

We, members of the faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the October 2, 2022 assault on Sharif University of Technology in Tehran by the security forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which injured both students and faculty and led to numerous arrests, including detentions in places unknown to the families of the detained.

As private individuals, we heard with horror last month of the murder of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini, in retaliation for walking on the street with her brother with what someone in authority deemed a misplaced scarf. Over the ensuing weeks we watched with growing concern as peaceful protestors, in large and small cities alike, in all regions of the country, were attacked by both uniformed officers and semi-official bands of thugs, resulting in countless injuries, unknown numbers of detentions, and at least many dozens of deaths. No peaceful protestors, anywhere, should ever be subjected to such treatment – let alone repeatedly, over weeks, with steadily escalating violence.

Today, as teachers and scholars, we are compelled to speak out in support of our colleagues, not only at Sharif but also in several other universities, whose similar suffering has been less publicized. Our concern goes well beyond “academic freedom.” This is a matter of *human* freedom; of basic human rights.

It is also, unfortunately, part of a broader pattern of attacks on Iranian universities, going back at least to the July 1999 (18th of Tir) armed assault on Tehran University, in which one student was killed and many others injured and detained. (That outrage also provoked national demonstrations that were put down with force.) And it is only the most violent expression of an insidious, decades-long campaign to purge Iran’s universities of independent thought and expression, greatly degrading both the quality of instruction and the opportunities for student learning and intellectual growth.

Today, once again, we see the very integrity of the university, as an intellectual and physical space of learning, under violent assault across Iran. We call on our colleagues across the globe to join us (and many other faculties in many other countries) in speaking out both in support of our Iranian colleagues and against those attacking them – and to call on their own governments to do whatever they can to help put an end to these atrocities.

Women, Life, Freedom

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