

Doc Number GDE00137 Celebrate the award of the Olof Palme prize to Parvin Ardalan

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Jane Gabriel ([/author/jane-gabriel](#)), **17 February 2008**

[Roja Bandari](#) ([/article/5050/16_days/one_million_signatures](#)) wrote of the courage of Iranian women behind the One Million Signature Campaign during openDemocracy's coverage of 16 days Against Gender Violence.

Parvin Ardalan is one of the Iranian women who dared to March in Tehran in 2005 and inspired the grassroots campaign now spreading across Iran. Here Elham Gheytauchi, an academic and activist, writes to celebrate the award of the Olof Palme prize to Parvin for her courage.

"Parvin Ardalan has won the Olof Palme prize (<http://www.palmefonden.se/index.php?page=53>). Such was the title of numerous emails I have been receiving over the past two days. Iranian women's rights activists in Iran and abroad are celebrating. At last, an untiring and brave young Iranian women's rights activist is being internationally recognized for her work, most recently in the [One Million Signatures Campaign](#) (<http://www.wexchange.info/english/>) to eliminate laws that discriminate against women in Iran.

Parvin Ardalan



This news comes at a time when the One Million Signature Campaign has come under fierce pressure from the authorities in Iran. Our jubilation was deflated just yesterday when we heard that two young activists, Raheleh Asgarzadeh and [Nasim Khosravi](#) (<http://www.wexchange.info/english/spip.php?article215>), had been arrested by the police in Tehran while gathering signatures in a public place near Fajr film and theater festival, an event celebrating the 29th anniversary of the Iranian revolution. Most

of the activists are the same age or younger than the revolution itself. Their "crime" is the same as that with which Parvin Ardalan and other activists have repeatedly been charged: "threatening national security" and "disrupting the public order" (<http://hrw.org/reports/2008/iran0108/>).

If you meet Parvin Ardalan, you will know why her presence and activism threatens the ruling establishment, especially the right-wing government of president Ahmadinejad. I first met Parvin during the [Iranian Women's Studies Foundation](#) (www.iwsf.org)'s annual conference in 2000 in Berkeley, (www.iwsf.org%20%3Chttp://www.iwsf.org) California where she presented a paper on the history of women's press in post-revolutionary Iran. A soft spoken, thin and pale-looking woman, Parvin is always willing to listen to the opposing side's arguments. She is intimately familiar with social inequalities in the Iranian society and is unwavering in her activism for social justice.

In 2005, Parvin Ardalan, Nooshin Ahmadi Khorasani and other young activists decided to launch a peaceful demonstration requesting the amendment of the Iranian constitution with regard to provisions that severely limit personal freedoms, fair and open elections, and impose legal limitations on women becoming [presidential candidates](#) (<http://www.payvand.com/news/05/jun/1092.html>). Many did not dare to join them thinking that the demonstration would be costly to the movement. But Parvin and others marched on. A year later, the One Million Signatures Campaign was born. For the first time since the 1979 revolution, a [women's grassroots movement](#) (http://www.wexchange.info/english/IMG/clip/titr1/titr1_en.htm) has reached as many as 16 out of 30 provinces in the country. A non-violent movement, the campaign has nonetheless been the target of state violence from its inception.

The activists' primary task is to listen to ordinary men and women's sufferings as a result of [discriminatory laws](#) (<http://www.wexchange.info/english/spip.php?rubrique3>) to engage in dialogue and to mobilize the whole country. Parvin and a whole generation of young Iranian women are listening to their fellow countrymen and women. They are determined, have chosen non-violent strategies and are persevering. Contrary to the claims of Islamic Republic of Iran's judicial system, women's rights activists are not a threat to Iran's national security. These activists have, in the words of the 2007 Olof Palme prize statement, succeeded in "making the demand for equal rights for men and women a central part of the struggle for democracy in Iran." The award of the 2007 Olof Palme prize to Parvin Ardalan declares her to be, in the clearest of terms, an asset to all those who fight for social equality and freedom in the world.



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