

## Iranian and American Feminists Declare Solidarity during Iran-wide Protests January 16, 2018

As the largest wave of protests since the 2009 Green Movement erupted across more than 80 cities and towns in Iran (in late December 2017 to early January of 2018), we again saw women's active participation.

Women have played an active role in people's fighting back against the economic hardship, increasing corruption, and oppressive rules in Iran, especially discrimination and violence on the bases of gender, sexuality, religion and ethnic differences. Furthermore, in the past 30 years, the women's rights movement has become an essential part of the civil rights and pro-democracy struggles of Iranians under the theocratic regime.

However, as in many other Muslim-majority countries, Iranian feminists and gender activists frequently get caught within a double bind: On one hand, there is a patriarchal cultural and legal system reinforced by the ruling clerics and fundamentalists inside the country; on the other are interventionist forces in the West who exploit women's rights for their own benefit.

On December 26, just a couple of days preceding the surge of protests in Iran, the [photo of a brave Iranian woman](#) objecting to the compulsory hijab in Tehran went viral. The woman, seen standing on a platform with her white scarf tied to a pole she is waving gently and her head bare, was not the first one to defy the compulsory veiling; her action was part of the women's rights movement in Iran, specifically the campaign for freedom of choice concerning women's dress code.

Unfortunately, some right-wing individuals or media outlets have used the aforementioned anti-compulsory hijab action to score points against American feminists who have been at the forefront of the resistance movement against the sexist actions and regressive policies shown by any governments in the U.S., past or present—especially those of President Trump. Some who have no record of advocacy for American women's rights at home have suddenly become advocates of women's rights abroad, particularly in Iran—and, ironically, have used their sudden fervor as an excuse to attack women's groups, activists and feminist activism in efforts such as the Women's March and the #MeToo movement. Of particular note were their attacks on some participants or organizers of the Women's March who were wearing headscarves; attempting to pit them against that brave Iranian woman who had taken off her headscarf. [\(link\)](#)

We hereby raise our objection to such opportunistic and divisive tactics. The struggle of Iranian women should not be used to undermine the work of American feminists, especially those who have worked to build the largest day of an inclusive global protest in the history of the world. While the Iranian women protesting compulsory hijab policies reckon with them by removing their scarves, the campaign's message is even more astute. Their campaign is one for a woman's right to wear or not wear a headscarf by their *own* choosing—not by force and state

imposition. Painting an American Muslim woman activist with a headscarf as a “fake feminist” and pitting her against that bare-headed Iranian woman is no more than a cynical attempt to cause conflict—and does nothing to further international solidarity and transnational sisterhood among women fighting for equal rights and freedom of choice. ([link](#))

The women challenging the compulsory hijab in Iran are fighting for their dignity—just as generations of Iranian women have since the first Iranian feminists began organizing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Iranian women have been tirelessly challenging inequality in every possible area of their public and personal lives—from fighting unjust family laws, to the equal access to education and employment, for the right to play and watch sports in stadiums, to the right to participate in political leadership of their country as a presidential candidate. And so are the women marching in the U.S.—who are, with more energy than ever, fighting hard to end sexual harassment, demanding freedom of choice and challenging racism, homophobia, xenophobia and exploitation.

Just as Americans stood with Iranians and other immigrant groups opposing the unjust travel ban, American feminists have and will continue to stand with Iranian women in their fight for equality at home in Iran and abroad as immigrants.

We will not let our mutual struggles for freedom and justice be appropriated and used to attack other defenders of women’s rights. We will not allow the fight of Iranian women for freedom, equality and justice to be co-opted and used against women elsewhere.

We can, and must, ensure that our fight for women’s rights and freedoms are aligned and intersectional. We will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in this fight for the common causes of democracy, equal rights, peace and non-violence—nationally and transnationally—across ideological or sectarian, racial, ethnic, sexual or national backgrounds.

Feminism is a movement built on solidarity and intersectionality, and our fight for gender equality knows no borders.

**Signed - Organizations and Individuals (in alphabetical order):**

- Association for Middle East Women's Studies - Task Force for Human Rights
- Feminist Majority Foundation
- International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
- Iranian Circle of Women’s Intercultural Network
- *Ms.* magazine
- Women’s Intercultural Network
- Women’s March San Francisco

1. Alyce LaViolette, MFT, Alternatives to Violence, Long Beach, CA
2. Amy Tahani-Bidmeshki, PhD, Occidental College

3. Angie Abdelmonem, NSF Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Faculty Associate, Arizona State University School for the Future of Innovation in Society
4. Anousheh Machouf, Psychologist
5. Asieh Amini, Iranian Poet, Journalist human/women's rights activist
6. Ava Homa, Writer and activist-Sunset Beach, CA
7. Azadeh Davachi, Iranian Poet, writer and women's rights activist
8. Azadeh Kian, Professor of Sociology, Director of CEDREF, University of Paris 7-Diderot
9. Azadeh Pourzand, Co-Founder and Executive Director at Siamak Pourzand Foundation
10. Barbara B Wilson, LCSW, EDPNA, Mental Health Hook Up, Valencia, CA
11. Breny Mendoza, Chair of Gender & Women's Studies, California State University, Northridge
12. Carmen Perez, Executive Director of The Gathering for Justice, Women's March Board Member
13. Carmen Rios, *Ms.* magazine
14. Carol Stabile, Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park and Fembot Collective
15. Charlie Toledo, Executive Director, Suscol Intertribal Council, Napa, California USA
16. Chelo Alvarez-Stehle, Journalist and Documentary Filmmaker, Malibu, California
17. Claudia Sobral, Brazilian Documentary Filmmaker and Cultural worker, Los Angeles, United States
18. Delaram Ali, Women and Children's Rights Advocate, Iran
19. Dolores Huerta, Dolores Huerta Foundation
20. Efat Mahbaz, Writer and Human Rights Activist, London
21. Ehteram Shadfar, Women's Rights Activist, Iran
22. Elahe Amani, Chair, Global Circles of Women's Intercultural Network
23. Elahé Chokraie, Feminist Activist
24. Eleanor Smeal, President, Feminist Majority Foundation
25. Elena V. Macías, Ph.D., M.S.W.Educator, Cerritos, California, USA
26. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Krister Stendahl Professor, Harvard University Divinity School
27. Ellen Dubois, Research Professor, History, UCLA
28. Fariba Boghraty, Business woman, Irvine, CA
29. Farideh Kioumehr, Founder & Executive Director, International Health & Epidemiology Research Center
30. Farsheed Nooryani, social justice activist
31. Farzaneh Fathi, Women's rights activist, Vienna
32. Fatemeh Farhangkhah, Women's Rights and Civil Society Activist
33. Fatemeh Haghighatjoo, Former Parliament Deputy, Reformist Faction and Women's Rights Advocate
34. Fatemeh Keshavarz, Director School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, Chair of Roshan Institute for Persian Studies, University of Maryland, College Park
35. Firouzeh Mohajer, Translator and Human Rights Activist, Iran
36. Frances S. Hasso, Associate Professor, Duke University, and Editor, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*
37. Freeda Saba Limonadi, JD, MS Communications, TV Journalist / producer, California

38. Haideh Moghissi, Emerita Professor and Senior Scholar, York University, Toronto, Canada
39. Hasmic Nazarian, Glendale, CA
40. Hellen Nooshei, Accountant, CA
41. Hengameh Abbasi, Radio Producer, Freelance journalist
42. Homa Hoodfar, Professor of Anthropology, Emerita, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada
43. Homa Mahmoudi, Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist, Los Angeles
44. Homa Sarshar, Author, award winning journalist & media personality, Los Angeles, California
45. Jamileh Nedaie, Filmmaker, feminist activist
46. Janell Hobson, Ph.D., Chair and Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, University at Albany
47. Janet Afary, Professor, Gender and Religious Studies, UCSB
48. Judith Plaskow, Professor, Manhattan College, emerita
49. Karen S. Harper, Advocate for the Hmong population, Long Beach, CA
50. Karon Jolna, Ph.D., Ms. magazine and UCLA Center for the Study of Women
51. Katherine Spillar, Executive Editor, Ms. magazine
52. Kathleen Cha, Writer, Director, WIN, League of Women Voters Bay Area Oakland, California
53. Kelly Dennehy-Schumann, Women's March Bay Area Board Member
54. Khadijeh Moghaddam, Iranian Women's Rights and Environmental Activist
55. Khanum Shaikh, Assistant Professor, Gender & Women's Studies and Asian American Studies, CSUN
56. Laleh Ramezani, President, Always Best Care Senior Services, Beach Cities
57. Leslie Salzinger, Associate Professor, Gender & Women's Studies, UC Berkeley
58. Lieve Snellings, UZ Leuven, Campus Gasthuisberg, Belgium
59. Linda Sarsour, Racial justice and civil rights activist, Women's March Board Member
60. Mahasti Afshar, Ph.D. Independent Scholar
61. Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh, Iranian Women Rights Activist, Founder and Director of ZananTV
62. Mahdokht Sanati, Board Member of Iranian Children's Rights Society in LA, LA, California
63. Mandana Zandian, MD. Iranian Poet, Journalist
64. Mansoureh Shojaee, Writer, Researcher and Human Rights Activist
65. Margaret Towner, Educator, Long Beach, USA
66. Martha Shaughnessy, Communications Lead of Women's March SF, Founder of The Key
67. Mary Elaine Hegland, Professor of Dept. of Anthropology, Santa Clara University, CA
68. Maryam Ahari, MD, Human/women's Rights activist
69. Mehrangiz Kar, Lawyer, writer and women's rights activist
70. Meredith Tax, Writer, New York City, US
71. Minoo Riahi, Orange County Library, California
72. Mitra Saffari, Social Activist
73. Nahid Husseini, Kingston University, London, and Women's Rights Activist
74. Nahid Mirhaj, Human/women's rights activist, Iran

75. Naida Tushnet, PhD. Retired Education Researcher. Long Beach, CA USA
76. Nancy Gallagher, Research Professor, Emerita, University of California, Santa Barbara
77. Nasrin Rahimieh, Professor and Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature, UCI
78. Nasrin Sotoudeh, Attorney at Law and Human/Women's Rights Activist, Iran
79. Nayereh Tohidi, Professor of Gender & Women's Studies and Director of Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies, CSUN
80. Nazy Azima, Journalist, translator & writer, Washington DC
81. Neda Bolourchi, Founder/Executive Director, FarsiVoter, CA
82. Nehzat Farnoody, Ph.D., Psychotherapist
83. Nelly Farnoody-Zahiri, Ph.D. Psychologist, Media/Host of Mom Talk-LA
84. Nima Machouf, Epidemiologist
85. Parastou Forouhar, Artist and Women's Rights Activist
86. Pardis Ghandhari, Women's Rights Activist
87. Partow Nooriala, Poet, writer and women's rights activist
88. Parvin Ardalan, Iranian Women's Rights Activist
89. Parvin Malek - Retired teacher , Fresno CA
90. Rezvan Moghaddam, Iranian Women's Rights Activist
91. Roja Bandari, Ph.D. Iranian Women's Rights Advocate, Co-lead of Women's March San Francisco
92. Rouhi Shafii, Writer, Translator and Executive Director of International Coalition Against Violence in Iran (ICAVI)
93. Sabri Najafi, Women Rights and Human Rights activist, Florence, Italy
94. Sarah Pike, Law student, Berkeley, CA, USA
95. Sepideh Jodeyri, Iranian Poet
96. Shahin Navai , Entomologist, Berlin, Germany
97. Shahla Haeri, Associate Professor, Anthropology, Boston University
98. Sheena Malhotra, Associate Dean, College of Humanities, California State University, Northridge
99. Sherna Gluck, Former Pacifica Radio producer, Emerita Faculty, California State University, Long Beach
100. Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Laureate, Founder of Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran
101. Simin Rouzgard, Human Rights Activist, Canada
102. Sofia Sadighpour, Educational Psychologist
103. Sondra Hale, Research Professor, Emerita, University of California, Los Angeles
104. Sophia Andary, Women's March San Francisco Co-lead
105. Soraya Fallah, CSUN, Researcher at CTL
106. Soudeh Rad, Iranian Gender equality advocate , President of Spectrum
107. Suad Joseph, Distinguished Research Professor, University of California, Davis
108. Sudi Farrokhnia, Women's Rights Activist and ICWIN Member
109. Suzanne Safar, Board Member of A More Balanced World, Oxnard, California
110. Wendy Griffin, Academic Dean, Cherry Hill Seminary
111. Zahra Biloo, Civil Rights Attorney & Community Organizer

112. Zamaneh Mofidi, PhD candidate 'Women in Religion,' Claremont Graduate University, California
113. Zayn Kassam, John Knox McLean Professor of Religious Studies, Pomona College
114. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Professorial Research Associate, Center for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, SOAS, University of London