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# Free the Iranian students!

In early December 2007, dozens of socialist Iranian students were arrested for taking part in the National Student Day demonstration. This demonstration has a long history and can be traced back to the 1950s, when three Iranian students were killed for protesting against the (then) US Vice President Richard Nixon. This year students were raising anti-war slogans in this protest.

According to even conservative estimates, the courageous demonstrations in Tehran and other cities attracted over eight hundred activists and there was strong defiance to the threats and intimidations dished out by the regime in the run up to them. The slogans, some of which were inspired by active solidarity from the Hands Off The People Of Iran campaign, called for: No to imperialist war, death to dictator! The University is not an army garrison! Hands Off the People of Iran! No to criminal imperialist intervention!

Although a handful of students have been released, it is estimated that around 81 students are still subject to the torturous conditions of the Islamic Regime's prisons. Others have fled or are in hiding. A few weeks ago, one of the arrested students, Ebrahim Latif Allahi, a law student in Payam Noor University in Sanandaj, was killed in Sanandaj prison. His family were told that "he had committed suicide in the prison", but that "his body was already buried". Ebrahim's family are adamant that he was killed under torture.

## Conciliators?

The brutal response of the Islamic regime should come as no surprise, given the regime's past crimes and its vicious suppression of left-wing activists. Yet what it also highlights are the social contradictions increasingly coming to the fore within Iranian society. The portrayal of the students as 'agents' of American imperialism and 'conciliators' highlights how the regime is cynically using the pretext of sanctions and war threats to crack down upon any opposition in Iran. But a report in the radical weblog/newspaper 'Avaye Daneshgah' shows differently:

"Leftist student activists are adamant that their struggles can only succeed if they are united with the working class. That is because we believe that the working class is the only force capable of bringing about radical and fundamental change capable of freeing society of all class relations. The student movement has taken direct steps to forge solidarity with the workers movement. This was the right time for the working class to defend its supporters in universities and over the last few days we have witnessed support from many workers' committees, unions and independent workers' organisations".

## Solidarity

We in Hands Off The People Of Iran believe that these forces – the radical movements of students, women and workers – are our natural allies in the struggle against a war on Iran. Like the leftist students in Iran, we do not see any faction of the Islamic Regime as representing a consistent force in the struggle against imperialism. We fully subscribe to the view that, "For us a dictator is a dictator, whether he does his dirty deeds with a smile and chocolate-coloured Aba (the cleric's shawl - a reference to Khatami) or with a scroll and a crème-coloured Aba" (a reference to Ahmadinejad).



Imperialism has no progressive role to play in this region or in any other part of the world. We therefore call for the release of the detained students as part of our campaign against the threat of any imperialist intervention in Iran. We also fight for an end to the sanctions – venerated as some sort of ‘solution’ by liberal pacifists, they actually represent a form of war and are hitting the Iranian people hard.

It is not the case, as the Stop The War Coalition seems to be suggesting, that raising criticisms of the Iranian regime or expressing active solidarity with democratic movements in Iran is tantamount to ‘assisting’ the plans of Bush and his cronies. In fact, this is the very same logic employed by regime when it calls protesting students ‘traitors’. We say that the struggle against war is an *international* one and if we are to be effective, we need the active support and solidarity of our brothers and sisters in Iran. And at the moment, with their country in the cross-hairs of imperialism and their own government moving to silence any dissent, they certainly need our support and solidarity. We urge you to join us!

## **Anoosheh Azaadbar for NUS Honorary Vice President!**

HOPI supports the initiative to elect Anoosheh, a brave student activist who was until recently in jail, to the position of NUS Honorary Vice President. Her election would be a small, but important step towards raising awareness of the anti-war struggles in Iran and to establishing better links between the British and the Iranian student movement.

If you oppose the war plans of the imperialists - but support the struggle for an Iran free of the oppressive clerical regime - join us! Individuals: £10 or £5 unwaged (organisations see website).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation/union \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to address above

## **Meeting after today's demo**

**Kave Heydari** is an Iranian student who now lives in London. He has taken part in numerous Iranian student struggles over the past few years, and many of his close friends and comrades are still in prison for their activity. He will be talking alongside **Yassamine Mather**, HOPI Secretary, on the significance and the dynamics of the anti-war student movement, and how we can look to develop practical links with it. Following on from the meeting, there will also be a small social event.

**Friday February 15, 4.30-7pm,  
Catholic chaplaincy, University of  
Manchester, Oxford Road**

## **Our campaign demands:**

- **No to imperialist war! For the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of US/UK troops from Iraq and all the Gulf region!**
- **No to any imperialist intervention. The immediate and unconditional end to sanctions on Iran!**
- **No to the theocratic regime!**
- **Opposition to Israeli expansionism and aggression!**
- **Support to all working class and progressive struggles in Iran against poverty and repression!**
- **Support for socialism, democracy and workers' control in Iran!**
- **For a nuclear-free Middle East as a step towards a nuclear-free world!**

Supporters include:

- **Diane Abbott** Labour MP
- **John McDonnell** Labour MP
- **Peter Tatchell** OutRage
- **Caroline Lucas** Green Party MEP
- **Tommy Sheridan** Solidarity
- **Ken Loach** filmmaker
- **John Pilger** journalist
- **Naomi Klein** writer and activist
- **Dr Hilary Rose** scientist
- **Haifa Zangana** writer
- Cllr **Rania Khan** Respect
- Cllr **Lufta Begum** Respect
- Iranian Workers Bulletin
- Workers Left Unity - Iran
- Communist Party of Great Britain
- Green Party
- Organization of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rahe Kargar)
- Communist Students