

IRANIAN PROTESTS FOR WOMEN, LIFE AND LIBERTY

An unprecedented, nationwide uprising not seen since the 1979 revolution is underway across Iran since the extrajudicial killing in detention of 22-year-old #MahsaAmini.

It is the first Middle Eastern movement led by women and significantly motivated by women's demands for fundamental human rights. The slogan of the movement crystallizes that women's emancipation is the basis for democracy in Iran and the toppling of Islamic fundamentalism in the region: 'Zan, Zendegi, Azadi!'

The shooting of peaceful protesters on the streets has exposed the true nature of the extremist Iranian regime. Iranian women have realized that their dignity and rights are irreconcilable with this regime which has subjected them to summary arrest for not wearing the hijab correctly, extrajudicial killing, torture, lack of due process and fair trial, and no freedom of expression among other violations. Young women have mobilized the entire society – people of all ages, groups and regions and restored their courage to stand up to their oppressors. This is why the movement is revolutionary. It seeks an end to the Islamic regime - not for reform or decent treatment which has not been forthcoming for 40 years. The current revolutionary situation brings to a head the confrontation between Iranian society and the clerical regime that began with women's protests in Tehran against the compulsory use of the hijab a generation ago, immediately after the establishment of this regime in 1979.

The Iranian women's movement has a long history of struggle for and achievement of equal rights and freedoms. The movement made significant progress in the 1960s and 1970s. Women won the right to vote in 1963. The Family Protection Law expanded women's divorce and custody rights in 1975. Women began to occupy professional positions in increasing numbers throughout these two decades, especially in the education and health sectors. The clergy's discontent with these social changes was dismissed by the Shah, which led to the vindictive opposition of a section of the clergy led by Khomeini.

Despite the Tehran protests, in 1979 and 1980, the new regime attacked every institution of civil society: the free

press, the arts and culture, universities and schools, political parties, ethnic and religious minorities, and most virulently women's rights. It aimed to colonize Iranian society by force and through ideological indoctrination exactly like the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. And similar to the Taliban, the Islamic regime of the Shia mullahs has enforced their rule by empowering male guardians, shopkeepers, taxi drivers and other men in the public sphere to uphold the subjugation of women and girls. It is a criminal offence in Iran for men to allow unveiled women and female relatives in their stores, cars or in public. Iranian civil society has risen up despite the regime's zealous effort to repress it.

Just as the 1979 revolution in Iran inaugurated the political career of virulent Islamic fundamentalism in the region, the removal of this regime by Iranian people in a movement instigated and led by women and their demands will put an end to that extremism. The victory of women and Iranian society vis a vis the regime will result in inestimable benefits for their rights and position in the political system; for national stability and for regional and even global security given Iran's role in the region's conflicts and its nuclear capacity.

Citizens and leaders everywhere, but particularly those in liberal democracies, must actively support the brave women and men of Iran in their struggle in every way possible. This is a struggle that concerns everyone: As the German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock has stated 'unless Iranian women are safe, no one is safe'.

Governments have already taken a number of actions, but more must be done to not only send a strong message to the Iranian regime but to support Iranian civil society's struggle for fundamental rights and freedoms in

the interests of peace and stability. Global public opinion and media have rallied behind the current uprising of Iranian women and society. Politicians around the world should seize this opportunity to put into practice their democratic values and foreign policy goals supporting gender equality, human rights, peace and security by standing up for the people of Iran.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

We recommend meaningful practical actions need to be taken by the Australian Government to back up our censure of the Iranian regime for its abuse of the fundamental human rights of its citizens. These actions will align Australia with other liberal democratic states and their actions against the Iranian regime's abuse of power and criminal behaviour.

Such actions will enable Australia to uphold democratic and human rights values and to implement its foreign policy gender equality strategy and second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which promotes the international leadership and accountability of Australia on women, peace and security worldwide.

1. Australia should institute Magnitsky-style targeted sanctions including financial asset freezing and travel bans against members of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) key security officials and morality police. The USA, UK, Canada and the European Union have already taken this action.
2. Australia should list the IRGC as a terrorist organization (aligning Australia with the US and Canada).
3. Australia should censure and expel the Iranian Ambassador.

4. Australia should join the call with other states to remove Iran from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
5. Foreign Minister the Hon Penny Wong should join her counterparts in feminist foreign policy countries (Germany, France, Canada, Sweden, Spain, Belgium and Chile) to condemn the Iranian regime and stand up for women's rights and human rights, as this is supported by foreign ministers in other liberal democratic states.

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