
NILOUFAR BAYANI

REPORT ON THE 2023 ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN - THE
NORWEGIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



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1. ABOUT BAYANI

Niloufar Bayani is an Iranian conservationist from who has dedicated her skills towards the preservation of the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah in her home country. Niloufar holds a bachelor's degree in biology from McGill University in Canada and a master's degree in conservation biology from Columbia University in the United States. After completing her education in 2012, she joined the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) as a project advisor.[1] Niloufar served as a project advisor for the UNEP until 2017, at which point she returned to Iran to assume the role of program manager for the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), a non-profit organization focused on studying and safeguarding the Asiatic Cheetah.

Niloufar Bayani and her colleagues were arrested by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and are still imprisoned. This report will discuss the political and legal background of her case, the advocacy-campaign we have done to help raise awareness of Bayani, and the results of said campaign.



Picture of Niloufar Bayani: found on [Danielhoops.com](https://danielhoops.com):

1.2 WHAT IS HER LATEST CIRCUMSTANCE?

Niloufar was temporarily released from prison on March 20, 2023, along with other conservationists.[2] However, she was returned to serve the remaining time of her sentence on March 26, 2023. At our advocacy seminar held in late March 2023, Dr. Karen Sudmeier-Rieux spoke about Niloufar's recent activities. Despite being in prison, Niloufar has remained active, participating in a book club and vegetable gardening with fellow inmates.

[1] UN Environment Programme, 'UN Environment Programme Statement on the Sentencing of Environmentalists in Iran', 29 November 2019.

[2] Scholars At Risk, 'We Are Delighted to Hear That Niloufar Bayani and Most of Her Colleagues Have Been Released on a 5-Day Furlough to Spend #Nowruz with Family. Twitter', 20 March 2023.

She has also developed a keen interest in climate change studies and decided to conduct a survey with other inmates to reflect on the impact of climate change in Iran. Additionally, she has been leading a study group on climate change, sharing her knowledge with other inmates. Our project team is touched by her strength, courage and optimism, and hope to see her release.

1.2 CASE INFORMATION AND TIMELINE

In January 2018, Niloufar Bayani and eight of her colleagues were arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps in Iran. The accusations were linked to their work aimed at protecting the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah through monitoring and conservation activities.[3]

In October 2018, Iranian authorities issued indictments for Ms. Bayani and three of her colleagues, accusing them of "sowing corruption on earth". The charges are based on allegations that the conservationists were seeking proximity to military sites under the guise of environmental projects and obtaining military information.[4]

In January 2019, Niloufar and her colleagues were part of a 300-page indictment in a closed trial. Niloufar objected that her forced confession had become the basis for the indictment and were made under physical and mental torture. After the first trial on 30 January 2019, Niloufar was absent from three out of the five court sessions and authorities provided no explanation for her absence.[5]

In November 2019, despite the absence of evidence supporting the allegations,[6] Niloufar was sentenced to ten years in prison for "contacts with the U.S. enemy state" and "gaining illegitimate income" and was ordered to repay all her paychecks from the UN.

[3] Kayleigh E. Long, 'Jailed Researchers Trying to Protect Threatened Cheetahs in Iran Await Verdict. National Geographic', 2019.

[4] Scholars At Risk Network, 'Niloufar Bayani's Case Information', accessed 20 February 2023.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Long, 'Jailed Researchers Trying to Protect Threatened Cheetahs in Iran Await Verdict. National Geographic'.

Letters written by Niloufar Bayani: Retracted her confession in the indictment

During her imprisonment, Niloufar managed to send letters when she was detained in Evin prison. On February 18, 2020, BBC Persian published those letters. She has alleged that she was subjected to severe mental and psychological torture, physical and sexual threats during 1,200 hours of interrogation by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (the IRGC) security agency.[7]

In another letter, written to the head of the IRGC's Ward 2-A in Evin Prison, she describes the agents' behaviour, which included exposing her to immoral and un-Islamic acts, making horrendous sexual insults and disgusting imaginary details, and carrying out sexual threats. She was further subjected to daily threats of execution, isolation in solitary confinement, blindfolded interrogations, insults, and humiliation.[8]

In one letter from January 24, 2019, addressed to then-Judiciary Chief Sadegh Larijani, she indicates that her confessions regarding espionage and other criminal activities were obtained through severe mental and psychological torture, and physical and sexual threats during the interrogation. She requested that the court disclose the audio and video recordings of her interrogations and medical reports to substantiate her claims of forced confessions and torture.[9]

Those letters provide further evidence of the alleged mistreatment that Niloufar and her colleagues faced, adding to concerns about the fairness of their trial and the potential for their convictions to be based on forced confessions obtained through torture. The content of the letters also highlights the violation of international human rights treaties, such as International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).



Picture of Niloufar Bayani: found on Genevaenvironmentnetwork.org

[7] BBC Persian and IranWire, '1200 Hours of Torture, Sexual Threats and Forced Confessions', 2 March 2020,

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Torture" and "Sexual Threats" Detailed in Letters by Jailed Former UN Environment Consultant', 20 February 2020,

2. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT IN IRAN

The protests in Iran in 2022 were a continuation of the political unrest that had been simmering in the country for several years. The protests in 2022 were mostly similar to previous demonstrations, which were triggered by grievances related to economic hardship, political repression, and frustration with the government's handling of various issues. Also, the Iranian authorities' response to these protests was also identical. It has been heavy-handed, including deploying security forces, arresting protesters, and using violence to disperse crowds.

2009 Protest: The Green Movement of Iran

The 2009 Green Movement in Iran was a series of protests and demonstrations that took place in Iran following the presidential election of that year. The movement was largely driven by supporters of Mir-Hossein Mousavi,[10] a reformist candidate who ran against incumbent president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The election results were widely disputed, with many Iranians believing that the election was rigged in favor of Ahmadinejad. This led to large-scale protests and demonstrations in the streets of major Iranian cities, including Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz. The protesters, who were often dressed in green to symbolize their support for Mousavi, called for an end to the government's crackdown on opposition voices, greater democracy, and more civil liberties.[11] The movement was largely peaceful, but clashes between protesters and security forces led to violence and the deaths of several people.[12]



[10] Hamid Dabashi, *The Green Movement in Iran* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2011).

[11] Hamid Dabashi, 'What Happened to the Green Movement in Iran?', 12 June 2013.

[12] Ian Black, 'Ahmadinejad Wins Surprise Iran Landslide Victory', *The Guardian*, 13 June 2009.

2017 Protest: The Largest Demonstrations Since the 2009 Movement

The Iran protests of 2017 were a series of widespread demonstrations that took place across Iran, starting in late December 2017 and continuing into early January 2018. The protests were initially sparked by economic grievances, with demonstrators calling for an end to corruption, high unemployment, and rising prices.[13] The protests quickly spread to other parts of the country and became more political in nature, with protesters also calling for greater political freedom, and chanting anti-government slogans against the country's foreign policy.[14]

2019-2020 protest: The Bloody November Protest of Iran

In 2019-2020, Iran witnessed widespread protests that were sparked by a range of grievances; including economic hardship, and frustration with the country's leaders. The protests began in November 2019 when the Iranian government announced a sudden increase in fuel prices, triggering outrage among citizens and leading to a wave of demonstrations throughout the country.[15]

2021 Protest: Widespread Demonstrations triggered by Economic Hardship and Dissatisfaction with Governance

In mid-2021, the water crisis that affected Khuzestan and other regions in Iran was a particular flashpoint for the protesters. Many protesters accused the government of mismanaging resources and neglecting the needs of its citizens, which exacerbated the water crisis and contributed to their grievances.[16]

2022 Protest: Triggered by Death of Mahsa Amini

Background: The protests in 2022 were sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, in a hospital in Tehran after she was detained by the "morality police" for allegedly wearing her headscarf incorrectly. The protests were ongoing for months and were unique compared to previous protests in Iran due to the protesters' demands, which had shifted from their previous economic grievances to demands for a political transition and the dismantling of the regime.[17]

How the government responded:

Iran responded to widespread protests with killings, beatings, surveillance, internet restrictions, and military operations, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands of detentions.[18] The government mobilized police, riot control teams, plainclothes officers, and paramilitary forces. It also closed universities and schools and severely restricted internet access.[19]

[13] 'Iran Protests: Why Is There Unrest?', BBC, 2 January 2018,

[14] 'Five Things You Need to Know about Protests in Iran', AlJazeera, 2 January 2018, .

[15] Mozorgmehr Najmeh, 'Iran Raises Petrol Prices by 50% as US Sanctions Bite', Financial Times, accessed 22 March 2023,

[16] Mohammad Khansari, 'Protests in Southwest Iran Due To Water Crisis', National Council of Resistance of Iran, n.d.

[17] Nikolay Kozhanov, 'The Economic Backdrop of Iran's Protests', MEI, 17 October 2022,

[18] United states institute peace, 'The Current Situation in Iran - A USIP Fact Sheet', 28 October 2022,

[19] Philip Loft, 'Iran Protests 2022: Human Rights and International Response' (House of Commons Library, 30 January 2023),

In the advocacy seminar we held in the end of March, one of our speakers, Dr Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam told us that since the start of the protest, approximately 440 protesters were shot on the street from mid of September to the end of December 2022.

The protests in Iran highlight the complex and intertwined nature of the grievances that citizens have with their government. The economic and political factors that fueled the demonstrations are closely related. The government's heavy-handed response to the protests also underscores the need for greater respect for human rights and political freedoms in the country. Ultimately, the protests demonstrate that citizens in Iran, like in many other parts of the world, are demanding greater transparency and accountability from their government.

2.1 WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN IRAN

One of the prominent features of the 2022 protests in Iran is the wide participation of women, who are demanding greater freedom and democratic participation.[20] This phenomenon has historical roots in the country's social and political landscape.

Since 1979, education has been encouraged for both men and women in Iran, and women have been able to pursue higher education. Since the 1990s, there has been a significant increase in Iranian women's participation in higher education.[21]

The percentage of females enrolled in higher education is 57% in 2020,[22] which increased by nearly 20 times, comparing with the figure in 1978. However, their opportunities for employment remain limited. According to the World Bank, the female labour force participation rate in Iran was around 16.7% in 2020,[23] while the male labour force participation rate was 68.1% in 2020.

This disparity has fueled dissatisfaction among young women and led to their call for greater rights and opportunities. The movement has sparked a broader debate about women's rights and freedoms in Iran and the role of religion in society such as protesting campaigns called "My Stealthy Freedom" in 2014[24] and "Girls of Revolution Street" in 2017.[25]

The protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death can also be seen as a continuation of the female movement in Iran as they represent another instance of women coming together to demand justice and equality in a society that has long marginalized and oppressed them.

[20] Farheen Nahvi, 'The Women's Movement in Iran', Observer Research Foundation, 14 October 2022.

[21] Effat Zahedifar, 'Women in Higher Education in Iran Student Perceptions of Career Prosperity in the Labour Market', UNIVERSITETET I OSLO, 2012.

[22] United states institute peace, 'The Current Situation in Iran - A USIP Fact Sheet'.

[23] 'Labor Force, Female (% of Total Labor Force)' (The World Bank, n.d.).

[24] 'Iran Unrest: Women Burn Headscarves at Anti-Hijab Protests', BBC News, accessed 23 March 2023.

[25] Mahsa Alimardani, 'The "Girls of Revolution Street" Protest Against Iran's Compulsory Hijab Laws', 1 February 2018.

2.2 THE POLITICAL CONTEXT IN RELATION TO BAYANI

An Inspiring story told by Niloufar Bayani

The protests in 2022 have brought renewed attention to the plight of political prisoners in Iran. Ms. Bayani's case is part of a larger pattern of political repression and human rights violations in Iran that has sparked wide-scale condemnation within the country. Being a victim of political repression and human rights violations in Iran, Niloufar's story is a reminder of the ongoing struggle for human rights and women's rights in the country. Niloufar's case also exemplifies the Iranian government's use of false charges, forced confessions, and torture to suppress political dissent and opposition.

Furthermore, Niloufar's education background and her contributions to Iranian society demonstrate how educated women can make a positive impact on their communities. Her story can inspire young women to pursue education and to use their knowledge and skills to effect change. The courage and outspokenness of young female protesters in the 2022 protests show that the new generation of Iranian women are willing to stand up for their rights and for democracy, despite the risks involved. Niloufar's story is a source of inspiration as it shows that even in the face of adversity, one can remain strong and committed to the cause of freedom and justice.

Niloufar Bayani's participation in the movement

Among other Iranian female political prisoners, Ms. Bayani signed an open letter that urged Iranian authorities to terminate protester executions. During the advocacy seminar we held, we learned about the significant increase in the number of executions since the beginning of the protests in Iran. The Iranian government is using the death penalty as a means to spread fear among the people and deter them from protesting on the streets, which explains the sudden jump in reported executions.[26] Dr. Moghaddam reminded us that behind the numbers and statistics, there are real people, and the reports of these executions represent a serious violation of human rights. Ms. Bayani's signature on the open letter is a powerful example of solidarity.

Niloufar Bayani also participated the Puppets show In Tehran's Evin Prison

Despite being in prison, Niloufar demonstrated her support and solidarity with the protest movement in Iran by participating in a puppetry play with other prisoners in Tehran's Evin Prison in November 2022. [27] The play was a one-time performance that highlighted the struggle of Iranian student activists and shed light on issues such as discrimination against women and ethnic minorities in the country. Through her involvement in the play, Niloufar contributed to the effort to raise awareness about the ongoing protest movement in Iran and the conditions faced by prisoners. As part of her involvement in the play, Niloufar taught others how to make the puppets used in the performance, which were made from flour paste and light dough. This act of teaching not only helped to create a sense of community and collaboration among other inmates but also showcased Niloufar's dedication to supporting and empowering others, even in difficult circumstances.

[26] Iran Human Rights, 'TOTAL EXECUTIONS 2023', n.d., accessed 1 April 2023.

[27] Rezaei Roghayeh, 'Puppets In Tehran's Evin Prison: Jailed Women Activists Turn Into Artists For One Night', 12 January 2023.

3. THE LEGAL SYSTEM IN IRAN

Background:

The Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) was founded in 1979 following the overthrow of Shah Pahlavi and the existing monarchy in an event known as the Islamic Revolution. The revolution resulted in the rise to power of an Islamic theocracy ruled by Shi'i clergy, and headed by the Supreme Leader who is "the sole source of political and religious authority for Iran." This structure of government is based upon the concept of wilayat al-faqih in Arabic which means, "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist" - that is, the principle in which some [undefined amount] of social, political, economic, and cultural affairs ought to be decided upon and overseen by "righteous Islamic Shi'i jurists." [28] At the time of the revolution, this was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini - a very prominent Shi'a scholar who had been exiled for his opposition to the Shah. He appealed to populists by preaching about the "evils of the Shah's regime" and its deviation from Islamic values and the interests of the Iranian people. [29]

The government that emerged was a unitary theocracy with a legal system based on both secular and Islamic law. Although greatly altered with the emergence of the republic, the Iranian constitution is one of the oldest constitutions still in force today. [30] The Iranian constitution was enacted in 1979 and later amended up until 1989. In its preamble, it states that the constitution:

"Sets forth the cultural, social, political, and economic institutions of Iranian society on the basis of Islamic principles and norms, which represent the earnest aspiration of the Islamic Ummah. This basic aspiration was made explicit by the very nature of the great Islamic Revolution of Iran, as well as the course of the Muslim people's struggle, from its beginning until victory, as reflected in the decisive and forceful slogans raised by all segments of the populations." [31]

Thus, the revolution sought to establish a country based on the principles of Islam and guide its people towards the ends that bring them closest to God.

[28] Kasra Aarabi, "What Is Velayat-e Faqih?" Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, March 20, 2019,

[29] Janet Afary, "Iranian Revolution: 1978-1979," Encyclopedia Britannica, last edited: March 13, 2

[30] Gordon B. Baldwin, "The Legal System in Iran," International Lawyer 7, no. 2 (1973): 495.

[31] Iran (Islamic Republic of)'s Constitution of 1979 with Amendments through 1989, The Constitute Project, (last edited April 27, 2022): 5.

3.1 THE LEGAL SYSTEM TODAY

The government is structured into three separate branches, the executive, legislative, and judicial, and all is presided over by the Supreme Leader, at the time of writing, this is the Ayatollah Khameni.[32] The Supreme Leader is appointed for life by the Assembly of Experts and must meet the following criteria: he must be a jurist with expert knowledge on the Qu'ran and Islamic law; he must be just, pitiful and courageous; and he must have a complex understanding of the social and political issues affecting the Iranian people of his time.[33] The rulings of the Supreme Leader are ordained by God and, as a result, challenging their legitimacy or acceptability is a direct affront to God and thus punishable under Iranian law.

The Executive Branch is headed by the President, a publicly elected official who may serve a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms. Following his election, he must then be appointed by the Supreme Leader in order to take his position. The President acts as the representative of Iran on the international stage, signs and enacts the laws passed upon by Parliament, and appoints the suggested foreign ambassadors. The ministers appointed by the president are to act in accordance with the will of the president but do have the right to issue administrative regulations and to implement laws on their own. Nevertheless, the president is ultimately responsible for their actions.[34]

Despite the heavy focus placed on their role as an Islamic country, the legal system is not solely based on Islamic law but also draws from civil law adapted from the French; family law, inheritance law, and heritage are typically rooted in Shari'a whereas civil, criminal and commercial law are largely based on secular civil law. The legislative branch has three subdivisions, the Majlis or Parliament, the Guardian Council, and the Expediency Council.[35]

The Majlis are elected by secret ballot and serve four-year terms, Iran does have universal suffrage for all citizens above the age of 18; this branch passes and interprets all laws and is responsible for investigating public affairs and approving international treaty adoption, agreements, loans, and aid. The Guardian Council is a 12 member council restricted to an equal number of religious scholars appointed by the Supreme Leader and jurists chosen by the Head of the Judiciary and elected by Parliament. It is important to note that the Head of the Judiciary is appointed by the Supreme Leader. Their responsibilities are to ensure that all drafts passed by Parliament are in accordance with Islamic Law, make judgements through interpreting the constitution, and supervise all elections and referenda. Thirdly, the Expediency Council contains either permanent or temporary members appointed by the Supreme Leader in order to resolve any conflicts that arise between the Parliament and the Guardian Council.[36]

[32] Mohammad Soltani and Nafise Shooshinasab, "An Overview of the Iranian Legal System," Hauser Global Law School Program, July/August 2022.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

The Judicial Branch is an independent body and is headed by the Head of Judiciary who is appointed by the Supreme Leader. The Iranian court system contains both general and specific courts; general courts have jurisdiction in all cases with the exception of those covered under the jurisdiction of specific courts; both are headed by jurists appointed by the Head of Judiciary. His responsibilities include handling grievances and violations of laws and rights, the promotion of justice, supervision of law enforcement, and to discover, prosecute, and punish criminals and take suitable steps towards future crime prevention.[37] There are many court systems in Iran with the highest court being the Supreme Court.

Although not directly linked to the branches of government, another important and unfortunately politicized body that contributes greatly to human rights violations in Iran is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Despite being a branch of the military, it came into existence in 1979 with the fall of the Shah and rise to power of Khomeini; it was intended to be the “ideological custodian” of the revolution and answered only to the Supreme Leader.[38] As of now, the IRGC’s ranks have come to roughly parallel those of the regular armed forces. Since their primary goal has been - and continues to be - to protect the State in accordance with the goals of the revolution, they operate considerably within Iran’s borders and regularly harass, arrest, detain and torture civilians. Since 2022 the IRGC has been “heavily involved in internal security and had significant influence in the political and economic spheres of Iranian society, as well as Iran’s foreign policy.”[39]

3.2 VIOLATIONS UNDER THE CONSTITUTION AND THE PENAL CODE

The Constitution itself in Article 2 states that the Islamic Republic is based on belief in the one true God and the perpetuation of goodness and rightness. One such way in which to attain this, is through educating the population and guaranteeing the security of access to “sciences and arts and the most advanced results of human experience”.[40] Article 3 highlights the methods in which these can be achieved and includes: “strengthening the spirit of inquiry, investigation, and innovation in all areas of science, technology, and culture, as well as Islamic studies, by establishing research centres and encouraging researchers.”[41] However, Iran is known for imprisoning scholars and academics who they believe to be in any way a threat to their regime. In the case of Niloufar Bayani and her team at the PWHF, they were conservationists who endeavored to preserve the natural beauty of Iran by protecting the last surviving Asiatic Cheetahs.

[37] Soltani and Shooshinasab, “An Overview of the Iranian Legal System.”

[38] CFR.org Editors, “Iran’s Revolutionary Guards,” Council on Foreign Relations, last updated May 6, 2019.

[39] “Iran,” CIA.org: The World Factbook, last updated March 29, 2023.

[40] Iranian Constitution, The Constitute Project, 10.

[41] Ibid.

The Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation was engaged in a conservation project for the Asiatic Cheetah, a highly endangered species whose remaining members live primarily in Iran. One particular mode of tracking animals is through using camera traps; “a digital camera connected to an infrared sensor which can “see” warm objects that are moving, like animals. When an animal moves past the sensor it causes the camera to fire, recording an image or video to the memory card for later retrieval. Camera traps can be left in the field to continuously watch an area of habitat for weeks or even months, recording the rarest events which occur in nature.”[42] These cameras are widely used by conservationists due to their ability to capture images and gather information that human beings simply aren’t capable of on their own.

In January of 2018, Bayani and her eight colleagues were arrested by Iranian authorities and detained and held indefinitely without receiving any reason for the detention - in direct violation of Article 32 of the Constitution:

“No one may be arrested except by the order and in accordance with the procedure laid down by law. In case of arrest, charges with the reasons for accusation must, without delay, be communicated and explained to the accused in writing, and a provisional dossier must be forwarded to the competent judicial authorities within a maximum of twenty-four hours so that the preliminaries to the trial can be completed as swiftly as possible. The violation of this article will be liable to punishment in accordance with the law.”[43]

Following their arrest, then-president Hassan Rouhani assembled a fact finding committee to investigate the conservationists’ activities. Three months later the Intelligence Ministry declared that there was no evidence to suggest that they had been engaging in any espionage or other illegal activities and thus ought to be released.[44] This request was never granted. During this first year of detention, Niloufar and her colleagues were forced to endure a variety of human rights violations. They were frequently denied access to legal counsel as well as contact with their families (both on the phone and in-person visits). Niloufar claims to have been held in solitary confinement for a period of nine months throughout which she endured torture and abuse by the guards and interrogators and was ultimately forced to confess to the crimes they chose under the threat of torture.[45]

In Iran, a confession that is lawfully obtained is considered sufficient evidence for charging someone for a particular crime and no further evidence is required.[46] However, a confession is also deemed inadmissible if it is not given freely. This is covered both by article 38 of the Constitution and Article 169 of the IPC which states that: “A confession which is taken under coercion, force, torture, or mental or physical abuses, shall not be given any validity and weight and the court is obliged to interrogate the accused again”.[47] Nevertheless, despite no evidence besides Niloufar’s “confession”, in October of 2018, four of the conservationists - Niloufar among them - were charged with the crime of “sowing corruption on Earth.”[48]

[42] “Camera Trapping for Conservation,” World Wildlife Foundation.

[43] Iranian Constitution, The Constitute Project, 15.

[44] Shahed Alavi, “IranWire Exclusive: Environmental Activists Tortured and Forced to Confess,” IranWire, August 23, 2019.

[45] Tatjana Rosen, “Any Hope for Nature: Summary of Events,” Any Hope for Nature, no date.

[46] Article 171, Iran: Islamic Penal Code (unofficial translation by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center), November 20, 1991.

[47] Article 169, Iran: Islamic Penal Code.

[48] Rosen, “Any Hope for Nature: Summary of Events.”

“Sowing Corruption on Earth” (efsād fe-l-arz) is considered a hadd crime under the Iranian penal system; that is, a fixed corporal punishment that has been enacted by God.[49] It is defined in Article 286 of the Iranian Penal Code (IPC) to include acts such as: the extensive commitment of a felony against the bodily entity of people, offenses against domestic or international security, spreading lies, and disrupting the public order of the state and causing insecurity.[50] Since hadd punishments are fixed, a judge is unable to override their scope once the sentence has been made; however, Article 218 states that if the accused claims that at the time of the offense they lacked the knowledge or intention to commit the offense and this claim is believable, or if they claim that their confession was extracted under threat, fear, or torture, then that claim is to be accepted by the judge.[51] The severity of hadd punishments requires considerable evidence under Iranian law and thus, lacking anything besides a forced confession extracted under torture, these charges were eventually dropped and changed to “contacts with the US enemy state” and “gaining illegitimate income”.

The initial proceedings took place during a closed door trial in which Niloufar repeatedly interrupted the proceedings to retract her confession, stating that she had been “forced to confess under immense physical and psychological pressure” and that “the body of [the] confession was false” and she had retracted it in subsequently interrogations. Following her insistence that her confession was the result of torture, she was barred from attending the remaining three sessions of her trial.[52] [53] With the dropping of the charge of sowing corruption on Earth, Niloufar no longer was at risk of receiving the death penalty, however she was sentenced to ten years in prison and is required to pay back all of the wages she earned working for the UNEP to the Iranian government.

In detention, Niloufar also claims to have endured considerable physical and psychological abuse and threats of sexual violence from her interrogators. Once again, under the Constitution, Article 39 states that “all affronts to the dignity and repute of persons arrested, detained, imprisoned, or banished in accordance with the law, whatever form they may take, are forbidden and liable to punishment.”[54] While Iran is not party to the International Convention Against Torture, both their constitution and the IPC prohibit the use of torture for extracting a confession or acquiring information.[55] Furthermore, they are party to the ICCPR which states in Article 7: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.”[56] Thus, Iran is obliged under international law and their own constitution and penal code, to accept the retraction and immediately release the conservationists and drop all charges against them.

Article 77 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates a dualist system of international treaty implementation.[57]

[49] Iran: Criminal procedures and documents, “Country Report,” Joint Report by: Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, December 2021.

[50] Article 286, Iran: Islamic Penal Code.

[51] Article 218, Iran: Islamic Penal Code.

[52] Rosen, “Any Hope for Nature: Summary of Events.”

[53] Center for Human Rights in Iran, ““Torture” and “Sexual Threats” Detailed in Letters by Jailed Former UN Environment Consultant, February 20, 2020.

[54] Iranian Constitution, The Constitute Project, 33.

[55] “Ratification of UN Treaties: Iran,” OHCHR: UN Treaty Body Database.

[56] United Nations, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 7.

[57] Seyed Ali Mousavi, “The Rule of law of the national and international levels,” agenda item 84 at the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, October 6, 2016.

4. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

The conviction of Ms Bayani for her environmental conservation work can be seen as a violation of international human rights laws and instruments. The internationally recognised right to a fair trial can be said to have been violated given the disregard to the overwhelming evidence that Ms Bayani was carrying out conservation work and not spying. Her arrest signifies the growing threats faced by human rights defenders across the world and justifies the numerous legal instruments being set up to protect environmental activists.

The internationally recognised right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. And the protection of those fighting for the preservation of the environment becomes important if we are to enjoy all rights.

The United Nations instruments violated by the arrest of Ms Bayani include:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Article 2.3

Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:

(a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;

(b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;

(c) To ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted.

The arrest and sentencing of Ms Bayani contradicts the principle of justice as it is clear the courts acted in such a way that denies justice and blocked her from getting a judicial remedy. The competence of the judicial authority is questionable given how evidence of her work as an environmental activist was ignored. A compliance to this ICCPR article is likely to result in the release of Ms Bayani.

Article 7

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The reports that Ms Bayani has been subjected to torture contradicts this article. It also goes against the principles of international law. The call for her release and protection from inhumane treatment while under custody is therefore relevant and important.

Article 9.1

Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. (...) All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person

The article states that prisoners should be treated well recognizing the inherent dignity of humans. There have been reports of maltreatment of Ms Bayani while in prison and this call for her release is convinced that she is being unfairly denied her liberty and freedom.

Article 17

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

The arrest of Ms Bayani constitutes such an attack on her reputation and her global recognised work as a scientist and environmental activists. The government of Iran ought to protect her reputation and protect her from attack which has seen her being imprisoned for practicing her research work.

Article 19

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

The research work which was being done by Ms Bayani is an explicit exercise of this right and hence did not have to be criminalised.

Article 21

The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Ms Bayani was within her rights to gather with other scientists to carry out research work. Her being part of a peaceful assembly should not warrant imprisonment or persecution from the Iranian government.

Article 25

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

The work of Ms Bayani was meant to promote public access to information on conservation and her contribution to the policies of environment protection.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The arrest clearly violates this fundamental human right as she was arrested for seeking knowledge which was of benefit to humanity. Her environmental work was important given the pressing concern of reducing global warming.

Article 20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

It seems that the Iranian government chose to punish her for her association with external environmental organizations and institutes. This is a clear violation of her freedom of association and her work should not have been criminalized.

The Geneva Roadmap (A/HRC/RES/40/11)

Article 3

Urges all States to take all measures necessary to ensure the rights, protection and safety of all persons, including environmental human rights defenders, who exercise, inter alia, the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association, online and offline, which are essential for the promotion and protection of human rights and the protection and conservation of the environment.

Ms Bayani's arrest contradicts the principles set out under this roadmap and further weakens attempts to solve the climate crisis.

Article 14 (b)

To adopt and implement strong and effective laws or policies ensuring, among other things, the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs and in cultural life, the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and equal access to justice, including to an effective remedy, in the field of the environment;

Ms Bayani's case was politicised and not taken as a case to research on the environment and enhance conservation efforts. The criminalization of her work contradicts the spirit of international cooperation in serving the planet from global warming.

Summary

There are many international legal frameworks, conventions and agreements that seek to protect conservationists like Ms Bayani. The legal instruments under international law support the innocence of Bayani and clearly show that her internationally recognized human rights have been violated by Iranian authorities. She was clearly within her human rights to undertake the research and the violation of her rights is by extension a violation of other people's human rights who stood to benefit from the information gathered from her research. It also undermines the efforts to serve the environment for future generations.

5. CURRENT MEASURES TO HELP BAYANI

The international community is continuing to call for the release of Niloufar Bayani and other environmental conservationists who have been detained in Iran since 2018. On February 13, 2023, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) renewed its plea for their release. The UNEP has highlighted the importance of protecting those who protect nature and how their detention negatively impacts the global environment.[58] A petition on Change.org is also circulating to raise awareness of their situation.[59]

Academics from McGill University have also joined the call for Ms. Bayani's release. They issued a statement on February 6, 2023, demanding her immediate release and that of all unjustly detained individuals in Iran.[60] Similarly, a letter from Nature published on April 13, 2022, called for more publicity about the charges and conditions of those involved in scientific activities, including conservationists and scholars, who have been jailed in Iran for alleged spying.[61]

In addition, former female cellmates of the imprisoned conservationists penned an open letter on June 7, 2022, calling for their release.[62] The letter, published by the Centre for Human Rights in Iran, highlights the critical importance of environmental preservation as a global issue and the role these conservationists played in protecting Iran's ecosystem. Most recently, Scholars at Risk issued a letter on March 15, 2023, urging the Iranian authorities to extend amnesty to remaining imprisoned scholars and students, including Ms. Bayani.[63] The letter calls on Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to release all scholars and students who have been unjustly detained. The ongoing efforts of the international community demonstrate the importance of protecting those who work to protect the environment and the need for global attention to human rights violations.

Lastly, our group has performed an advocacy campaign since the beginning of February until the end of April. The next section of the report will illustrate and explain our three main advocacy and awareness-raising measures: social media, petition-signing and the arrangement of our event.

[58] UN Environment Programme, 'UNEP Renews Plea for Release of Environmental Conservationist Niloufar Bayani', 13 February 2023,

[59] Karen Sudmeier Rieux, 'Call for Release of Niloufar Bayani and Environmental Conservationists Detained in Iran!', accessed 1 April 2023,

[60] Nikki Bozinoff et al., 'Five Years Later, McGill Alum Niloufar Bayani Remains Detained in Iran', 6 February 2023,

[61] Nature, 'Global Science Must Stand up for Iran's Imprisoned Scholars', 13 April 2022,

[62] Center for Human Rights in Iran, 'Open Letter by Former Cellmates of Imprisoned Conservationists in Iran', 7 June 2022,

[63] Scholars At Risk, 'Extend Amnesty to Remaining Imprisoned Scholars and Students', 15 March 2023,

6. THE ADVOCACY-CAMPAIGN

The objective of this section is to detail our advocacy activities undertaken to raise awareness of the unjust imprisonment of environmental activist Niloufar Bayani in Iran. This report outlines the strategies utilized to generate support for her release and the challenges faced during the project. It also identifies areas for improvement and concludes with expressions of gratitude.

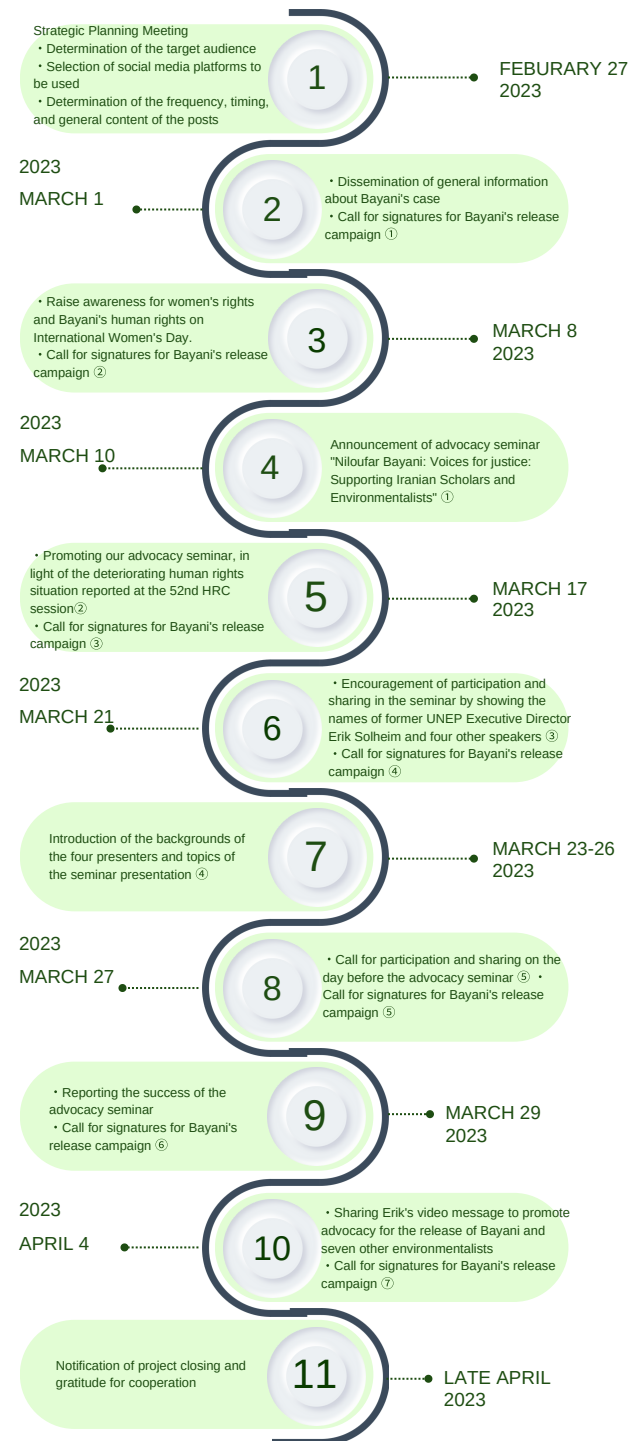
6.1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Strategies Utilized

The primary strategy employed in the advocacy project was social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. The aim was to generate support for Bayani's release by sharing information on her case, updates, and announcements of seminars. The project planned to feature letters, interviews, and video interviews from Bayani's friends and colleagues at McGill University in Canada, Columbia University in the USA, and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). However, it was challenging to find individuals who were willing to cooperate with the project among Bayani's ex-cohort at both universities.

TIMELINE

Advocacy Campaign for the Release of Bayani Using Social Media



Challenges Faced

Despite contacting eight people at two universities, only alumni from Columbia University responded. The responder stated that Columbia had given up calling for a statement for Bayani's release due to her parents' concerns about reprisals from the Iranian authorities. Bayani's friends and colleagues also chose not to cooperate with the project for her release. Consequently, the project had to abandon featuring letters, interviews, and video interviews from Bayani's friends on social media. The project also considered involving politicians but decided against it to avoid being co-opted for their political activities.

Successful Strategies

The project eventually collaborated with two individuals who were willing to support the project. One of them was Bayani's ex-colleague at UNEP, who was organizing a change.org petition for Bayani's release with her ex-colleagues. Our project joined forces with petition of the later collaborator and contributed to a net increase of 414 signatories in a month by posting the information on LinkedIn and Facebook seven times. Additionally, to strengthen the seminar, the collaborator introduced the project to Erik Solheim, a former Norwegian politician and Executive Director of UNEP, who is still involved in environmental conservation activities worldwide. Through social media promotion with the use of his name, the project generated buzz around the seminar, which drew participants in Oslo and supporters from around the world.

Outcomes

Despite facing some challenges, the project successfully utilized social media to raise awareness about the Bayani's case globally. As the section of SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH illustrates, the project's social media posts experienced a steady increase in likes and shares. The project earned 25 "going" and 75 "interested" on the special event page on Facebook as of the seminar's day^[64], which demonstrated the contribution of social media to the attention of many individuals to the advocacy seminar all over the world. Additionally, many people accessed and appreciated the project's postings after the seminar. Although the seminar was conducted at our university campus in-person only, the project confirmed that there is worldwide interest in the project.

Areas for Improvement

The project recommends utilizing TikTok and Twitter to target youth audiences, as they are more likely to use these platforms than Facebook and LinkedIn, and both digital platforms help spread information more promptly. To promote their advocacy campaign more efficiently, the project can also link Instagram to Facebook. However, since the Instagram account is administered by the Norwegian Centre of Human Rights, it took some time to link both platforms in a timely manner. To avoid this delay, the next project should send a draft of the post to them as early as possible.

Conclusion

The project successfully used social media to raise global awareness about Bayani's case despite challenges. We identified areas for improvement and recognized the significance of social media in advocacy campaigns. We are grateful to everyone who offered advice and support and to their team members for their valuable input in developing the platform.

[64] Refer to our Facebook event page (<https://fb.me/e/3rGQHx8xd>).

SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Page overview of top locations of unique viewers.
(All data is collected between March 1st and April 4th 2023)

Instagram

Impression 282	Account Reached 224	Like 73
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Facebook

post reach 2,784	post engagement 408	Reactions 188
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 Countries


NORWAY	52
LATVIA	33
INDIA	22
US	15
UK	4

 Cities

OSLO, NO	39
REZEKNE, LV	12
LUDZA, LV	9
RIGA, LV	4
COCHI, KOALDA IN	3

LinkedIn


Impression 6720	Reaction 155	Comment 6	Repost 35
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 Job Titles

PROFESSOR	72
FOUNDER	50
RESEARCH ASSISTANT	33
CO-FOUNDER	25

 Locations





OSLO, NO	351
TOKYO, JP	249
LONDON, UK	126
NEW YORK, US	60

 Industries

HIGH EDUCATION	254
RESEARCH SERVICES	242
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES	228
NPO	141

6.1.1 INSTAGRAM - "UIO_HUMR"

Here are some statistics from our Instagram-posts and how much attention they received. (All data is collected between March 1st and April 4th 2023) [65]

Post	Contents	Impression	Reached	Like
1 March 6	 The imprisonment of Niloufar Bayani and her colleagues is a breach of their academic freedom and human rights. We are therefore teaming up with Scholars at risk and Bayani's...	0	0	14
2 March 8	 On this International Women's day, we celebrate the achievements of women around the world and reflect on the progress we've made towards gender equality. However, we..	0	0	22
3 March 17	 Hey everyone! We're a team of passionate Human Rights master's students at UiO who are advocating for the release of Niloufar Bayani, a wildlife conservationist who was...	141	105	16
4 March 23	 Our advocacy seminar is now less than a week away, and we are excited to announce that Erik Solheim, renowned Norwegian diplomat and former Executive Director of the UN...	141	119	21

About our Last Instagram Post

There was also a fifth post which containing Erik Solheim's video. However, this was posted the 6th of April, after we stopped collecting data. This is because we do not administer the Instagram account, and the time of posting was not up to us to decide. Therefore, we do not have any statistics of this.









About Future Instagram Post

Furthermore, we have also made future Instagram posts for the autumn semester when our advocacy campaign is over. This is an attempt to keep the interest of Niloufar Bayani's case alive on Instagram while we are waiting for the new students to take over the spring semester of 2024. There will be four posts in total, one for World Environment Day June 5th, one for Wildlife Conservation Day December 4th, and two posts between the two dates. We want to express our gratitude to the workers on the Norwegian Center of Human Rights who are willing to post for us after the campaign is finished.

[65] Please note that Impressions and outreach data were not collected for the first two posts through the Instagram feature.

6.1.2 FACEBOOK - "FREE NILOUFAR BAYANI"

Here are some statistics from our Facebook-posts and how much attention they received. (All data is collected between March 1st and April 4th, 2023.) [66][67]









Post	Contents	Reach	Engagement
1 March 1	 Imagine dedicating your life to conserving your country's natural heritage and being accused of spying for it. That's the...	854	77
2 March 8	 On this International Women's Day, let's show our support for women like Ms. Niloufar Bayani, an Iranian wildlife...	1,129	116
3 March 10	 Join us for an eye-opening seminar on the challenges faced by environmentalists and academics in Iran, ...	49	31
4 March 17	 Don't miss our upcoming seminar focused on the challenges that environmentalists and academics in Iran are facing...	88	16
5 March 21	 We're excited to announce that Erik Solheim, a renowned Norwegian diplomat and former Executive Director of the...	211	15
6 March 27	 Please join us for an informative and inspiring seminar on the challenges faced by environmentalists in Iran tomorrow!	32	4
7 March 29	 We are excited to announce the successful conclusion of our seminar on "Voices for Justice: Supporting Iranian Scholars..	106	14
8 April 4	 Are you ready to take action to protect the human rights of environmentalists and safeguard the beauty of our planet?	240	44

[66] This data differs a little from our overview on page 20. This is because the data for the Facebook content was received a few days later due to some technical issues.

[67] Throughout the same period, the project regularly posted on four additional group pages on Facebook, resulting in a total of 32 reactions in addition to those on the project's main group page.

6.1.3 LINKEDIN (OUR PROJECT MEMBERS' PERSONAL ACCOUNTS)

Here are some statistics from our LinkedIn-posts and how much attention they received. (All data is collected between March 1st and April 4th, 2023.) [68]

Post	Contents	Impression	Reaction
1 March 1	 As part of my university project, I am working on the human rights challenges in Iran, specifically the issue of academic...	962	15
2 March 8	 On this International Women's Day, let's show our support for women like Ms. Niloufar Bayani, an Iranian wildlife...	1254	34
3 March 10	 Join us for an eye-opening seminar on the challenges faced by environmentalists and academics in Iran, ...	773	11
4 March 17	 The current human rights situation in Iran is a matter of great concern. Despite efforts by the Special Rapporteur.	919	29
5 March 21	 Our advocacy seminar is just a week away, and we're excited to announce that Erik Solheim, a renowned Norwegian...	977	25
6 March 27	 Join us for tomorrow's informative and inspiring seminar on the challenges faced by environmentalists in Iran!	456	6
7 March 29	 We are excited to announce the successful conclusion of our seminar on "Voices for Justice: Supporting Iranian Scholars..	813	13
8 April 4	 Are you ready to take action to protect the human rights of environmentalists and safeguard the beauty of our planet?	566	22

[68] During the same period, the project made six posts on a LinkedIn group page dedicated to human rights defenders, resulting in a total of 593 impressions.

6.2 THE PETITION

Petition Collaborated with Bayani’s ex-colleagues of UNEP
 (All data is collected between March 1st 2023 to April 4th 2023)

Petition page: "Call for release of Niloufar Bayani and environmental conservationists detained in Iran!"

PETITION-SIGNERS DURING OUR ADVOCACY-CAMPAIGN



Countries

FRANCE	205
CANADA	63
INDIA	28
NORWAY	16
IRAN	14
SWITZERLAND	14

Cities

PARIS, FA	14
MONTREAL, CA	9
TORONTO, CA	9
KOCHI, IN	8
SHERBROOKE, CA	8

PETITION-SIGNERS COMPARED TO OUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



6.3 THE EVENT - "VOICES FOR JUSTICE"

While social media is effective for spreading awareness worldwide, it was also important for our campaign to spread awareness 'on the ground'. In addition to the online community, we needed to reach other students at the university as these students will soon be professionals in many roles relevant for cases such as Bayani's. We believe that raising awareness within the university is just as important as raising awareness outside of it. To do so, we decided to do an in-person seminar about Bayani's case, primarily targeting students at the University of Oslo.

The objectives of the event were:

- 1.To create an impact on the people who attended the seminar.
- 2.To raise awareness of Bayani's case within the university.
- 3.To contribute to a positive impact on Bayani's case.



Picture of our project members Sunniva and Katryna

Speakers

We contacted multiple speakers that we believed would add value to the event based on our objectives. In the end, we ended up with five speakers, that can be categorised in three main categories.

1. Speakers that could share Bayani's story in an impactful way, to create a lasting impression of her case for attendees.

Tatjana 'Tanya' Rosen is a conservationist and former colleague of Bayani's, who was tasked with speaking about Bayani's case and their conservation work. Her talk was an emotional rendering of the weeks leading up to and following Bayani and her colleagues' arrests.

Dr. Karen Sudmeier-Rieux is also a former colleague of Bayani's and is currently the frontrunner for Bayani's release campaign and the creator of, amongst other initiatives, the petition for her release. As someone who is actively advocating for Bayani's release, Karen was able to give an insight into Bayani's current situation and the work that is being done for her release as well as providing a direct link to the opinions and thoughts of Bayani herself.

2. People who would speak on topics relevant to Bayani's case, but that would also be of interest to a wider audience.

Dr. Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam is a professor of medicine at UiO as well as a human rights activist and the founder of Iran Human Rights. He is also a political refugee from Iran, who came to Norway as a teenager. He was invited to speak about the political and human rights situation in Iran in order to provide context for Bayani's arrest. Additionally, the political situation in Iran is a very current topic due to last year's protests and is therefore could be of interest to students, especially those in Middle Eastern studies, women's rights, or politics, but do not already know Bayani's case.

Dr. David Rodriguez Goyes is a green criminology researcher at UiO. He was invited to speak on green criminology and the risks for conservationists such as Bayani when working within authoritarian regimes. This topic was both relevant to Bayani's case, but also made the event more interesting to students interested in the environment.

3. A name that would be recognisable to the general student population which could capture the interest of potential attendees.

Erik Solheim is a former diplomat and the executive director of UNEP when Bayani was arrested and was therefore already concerned by Bayani's case. He was very willing to contribute to our advocacy campaign but was unfortunately unable to physically attend the seminar as he was travelling. Instead, Solheim was able to send us a video that we were given permission to show in the seminar and edit to share on social media. His contribution was a good pull to the seminar, but also had the additional result of increasing the credibility of our campaign.



Picture of Dr. David Rodriguez Goyes speaking about animal rights during the event.

Promotion

We knew that gaining as many attendees to the event as possible was key to the success of our event, and promotion was therefore a big part of our preparation. The event was promoted through various channels, both online and in-person.

As detailed in the social media section of this report, our team used social media actively throughout the campaign. We used the same Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn channels that we had engaged for our advocacy work to promote the event, in order to utilise the interest we had already created to gain attendees. We also utilised our personal social media channels and networks to share the event with our friends and peers.

Additionally, as UiO students were our main target we targeted online channels they were likely to see. This included Facebook groups such as 'Events at UiO Blindern', a page where students can post events that are happening at the Blindern campus. Additionally, the team reached out to professors of various disciplines, including human rights, environment, and women's rights, who shared the event announcements to their students and colleagues through relevant Canvas pages and newsletters.

Finally, we created a digital poster for the information screens at both Domus Juridica and Blindern for students to see when walking on campus.

The Event

The programme for the event was as follows:

17:45 Doors open.

18:00 Welcome and facts about the case by Katryna, UiO.

18:10 Appeal by Erik Solheim, former executive director of UNEP (video).

18:15 Human Rights risks associated with wildlife conservation by Tanya Rosen (online).

18:30 Human Rights violations in Iran by Dr. Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam (UiO),

18:45 The intersection of environmental harm and criminal justice by Dr. David Goyes (UiO).

19:00 Bayani's current situation and campaigns for her release by Dr. Karen Sudmeier-Rieux (online).

19:15 Ending address by Katryna, UiO.

19:25 Call to sign the petition.

During the event, each person in the team had a role to ensure the event ran smoothly. Katryna served as the host of the event, giving the welcome address, introducing each speaker, and closing the event. Sunniva and Ken were responsible for IT and did both an IT rehearsal the evening before the event, as well as a tech rehearsal with the online speakers before the start of the event. Ken also welcomed guests together with Ragnhild to ensure all attendees were able to enter the building and knew which auditorium to enter. Together with Miyo, Ragnhild also bought snacks for the event and posted signs around campus to indicate the direction of the event. Additionally, they were both responsible for contact with the speakers. Finally, Miyo was responsible for taking pictures during the event to use for the report and campaign.



Picture of Tatjana Rosen speaking on Zoom

Outcomes

The seminar was overall successful, and the team was very satisfied with the event. This was partly due to each member being assigned a clear role with a set of responsibilities, which meant that the event ran very smoothly. Additionally, the event was overall successful in achieving its objectives.

A central objective of the event was to create an impact on the attendees and educate them about Bayani's case in a way that made them want to engage with the case. This was measured by feedback from attendees. From this feedback we deem that this objective was fulfilled, with all attendees describing the speakers as both giving a deep insight into the case and its context as well as having an emotional impact. This was also the impression of the team, as we left with both a better understanding of the case and a greater emotional investment in it. The event therefore succeeded in its first objective.

Additionally, the event succeeded in its third objective; to contribute to and positively impact Bayani's case. Karen, who is in direct contact with Bayani, was able to tell her about the event, which Bayani said was motivating to her, thus creating a direct positive impact on Bayani and her case. Additionally, by putting "sign the petition" as the main call to action at the end of the event, the petition gained signatures which had an impact on the work for Bayani's case outside of our project.

The final objective was to raise awareness of Bayani's case within the university, which we measured by the amount of people the seminar reached. Unfortunately, the biggest challenge of the event was reaching a large audience. As mentioned, this was a large concern for the team, and the reason for the extensive promotion campaign. In the end the event had 30 participants, of which five were members of the advocacy team and four were speakers. Thus, the event attracted 21 attendees, the majority of which were personally invited by the team. The second objective to raise awareness of Bayani's case within the university was therefore not fulfilled by the seminar alone.

However, through the promotional campaign, Bayani's case was visible throughout the university and its social media channels, and the promotion campaign alone therefore raised awareness for the case. As detailed in section 6.1, the promotion post on social media reached over 4 500 impressions and 225 reactions split over the three platforms. Additionally, 100 people engaged with the Facebook event page. This indicates that the awareness raising of the event reached beyond the seminar itself. It is therefore not possible to determine how much awareness was raised by the seminar through looking at the number of attendees alone, and the awareness raising efforts were therefore more successful than the number of attendees suggests.

Reflections

Organising the seminar, we faced many dilemmas and challenges. Most significant was the concern of privacy of everyone involved in the project and the safety of Bayani. We initially considered to livestream the event to be able to reach a greater number of people, but with these concerns in mind that we ultimately decided to only do an in-person seminar to have full control over who was able to see the event.

Similarly, we recorded the event for internal purposes, and received requests to share this recording. We again decided against this due to the privacy of attendees and out of fear that it would compromise Bayani's safety if the video was shared with her. The recording will therefore not be shared beyond the team and will be destroyed upon the completion of this project.

We were also concerned about attendance to the seminar. When deciding on doing a seminar the team knew that there was a likelihood of low attendance, regardless of the amount of promotion. We therefore considered other avenues of 'on the ground' promotion of Bayani's case. However, we ultimately decided that the depth of awareness that a seminar achieved would be unmatched by other types of campaigns that would reach more people. A seminar which reached fewer people but with more in-depth information also paired well with our social media campaign, which reached a larger amount of people but with more surface level information. The event was therefore deemed to be a valuable addition to our campaign.



Picture of Erik Solheim's video calling for Niloufar Bayani's immediate release.

7 SUMMARY CONCLUSION

After having researched Niloufar Bayani's specific case, the relevant political context, the legal system in Iran, and the international human rights law materials, we are positive that Niloufar Bayani is in need of immediate release from the Iranian prison. We have tried to advocate for her release, and help spread awareness of her unjust imprisonment and lack of academic freedom.

We want to thank all who have helped us during the spring semester of 2023. This includes fellow peers and professors from the University of Oslo, all the speakers during our event, people who have shared our social media content and signer of the petition. Niloufar Bayani has expressed her gratitude to our collaborator Dr. Karen Sudmeier-Rieux, and is very grateful for all the work being done to aid her situation. On that note, we want to share some of Bayani's own words:

"Hope"

Months have passed since I embarked on this research in the spring of 2022. I write these lines as I sit in the courtyard of our small ward in the unbearable lull of a long weekend. My spirit is weighted down by the silence and the polluted air. The sudden visit of a small blue butterfly in the prison yard distracts me from my dystopian thoughts. It has been a long time since I've last seen such colors, radiant blue with purple shades. Its beauty is doubled by the bland background of asphalt and bricks. It must be a rare species. Its presence has calmed down my anxiety. It reminds me that rare does not mean impossible. [...]my mind is pulled towards a possibility, a colorful surge of people from all corners of the world coming together and demanding a future in which the climate of our planet does not imperil our existence, or that of other species. I come to think that it is possible. As possible as the first encounter with a rare blue butterfly in a notorious prison.[69]

With Bayani's own words of courage and hope, we stress the importance of her immediate release. Together with Bayani, we hope for an improved legal system, where justice is presides over the head of the Iranian regime, and compliance with international human rights law at the heart of the system. Release Niloufar Bayani now!

Thank you for your attention,

Ken, Katryna, Tonderai, Miyo, Sunniva & Ragnhild

[69] excerpt from unpublished manuscript, "Climate literacy in the land of Oil - interviews with female political prisoners in Evin", Niloufar Bayani, March, 2023.

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