

Three Iranian human rights activists receive the Lech Walesa Prize

September 29, 2009



On September 29, 2009, Ladan and Roya Boroumand, historians and founders of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation, and Shadi Sadr, a lawyer, journalist, and human rights activist, received awards from the Lech Walesa

Institute Foundation. The Lech Walesa Prize honored their work to promote human rights, freedom of expression, and democracy in Iran.

Mr. Lech Walesa, who founded the Foundation, is the former president of Poland, leader of the Polish trade union, Solidarity (Solidarnosc), and winner of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize. The Lech Walesa Prize, established in 2008, honors "people who stand for understanding and international cooperation in solidarity, freedom, and for promotion of the fundamental values of Solidarity Movement. This Prize is symbolic support for those who are courageous enough to fight for non-violent world development, stand against terrorism, and through their own actions, give hope and open the possibilities of political and social change. The Lech Walesa Prize shows solidarity with those who struggle for a better tomorrow for their countrymen and the world society."^[1]

In addition to its Chairman, Mr. Walesa, the award selection committee is comprised of several esteemed members, including former Czech President Vaclav Havel, French Foreign Affairs Minister Bernard Kouchner, former President of Belarus Stanislaw Szuszkiewicz, former Prime Minister of Poland Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Poland Wladyslaw Bartoszewski.

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The Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation is grateful and honored that its founders, Ladan and Roya, have been selected to receive the prestigious Lech Walesa Prize. The Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation congratulates Shadi Sadr for her extraordinary work on women's rights and against stoning in Iran. Ladan and Roya consider this Lech Walesa Prize to be an acknowledgment of – and homage to – all Iranian human rights defenders and activists. As such, they dedicate their award to their "fellow human rights defenders, in particular to those courageous men and women who – at high risk – promote human rights and democracy inside the country, and without whom the work of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation would not be possible."

Lech Walesa award acceptance speech
by
Ladan Boroumand
September 29th, 2009



They arrest, then deny an arrest ever took place. They torture, but they say torture is banned. They kill, but they say their enemies did it. They murder the best of your fellow citizens, and then they try to make you an accomplice after the fact by believing and repeating their lies. They require this complicity from their citizens and want the whole world to

echo their falsehoods.

At first one feels lonely, isolated, and empty-handed in the face of Evil, seemingly almighty and invulnerable.

But then one realizes that Evil has a mortal enemy. That enemy is Truth. You understand that you do not need weapons to resist the lies and tell the truth. You only need a strong mind, and a sense of righteous purpose that will not bend or break.

You notice that Evil gets its strength less from raw violence than from the way it tempts us to believe its lies.

You understand that truth is the power of the powerless.

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Documenting the truth as much as we can is what Roya and I have tried to do, with humility and perseverance, at the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation. In the daunting task of telling the story of the victims of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we have had the privilege of working with a dedicated team of researchers. We have benefited so much from the technical, moral, and financial support of the international human-rights community. We would like to thank them all for their support and commitment.

But more importantly we would like to thank our fellow Iranian citizens who have braved danger and defied the power of the lie by pouring into the streets and squares by the millions to tell the truth about the stolen presidential election this past June. They told their government that they did not believe its lies, and they would not be quiet about it. By refusing to accept those lies, they shook the foundation of its totalitarian rule.

We have no doubt that the award we receive today is honoring not only three human-rights advocates, but a nation's will to reject lies and live in truth.

Mr. President, today by honoring three Iranian women with the prestigious Lech Walesa prize, you and the honorable members of the award committee are sending a message to our persecutors that the world rejects their lies.

We thank you for this great honor, and for all you have done in the cause of freedom.

Lech Walesa award acceptance speech
by
Roya Boroumand
September 29th, 2009



I would like to express my gratitude on behalf of all of us at the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation to the Lech Walesa Institute Foundation and to the Award Committee.

This recognition is a great honor as it comes from individuals whose courage to do the right thing and speak to the truth against all odds was an inspiration to us in our formative years.

In this moving moment, our thoughts are with our fellow citizens. I would like to dedicate this award to brave women and men, such as Alieh Eghdamdust, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Farzad Kamangar, and many others in Iran, who put their security and lives in danger to promote human rights and democracy, and without whom, our work would not be possible.

This award brings much needed visibility to our work and strengthens our resolve. Thank you.

Lech Walesa award acceptance speech

by

Shadi Sadr

September 29th, 2009



Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am extremely honoured that the jury at the Lech Walesa Award has chosen me as the recipient of this prize. To be accompanied by the founders of the Boroumand Foundation has added to my delight. To be granted this Prize, not only bears an honour but an importance. It is important not only for myself, but also for the battle going on in Iran for three decades: the

battle for freedom and for democracy. The Lech Walesa Prize is given to support those who fight against political and social terrors. In fact, on one hand, this prize is a reminder for those who anxiously follow Iranians' daily struggle against political and social tyranny through the media and, on the other hand for those who do not know, it can be the beginning of awareness and solidarity. All this is a heart-warming support for those people who face batons, bullets, and knives on the streets of Tehran; for those who spend hard days behind the high walls of Evin prison and other jails in Iran; and for those who carry on the fight for freedom in spite of horror and insecurity. This prize is the recognition of millions of Iranians who are not prepared to tolerate dictatorship and human rights violations anymore; and for this reason it is even more important.

Two months ago, plain clothed agents violently arrested me in one of the streets of Tehran and I ended up in Evin prison for the second time. At that time, I could not dare imagine that one day so soon I would be speaking in an open society against systematic human rights violations in Iran free from the fear of being charged with actions against national security. I was taken to another building, separated from the section 209, and in the control of the Intelligence and Security Ministry with about 15 imprisoned men. The screams of these men being brutally beaten while interrogated were meant to be my torture. At that time, I could not dare imagine that one day so soon I would be speaking about mental and physical torture of prisoners in Iran in order to extract false confessions against themselves and against the protestors. On the days that, blindfolded, I would be taken through the corridors of the Section 209 of Evin prison to the interrogation room to be persuaded that all my activities in defending women's rights were a part of United States ploy to overthrow the Iranian regime; and that me and others within the women's movement and human right activists were nothing but puppets in the hands of western countries who taught us change and with their prizes created of us credible social agents of change and that ultimately through us they would introduce secularism and equality to the society at large, I could not dare imagine that I would be standing

here and taking advantage of the Lech Walesa Prize as a tribune to expose and discredit their meaningless justifications and deceptions.

Today I am very happy to be here and to talk freely about the lack of freedom in Iran. I am very happy for the opportunity to remind everyone that for thirty years we Iranians have endured systematic human rights violations; but more importantly to stress that for thirty years we have resisted the systematic violations of human rights. In the last ten years, as an advocate of women's rights movement in Iran, I have witnessed how this movement and other social movements such as that of the students', workers', and ethnic minorities' have tried to take advantage of even the smallest window of opportunity to further their aims publicly. The flames of resistance have been kept alive throughout these years in spite of insecurities, work and travel bans, imprisonments, and activists have not allowed the flames to be extinguished under oppression and tyranny.

However, after the result of the presidential elections in June, millions of Iranians showed that they even if they were not counted in the last thirty years, that despite being humiliated, oppressed, imprisoned, tortured and raped or even killed they have a voice, that they do count and that they are not dead. They came in their thousands upon thousands to the streets to make themselves heard. If until now it appeared that we were just a few who dared to say "No!" publicly, now millions of people have raised their hands as a sign of final victory and have said "No!" to dictatorship and human rights violations.

The response to this multitude of "No's" was a form of martial law in the streets, beating people, arresting them, mental and physical tortures, rapes, and finally death. For three months this has been the practice in streets and prisons of Iran. These events are reminders of the 1980's, when thousands of political dissidents were silenced cruelly in prisons. The only difference between the eighties and the post-election events is that in those years, the opponents were affiliated to political organisations. Just like now they were abducted, imprisoned, tortured, raped, and executed. Now, however, although the same treatment is meted out the people are members of the public with no affiliation to any political groups or parties. Another difference is that in the last three months, pictures and news about the daily human rights violations are broadcast so rapidly through internet and citizen journalism that unlike the eighties, the world is conscious and sensitive to Iran. But this is not enough. We need a global action.

As a feminist, I would like to mention once again the issue of rape and sexual tortures of prisoners, particularly women prisoners, and demand international action. Many evidences point to the fact that not only in the post-election events, but all through the last thirty years, rape and other kinds of sexual tortures have not been sporadic but systematic, used to intimidate, humiliate, and

break the morale of imprisoned women. For years this kind of torture had been concealed, but now through the public declaration of its victims and also through exposes by authorities

of the regime, it has become a topic of social dialogue. But this is only the beginning of a path which cannot be resolved without global solidarity.

Today, all of us share a global responsibility with respect to these systematic violations of rights in the past thirty years, of which rape and torture of imprisoned women is just a part. I remind myself and all others of our collective responsibility to bring to justice the authorities who have been responsible of such acts of systematic violations. The voices of the protesters in Iran have only been heard after the sacrifices of hundreds with their lives, sustained injuries and imprisonments. To hear the voices of this movement, to create a worldwide solidarity with the Iranian people who fight for freedom and democracy and to feel responsible against the abuse of their human rights and to convene a worldwide action to take the perpetrators to the court of law and to seek justice is what we seek. Thinking of the victims and sympathising with those whose body and soul is raped and contaminated is not enough. Let's think every day as we wake up what can we do to seek justice for the victims and the punishment for the abusers.

Thank you

Lech Walesa Award Gala Speech Roya Boroumand



I would like to say a few words about the conception of our project and what motivated my involvement.

Ladan today talked about the truth as the weapon of the powerless. Those who have lived under totalitarian regimes know how difficult and how crucial it is for those who fight for freedom and democracy to undo the "official truth." This is what we learn as we read about the experience of other pro-democracy movements. My

commitment to truth telling also stems from the lessons I learned during and after the revolution. In 1978, when I was in my last year of high school, Iran was in turmoil. The government was retreating in the face of pressure to liberalize from inside and outside Iran and political actors were increasingly daring.

The perspective of a pluralist political regime brought hope and enthusiasm to us and many around us. Ordinary Iranian citizens seemed intrigued and cautious. There was a cautious excitement but no hatred in the streets. Nothing then led me to believe that events would take such a violent turn. One event however, in the summer of 1978, played a key role, in my opinion, in laying the

groundwork for what was to come next.

In August of that year, Cinema Rex, a movie theatre in the town of Abadan in the south of Iran was set on fire. Close to 400 men, women, and children burned alive. The religious opposition, followed by all of us, attributed this fire to the government. I did not question this belief, in spite of the government's denials. I did not wonder why a regime, under pressure would bring upon itself more hostility by doing something so ruthless. I was angry, and for me, as I am sure for many other citizens, this fire was a turning point.

In the following weeks, as the tension increased between protesters and the regime, and the number of victims rose, we hardly ever questioned the numbers and the information that was circulated among us. After the revolution, we learned that it was a group of religious activists who had helped carry out the plan to set Cinema Rex on fire. We also learned that there were much fewer political prisoners in Shah's prisons than we thought and we learned that there were fewer victims in the demonstrations than we were told.

The shock caused by the uncovered truth and guilt have been with me ever since. I understood the impact of information on political developments and the importance of seeking the truth and being accurate in any effort aimed at bringing about change. The post-revolutionary era was also a learning period. In 1979 and 1980, the number of executions raised and individuals associated with the former regime as well as ordinary citizens convicted for prostitution, adultery, or homosexuality were killed in summary trials, deprived of all the rights including the right to a proper defense. The indifference of the post-revolutionary political elite who criticized the previous regime for not respecting due process of law, to the plight of ordinary Iranians victims of the revolutionary terror was another sad surprise.

As the Islamic Republic consolidated itself through a systematic terror that cost the lives of thousands of young men and women, we lost hope in ever seeing a pluralistic political regime where citizens are safe and their rights are respected. But then, we had the chance to watch the Solidarity movement. We were glued to our televisions every night waiting anxiously for the news. Lech Walesa was our hero. Solidarity showed us that no regime is eternal no matter how closed or evil it is. The success of Solidarity revived our hope for a better future and taught us that we all have a role to play no matter how strong the adversary is.

So the work of our Foundation and our methodology stem from the lessons we learned as young activists. Finding out the truth, focusing on due process of law, understanding human rights and democracy, being inclusive, and constantly reminding our fellow citizens that we are all equal in rights and dignity are our way to contribute to the pro-democracy movement in Iran. Thank you for recognizing the relevance of our work.

Lech Walesa Award Gala Speech
Ladan Boroumand



Mr. President,
 honorable members of
 the Award
 Committee, Ladies
 and Gentlemen, good
 evening.
 The tyrants who
 oppress Iran and its

people today have learned many a malign lesson from the tyrants who persecuted Poland for almost half a century after the end of the Second World War. The Islamic Republic's "revolutionary" tribunals and committees, coerced confessions, mass executions, vast purges, cultural revolution, "state security" thugs, cults of the supreme leader, and the pressure on citizens to spy on one another—these tactics all come from the handbook of modern totalitarian ideologies. Certainly they are not found in the tradition of the prophet of Islam. A regime that dares to call itself "Islamic" has confiscated God and perverted the Muslim religion into a totalitarian ideology.

Given the parallels between Poland's case and Iran's, it is unsurprising that we, the members of Iranian civil society, should have taken an interest in how, not so very long ago, our Polish brothers and sisters waged their own heroic struggle for freedom in the face of terrible odds. Confronted with totalitarianism in an Islamist guise, we turned to the words and deeds of the Poles Lech Wałęsa, Czesław Miłosz, and Leszek Kołakowski—plus such kindred spirits as Vaclav Havel, Tzvetan Todorov, Hannah Arendt, Andrei and Yelena Sakharov, and Aleksandr Solzhenitzyn, to name a few—in order to make sense of what was happening to us. They helped us understand the evil that prevailed in our country. It is from them that we learned how ordinary citizens can resist a totalitarian regime by not giving in to its lies. We learned that telling the truth is the subversive power of the powerless, and the revolutionary hope of the hopeless.

We knew that, even as ordinary citizens, we had to face our own share of the responsibility for what had happened in our country. We were well aware that for an evil of such scale to take hold of a country you need not only the evil thought and the executioner, but also all those ordinary people who kept silent when the first crime was committed in 1979. Then the

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second and the third, and so on. All those millions of innocent accomplices and guilty bystanders: us, I mean. From thousands of kilometers away, we felt that we should first make amends ourselves, break our silence, tell the truth, and bring the wickedness and violence of our rulers to light.

Evil, we understood, consists in the eclipse of humanity. What we could do after the fact of evil's triumph, we realized, was to restore the universal essence of human nature and honor human dignity. The perpetrators kill to eliminate their victims; the victims' deaths cannot be undone, yet it is possible to bring them back in memory. By violating their victims' human rights, the perpetrators sought to deny their human dignity. To remedy such an outrage, we could posthumously restore at least a measure of the victims' humanity by refusing to let them be slipped into the Orwellian "memory hole" down which the tyranny wanted them to vanish. Hence the idea of creating a virtual memorial dedicated to all individuals whose violent death is imputable to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Omid is a memorial in defense of human rights that intends to list and document, insofar as possible, the story of every person killed without due process of law by the Islamic Republic and to create a file in both Persian and English that will serve as a virtual memorial to them, to enshrine their stories and record their ordeals.

Roya said that the story of Solidarnosc was a ray of light in the darkness of our fate in the early eighties. We knew that Solidarnosc's victory would pave the way for our freedom fighters, and we were right. The collapse of communism was the prelude to the conversion of Iran's intellectual and political elite to democracy and human rights. The triumph of the Poles and others over communist totalitarianism created intellectual and ideological conditions favorable to the emergence of a new and innovative Iranian civil-rights movement, spearheaded by women.

Tonight, as we gratefully accept the humbling honor of receiving the prestigious Lech Walesa award, we know that through the three of us the award is honoring all the members of Iran's human-rights community. On this glorious occasion we would like to pay homage to all our fellow defenders of human rights

—to those who, like the former political prisoners Monireh Baradaran and Iraj Mesdaghi, have been persistently documenting what happened during the eighties in the prisons of the Islamic Republic; and also to those who, like Mansour

Osanloo, suffer imprisonment for doing nothing more than trying to organize a free and independent trade union. We also remember those like 21-year-old Ronak Safarzade, who has been sentenced to six years in jail for peacefully defending women's rights; and Sadigh Kabudvand and Farzad Kamangar, who have received sentences of eleven years and death, respectively, for trying to safeguard human rights. There are many more like these brave people in our thoughts tonight; we feel that this prestigious award honors them too, and we humbly accept it on their behalf.

When in 1980 our father, after whom our foundation is named, sought asylum in Paris, he lived on l'Avenue Charles Floquet. One day, with a smile on his face, he asked me if I knew who Charles Floquet was. I said I had no idea. Monsieur Floquet, my father explained, had been a premier of France under the Third Republic, in the late 1880s. But more importantly, my father continued, when Floquet had been a young lawyer witnessing the 1867^[2] state visit of Czar Aleksandr II to the Palais de Justice (Court House) in Paris, Floquet was said to have confronted the Russian autocrat with the cry, "Vive la Pologne, monsieur!" (In my father's telling, this became embellished to, "Vive la Pologne libre!") How Roya and I wish our father could be here tonight to witness the beautiful sight of a free and democratic Poland honoring the struggle of his people for a free and democratic Iran, the cause for which he gave his life. As it is, we know that he is here in spirit, and we must be content with that.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your support—and long live free Poland!

Roya Boroumand Addresses the Gdansk Youth Forum

I- Introduction

On June 12, 2009, millions of Iranians stood in sometimes hours-long lines and voted. The election results, announced surprisingly soon after the closure of the polls, stunned millions of citizens who poured into the streets in protest. This was not the first time that Iranians voted for change, nor was it the first time that they saw their hopes shattered. But this was the first time in three decades that they came out so massively to protest peacefully against what they believed to be outrageous electoral fraud. The state's response was immediate and ruthless.

Neda's death, witnessed by millions around the world, made her the symbol of young Iranians punished for exercising their right to peaceful assembly. To date, more than 70 names and stories have been documented, but according to unofficial sources, the number of protesters killed in June and July is much higher. The June protests also led to massive arrests of demonstrators, political activists, lawyers, human rights activists, and journalists around the country. In August 2009, the spokesman of Iran's Judiciary admitted that close to 4000 people were arrested during and after the protests. Reports earlier this month indicated that more than 1100 were still in detention. Many of the detainees were detained in very harsh conditions and were physically and mentally tortured. An unknown number died in detention.

Kianush Asa for example, was a brilliant and passionate young man. He had just finished his graduate studies in chemical engineering and was planning to return to his home town of Kermanshah to work and support his family, so that his older brother could go back to university. He was shot during the protest and taken to an unknown place. The coroner determined that he died 4 days later. His family does not know where he was during those days, nor what happened to him. He was only 25.

This is not the first time that the government detained citizens without access to lawyers or their families, nor is it the first time it killed in secrecy. In December 1982, Amnesty International estimated the number of executions in Iran since 1979 at more than 4000. Like today, many of the victims were buried secretly. In 1988, international human rights groups reported weeks of secret executions of political prisoners in prisons around Iran. Like today, families were threatened and told not to mourn.

This is not the first time that the Iranian government got away with murder. Iranian authorities have learned over time that their violent treatment of dissidents will have no serious consequences. At worst, they will have to endure short-lived international criticism. Victims are then forgotten, and survivors get used to living with their pain, and to living without closure.

II - Background

For nearly three decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has preoccupied the international community with its foreign policy and, more recently, its nuclear ambitions. Before June 2009, the record of its human rights' violations rarely made the headlines. By limiting foreign media access to Iran, monitoring reporters, and restricting issues they can cover, Iran has prevented the dissemination of detailed information that would allow for a more accurate perspective on the situation inside Iran.

For example, the government's particular sensitivity regarding those who call for accountability, criticize the electoral laws, and promote the boycott of elections does not always get the attention it deserves. That is why very few knew that the young Kurd, Shawaneh Qaderi, who was killed by the security forces after the

2005 elections actively promoted an electoral boycott. Scores of students were regularly punished for the same reason but seldom got visibility. The execution in the summer of 2008 of Ya'qub Mehrnahad, the young founder of an association in Baluchistan with a focus on discrimination and accountability, went quasi-unnoticed, as did the conviction of his 15-year old brother Ebrahim who is now serving a 5-year sentence for having tried to give visibility to his brother's case.

To prevent the flow of information, the government has tried to isolate and silence each new generation of activists, journalists, and dissidents or to force them into exile where they lack financial resources and the necessary language skills to remain active and effective. Outside Iran, most of them, that is most of us, have soon become irrelevant to governments, the media, and sometimes human rights groups.

The Iranian leadership has used the nuclear issue to distract the International community's attention. It has successfully deterred governments, civil society, and human rights funders from lending direct support to Iranians who fight for rights and democracy inside Iran. It has criminalized rights defenders and journalists' activities and prosecuted them for reporting about the human rights situation, which it sees as detrimental to the Islamic Republic's national security. Even activities in the area of women's rights, which were once tolerated and hence better known outside Iran, now trigger prosecutions and prison sentences. The government has filled Iran's prisons with rights defenders and dissidents confident that its actions will get short-lived attention, if any.

For years the state of affairs has seemed hopeless, and experts have talked about Iranians' apathy. But general apathy can hardly explain the June elections and their aftermath, and over the past few years, the high number of arrests and prosecutions, which in fact indicate a steady positive trend.

III - A vibrant civil society with increasing interest in human rights

1. Human rights defenders

Reference to human rights and universal values is more common among government critics who, unlike those of the 1960s and 1970s, are not drawn to radical ideologies or armed resistance in the face of government repression. Young Iranians, for the most part, reject violence and look for alternatives ways to bring about change (example of the One Million Signature Campaign).

2. Ordinary Iranians are more accessible and receptive

Massive participation in the 1997 and 2009 elections was largely a

response to the language and promises of opening and freedom used by the candidates in their campaigns. Through the web, satellite communication, and printed publications, Iranians are exposed to human rights news. Our organization regularly receives information from Iran, and the e-mails and electronic data forms that they send regarding victims increase noticeably each time we publicly discuss our project, for example on Voice of America radio programs. In fact, we receive more information from Iran than from Iranians abroad. Translations of human rights-related texts in Farsi are widely read. The guidelines for documenting violence against women by state agents, the Yogyakarta statement, and other documents in the Library have been downloaded several thousand times.

3. Modern technology

In the past decades the progress in technology used to promote human rights has been very encouraging.

Technology prevents the kind of isolation in which repressive governments thrive. The Iranian government cannot afford to shut the internet off completely, isolating businesses and universities.

4. The Islamic Republic's ambiguity vis-à-vis human rights

In spite of its rhetoric, the Islamic republic has never totally dismissed human rights. Though the leaders have rejected these rights as a Western plot, they did not withdraw from the conventions ratified by the Iranian parliament before the revolution. They have often denied access to human rights monitors but have adopted the language, created an Islamic Human Rights Commission and, most recently, a human rights headquarters in the judiciary. The Iranian leaders refer to rights and freedom when they travel outside Iran and try to project the image of rulers in harmony with their people. Hence, their dislike of reporting human rights violations.

Human rights monitoring does act as a deterrent and it is not surprising to hear statements such as, "We don't cut thieves hands in Iran because when we do so, we become a subject of human rights discussions outside Iran." This is the representative of the Spiritual Leader in Shiraz who also hopes that someday, "We will cut hands everywhere in the world." The ambiguity that characterizes Iran's attitude towards human rights opens a space, albeit small, for progress.

Civil society in democratic countries, governments that include human rights as a component of their foreign policy, and, most importantly, the media can help make these changes durable. The Islamic Republic's leaders, with a successful long-term strategy, have exported their ideas and built a constituency outside Iran, where their lack of legitimacy is less apparent. Positive as well as negative developments in Iran will have an impact beyond its borders. Therefore, the international community should not exclude human rights promotion in Iran from its agenda. It should

be consistent in its interest, and avoid laxity on definitions and principles and promote the international standards to which Iranian civil society aspires.

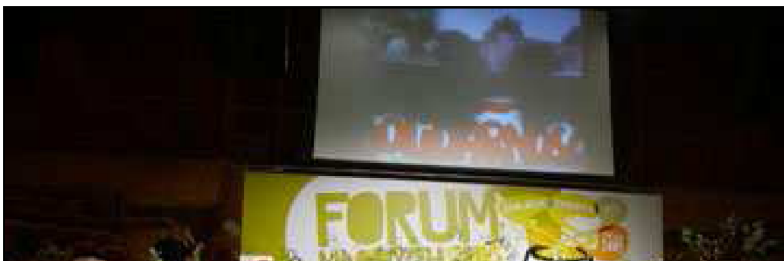
IIII - The international community's role in supporting Iranians' struggle for human rights and democracy

1. Be true to your values

Iranians who promote universal values rely on the support of democracies. Their advocacy is undermined and their morale affected when they perceive that civil society and democratic governments do not uphold international standards when it comes to them. We do have the same rights and the same needs.

2. Consistency and follow-up

Unlike the Iranian President, who can travel the world and talk on behalf of Iranian citizens to civil society and foreign governments and return to Iran, Iranian activists cannot travel freely, talk to their counterparts, to the media, or to foreign governments without risking prison sentences or worse. Human rights defenders, in particular those with less notoriety, need recognition and consistent support. The valuable efforts of activists who work in the more isolated and difficult regions and whose work of promoting rights is the most challenging should not be neglected. As members of the youth forum, you can give visibility to crackdowns on Iranian students and help publicize what exactly triggered the abuses. Follow-up as long as activists are in prison. Investigate the selection process in the universities, focus on laws and practices that exclude a majority of Iranians from participating in the government of their country and bring attention to the impunity granted to the security forces and authorities who abuse their power.





3. Need for increased moral and financial support

There is a need to fight back against government propaganda regarding foreign support to human rights activists. Rather than defending against the accusation of a "velvet revolution" and regime change, the debate should move to Iran's reasons for arresting activists. The Islamic Republic's leaders should be constantly reminded that the reason for arresting a human rights defender is not his or her criminal activities but it is an effort to hide the government's despicable human rights record.

4. Keep us relevant

In the past few years, scores of activists and journalists have left Iran. The international community can discourage the government from forcing them into exile by keeping those who leave active by providing them the means to continue their work effectively outside the country

I would like to thank again the Lech Walesa Institute Foundation for recognizing the relevance of our work. By keeping us relevant, you will also help us be more effective.

The Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation is grateful to the Lech Walesa Institute Foundation for the visibility that this award has given to human rights violations in Iran.

Additionally, the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation would like to thank the staff of the Lech Walesa Institute Foundation for their efforts in organizing this event.

The photographs in this Newsletter are courtesy of Krzysztof Kuczyk.

For more information about the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation, please visit www.iranrights.org.

[1] <http://www.ilw.org.pl/en/>

[2] At the beginning of his reign, Alexander expressed the famous statement "No dreams" addressed for Poles, populating Congress Poland, Western Ukraine, Lithuania, Livonia and Belarus. The result was the January

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Three Iranian human rights activists rece...

Uprising of 1863–1864 that was suppressed after eighteen months of fighting.

Hundreds of Poles were executed, and thousands were deported to Siberia. The price for suppression was Russian support for Prussian-United Germany. Twenty years later, Germany became the major enemy of Russia on the continent. All territories of the former Poland-Lithuania were excluded from liberal policies introduced by Alexander. The martial law in Lithuania, introduced in 1863, lasted for the next 40 years. Native languages, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian were completely banned from printed texts, see a , e.g., Ems Ukase. The Polish language was banned in both oral and written form from all provinces except Congress Kingdom, where it was allowed in private conversations only.

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