



DAY OF THE  
IMPRISONED  
WRITER

**pen**  
INTERNATIONAL

**DAY OF THE IMPRISONED WRITER  
15 NOVEMBER 2013**

**Islamic Republic of Iran  
Zahra Rahnavaard  
Author and Political Activist**



*"We have no strategy for including women in this country's destiny." Zahra Rahnavaard, 1990.*

**Zahra Rahnavaard, academic, writer and politician, has been held under unofficial house arrest in Tehran since February 2011 for her and her husband's political activism. PEN International is calling for her immediate and unconditional release, in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political**

**Rights, to which Iran is a signatory.**

Dr Rahnavaard is a leading Iranian academic, writer, artist and politician. She served as the Chancellor of Alzahra University from 1998. 2006, becoming the first female chancellor of a university since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. During this time she also served as political advisor to President Khatami. She is a member of the reformist opposition group, the Green Path of Hope headed by her husband, Mir-Hossein Mousavi. Dr Rahnavaard is also the author of 15 books.

Born in 1945, and a mother of three daughters, Zahra Rahnavaard is a committed women's rights activist. She broke convention by campaigning on her husband Mir-Hossein Mousavi's 2009 presidential campaign, becoming the first woman to do so in Iran. Her mantra on the campaign trail - that getting rid of discrimination and demanding equal rights with men is the number one priority for women in Tehran - is credited with galvanising young women to vote. She is also a devout Muslim and [vocal supporter](#) of the hijab, arguing that it liberates women, though she has said it should be a woman's choice to wear it.

Zahra Rahnavaard and opposition leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, have been held under house arrest since February of 2011 after they called for popular demonstrations in support of the people of Tunisia and Egypt. There have not been any official legal proceedings against them. Both men had alleged vote fraud in the [disputed 2009 presidential election](#) which was followed by a widespread crackdown on protests against the result. In the wake of the protests, and Karroubi and Mousavi's criticism both of the election and of alleged human rights violations by state agents, the authorities tightly monitored and controlled their and their wives' movements, and suspended the presidential candidates' newspapers *Etemad-e Melli* and *Kalame-ye Sabz*.

PEN International has long been concerned at the situation of freedom of expression in Iran and currently is aware of over 20 other writers, journalists and bloggers detained solely on account of

their peaceful expression of their opinions or advocacy of others' rights. However, since the election of President Hassan Rouhani and the establishment of the new administration in June 2013, some [welcome steps](#) have been taken to address the dire situation for freedom of expression in Iran, leading to much speculation over whether Rahnavard, Mousavi and Karroubi will finally be released.

**Please send appeals:**

- Welcoming the initial steps taken by President Rouhani's government to address the appalling state of freedom of expression in the country;
- Urging that further measures be taken to fully enshrine the right to freedom of expression in law and practice in Iran as provided for under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is a state party;
- Calling on the Iranian authorities, as a first step, to demonstrate their commitment to reform by releasing Zahra Rahnavard and all other writers currently imprisoned in Iran solely for exercising their right to legitimate freedom of expression.

**Send appeals to:**

**Leader of the Islamic Republic**

Ayatollah Sayed ~~al~~Ali  
Khamenei  
The Office of the Supreme  
Leader  
Islamic Republic Street .  
End of Shahid Keshvar  
Doust Street,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic  
of Iran  
Salutation: Your  
Excellency  
Email:  
info\_leader@leader.ir  
Twitter: @khamenei\_ir

**President**

Hassan Rouhani  
Office of the Presidency  
Pasteur Square,  
Pasteur Street,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic  
of Iran  
Salutation: Your  
Excellency  
Twitter: @HassanRouhani

And copies to:

**Secretary General, High Council for Human Rights**

Mohammed Javad Larijani  
c/o Office of the Head of  
the Judiciary  
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave  
South of Serah-e  
Jomhuri, Tehran,  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Email: larijani@ipm.ir  
(Subject line: FAO  
Mohammad Javad  
Larijani)

It is recommended that you send a copy of your appeals via the diplomatic representative for Iran in your country.

**PUBLICITY**

PEN members are encouraged to:

- Publish articles and opinion pieces in your national or local press highlighting the situation in Iran.
- Organise public events, stage readings, press conferences or demonstrations.
- Share information about Iran and your campaigning activities for Zahra Rahnavard via social media

Remember to let us know about your activities and to send us reports about them so that we can share them with other centres.

*For further information please contact Cathy McCann at International PEN Writers in Prison Committee, Brownlow House, 50/51 High Holborn, London WC1V 6ER, Tel. + 44 (0) 20 7405 0338, Fax: +44 (0) 20 7405 0339, email: [cathy.mccann@pen-international.org](mailto:cathy.mccann@pen-international.org)*