Externalizing Risk of Political Activism in Iran

Proposed Structure and Program

A Model for A Proxy Representative Political Activism

Co-Chairs: Professor Raha Parham, Mr. Adam Lovinger
Advisor: Bijan R. Kian
Date: 26 January 2022

This document represents “work in progress”. It is neither complete, nor final. No part of this document may be reproduced, transmitted digitally, or shared by any other means without written and explicit consent of the board of directors of the:

Institute for Voices Of Liberty
The Problem

The Islamic Republic IN Iran is a clerical tyranny. Political activism in opposition to the institution of the Islamic Republic is not possible inside Iran. Superficial and controlled dissident voices and scattered political action make it difficult if not impossible to gauge the authenticity of such voices and actions. Thinkers and activists who dare to cross the red lines of the regime are silenced, jailed or physically eliminated. A case in point is the reaction of this repressive government to a political statement issued by 14 activists who criticized the government on its inability to address economic, civil and political demands of many Iranians. This group of 14 called for the resignation of Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei and transition of power from the Islamic Republic to a new democratically elected government. All 14 signatories to the statement were arrested or harassed, some violently, by the authorities. Some received heavy sentences for simply protesting institutional corruption, ineptitude and political oppression. Transparency International ranks the Islamic Republic as one of the most corrupt governments in the world. The Islamic Republic is nearly bankrupt and on a trajectory of financial collapse. It is important to be prepared for the eventual fall of this regime. Today, opposition to this regime is not organized. A path for achieving change has not been established. There is a constant cry for “Change” but no plans for change, no seriously organized political parties and no candidates to present plans to the people of Iran or to the international community.
**Islamic Republic’s Government Reaction to Dissent**

*In the Islamic Republic, if you protest, you go to jail...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Noorizad</td>
<td>Sentenced to 15 years imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbas Vahedian Shahroudi</td>
<td>Arrested, assaulted, imprisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamal Jafari Yazdi</td>
<td>Arrested, sentenced to 13 years in prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashem Khastar</td>
<td>Sentenced to 16 years imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Maleki</td>
<td>Assaulted, arrested, deceased (former head of Tehran University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gohar Eshghi</td>
<td>Threatened, assaulted (Mother of a murdered protestor Sattar Beheshti)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Hossein Sepehri</td>
<td>Arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zartosht Ahmadi Ragheb</td>
<td>Arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoorieh Farajzadeh</td>
<td>Arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Reza Bayat</td>
<td>Assaulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Karim Beigi</td>
<td>Assaulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javad Laal Mohammadi</td>
<td>Arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Mahdavi Far</td>
<td>Arrested, 9 Years of Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reza Mehregan</td>
<td>Arrested, 6 Years of Imprisonment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Supporters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatemeh Sepehri</td>
<td>Arrested, sentenced to 6 years imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahla JahanBin, Guity Porfazel, Shahla Entesari</td>
<td>Arrested. 27 months imprisonment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahra Jamali</td>
<td>Arrested, assaulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narges Mansoori</td>
<td>Sentenced to 6 years imprisonment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brief Historical Review

YESTERDAY
1979- An 80-year-old cleric led a revolution ending the 2500-year-old monarchy in Iran. 8 years of war with Iraq took the lives of a million people on both sides. The war was led by Rafsanjani, a cleric. In 1982, Iranian regular army and special forces pushed back Iraqi forces. (Fath ol mobin operation). Iran could have declared victory and ended the war, but it did not. Instead, it continued the war for 6 more years. Finally, in 1988 the war ended. Young warriors had fought for preserving the territorial integrity of Iran coupled with and powered by their religious belief in martyrdom. The cycle of corruption began when Rafsanjani declared Khamenei as Supreme Leader and the heir to Khomeini. Khamenei was not qualified as a religious leader. Lacking legitimacy, he owed his power to Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani himself owed his own rise to the IRGC which became the protector of the Islamic Republic. The legitimacy crisis advanced at a steady pace. As Khamenei bribed Rafsanjani, Rafsanjani bribed IRGC and corrupt IRGC commanders raided our national wealth. Religious foundations began to devour natural resources. Consecutive corrupt governments were formed. The founder of Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini provided the foundation for corruption while the most corrupt government in The Islamic Republic was led by the so called “reformist” Mohammad Khatami. Khomeini was an uneducated clerics whose world view was limited to his clerical studies. He was a dangerous man but not a thief. The cycle of corruption began when Rafsanjani elevated an illegitimate leader (Khamenei). This cycle of corruption has escalated steadily through subsequent governments led by Rafsanjani, Khatami, Ahmadinejad, Rouhani and now Raisi.
Timeline of Institutionalized Corruption in the Islamic Republic

1979 Feb. Khomeini returns after 14 years in exile

1980 Jan. Abulhasan Banisadr becomes president

1980 Sep, Iran-Iraq war begins; lasts 8 years

Aug. 1989 Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani becomes President and helps Khamenei ascend to Supreme Leader

June 1989 Khomeini dies

Aug 1997 Mohammad Khatami becomes President

Aug. 2005 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad becomes President

Aug 2013 Hassan Rouhani becomes President

Aug 2021 Ebrahim Raisi becomes President

Corruption begins

Corruption grows rapidly

Corruption is Institutionalized. Incompetence intensifies

Corruption, Incompetence, and Downward spiral

All Three Branches Are Led by the Fundamentalists.
TODAY
It is difficult to obtain reliable figures on the Iranian economy. Even figures published by the IMF are questionable due to lack of transparency in reporting. A summary of economic figures includes:

- **Population:** 85,484,011
- Iran holds 10% of the world’s proven reserves in Oil and 15% of its gas reserves.
- GDP: $703.9 billion with an estimated $1.1 trillion PPP GDP Growth: 2018 (-5.4%); 2019 (-7.6%); 2020 (-6%)
- GDP per capita: $8,215, ($13,513 PPP)
- **Inflation:** 34%
- Population below poverty line: 55% living on less than 3.4 million toman per month or roughly $121 per month
- 10.9% of the population lives on less than $5.50 per day.
- Misery Index (unemployment + Inflation – percent change in GDP per Capita): 92 (higher than Angola, Haiti, Zambia and twice that of South Sudan)
- Gallup reports that 59% of Iranians say their local economy is getting worse.
- 91% of Iranians say it is a bad time to find a job where they live.
- Transparency International scores Iran’s corruption 149 out of 180, among the top 25% most corrupt countries in the world.
- The Fragility Index scores Iran at 84.5 Index points. The World Average for 173 countries is 66.4 index points.
- Oil revenue has dropped, currency is in a free fall, government debt is rising $139 billion in 2016 to $406 billion in 2021
Islamic Republic Violates International Law

- Gross violations of international norms, including
  - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (12/10/1948)
  - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (12/16, 1966 UNGA)
  - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (12/16/1966 UNGA)
- Gross and systematic human rights violations as documented and reported by the UN special Rapporteurs on Human Rights In Iran whose missions have been extended since 1984.
- Extrajudicial executions of thousands of political prisoners in 1988 determined as Crimes against Humanity by Human Rights experts from the United Nations. (Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa).
- Extrajudicial killing of over 1500 protestors in 2019.
- Top state sponsor of terror through proxy terrorist elements endangering global peace and security from the Middle East to Africa.
- Threatening Israel, a member of the United nations, with extinction in violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.
- Continued violation of United Nations Resolution 2231 by expansion of its intercontinental ballistic missile and nuclear program and endangering “international peace and security.”

It is imperative to counter this rogue regime. We ask world leaders to “recognize” an organized opposition to the Islamic Republic in Iran.
The Islamic Republic in Iran is not Reformable

The most formidable obstacle to formation of real democracy and the holding free and fair elections in Iran are the principles of absolute rule by religious leaders; religious (Islam) dominance in politics, government and society; and sharia-based law. Under the current religious and constitutional structure of the Islamic Republic true democratic reform is impossible. Fundamental reforms must be carried out under an established and peaceful system of government through drafting a new constitution. However, this path is not possible under the current constitution [Article 12] which provides that the official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja'fari school, and that this principle is eternally immutable. In addition, according to Article 177 of the Islamic Republic Constitution, the “holy principle of the Imamate of Ummah” is the basis for all rules, regulations, and objectives of Islamic Republic of Iran, and that these are unalterable.
True opposition in Iran is suppressed. The people are not permitted to voice their dissent. Superficial opposition in the form of so-called “reformists” have no real power. All power is consolidated by so-called Fundamentalists. All three branches of government are led by hardliners close to Supreme Leader. Policies are clearly influenced by Russia and China. JCPOA negotiations are complicated and do not offer solutions for mitigating the threats the Islamic Republic pose for World’s international security and freedom seeking Iranians.

Some Iranian activists have described the path forward to a free, Secular Democratic Iran in three phases:

1- “Before” the fall of the Islamic Republic
2- “Transition” to a new government in a free, secular and democratic Iran
3- “After” the fall of the Islamic Republic, which includes: the process of forming a “constituent assembly”, preparing a draft for a new constitution and drafting a referendum on the “form” of the new government.
Islamic Republic will not fall on its own

1. The regime will fall on its own (What does it take for the regime to fall or submit to the will of the people?)

2. It ignores the causality of change (What actions can be taken to facilitate and expedite change?)

3. It assumes that freedom seeking people of Iran must wait for the fall of the regime to hold the “constituent assembly”, prepare a draft of a new constitution and put such draft through a referendum to ascertain the will of the people on the new form of the government based on a new constitution. (Why can’t all this be done in order to help facilitate or even expedite the “change” now and outside of Iran with the cooperation of political activists inside Iran?)

4. This thinking is framed in the operating requirements of the Agricultural Age or the Industrial Age. We are in the Information Age.

Instead of assuming that the regime will fall on its own, freedom-seeking people of Iran can form a “constituent assembly” and prepare a draft of the new “free Iran constitution” now and outside of Iran with full participation of those who have rejected and renounced the entirety of the institution of the Islamic Republic.
A roadmap for creating a broad-based coalition for democracy in Iran

Free and fair political competition

1. Encourage formation of political parties with published charters, candidates and plans to face the party members and compete inside the party.
2. Hold primary elections inside the party. Elect a winner.
3. Organize debates amongst proxy candidates.
4. Form a coalition of the various party leaders. Hold final elections elect a winner.
5. Show the world that people of Iran are ready to replace the government.
Externalizing the risk of political activism

The Islamic Republic is a tyranny. Political activism inside Iran is not safe. Many pundits. No political leaders. No organized entities. No plans, No candidates, No open competition for ideas.

Solution
Externalize the risk of political activism through an obfuscated proxy representative system abroad
The goal and the roadmap to change

Building coalitions around shared principles

Create a safe space for political dissent

Open and transparent competition for specific programs and initiatives, the means to unite groups under specific initiatives with shared interests among various groups.

Encourage activists to act as leaders and change agents

Assemble leaders who are prepared to take responsibility and lead the execution of popular initiatives

Present a group selected by the Iranian people representing freedom seeking people of Iran to world leaders as the Iranian "Choice" to replace the Islamic government in Iran on the sidelines of UNGA in September 2022 in New York. Make this voice heard all over the world. This group will call for renunciation of the entirety of the Islamic Republic in Iran.

The world should “recognize” an organized group of leaders chosen by Freedom Seeking Iranians as the opposition to and alternative for replacing terror sponsoring, tyrannical rule of the Islamic Republic in Iran with a Secular Democratic government following a transparent, free and fair process. Meet in New York in September 2022 to present this group to world leaders. Encourage them to “recognize” this group as the voice of Freedom for Iranian people.
Political Parties are formed

Three different charters with a single shared principle: gender equality and other shared principles.

- Big Government controls all production guarantees economic equality and quality for all under the law.
- Small government delivers national security, healthcare, education, independent Judiciary, armed Forces, and equality for all under the law.
- ?

Institute for Voices Of Liberty
Unity through competition

Unifying principle: Shared Principles

**A - Big Government**
Big Government controls all production, guarantees economic equality and equality for all under the law.

**B - Small government**
Small government delivers national security, healthcare, education, independent judiciary, independent armed Forces, and equality for all under the law.

**C - Small government**
Small government delivers national security, healthcare, education, independent judiciary, independent armed Forces, and equality for all under the law.

Parties compete on all other principles but unite in equality for all under the law.

Parties could lose up to 50% of the voters if they drop equality for all under the law.

What % of the population votes for equality for all under the law?

This is one way to galvanize a large % of the voting public around Shared principles.

Institute for Voices Of Liberty
What are free and fair elections?

Contestants

- Political parties publish their charters
- Train candidates
- Publicize their platform,
- Hold Intra-party elections
- All candidates operate under the same rules to gather support and compete for votes by party members.
- Parties subject themselves to public
- Debates and scrutiny by the public.

Who checks the veracity and feasibility of their claims?

Voters

Without Independent organizations who are not a part of power competition and an independent media, The potential for knowledge equality is next to nil. Uninformed voters will buy any claims by the contestants.

Independent entities will push up the voter’s knowledge to democratize the scale and bring checks and balances to the political arena.
Voters need to have knowledge about candidates and issues in public square

NGO’s (Independent entities that do not compete for power), and free and fair media elevate voter’s knowledge to balance the knowledge Disparity between Contestants and Voters

A free and fair political environment needs competent and experienced political candidates on the one side and informed public on the other side. Independent entities (like iVOL) help the public scrutinize the candidate’s claims. Free and Fair media spreads the word.

Measures of competence:
1) Education,
2) Experience,
3) track record.

Use a weighted index with track record carrying the highest weight.
Checks and balances

Independent NGOs (such as iVOL)
- Encourage the formation of political parties.
- Educate and assist in the formation and organizational process.
- Help: Qualify political parties
- Establish Standard Operating Processes.
- Develop parliamentary rules of conduct and debate.
- Organize public debates
- Question contestant’s capacity to deliver on their claims
- Does not itself participate in power competition.
- Does not favor one party or one candidate over others.
- Scrutinize the independence of media

Independent media
- Provides checks and balances on political parties
- Informs the public on candidate's political background and qualifications
- Scrutinizes the neutrality of independent entities
- Scrutinizes other independent media fairness and neutrality
- Maintains neutrality itself
- Provides public with specific unbiased assessments of all components of the political system
- Does not itself participate in power competition.
- Does not favor one party or one candidate over others.
- Scrutinize the neutrality of Independent entities
THE NECESSITY TO FORM THE “FREE IRAN COUNCIL”

Over the past 43 years, many groups and individuals have consistently and admirably fought the tyrannical regime in Iran. They have held the torch of hope and struggle high. History will remember the courageous souls who have been fighting the good fight with respect. now, is the time to take the lessons learned and the gains of this struggle into measurable results.

Freedom Seeking people of Iran wish to take the next concrete steps. First, they wish to form political parties advocate for and promote the voices of leaders inside and outside of Iran who compete for popular support through specific plans and programs. Next, while candidates compete against each other, they will unite and galvanize supporters of various plans and programs around “shared aspirations” such as equality of rights under the law regardless of gender, sexual preferences, religious beliefs, political beliefs, ethnicity or any other superficial, real or perceived differences.

Next, representatives of various political parties representing popular voices (who reject the entirety of Islamic Republic) form a “Free Iran Council” with popular support from Iranians inside and outside of Iran. The goal of the formation of a “Representative Council” is to provide the international community with the aspirations of freedom seeking people of Iran before the fall of the rogue regime in Iran. This Council will answer the question: “What happens after the Islamic Republic In Iran?” before the fall of the regime. Following the causality principle, this entity will ask leaders of the Free World to recognize it as a representative voice of the Iranian people who reject the entirety of this rogue regime.
Question: why now?

Should we not wait for the fall of the Islamic Republic and then form the founder’s parliament to prepare a draft of the new constitution for the public to vote on in a free and fair election?

A possible answer

Iran has had 4 founders parliaments. They were all formed in the industrial age. We are now in the information age. All affairs reserved to take place in the public square can now take place in the digital public square. The deadly covid virus has taught the world that most, if not all, private and public affairs that do not require physical contact can be conducted remotely. Even the United Nations has conducted its most sensitive meetings of the security council over the internet. There is no reason the same standard cannot be applied to the concept of the formation of new founder’s parliament, preparing the draft of a free Iran constitution and conducting a referendum digitally. Every Iranian citizen now carries a national card with a unique number. Conducting such a referendum digitally is not an insurmountable challenge.

A better question

Do the people of Iran need a founder's parliament to decide what is best for them in defining their inalienable rights? After 43 years of oppression, do they really need a group of greybeard “elders” to prescribe to them what “should” they want? They have said no to the Islamic Republic. Should we not consider going directly to the people with some 10 key questions and ask them not to answer with a “yes” or a “no” but indeed with a short description of their sentiment on the question?
The necessity to form the “Free Iran Council”

The absence of an answer to the question of “What happens after the Islamic Republic?” has clearly been an impediment to garnering the cooperation and support of western governments in general and the United States in particular for the freedom seeking people of Iran.

It is not the first time that opposition to tyrannical regimes are exploiting and leveraging the creation of an opposition council. Some, have realized measurable and relative success. An example of such relative success can be found in the coalition of opposing groups to the tyrannical rule of Bashar Assad in Syria. In 2012, 130 governments, including the European Union, recognized that coalition. Specifically, at the official gathering of the leaders of the Arab League, Syria’s chair was assigned to the coalition of the opposition to Bashar Assad’s rule.

While the formation of such “recognized” opposition did not lead to the fall of the Assad regime, due to many reasons, this organized political action placed significant pressure on Bashar Assad’s authoritarian rule and measurably eroded the legitimacy of his tyrannical rule.

It is not wishful thinking to capitalize on the experiences of other freedom-seeking people and learn from their, successes and failures that the true aspirations of Freedom Seeking people of Iran can be realized through this process. The world will be a better place when the tyrannical, inept, and institutionally corrupt regime of the Islamic republic is replaced with a new secular democratic government based on consent, participation, equality, and freedom. By the people, for the people of Iran.
1. Should all Iranians be equal under the law? (i.e., without distinction of any kind such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, political or other opinion, social origin or other status)?

2. Should Iran have an official religion, or should religion and state be separated?

3. Should the Iranian constitution guarantee the right to free and fair elections which represent the will of the people?

4. Should all Iranians be considered innocent until proven guilty under the law representing the will of the people through their elected representatives subject to free and fair trials?

5. Should all Iranians be guaranteed fundamental rights such as the rights of conscience and personal privacy; freedom of speech and the press necessary for the existence of a democratic government?

6. Should Iranians have the right to peaceably assemble for the redress of their grievances and other purposes without fear of government interference?

7. Should Iranians have the right to freely form and join political parties?

8. Should Iran have independent and co-equal branches of government (i.e., legislative, executive, and judiciary)?

9. Should Iran have an independent military to solely protect the territorial integrity of the country and the rights and freedoms of Iranian people and not in the service of protecting the government?

10. Should Iran's foreign policy be determined on peaceful relations with all nations based on Iran's national interests?
FORM OF GOVERNMENT?

The representative council will reflect the voices of freedom seeking people of Iran who have renounced and rejected the entirety of the institution of the Islamic Republic, its constitution, and its related entities, while maintaining the territorial integrity of Iran.

In a secular, democratic Iran, the content of government must be based on principles of consent, participation, equality, and freedom. The decision to choose the form of government belongs to the people of Iran and the people of Iran only.

Secular= I keep my religion. You keep yours. You are free to be free of religion if you so desire. No citizen, group, cult, or customs can impose their belief and way of life on others.

Democratic = the majority rules while protecting the rights of the minority.
The difference is in the content not the label

Founded on the principles of:

- Consent
- Participation
- Equality
- Liberty
- Justice

A republican or a constitutional monarchy form of government?
Our hands are extended in friendship to all like minded entities and we seek your support.