



Association for  
**Iranian  
Studies**

February 11, 2021

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei  
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
c/o H.E. Mr. Majid Takht-Ravanchi  
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Mr. Gholamhossein Esmaili, Iran's Judiciary Spokesman  
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Your Excellencies,

We write to express concern regarding the imprisonment of Touraj Amini. Mr. Amini, who is an Iranian writer and researcher of the Qajar period and the Constitutional movement, is also Baha'i. On January 29, 2021, he was summoned to begin a six-month prison sentence on charges of spreading propaganda against the state.

AIS is a private, non-profit academic society founded in 1967 to support and promote scholarship and research on Iran and the Persianate world at the international level. As an independent, non-partisan, non-political, multidisciplinary international community, the association publishes *Iranian Studies*, the principal journal in the field. AIS membership includes over 500 scholars, students, academic and other professional researchers. We are committed to encouraging the free exchange of ideas and academic freedom of speech, both within and beyond the geographical boundaries of Iran. The association's Committee on Academic Freedom has been following the particularities of this case.

In July 2020, Mr. Amini appeared at the Revolutionary Court of Karaj, to defend himself against charges that he had spread propaganda against the state. The court sentenced Mr. Amini to one year in prison and two years in exile, ostensibly because of his writings on the Qajar period. On appeal, the Alborz Provincial Court of Appeals reduced the sentence to six months in prison and lifted the two-year exile, apparently finding merit in Mr. Amini's defense that his writings in no way offend, let alone refer to, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

While we applaud the Court's reduction of Mr. Amini's sentence, we urge the Court to dismiss the charges completely and free Mr. Amini without delay. The claim that Mr. Amini spread propaganda against the state is unfounded because Mr. Amini's research, which explores the Qajar period, does not engage with any contemporary political or social issues. Whatever his findings, Mr. Amini's writings do not refer nor connect to the current government. As such, there are no legal grounds for holding Mr. Amini or preventing him from conducting research as a historian of the Qajar period.

Requiring him to serve this sentence is especially severe in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit Iran's prisons particularly hard, compromising the health and welfare of numerous prisoners. Many prisoners have been released and many more are under house arrest. Mr. Amini's wife, moreover, suffers from multiple sclerosis and depends on her husband for care.

Sincerely,

Naghmeh Sohrabi  
President, Association for Iranian Studies

and

The Committee for Academic Freedom,  
Association for Iranian Studies