades after the Revolution, internal frictions and the loss of many members to prison and exile weakened the National Front. Two of its leaders were assassinated by agents of the Islamic Republic inside and outside Iran.

Peykar Organization for the Liberation of the Working Class

Dissident members of the Mojahedin Khalq Organization who converted to Marxism-Leninism founded the Peykar Organization and rejected guerrilla struggle. They were anti-Soviet, staunchly anti-clerical, and believed China had deviated from true Marxist-Leninist principles. Peykar, which never supported the clerical rule, was one of the first leftist groups targeted by government forces. A majority of its members and sympathizers was executed in the early 1980s. The brutal repression of dissidents by the Iranian government and splits within Peykar in 1981 and 1982 effectively dismantled the group.

Ranjbaran Party of Iran

In late December 1979 a number of Marxist groups in Tehran created the Ranjbaran Party. The founders were Marxist-Leninist and ascribed to the communist ideologies of Chinese leader Mao Tse-Tung. They opposed the United States and the Soviet Union. They supported Ayatollah Khomeini as an anti-imperialist leader. During the massive government crackdown in 1981, the Party was banned and its leaders executed.

Razmandegan Organization for the Liberation of the Working Class

Founded in the winter of 1979, Razmandegan focused on the working class and factories. The founding tenets of Razmandegan included the rejection of armed struggle and a strong stand against the pro-Soviet policies of the Iranian Tudeh Party. By early 1981 disagreements about the Iran-

Iraq war caused internal splits in Razmandegan. These splits, which coincided with the government's massive and brutal repression of dissidents, caused the organization to disband.

Red Star Organization [Setareh-ye Sorkh]

This group was formed when its members split from the Peykar Organization in 1980 over tactical disagreements. Red Star opposed the Islamic Republic, rejected armed struggle, and believed in the fundamental role of organizing the industrial and agricultural labor force and the student movement. The brutal repression of dissidents by the Iranian government in 1981 caused Red Star to dismantle.

Revolutionary Workers Organization of Iran [Rah-e Kargar]

In the summer of 1979 individuals from various leftist groups established Rah-e Kargar. Its members rejected armed struggle and believed in political action. They identified the organization as Marxist-Leninist and promoted a socialist revolution and the leadership of the proletariat. They opposed the Islamic Republic and Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership.

Tudeh Party

Created in 1941, the Tudeh Party's ideology was Marxist-Leninist and it supported the former Soviet Union's policies. The party played a major role on Iran's political scene until it was banned for a second time following the August 19, 1953, coup. Many of its members, particularly those in the army, were executed. After the 1979

Revolution the Tudeh declared Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic regime revolutionary and anti-imperialist and actively supported the new government. Although the party never opposed the Islamic Republic, its members were targeted in early 1982-83 when most of the party's leaders and members were imprisoned. Scores of its supporters were executed in the following crackdown and during the 1988 mass prison killings.

Interrupted Lives:

Portraits of Student Repression in Iran

An exhibition from

the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation

Co-sponsored by Amnesty International USA

Founded in 2001 by Ladan and Roya Boroumand and named in memory of their father, the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation (ABF) is a non-governmental non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of human rights and democracy in Iran. Based in Washington D.C., ABF is an independent organization with no political affiliation. Committed to the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Foundation seeks to ensure that human rights in Iran are promoted and protected without discrimination.

Guided by the belief that unresolved human rights violations are a major obstacle to the establishment of a stable democracy, ABF is committed to the right of all victims of human rights abuses to justice and public recognition. Through its programs of research, documentation, publications, and outreach, the Foundation hopes to help restore the dignity of Iran's countless victims of human rights violations.

The profiles in this exhibition are but a few of the countless stories of human rights victims catalogued by the Foundation. These victims are given voice in an online memorial named Omid or "hope" in Persian. An ongoing project of ABF, Omid has amassed thousands of searchable profiles. Visit www.iranrights.org to witness these stories and to learn more about the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation.

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Special thanks to the students, human rights advocates, student groups, journalists, and families within Iran who document and report human rights violations. This exhibition would not have been possible without their dedicated work and support.



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