



October 3, 2022

We write on behalf of the Association of Iranian Studies (AIS), its Committee for Academic Freedom (CAF), and the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) to condemn in strongest terms the assaults against a peaceful protest by students at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran on October 2nd, 2022. This violent crackdown on one of the top universities of the country was orchestrated and executed by the state security and plainclothes forces. We express our outrage and deep concern over the fate of injured and arrested students and professors who were shot by rubber bullets, detained, and taken to unknown locations.

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, nonpolitical, and multidisciplinary international community, the association publishes *Iranian Studies*, the principal journal in the field. AIS membership includes over 500 scholars, students, and academic and professional researchers. We are committed to encouraging the free exchange of ideas and freedom of speech, both within and beyond the geographical boundaries of Iran. AIS's CAF has been closely following the tragic news of the government's violent crackdown on the protesters, including university students across the country. MESA was founded in 1966 to support scholarship and teaching on the Middle East and North Africa. The preeminent organization in the field, the Association publishes the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and has almost 2800 members worldwide. MESA is committed to ensuring academic freedom and freedom of expression, both within the region and in connection with the study of the region in North America and elsewhere.

The peaceful demonstration at Sharif University of Technology was organized in response to the state murder of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini on September 16, 2022, and in solidarity with the nationwide protests including demonstrations in over one hundred universities in the country. The state response to such basic civil rights was brutal: students became subject to hostile physical and verbal attacks by the security and plainclothes forces, some were shot by rubber bullets, and some have been arrested. In their [statement](#), Sharif University students have called October 2nd, 2022 a “*Ruz-e Khunin*,” – “A Bloody Day” – and announced that they will not attend classes until all students are released and security forces are expelled from the university campuses. As we write this statement, over thirty universities are protesting, many students are arrested, over two hundred university professors have issued a [statement](#), and some university professors have canceled their classes in solidarity with the students.

The horrific videos on social media showing these attacks are testimonies to the volume of crimes committed against innocent students whose basic civil rights are violated by the state. The number of injuries and arrests remain unknown. However, these attacks may well resemble those against the Student Movement at the University of Tehran in July 1999, in which the university campus was violently raided resulting in death, injuries, and arrests of the students.

The violent crackdown on Sharif University of Technology on October 2nd, 2022, is just the latest example of targeted assaults on the institution of the university in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Since its inception, the state has constantly and systematically assaulted, physically and discursively, the institution of the university – its students and professors, independent knowledge and freedom of expression. This reaches from the so-called 1980s “cultural revolution” to the several waves of purging university professors, the unjust vetting admissions process for students, the failed agenda of so-called “Islamization of Humanities and Social Sciences,” the July 1999 violent attacks at the University of Tehran, and several other incidents over the past four decades.

The Association of Iranian Studies and the Middle East Studies Association expresses its grave concern over the violation of academic rights of university students and professors who are entitled to teach and learn with dignity in a free and safe academic environment. We condemn in strongest terms the attacks on university campuses, and register our outrage and dismay over systematic assaults on the institution of the university and the individuals who shape its community. More importantly, we are extremely worried about the safety of the injured and arrested university students and professors and demand their immediate release. We also call for a full and transparent investigation of these crimes.