

Letter in Solidarity and Support for the Women of Iran

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The Associated Students of San Francisco State University write this letter in solidarity with the women of Iran who are protesting for their individual rights and freedoms in opposition to the oppressive theocracy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since the beginning of the 1979 Islamic Revolution that installed the current regime, women have protested the compulsory head covering (hijab), and demanded equal rights with men in all sectors of society. In 2019, Sahar Khodayari, 29, self-immolated in protest at the ban on women at sporting events, causing Iran to lift its ban. On September 16th 2022, Mahsa Amini was killed in custody by the so-called Morality Police, detained for not wearing a hijab properly. This has sparked protests and an unproportional government response that has killed at least 200 people.

It is important to remember that the oppression of Iranian women and girls is a result of political decisions. Prior to the current regime, Iran was a secular monarchy where women had the right to vote, hold public office, gain an education, earn equal salaries, and travel without a veil in public, the same things that protestors are demanding today.

The mass uprising sparked by Amini's murder has been met with barbaric violence by a government that has now killed hundreds of its own citizens. Amnesty International reports that Iranian authorities have ordered disproportionate force including the use of live weaponry against young protestors.

On behalf of the students at San Francisco State University, Associated Students condemns Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the current government of Iran, and its so-called "Morality Police" in their efforts to oppress women, who dare to live their lives and express themselves without arbitrary rules placed upon them by a religious patriarchy.

In today's globally connected world, youth are quicker to recognize and act against the foolishness of antiquated customs that contradict their own moral intuition. It is therefore no coincidence that young people – whether here at our university or protesting across Iran – recognize certain truths as self-evident, including the right to live freely without being subjected to laws that degrade humanity, and that the imposition of religious belief and opinion have no place whatsoever in public policy.

The beating and killing of young people, including those at universities like Sharif University, where students and faculty were beaten and fired upon with rubber bullets, demonstrate the cowardice of a repressive, authoritarian regime and its fear of the conviction of some of Iran's brightest youth. As students at SFSU, an institution of higher learning with a history of student-led social justice and activism, we understand the value of freely examining the societies we inherit, asking questions, voicing opinions, and demanding change.

We write in solidarity with the heroes and heroines who are putting their lives on the line fighting for freedom and the chance for a life without oppression from the Islamic Republic of Iran. From Mahsa Amini, 22, who was beaten to death for allegedly improperly wearing a hijab, to Sarina Esmailzadeh, 16, who loved to sing, dance, cook, and do makeup, to Nika Shakarami, 16, who was killed after joining her people's anti-government movement, the bravery of these protestors in the face of such brutal retribution should only inspire our own students to never take their own empowerment at this University and this country for granted.

We offer our condolences and solidarity to the families of the many young people, both girls and boys, who have lost their lives at the hands of police brutality and violence, and urge all members of the SFSU community, the 23 CSU campuses, and local, state, and federal governments to support the women of Iran in their fight for basic liberties and freedoms, as well as the Iranian students and families here in the United States.

With the average age of protestors arrested in Iran being just fifteen, there can be no more powerful testament to the unflinching leadership and bravery of young girls who, along with women and men, are prepared to die demanding justice and liberation. May their example embolden us all, from schoolyards and dorms to streets and jail cells, to governments around the world, enlisting hope on a global scale.

In Solidarity,

Associated Students of San Francisco State University
Board of Directors