



7 October 2022

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Kurdish Lobby Australia

The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP
Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon. Ms Penny Wong
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australian MPs and Senators

Kurdish Lobby Australia wishes to bring to your attention the significance of what is happening in Iran: a women-led protest that began in the Kurdistan region, and spread to all 31 provinces, further spreading to the Kurdistan regions of Iraq and Syria, Europe, the United States and Australia. These protests were ignited by the death of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Jina Amini, (also known as Mahsa Amini because her parents were not allowed to register her Kurdish name), who died in Tehran on September 16, 2022, whilst in the custody of the 'morality' police. These police had detained her for allegedly wearing her hijab too loose and her pants too tight. Witnesses say that Jina Amini was modestly dressed when she was aggressively thrown into a police van, and that her dead body had bruises to her head and legs.

The protests about this injustice transformed into a protest about the injustices that all Iranians are subjected to, and a demand for the Islamic Republic of Iran to be overthrown. These ongoing protests are unprecedented, firstly because they are led by women and among them are people as young as fifteen, and secondly, because the rapidly spreading angst originated in the Kurdistan region. To the horror of the Islamic Republic, Iranians are chanting "Kurdistan is the eyes and the light of Iran," and a Kurdish slogan: "Jin! Jiyan! Azadi!", "Women! Life! Freedom!", the latter reverberating around the world. When Iranian universities reopened on October 1, students throughout the country joined protests in large numbers. On October 1, many hundreds of students at Shariff University in Tehran were trapped in a car park and targeted by masked police and paramilitary *Basiji* on motorbikes brandishing machine guns, firing live bullets, pellets, and gas, killing some students, and bashing and detaining others. Students chanted "Sharif University has become a jail! Evin Prison has become a university".

The inevitable crackdown has led to well over 150 protesters being killed by direct gunfire from security forces (82 people dying in Balochistan alone), many hundreds being injured, and well over 1,500 being arrested. These figures are estimates. In addition, the Islamic Republic is using artillery and drones to repeatedly target Iranian Kurdish organisations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, killing nine people on September 28 alone, and a total of 14 people by October 3. Please Note: This means that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is being simultaneously attacked by Turkey and Iran – an untenable predicament which warrants an international response.

Since 2019, Iran has seen monthly demonstrations protesting the ultra-strict, incompetent, and corrupt governance of Shia Mullahs and their Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC), the latter established by Ayatollah Khomeini for the specific purpose of protecting the Islamic Republic. Thus, the IRGC's survival depends on the regime's survival, and visa versa. Reasons for protests include extreme water shortages, corruption, non-payment of wages, shop closures, price rises and poor living conditions. Every protest receives a harsh response. For instance, in November 2019, security forces killed 1,500 protesters. For the current protests, Iran has hired



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Arab militants from Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to respond! At least three 16-year-old protesters have been killed and countless 15-year-old protesters have been detained.

Clearly, many Iranians want a change of government but do not have the means to do so. Australia has experienced one consequence in the number of Iranians, particularly Iranian Kurds, who have sought asylum or migrated to Australia. These people have become professional doctors, lawyers, accountants, businesspeople, academics, dedicated community and care workers, artists, and sports people, one having won a prestigious literary prize (but still denied asylum), and another becoming a highly articulate Senator.

Iranian people need your help. Kurdish Lobby Australia asks the Australian Government to:

- Publicly condemn the Islamic Republic of Iran, the IRGC and the 'morality' police for their human rights abuses of women and ethnic minorities and use all means to gather support for the Iranian peoples' legitimate human rights, including the right to change their government.
- Speak to the Iranian ambassador in Australia about the urgent need to address the people's Demands, and perhaps make Australia the first country to expel the Iranian ambassador.
- Consider ways to support the Iranian people by:
 - Offering humanitarian assistance and insisting that food and medical aid be provided to towns in the Kurdistan region that have been cut off from the world;
 - Investing in and/or forming partnerships with Iranian NGOs and businesses,
 - Offering training in and outside Iran (e.g. providing scholarships to Australian educational institutions);
 - Accepting into Australia Iranians whose lives are being threatened, particularly Iranian Kurds, who helped fight ISIS, whose region is impoverished, and who are disproportionately represented among those imprisoned, tortured and executed, many being political prisoners; and most importantly, by
 - **Facilitating international support for Iran's different ethnic, religious, and political groups to come together and discuss ways forward; and**
 - **Facilitate peace talks and political negotiations between Iranian Kurds and any future Iranian government.**

In the twentieth century, Iranians have made three attempts to establish a democracy. External interests have thwarted each attempt. Currently, American politicians in both houses and across the aisle are talking about supporting Iranian protesters rather than continuing nuclear talks. Already the US has moved to allow additional internet services to circumvent Iranian government censorship of the internet and media. Positive and negative incentives must be deployed to greatly modify the regime, if not contribute to the overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran. The highly intelligent, hospitable people deserve this. To expand our points, and discuss other critical issues related to the Kurdistan regions of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, we would like to meet with you at Australian Parliament House on Monday 28 November. We look forward to your response.

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Yours Sincerely,

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