

AN UNPRECEDENTED 'VIRTUAL' GATHERING OF 42 IRANIAN POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN A DIALOGUE FOR THE SALVATION OF IRAN



(23 inside Iran of which 9 are currently in jail)

On the 21st and 22nd of April 2023, some 42 well-known and respected Iranian political, social, and human rights activists representing the broadest spectrum of political opinions inside and outside the country, took part in a 'virtual dialogue' that highlighted their shared views for the urgent need to move the Iranian nation beyond the framework of the current theocracy.

The dialogue focussed on internal solutions to internal issues, especially in the new circumstances that have transformed internal and external public opinion following the unprecedented popular protests in the aftermath of Mahsa Amini's tragic death in September 2022.

Among the 42 speakers, 23 of them had taken part in the dialogue from inside Iran, despite many clear risks. There was general consensus among all the participants that Iran's salvation was contingent upon the promulgation of a new national constitution based on popular sovereignty and the votes of the Iranian people to replace the current theocratic dictatorship.

Among the participants, there were some who had joined the gathering from prison. These included some prominent figures such as Faezeh Rafsanjani, Narges Mohammadi, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee and Mostafa Tajzadeh, as well as two former leaders of the Baha'i community. Some participants were arrested either before or after the gathering, creating a powerful image of unswerving commitment by those activists to continue the struggle for the freedom of the Iranian people, despite all risks to their personal well-being and safety.

The seminar was introduced and concluded by Dr Ardeshir Amir-Arjomand, an advisor to the former Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi. In his opening remarks, he drew attention to the oppression faced by Iranian citizens, particularly women, and emphasized that a new constitution based on the sovereign rights of the Iranian people was the only solution to the wide array of problems currently confronting the Iranian nation.

In the course of the debates, the recurring themes that were discussed primarily focused on the importance of achieving unity among the various political groups, the need for structural reforms, including ultimately the establishment of a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution.

All the speakers were in agreement that there must be a definite separation between religion and the state, and that Iranian citizens should be treated in accordance with the standards of international human rights.

Other notable figures who contributed to the discussions included the imprisoned human rights advocate, Narges Mohammadi. She called for the removal of Iran's oppressive regime, whilst ensuring a peaceful transition for the people. Additionally, another imprisoned participant, Golrokh Iraee, criticized the silence of international organizations regarding the momentous events that are taking place in Iran. Keyvan Samimi, who had been arrested just before the event, stressed in a pre-recorded message the importance of unity in the battle for freedom and democracy.

Overall, the event provided a concurrence of views as well as a platform where the fundamental flaws of the Iranian Republic - something that the current regime was totally incapable of correcting, were discussed and analysed.

Despite the challenges that the country is facing, the participants maintained a positive outlook regarding Iran's future, vowing to relentlessly continue their peaceful struggle for the desired transition to a new secular democracy.

*For further information regarding this historic event
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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SOME OF THE KEY PARTICIPANTS



Narges Mohammadi*: An Iranian journalist and human rights activist who advocates for the abolition of the death penalty and the mistreatment of prisoners. She is the deputy director of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre which advocates for human rights reforms and gives legal representation to political prisoners.

Mostafa Tajzadeh *: A former Deputy Minister of Interior in the Khatami government and an outspoken critic of the Islamic regime who is currently in prison.

Faezeh Hashemi Rafsanjani * (daughter of former President Hashemi Rafsanjani): An Iranian women's rights activist and a former member of the Iranian parliament. She is known for her advocacy on women rights and social reform.

Keyvan Samimi*: A journalist, political activist, and the editor-in-chief of Iran Farda magazine. He is member to both the Council of National-Religious Activists of Iran and the Iranian Writers Association.

Mohsen Kadivar: A Muslim scholar in Philosophy and Theology. He is known for his research on democracy and human rights in Islam as well as classical Islamic theory.

Mehdi Nasiri: Former Editor of Keyhan Newspaper in Iran (appointed by the Supreme Leader), Iran

Manijeh Baradaran: Human Rights Activist

Mehrdad Khonsari: A former Iranian diplomat from the previous regime and a prominent 'Constitutionalist' opposition figure and political activist/

Adnan Hassanpour: An Iranian-Kurdish journalist and advocate of cultural rights for Iranian Kurdish people.

Abdollah Momeni: An Iranian student leader and political activist, who first gained prominence in the 1999 July student protests against the government's clampdown of the pro-reform 'Salam' newspaper.

Alireza Beheshti Shirazi*: A prominent politician and journalist. He was advisor to the former Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi. Shirazi was arrested by security forces on 25 April 2023

Taghi Rahmani: A veteran 'Nationalist-Religious' politician and activist

Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee: A writer and political activist who has advocated against the practice of stoning in Iran. During the mass imprisonment that followed the Mahsa Amini protests, she was arrested in September 2022.

Mahvash Sabet*: Former director for the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education and an advocate for Baha'is rights. She was arrested in 2010 under false charges and during her time she famously authored poems about her experiences in prisons. She was arrested once again in 2022.

Fariba Kamalabai*: A human rights defender who was previously part of the leadership of the Baha'i community in Iran.

The 2-day sessions were moderated by **Reza Alijani**, a prominent writer, commentator and veteran 'Nationalist-Religious' politician and **Mohammad Javad Akbarin**, a religious scholar and a prominent political activist and journalist.



* in prison at this time