
Azar Karimi, “they are fighting against the regime with only their bare hands and they will not stop. We must help them”



The pictures and videos are precious: people risked their lives to film them. The images are dramatic, hard to see. They capture youths fighting in the streets, executed teenagers, weeping mothers. Yet they must be disseminated because "the world must know what is happening in Iran, and it is our duty to spread this information." Iranian resistance is present also in Italy. Women and young people - the offspring of Iranian immigrants with strong ties to their homeland - are the leading protesters in Italy. Azar Karimi is one of them. She is a member of the Association of Young Iranians in Italy. We contacted her as horrifying news had just come in from Iran: after the hanging of Mohsen Shekari on December 8 and of Majidreza Rahnavaard, on December 12 the Court sentenced to death 11 more young people who had taken to the streets to protest in the wake of Mahsa Amini's death. These numbers are lower than the real figure, estimated by activists to be at least twice as high. It's the ayatollahs' ruthless war against the Iranian people, employing "scorched-earth" tactics against the protest. "Most of the people who were sentenced to death - Azar explained - are members of the nationwide resistance groups that coordinate the protests. Two young men were executed within a few days and sadly more will follow. They know exactly what they are up against, but they are also aware that they form part of a revolution that has been ongoing for over 85 days, and they will not stop." **How are you coping with the news arriving from Iran?** What happened the other day is heartbreaking. We woke up to this horrible news. The last young man that was executed was subjected to a sham trial, with no defence and no due respect for his rights. A court sentenced him to death, executed and secretly buried him without even informing his mother. The people of Iran are perfectly aware of what they are up against when they take to the streets to protest. But the people are determined not to back down, to continue with the protests until the Iranian regime is overthrown. **Do you have any direct contacts with the members of the resistance?** We don't have direct

contacts with them. They send us information. Unfortunately Internet access is restricted. But through our channels we do manage to receive images, videos, photos and reports. External communication can be very dangerous for them. Even filming, disseminating footage or even small evidence of what is actually taking place, exposes them to a very high risk. **So how do they communicate with the outside world?** They succeed through encrypted channels. Whatever small amount of information we receive is nonetheless a lot for us. But this is no simple matter because communicating with the outside world is precisely what the regime wants to avoid at all costs. **Can you tell us something about the material you receive?** The pictures and videos speak for themselves. They are heartbreaking, as is the video of the first young man who was executed. His mother can be seen crying out in excruciating grief. The footage is so tragically overwhelming that I had to stop watching before it was over. Those who did succeed said it was extremely painful to watch. We are proud of these people. We consider it the Iranian people's revolution. If they manage to win, it will be a victory that has cost them their blood and their lives. With each passing hour, each passing second, I am increasingly terrified of receiving pictures and news of further executions, convictions, arrests. **How many so far?** We know that the death toll, the number of people arrested and killed, is very high, but the data we have does not correspond to the actual number, which is definitely higher. According to our sources 700 people were killed and 30,000 were arrested. But again, the real number is higher. And it includes children, minors, young people, men and women. There are no limits." **So your main preoccupation concerns what is happening in prisons?** Yes. We will be meeting with Amnesty International in the next few days to see if we can find a way to stop these executions together. The Iranian regime will continue unabated. They use these capital punishments to frighten the population. Two people were put to death in the space of a few days. Our goal is to stop the executions and keep the spotlight on the Iranian revolution. **Is the general public in Italy following you?** Luckily this time there is a high level of attention. We want to be the voice of the Iranian people here in Italy. **What would you like to say?** I want people to know that we are all one big family. Iran may seem a distant country but it is not. Young people, men and women in Iran who are protesting against the regime are asking for our support and for the intervention of the international community. These people are defending themselves with only their bare hands against an inhuman regime that has no mercy for anyone. They are fighting for their lives. Italian history is there to remind us that many years ago people fought for the ideals in which they strongly believed. That is exactly what the Iranian people are doing today. We hope to see them emerge victorious as soon as possible."

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