

OPEN LETTER

Michael Froman
President, Council on Foreign Relations
58 East 68th Street
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URGENT - 18 September 2023

Dear Mr. Froman,

It has come to our attention that the Council on Foreign Relations has extended an invitation to the President of Iran's regime, Ebrahim Raisi, to attend an event at your offices despite his sinister role in the 1988 massacre of political prisoners.

According to human rights groups, on Ayatollah Khomeini's orders, as many as 30,000 political prisoners were executed in the 1988 massacre for refusing to renounce their beliefs. At the time, Raisi was Deputy Prosecutor of Tehran and sat on the Tehran Death Commission that sent thousands of steadfast political prisoners to their death. According to Amnesty International¹, "Across the country, the victims were primarily supporters of the PMOI" opposition group.

In 2019, as Judiciary Chief, Raisi presided over a brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters who dared to cry out for democracy and freedom. As President, he oversaw the murder of at least 750 protesters and the arrest of some 30,000 others during the September 2022 nationwide uprising led by brave young women. Those protesters have made clear that they reject any form of dictatorship, be it the monarchy or theocratic rule. Authorities in Iran are now executing those defiant protesters.

Amnesty International has publicly called² for Raisi to be investigated for his involvement in past and ongoing crimes against humanity, including by states that exercise universal jurisdiction. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Iran has equally called³ for an international investigation into Raisi's role in the 1988 massacre.

While we appreciate the CFR has a forum for promoting international dialogue, there can be no justification for inviting a perpetrator of crimes against humanity to speak at your panel. By lending your platform to Raisi, who should be prosecuted for crimes under international law, you will only fuel the culture of impunity that exists in Iran.

As international human rights and legal experts and organisations, and as individuals of conscience, we implore the CFR to immediately cancel its event with Raisi.

Sincerely,

¹ Amnesty International, "Blood-soaked secrets: Why Iran's 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity", <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/9421/2018/en/>

² Amnesty International, 19 June 2021, "Ebrahim Raisi must be investigated for crimes against humanity", <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/iran-ebrahim-raisi-must-be-investigated-for-crimes-against-humanity/>

³ Reuters, 29 June 2021, "U.N. expert backs probe into Iran's 1988 killings, Raisi's role", <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/exclusive-un-expert-backs-probe-into-irans-1988-killings-raisis-role-2021-06-29/>

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2004 Nobel Laureate in Literature

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1993 Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine

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1979 Nobel Laureate in Physics

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Lawyer and former advisor to Chilean President Salvador Allende; Winner of the 1999 Right Livelihood Award (Sweden); Director of "Garcés y Prada Abogados", Madrid; President of the Spanish Foundation "President Allende"

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European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) - (Germany)

Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights - (Canada)

CIVICUS - (South Africa)

Center for Civil Liberties (CCL) - (Ukraine)

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Gerard Noodt Foundation for Freedom of Religion or Belief - (The Netherlands)

West African Human Rights Defenders Network / Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (WAHRDN/ROADDH) - (Togo)

Budapest Centre for Dialogue and Mass Atrocities Prevention - (Hungary)

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Greater Caribbean for Life - (Puerto Rico)

NGO Little People of Kosova - (Kosovo)

Mille étoiles pour la Liberté - (France)

Asociația Necuvinte (Necuvinte Association) - (Romania)

Association des Femmes Iraniennes en France (AFIF) - (France)

World Without Genocide - (United States)

Hands Off Cain - (Italy)

Simon Wiesenthal Center - (United States)

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