



July 24, 2026

Statement Issued by the Association for Iranian Studies' Committee for Academic Freedom (AIS-CAF)

The Association for Iranian Studies' Committee for Academic Freedom expresses its profound alarm at the accelerating deterioration of academic freedom in Iran. Since the nationwide *Woman, Life, Freedom* protests that began in the fall of 2022, Iranian universities have experienced an unprecedented wave of political repression targeting students and faculty members. Over the past three and a half years, the Iranian authorities have intensified their campaign to restrict academic freedom through arbitrary suspensions, expulsions, arrests, imprisonment, disciplinary prosecutions, and restrictions on academic institutions and organizations as well as individual scholars, students, and researchers. These actions threaten not only individual members of Iran's academic community but also the autonomy and integrity of higher education in Iran more generally.

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. An independent, non-partisan, non-political, and multidisciplinary international community, the association publishes *Iranian Studies*, the principal journal in the field of Persian/Iranian Studies. AIS membership includes scholars, students, and researchers. AIS is dedicated to the promotion of scholarship and teaching on Iran and the protection of academic freedom. Central to this mission is the defense of educational institutions as spaces of learning, research, and intellectual exchange, which must be safeguarded from violence and political coercion.

The AIS Committee for Academic Freedom is deeply concerned by the suspension of Professor [Ahmad Bani Jamali](#), a political science professor at Azad University (Central Tehran Branch), whose classes have once again been canceled. Professor Bani Jamali was similarly barred from teaching during the crackdown on academics following the start of the *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement. Repeated exclusion of scholars from the classroom because of their perceived



political views or public engagement violates the core principle that faculty members must be free to teach and conduct research without fear of retaliation.

We are equally disturbed by [reports](#) concerning the violent arrest of **Dr. Fereydoon Farahani**, a professor of music, who was reportedly detained by security forces in June 2026, transferred to an undisclosed location, and had his electronic devices confiscated. Such actions raise serious due process concerns and send an unmistakable message of intimidation to the broader academic community.

The Committee also condemns the June 2026 sentencing of [Raheleh Moeini](#), a biomedical engineering graduate of Amirkabir University of Technology and a master's student at the Polytechnic University of Milan. Following her arrest in January 2026, she has reportedly been sentenced to a total of two years and six months' imprisonment. Her prosecution reflects the growing criminalization of students and recent graduates for activities protected under internationally recognized rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

We are further concerned by the June 2026 confirmation of two-semester suspensions imposed upon **Alireza Jafari Asar**, **Seyed Mohammad Seyedaboudi**, and **Hossein Mohammadi**, students at Khajeh Nasir University of Technology. According to available [reports](#), these disciplinary decisions were upheld despite serious procedural deficiencies and credible allegations that the underlying cases had been fabricated. University disciplinary mechanisms must never be used as instruments of political repression.

These incidents are not isolated. Rather, they form part of a broader and systematic campaign of repression directed at Iran's institutions of higher education. AIS-CAF is additionally alarmed by [reports](#) that more than one hundred women students have been expelled from universities and removed from student dormitories following the January 2026 protests in which tens of thousands of unarmed protestors were killed by Iranian security forces on the streets of cities and towns across Iran. The reported mass expulsions and forced removals represent an alarming escalation in efforts to exclude students from higher education because of their peaceful civic participation. Such measures undermine equal access to education, further erode university autonomy, and contribute to a climate of fear and intimidation within Iran's



academic institutions. These measures have fallen particularly heavily upon women students, whose participation in higher education has become an increasingly prominent target of state repression.

Additional [evidence](#) indicates that **eight students at Sharif University of Technology** have been expelled following their participation in protests earlier this year. There is also [documentation](#) of the continued summoning of students at Khajeh Nasir University of Technology before disciplinary committees, suggesting the systematic use of university disciplinary procedures to suppress student participation and expression.

AIS-CAF is particularly alarmed by the increasingly severe criminal penalties imposed on Iranian students. According to available [reports](#), **Erfan Arabi**, a computer science student at Islamic Azad University in Birjand, and [Iliya Bakhshaei](#), a master's student at Yazd University, have each been sentenced to five years' imprisonment in connection with protest-related activities, without meaningful access to legal counsel. The imposition of lengthy prison terms such as these for peaceful civic engagement represents an extraordinary escalation in the repression of Iran's academic community.

Faculty members likewise continue to face harassment, surveillance, arrest, and intimidation. Reports documenting the arrest and targeting of university instructors demonstrate that the authorities' campaign extends beyond student activism to encompass scholars whose teaching, research, or public engagement is deemed politically unacceptable.

Equally troubling is the steady dismantling of independent student representation. According to June 2026 [reporting](#) by *Shargh* newspaper, student guild councils—which for decades have represented students' academic, professional, and welfare interests—have faced increasing administrative intervention, diminished authority, and systematic efforts to curtail their representative role. Independent student organizations constitute an essential component of university self-governance and provide students with legitimate avenues to participate in academic life. Weakening these institutions deprives students of legitimate channels for participation in university governance and further erodes the autonomy of higher education.



Taken together, these developments reveal a sustained effort by the Iranian authorities to subordinate Iran's universities to political control through coercion, surveillance, disciplinary sanctions, and criminal prosecution. Such policies violate internationally recognized principles of academic freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and institutional autonomy. They are inconsistent with Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and they run counter to the principles articulated in the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, which recognizes academic freedom as indispensable to the advancement of knowledge and to the proper functioning of institutions of higher education.

The Association for Iranian Studies' Committee for Academic Freedom therefore calls upon the Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately end the arbitrary suspension, dismissal, arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment of students, faculty members, and university staff for the peaceful exercise of their academic and civil rights;
- Nullify disciplinary sanctions imposed through proceedings that fail to satisfy basic standards of fairness and due process;
- Release all students, scholars, and academics imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and academic inquiry;
- Foster and uphold the autonomy of Iranian universities and end political interference in academic governance;
- Respect the independence of student organizations and permit them to operate without intimidation or administrative retaliation; and
- Ensure that Iranian universities are places where teaching, learning, research, and intellectual debate may proceed free from censorship, coercion, or fear of reprisal.



Association for
**Iranian
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AIS-CAF also calls upon university leaders, scholarly associations, learned societies, and academic institutions based outside of Iran to speak publicly and consistently in defense of their colleagues and students in Iran. We urge governments committed to the protection of human rights, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education, UNESCO, and other relevant international bodies to continue monitoring these developments, to press the Iranian authorities to uphold their international obligations, and to support those members of Iran's academic community whose rights and safety remain under grave threat.

The continued erosion of academic freedom in Iran is not solely a national concern. It is a matter of international importance affecting the global scholarly community. The suppression of independent scholarship impoverishes intellectual life everywhere. AIS-CAF stands in solidarity with students, faculty members, researchers, and university staff throughout Iran who continue to pursue knowledge, teach, learn, and conduct research despite sustained pressure and considerable personal risk.

Signed:

The Committee for Academic Freedom
Association for Iranian Studies