

Statement on the Imprisonment of Poet & Translator Ali Asadollahi
Monday, December 19, 2022

On September 16, 2022, Jina/Mahsa Amini, a 22-year old woman from Saqqez, Kurdistan, was beaten to death by police while in custody at Vozara Detention Center for wearing “inappropriate attire.” Her name and memory continue to echo around the globe as a revolutionary call for an end to the Iranian regime, and as a unifying force for working class Iranians who stand in solidarity against gender-based and sexual violence and discrimination against minoritized ethnicities (#JinJiyanAzadi, #WomanLifeFreedom).

Following Jina/Mahsa’s death—for 95 days now—the woman-led revolution in Iran has taken to the streets to fight against a violent patriarchal dictatorship that uses military force to execute and imprison people for exercising their right to the freedom of their own bodies and voices. Since the revolution began, guards have ruthlessly murdered protestors and bystanders whose names echo as Jina/Mahsa’s does. #NikaShakarami, #SarinaEsmailzadeh, #HadisNajafi, among so many others. The official reported civilian death toll has reached 496 (including 68 minors), but around 18,000 more are imprisoned and countless others have disappeared (1).

Since the murder of Jina/Mahsa, the regime has especially cracked down on the Indigenous Kurdish population, a historically oppressed ethnic minority in Iran. Heavily armed guards continue to open-fire on Kurdish protesters, targeting teenagers (2). Sistan Baluchistan—where weekly protests have become known as “Bloody Fridays”—has also been especially hard-hit by the government crackdown due to ongoing discrimination against Sunni Baloch citizens (3).

Activists and protesters on the ground, as well as students, journalists, writers, musicians, artists, doctors, and others fighting for justice are in immediate danger of imprisonment, torture, and execution.

Based on a list assembled by a group of Iranian writers and journalists, more than 240 writers, artists, and journalists have been detained, sentenced, and imprisoned during the ongoing protests in Iran. This list consists of the names of writers, journalists, artists, musicians, and filmmakers who were illegally persecuted, threatened, summoned for persecution, arrested, or tortured. The creators of the list demand the publicity of the names of these 240 prisoners to raise global public awareness about the profound depths of suppression exerted in Iran on a daily basis.

Ali Asadollahi, a 35-year-old poet is one of the writers on that list. His autotranslation, [The Labor's Look](#), was published in *Alchemy's* Winter/Spring 2022 issue. Asadollahi was arrested in his apartment in Tehran on November 21, 2022. He was imprisoned without cause by Islamic Republic guards and has been held in solitary confinement since his arrest; the prison authorities refuse to answer his family's inquiries about his status.

Alchemy is proud that Asadollahi's powerful words are a part of our publication. We call for his immediate release and stand in solidarity with him, his family, and the other writers and artists

who have been imprisoned without cause for bravely speaking out against authoritarian violence and oppression through their creative work.

Asadollahi is one of the most celebrated poets of his generation. His works are known as progressive not only for their experimentation with poetic form, but also for their in-depth political engagement. He was recently appointed as secretary of the Iranian Writers' Association—an organization committed to promoting freedom of speech that was officially banned in the 1980s by the Islamic regime. Asadollahi has published six poetry books and a collection of photographs, which are all made available to the public by the author through his [website](#) as an act of resistance against state censorship. Asadollahi has translated his poems into English in recent years and has published them in a number of other literary journals, including *Roanoke Review*, *Palaver*, and *The Persian Literature Review*.

[Click here to view this statement on the *Alchemy* website.](#)

Sources

(1) Death records and arrest records:

(Persian) <https://www.hra-news.org/periodical/a-129/>

(English) <https://www.en-hrana.org/a-comprehensive-report-of-the-first-82-days-of-nationwide-protests-in-iran/>

(2) Crackdowns in Kurdistan:

(English) <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2022/12/kurdistan-protestshengaws-report-number-11-regarding-the-deaths-of-122-and-injuries-of-more-than-8000-citizens>

https://twitter.com/hengaw_english/status/1601240424106332160?s=12&t=cW0FmWAQv5d9oYgXpQ8OKg

(English)

https://twitter.com/hengaw_english/status/1595392804787818498?s=12&t=cW0FmWAQv5d9oYgXpQ8OKg

(3) Crackdowns in Zahedan, Sistan-Baluchestan:

(Persian) <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1597500793258921985>

(English)

https://twitter.com/1500tasvir_en/status/1597538717794988032?s=12&t=cW0FmWAQv5d9oYgXpQ8OKg

(English/Persian) <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci8-nxzsuan/>