

# MOTHERS OF MARTYRS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES



## INTRODUCTION

The flame of resistance and struggle in the freedom movement has always been alive and it continues to burn in the face of Iran's stifling dictatorship that holds the world's record in executions.

Alongside the freedom fighters, there have always been young men and women who brave the obstacles and sacrifice their own lives in responding to the call of the movement. Each of them shines like a star, piercing through the dark night of oppression and heralding the dawn.

Following in their footsteps with love and compassion, are their mothers, sisters, and relatives who deeply believe that their loved ones did not die in vain and need to continue their path until final fruition.

Certainly, the gushing pain and anger of mothers join together and become a devastating flood that will wash away the filth of the mullahs' religious dictatorship from Iran.

### **What are the mothers' goals and demands?**

#### **Freedom of Political Prisoners**

One of the major demands which led to the formation and coherence of the Mother's Movement was freedom of political prisoners.

Mahin Shahinfar, mother of Amir-Arshad Tajmir who was killed in the 2009 uprising, called for the release of political prisoners and wrote, "Who will return my son Amir (Arshad) to me? No one. At least free the innocent political prisoners who have been imprisoned for absolutely no reason, but face continuous torture and punishment. Believe me, if Sohrab were alive, his only wish would have been to see the freedom of political prisoners, the same thing Amir (Arshad), Neda, Mustafa, and the rest of our children wished for. They wouldn't have any other demands. Is that too much to ask for? They wanted security, they wanted the freedom they never had. And I don't want anything other than the freedom of our righteous children, locked up in prisons and perishing."



Akram os-Sadat Sanjari, mother of Misagh Yazdan-Nejad, a political prisoner in Rajaii Shahr Prison located in Karaj, in a letter addressed to the UN Special Rapporteur, Ahmad Shaheed, revealed, "One of the interrogators admitted that the main reason for my son's outrageous 10-year prison sentence is because we (his parents) were political prisoners in the 80s and because three of his uncles were executed during the same period."

In August 2013, Zolaikha Moussavi, mother of imprisoned blogger Hossein Ronaghi who is suffering from serious health problems, went on a hunger strike to protest the injustice done by the judicial authorities.

The Mother's Movement has been calling for the freedom of political prisoners especially louder in the past two years. They have been actively demanding justice for the prisoners and holding meetings to achieve the same demand.

Mothers and families of martyrs and prisoners gathered on May 5, 2014, in front of Rouhani's office in protest, chanting, "Free All Political prisoners!"

The following day, Mojgan Moradpour, Mother of Daavar Hosseini-Vojdan, as well as the wives of Saeed Mateen and Abdolfattah Soltani, were accompanied by a number of relatives of other political prisoners in Ward 350 of Evin Prison, started a hunger strike in protest to the unjust imprisonment of their family members. The same slogan, as well as “Down with dictatorship!” were chanted in the meeting halls of Evin prison at the end of the same month. This was in response to the violent attacks of the Iranian regime’s forces against political prisoners of Evin.

The gatherings of the families of martyrs and political prisoners in protest to the arrest of Narges Mohammadi began in mid-May 2015 and continued for several days. Gohar Eshghi who was with Narges at the time of her arrest, began protesting and chanting slogans against Khamenei and IRGC, so much that she suffered a heart attack.

The rallies in defense of political prisoners were repeated on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> of October. On November 21<sup>st</sup>, the Intelligence Ministry agents brutally attacked the mothers and families of martyrs and political prisoners in a gathering outside Evin Prison. More than 30 demonstrators were reported arrested and transferred to Evin and Qarchak Prisons. Simin Eyvaz-zadeh, mother of political prisoner Omid Ali-Shenas, and father of Saeed Zeinali who has been missing since the 1999 student protests in Tehran, were among the detainees.

In an interview prior to her arrest, Ms. Eyvaz-zadeh asserted, “Everyone who has been imprisoned based on their political or ideological beliefs are among the purest people in this country. They should be given medals of honor instead of long 10-15-year sentences.”

Saeed Zeinali’s sister, Behnaz, in response to her father’s arrest wrote, “My father has been searching for an answer to his 17-year-long question of ‘where is my Saeed?’ He was inquiring in front of Evin Prison but instead he gets arrested.”

The Zeinali family have proven that they are strong and can overcome the threats they are faced with on a daily basis. Simin Eyvaz-zadeh, 56, as well as all other detainees went on hunger strike after being arrested. She suffers from dysrhythmia and elevated blood pressure. A number of political prisoners, as well as Omid Alishenas, Simin’s son, went on hunger strike in solidarity with their families.

In a letter to the detainees, Gohar Eshghi wrote in this regard, “I would like to announce in a loud and clear voice that I am with you, supporting you all, and have no fear of the threats my daughter and I are faced with.”

The mullahs’ regime was forced to release a number of the detainees after nearly 10 days, including Ms. Eyvaz-zadeh. Shortly after their release, Ms. Sholeh Paakravan (Reyhaneh Jabbari’s mother) wrote, “Yes, the mothers do not give up demanding the rights of our children, whether they are imprisoned, or resting peacefully in the heart of the ground. I went to visit Simin Eyvaz-zadeh. I was so happy to see her persisting on the rights of her son. Omid is like a son to me. Just like how Reyhaneh was a daughter to Simin.”

On 2 December 2015, the violent (IRGC) Guards attacked and arrested several people in Tehran during a rally held in defense of political prisoners.



## Litigation of Martyred Children

Shahin MahinFar, mother of Amir Arshad Tajmir, on the day that marked the anniversary of her son's death, stated, "The person you see in the film who is run over three times by IRGC's van is my Amir... He was on his way to rescue two innocent girls but they took his life. Instead, today, every youth I meet introduces himself as Amir. What more do I want? I gave one Amir and received thousands in return."

Gohar Eshghi, mother of 35-year-old martyr, Sattar Beheshti who lost his life under torture in November of 2012 merely for writing anti-regime blogs, said, "They brought me face-to-face with Sattar's murderers and told me that if I don't consent, they will arrest my daughter. I won't conform until they pay for Sattar's blood." She was brutally attacked by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence 14 days later on her son's 40<sup>th</sup> Day post-burial ceremony and suffered numerous injuries.

In March 2013, Gohar Eshghi said Sattar's interrogator revealed to her that Sattar was laughing under torture and it made the guards really mad, so they beat him to death.

10 October 2015: Gohar Eshghi's response to the death threat on behalf of the infamous Intelligence Ministry against her daughter, Sahar Beheshti, was, "I am Gohar Eshghi, the mother of Sattar. Sattar was a modest worker. They took him away and killed him after 4 days. And now they are after my daughter. It's not the first time they threaten Sahar. I want everyone to know that I will not stop even at the cost of losing Sahar. We are not afraid of anything, and the Islamic Republic should learn that Sattar's mother is not the same mother she used to be."

On 13 January 2015, Akram Neghabi mentioned to the regime's Judiciary spokesman Mohsen Ejejee, that so far there was no proof of an arrest warrant for Saeed Zeinali, highlighting the fact that they were not given an arrest warrant 17 years ago when they first arrested her son. She said, "Not only at the time of his arrest, but also when my daughter and I were detained as well. We were never given any supporting documents, yet they ask us to provide documents for my son's arrest."

Sholeh Pakravan wrote in this regard, "I, as an Iranian citizen, announce my support for Akram Neghabi. In my opinion, this litigation is on behalf of all Iranians."



## No to Executions

These mothers who are suffering from the regime's crimes, proudly denounce capital punishment and executions.

Ameneh Ghaderi, mother of Zanyar Moradi who was sentenced to death in January 2013, wrote, "We have said several times that Zanyar and Loghman's verdicts were unjust. This can be described only as an inhumane conspiracy. Whether our children are hanged or are beside us and their families, the future belongs to them and they are the ones who will build a bright future of freedom, justice, and humanity. Our children's only guilty is being open-minded intellectuals who seek freedom and, for that reason, they have to endure torture."

On 26 October 2015, Akram Neghabi said, "If our people were awake, the events of 1980s would have never occurred, nor would have the 1988 (massacres). If they



were aware, (the events of) 1999 or 2009 would have never happened. Many young men like my son, Saeed, were killed and their names would not have remained anonymous. Mothers would have not been mourning. We, mothers, must raise our voice.”

On the first anniversary of Reyhaneh Jabbari’s execution, her mother, Sholeh Pakravan said, “She (Reyhaneh) said, ‘We were silent. I am ashamed to say that I was silent over our sister, Rahemi’s execution during the 80s; we kept silent.’ The events of 90s happened. The mother and sister of Saeed Zeinali have been searching for him for 16 years! We are not asking much... what were our children guilty of? For what crime did you take them away from us? “We want to return to civilization. We want to be saved from barbarism. Ladies and gentlemen! Believe me, there will be no guarantee that in 10 years your children and grandchildren will no longer be executed and that you will not be in the same place as I am today.

“The only way we can guarantee that, is to become one voice, a voice that loudly says no to executions! Say no to torture! I don’t want you to think it was only Reyhaneh. You see all these young girls here today; they are all susceptible to the same fate as Reyhaneh. I have an objection! As a citizen, I swear to God, even if Reyhaneh were not my own daughter, the same question would have occurred to me that why should we have a long list of names, like Mustafas and Shabnams and many more, who have been killed. Over the last year, I have met mothers whose hearts have been torn to pieces; yet nobody cares to ask how they’re doing. We, mothers stand together alongside each other. We are powerful because we are not afraid. For us, mothers, it’s not a matter of risking our wealth and cars, or jobs and comfortable lives or anything else. We have lost our dearests; they have taken our children from us; and not only one, hundreds and hundreds of them. There are many mothers like us across this country. I am an independent person and have no ties to any foreigners or anybody else. I am following my own understanding of what I have witnessed in our history. I want to say that until the moment I am alive I will be Reyhaneh’s voice. My vocal cords are the vocal cords of Reyhaneh who defended her friend even when she was behind the bars and said, ‘no to execution!’ Until the day I am alive, I shall advocate abolition of torture and the death penalty. However, I am alone, and I need help... because this is a very serious issue. The more they (activists) put an effort into saving lives from execution, the more they (the Iranian regime) issue death sentences. I promise you that if we continue our silence, that if we do not bring up torture and execution in every court and in the parliament, 50 years from now, they are going set you up at your own homes and execute you on absurd charges. I can give you assurance about that.”

During the first few months of 2015, leading up to Reyhaneh Jabbari’s execution, her mother, Sholeh Pakravan condemned the public’s participation in watching executions taking place in public. She reiterated, “Remember last year when people attacked the insane executioners and were able to save the life of that prisoner? That is the correct response to executions and killings of our innocent youths. We must praise the people of Shiraz who did not participate in watching public executions. Fellow citizens, wherever you live in this vast and devastated country, you must boycott watching of public executions. By boycotting such horrible and inhumane acts, you can break the atmosphere of fear and terror. For God’s sake, on the Day of Judgement, in the court of our Creator and our poor nation, you will be accountable for all this murder. You judges, who rely on defective information, manipulated intelligence, and on your findings extracted under torture; you who issue death sentences, your lives will one day come to an end as well and you will be responsible for all the innocent lives you destroyed. Until that joyous day, louder than ever we say, ‘No to Executions!’ ”



In November 2016, Ghadam-Kheir Faramarzi condemned the execution of his son and other prisoners and wrote, “They legalize execution so that they can guarantee security of the state and continue to suppress the youths who seek truth and freedom. The Islamic Republic of Terror and Crime has already shown us its true colors, especially with their record killings of the 1980s and 1988. The survival of this regime depends on murders.”

## Commemorating their own and others' slain children

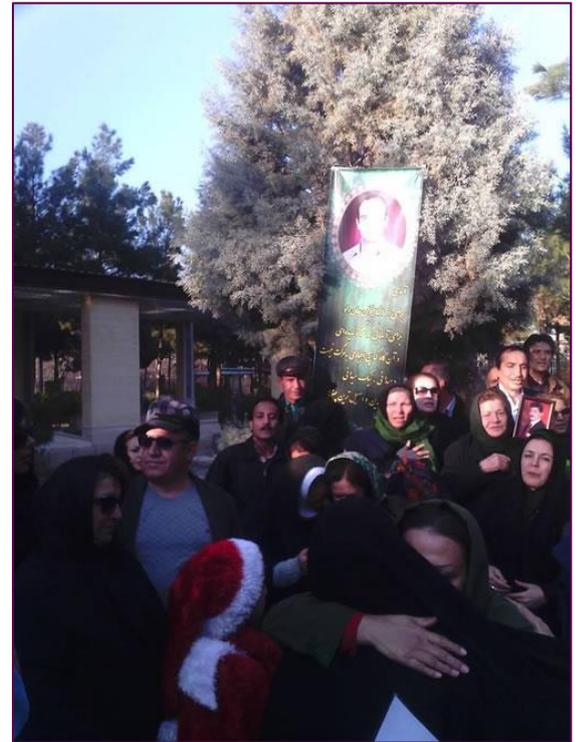
On 19 July 2014, Akram Neghabi held the annual ceremony commemorating those who lost their lives on 18 July 1999 at her home. (This is the same date her son was arrested and then disappeared.)

In a letter to Akram Neghabi, Ghadam-Kheir Faramarzi wrote, "This regime has hanged one of my children and the other has received a death sentence. I understand you. I would have liked to personally visit the family and attend this event but due to a stroke I have lost my mobility and I am unable to."

In July 2015, a group of mothers travelled from the capital city of Sanandaj to Sardasht (Iranian Kurdistan) to show their solidarity with the family of Sirvan Nejavi. The agents of the Ministry of Intelligence arrested these mothers, threatening and insulting them.

In January of 2015, a memorial was held at Mustafa Karim-Beygi's grave in Tehran's Shahriar Cemetery. Mustafa was killed in the 2009 uprising. His mother remarked, "I am a mother; a mother who has lost her young son. A son who was pure and innocent; he was not misled to the wrong path. My children grew and matured, the middle-aged grew older, and the elderly are gone. Oh, my Mustafa, my beloved son, you have remained young despite the passage of all this time, still younger than the sprout of a weeping willow, with roots deeply embedded in the soil of love, singing the song of justice, you're crazy for justice..."

The regime's agents who were widely present in the area attempted to cut short the ceremony by intimidations, however they faced the ignorance of the crowd.



The trials of ten members of the families of martyrs and political prisoners, including Simin Eyvaz-zadeh, who were arrested on January 20, 2016, were held on 9 February 2016.

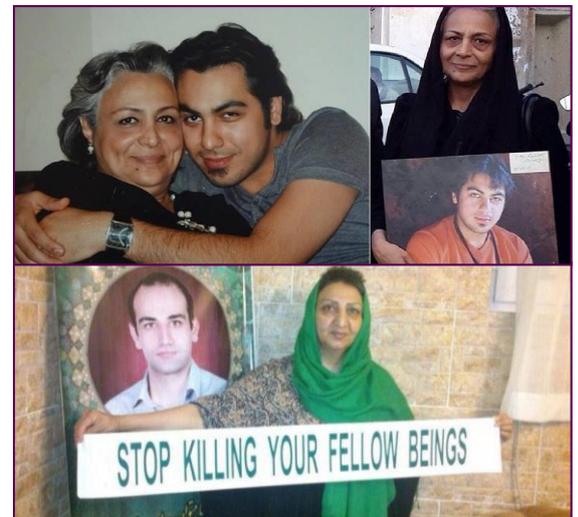
A number of mothers gathered together to protest the way the crowd was treated. They also carried signs in solidarity with martyrs and political prisoners. Sholeh Pakravan wrote on her Facebook page, "I can see with the eyes of my heart that this country is awaiting some great news."

## Boycotting the sham elections

Mothers also stood up against the clerical regime's sham elections. Sholeh Pakravan, Reyhaneh's mother, wrote in this regard, "I will not be an accomplice in destroying the future of this country... Who can forget the role of (intelligence ministers) Fallahian and Rayshahri in the missing of Saeed Zeinali and six other anonymous persons missing? Who can forget those who were drenched in blood in 2009? Who can forget more than 2000 executions per year? Who can forget Reyhaneh, the girl who became the daughter of the honorable men and women of our country? That's why I will not vote. I will never vote for anyone who has collaborated with this criminal regime."

In a short description of her son's picture, Mahin Shahinfar wrote, "For the sake of my freedom-loving son, Amir Arshad Tajmeer, I will not vote."

Shahnaz Karim-Beygi, mother another martyr of the 2009 uprising, wrote, "Sattar's mother, Neda's mother, Karoon's mother, Saeed's mother, and all others... I will stand beside these mothers and their slain children, and will not vote for anyone who belongs to the list of murderers and criminals."



## **Conclusion:**

That is how these mothers attract new supporters every day and are increasing in numbers, not only because they support the freedom fighters, but because they raise a generation that hungers for freedom. These mothers have turned into brilliant examples of courage who inspire change and give the glad tidings of the bright morning of freedom in Iran's darkest night of repression.

**Copyright©2016 by Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI)**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.