

URGENT – OPEN LETTER

H.E. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

29 May 2024

Dear Secretary-General,

As current and former United Nations Ambassadors, experts, and officials, we are deeply alarmed by the General Assembly's planned tribute on 30 May 2024 to the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash on 19 May 2024.

Over four decades, Raisi participated in or oversaw grave human rights violations, including the enforced disappearance and extrajudicial execution of thousands of political prisoners in the 1980s. He was a key member of the 'Death Commissions' responsible for the 1988 massacre of as many as 30,000 political prisoners, earning him the nickname 'Butcher of Tehran'. In recent years, as Judiciary Chief and later President, he directed deadly crackdowns on anti-government protesters, with 1,500 and 700 killed during the 2019 and 2022 uprisings respectively. He oversaw the violent persecution of women and girls defying compulsory veiling.

UN Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur on Iran, have called for an international inquiry into the 1988 enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions, which have been described as 'ongoing crimes against humanity'.

Raisi should have faced criminal investigation for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance, and torture, according to human rights groups. His death does not absolve the international community of its responsibility to seek truth and accountability for his victims.

Holding a tribute for a figure implicated in mass atrocities would severely undermine the UN's human rights principles and perpetuate the culture of impunity in Iran.

We urge you to intervene and cancel the planned tribute. Instead, use this moment to speak out in support of the victims and reiterate the UN's commitment to accountability and justice. The international community must act now to establish pathways to accountability for crimes under international law committed by Raisi and other Iranian officials.

Sincerely,

CC:

- H.E. Dennis Francis, President of the General Assembly

SIGNED:

Dr. Ganna Yudkivska - (Ukraine)

Vice-Chair/Member of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (2022-present)
Former Judge, European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

Miriam Ekiudoko - (Hungary)

Member of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (2021-present)

Prof. Wolfgang Schomburg - (Germany)

Judge, UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) (2001-2008)
Former Judge, UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)
Judge, Federal Supreme Court of Germany (1995–2000)

Geoffrey Robertson AO KC - (Australia)

First President, UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)
‘Distinguished jurist’ on the UN Internal Justice Council (2008-2012)
Founder and Head, Doughty Street Chambers

Prof. William A. Schabas - (Canada)

Chair of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict (2014-2015)
President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (2009-2011)

Hon. Richard J. Goldstone - (South Africa)

Former Chief Prosecutor of the UN International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda
Chair of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (2009-2010)
Former Judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa

Amb. Joachim Rucker - (Germany)

President of the UN Human Rights Council (2015)
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN in Geneva (2014-2016)
Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (2006-2008)

Dr. Solomon Passy - (Bulgaria)

President of the UN Security Council (2002 and 2003)
Former Chairman-in-Office, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
Former Foreign Minister of Bulgaria

Prof. Jan Pronk - (The Netherlands)

Former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan (2004-2006)
Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations (1985-1986)
Deputy Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (1980-1985)

Amb. Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata - (Italy)

Italian Senator

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN in New York (2008-2009)

Amb. Amanda Ellis - (New Zealand)

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the UN in Geneva (2013-2016)

Amb. Keith M. Harper - (United States)

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the US to the UN Human Rights Council (2014-2017)

Amb. Zorica Marić-Djordjević - (Montenegro)

Ambassador of Montenegro to the UN Human Rights Council and WTO (2013-2018)

Amb. Filloreta Kodra - (Albania)

Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Albania to the UN in Geneva

Amb. Juan Esteban Aguirre Martinez - (Paraguay)

Foreign Minister of Paraguay (2000-2001)

Former Ambassador of Paraguay to the United Nations Office in Geneva

Vice President of the UN Human Rights Council (2015)

Amb. Ken Blackwell - (United States)

Former US Ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights

Alda M. Facio - (Costa Rica)

Chair-Rapporteur and Member of the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (2014-2020)

Tahar Boumedra - (United Kingdom)

Director, Justice for the Victims of the 1988 Massacre in Iran (JVMI)

Former Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office and Representative of the HCHR in Iraq

Prof. Robert K. Goldman - (United States)

UN Independent Expert on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism (2004-2005)

President, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

Former President and member, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

Dr. Mark Ellis - (United Kingdom)

Executive Director, International Bar Association (IBA)

Former Chair of the UN Advisory Panel on Matters Relating to Defence Counsel of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals

Prof. Sir Geoffrey Nice KC - (United Kingdom)

Lead prosecutor at the trial of Slobodan Milošević in The Hague; prosecuted the case of Bosnian Croat Dario Kordić at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), successfully prosecuted Goran Jelisić at the ICTY

Prof. Jean Ziegler - (Switzerland)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (2000-2008); Former Vice-President of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

Prof. Annalisa Ciampi - (Italy)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association (2017)
Ad hoc Judge, European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

Gabriela Knaul - (Brazil)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (2009-2015)

Dainius Pūras - (Lithuania)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health (2014-2020)
Chairman of the Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council (2018-2019)
Director of the Human Rights Monitoring Institute / VŠĮ Žmogaus Teisių Stebėjimo Institutas

Prof. Gabor Rona - (United States)

Chair-Rapporteur/Member of the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries (2011-2019)
Chief ad interim, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Protection of Civilians Section (2010)

Prof. Michael Lynk - (Canada)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories (2016-2022)

Anand Grover - (India)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health (2008-2014)

Maud De Boer-Buquicchio - (The Netherlands)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children (2014-2020)
Former Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Prof. Gerard Quinn - (Ireland)

UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020-2023)

Dr. Jelena Aparac - (Croatia)

Chair-Rapporteur/Member of the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries (2018-2023)

Prof. Dante Pesce - (Chile)

Chair/Member of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (2015-2021)

Prof. Sir Mark Vlasic KCHS KCEM - (United States)

Former prosecutor/legal officer on the Srebrenica genocide (Krstic) trial and the Slobodan Milošević trial at the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague (ICTY)

Hiljmnijeta Apuk - (Kosovo)

Winner, United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights for 2013

Director, Little People of Kosova

Member, Ad Hoc Committee of the UN General Assembly on drafting of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Dr. Maude Barlow - (Canada)

Former Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the UN General Assembly

Former Chairperson of the Council of Canadians

Marek Antoni Nowicki - (Poland)

Former President of the UN Human Rights Advisory Panel in Kosovo

UN-appointed International Ombudsperson in Kosovo (2000-2005)

Member of the European Commission of Human Rights (1993-1999)

Prof. Giovanni Grasso - (Italy)

Former International Judge of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Former Judge of the Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sonja Biserko - (Serbia)

Member, UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK (2013-2014); President, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia

Clair Duffy - (Australia)

Former Prosecution Appeals Counsel, UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

Prof. Rebecca Cook - (Canada)

Professor Emerita, Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto

Gabrielle Louise McIntyre - (Australia/Cyprus)

International Consultant, Lex Collective

Former Chef de Cabinet and Principal Legal Advisor to the President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT)

Charles A. Adeogun-Phillips - (United Kingdom & Nigeria)

Barrister, Guernica 37 International Justice Chambers

Former Lead Prosecutor, UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

Prof. John Packer - (Canada)

Former UN Staff Member, Member of the UN's Standby Team of Mediation Experts (2012-2014)

Director of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC), University of Ottawa

Dr. Charli Carpenter - (United States)

Director of Human Security Lab and Professor of Political Science and Legal Studies, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Former UN consultant

Prof. Pearl Eliadis - (Canada)

OHCHR Senior Consultant, National Unity and Reconciliation Commission of Rwanda (2001)

Associate Professor (Professional), McGill University