



Association for
**Iranian
Studies**

March 17, 2021

We write on behalf of the Association of Iranian Studies (AIS) and its Committee of Academic Freedom to register our deep concern about the state of academic freedom and the safety and freedom of Iranian social scientists and academics in Iran. We appeal to Iranian authorities to protect the rights of free expression in writing, speaking and publishing.

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 concerning news of the dismissal and devastating death of Professor Haleh Lajevardi, a prominent Iranian professor of sociology at Tehran University, who died on February 1, 2021, in Tehran, at the age of 56.

Professor Lajevardi was an exemplary case of a distinguished woman academic whose scholarship and influential contributions to the field of social sciences were first recognized by the Department of Social Sciences of Tehran University, where she held a tenure-track position following her graduation with honors from the same department in 2004. She was among the few Iran-based women social scientists who have taught and published extensively in the field of cultural studies and social sciences. As an influential public intellectual, Lajevardi contributed to her fields of expertise with timely translations of the works of world-renowned theorists and intellectuals. Her book, *Zendegi-ye ruzmarreh dar Iran-e modern (Everyday Life in Modern Iran, 2010)*, was a novel and groundbreaking study of the transformation of everyday life in postrevolutionary Iran. Throughout her academic career, which was forcibly cut short in 2009 because of groundless accusations based on her critical views and her vulnerable position as a woman in a deeply misogynistic environment, Lajevardi became one of the most influential pioneering voices in the Department of Social Sciences of Tehran University and beyond.

The unjust treatment and unfounded accusations against Professor Lajevardi comprise part of ongoing persecution of Iran's academics and social scientists whose professional and personal lives have been constantly beleaguered by persistent threats, baseless accusations, forced retirements, isolation, imprisonment, exile and even death. Committee on Academic Freedom objects to these actions, which are violations of internationally recognized rights and due process. Professor Lajevardi's unfair treatment is a clear violation of Iran's domestic and international obligations to refrain from placing restrictions on and retaliating against nonviolent expression. The fact that she was not allowed to practice her rights as a woman, a teacher, and a scholar also infringes upon her right to academic freedom.

As a community of scholars, we will always remember, cherish, and celebrate the contributions of Professor Lajevardi. Despite her isolation and despair during the last decade of her life, Professor Lajevardi's professional legacy will live on and inspire her colleagues, students, and fellow academics for years to come. Her dismissal, isolation and death speak to a much broader issue of state-sponsored violations of academic freedom in Iran, multifaceted challenges for free research in social science and humanities, and a systematic marginalization of independent social scientists. As such, the Association of Iranian Studies (AIS) and its Committee of Academic Freedom remain deeply concerned about the state of academic freedom in Iran. We call upon Iranian authorities to ensure the safety and freedom of all Iranian social scientists and academics and to allow them to practice their rights of free expression, a protection clearly set forth in Iran's own Constitution.