

SAR Ireland's Statement on the Situation of Students and Scholars in Iran

SCHOLARS AT RISK

IRELAND SECTION

4 November 2022

The Irish section of the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR Ireland) is deeply concerned by violations of the human rights of students and staff currently occurring at Iranian universities, higher education institutions, and secondary schools.

Demonstrations against the Iranian regime started after the 22 year old Mahsa Jina Amini, who had been detained by the state 'morality police' over an alleged violation of Iran's restrictive hijab laws, died in custody on September 16. For the past seven weeks thousands of Iranians across the country have taken to the streets using the slogan, "Woman, Life, Freedom", to protest Mahsa Amini's death and to demand an end to systematic violations of human rights in Iran, including the right to academic freedom.

According to the Oslo-based organisation Iran Human Rights on 29 October "students in more than 50 universities and higher education institutions in cities including Sanandaj, Tehran, Mashhad, Urmia, Kerman, Kashan, Zahedan, Rafsanjan, Qazvin, Bandar Abbas, Karaj, Ahvaz, Babol, Shiraz, Marivan, Isfahan, Yazd, Khorram Abad, Rasht, Qom and Shahroud staged peaceful protests." These peaceful protests were met with extreme violence.

Over the past seven weeks Iranian security forces have used live ammunition on unarmed protestors, killing more than 270 people including 40 children. Up to 13,000 people have been reported arrested and detained across the country; this includes at least 307 individuals identified as students. The attacks have also extended to university dormitories where tear gas and live ammunition have been used.

The unjustified use of force, including killing, beating, and the arrests of students and

scholars are clear violations of the fundamental rights to freedom of speech and assembly, of the right to education and teaching, and of academic freedom. In solidarity with scholars and students, education unions, and civic organisation, we condemn the brutality with which the Iranian government forces have responded to peaceful protests and call for all political prisoners, including students, staff, and faculty members, to be freed.

SAR Ireland is strongly committed to protecting the fundamental rights of students and scholars, including the right to free expression, participation in the life of universities, and peaceful protests. We are also deeply concerned about the violations of these rights for university students and staff in Iran and particularly for the fate of the detained students and scholars and request their immediate release. We reiterate the call by the wider SAR Network to demand accountability, and invite colleagues across the higher education sector to continue to flag attacks on the Iranian higher education community for review and consideration in SAR's Academic Freedom Monitoring Project. This can be done by directing reports of attacks to sarmonitoring@nyu.edu. We also invite colleagues at higher education institutions in Ireland to continue to raise awareness on the situation in Iran within the national context of Ireland, as well as locally on university campuses. Such support could be shown through social media campaigns, media outreach, and public events to demonstrate solidarity with our colleagues in Iran.

We anticipate and support a future in Iran when human rights will be protected and when academic freedom will be more fully realised through freedom of association and speech, the de-securitization of universities, the preservation of university autonomy, and the promotion of critical and participatory modes of education and knowledge production.