

The Iran Transition Council

The Way Forward

A new alliance of well-known Iranians representing the most renowned opposition leaders and representatives of many ethnic groups in Iran launched “an alternative to the Islamic regime.” The Iran Transition Council (ITC) launched its new political movement in September 2019. As Iranian democrats representing all walks of Iranian life, ethnicity, and religion, challenging Iran’s current system of government, the ITC offers an alternative to the regime. ITC’s founders decided to create the Council as Iranian civil, political, and business leaders knowing some would ask why it is necessary and why now. The events in Iran in the past years and the predicament that millions of Iranians find themselves in as a result of their government’s actions, and inaction, beg a different question: Why did it take this long to create the Iran Transition Council?

The ITC consists of many political leaders and chief among them is an executive committee. After 2018’s widespread protest movement in Iran, ITC’s founders representing nearly everyone in Iranian civil society decided to join forces to help Iran transition to a democratic nation once the current government loses power, a scenario that has become more likely based on the fact that Iran’s public is fed up with the current political system in the country.

Recent history in the Middle East and Africa (MENA) Region makes the case stronger yet for the need of the ITC in Iran. The experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq in the past twenty years; Iran’s own Green Movement a decade ago; the Arab Spring and the examples of Tunisia and Egypt, and the civil wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen demonstrate that the ITC is vital to shepherd a realistic path to freedom in Iran.

Indeed, in the absence of leadership and a coordinating body that can direct and ensure a peaceful transition of power in Iran, the risk of violence and civil war is high. Without leadership, possessing large constituencies inside Iran and in the Diaspora, which can manage the march to democracy through peaceful means including all layers of society, beliefs and ideas, the chance of chaos and anarchy is real. The ITC was formed to provide that leadership and coordination.

The ITC seeks freedom, democracy, social justice, prosperity and security in Iran and for Iran by the empowerment, expansion, and solidarity of social, civil and non-violent movements in the country. The ITC calls for a transition in Iran from a The Islamic Republic to a democratic, secular government based on the “Universal Declarations of Human Rights,” the preservation of Iran’s territorial integrity and the country’s unity. The ITC believes that all decisions about the political structure of the future system of government in Iran shall be left to a post-Islamic Republic “Constituent Assembly,” as the embodiment of the free will of the people of Iran. The ITC is also crucial to the United States and the international community. The US, Europe, the MENA Region and the broader community of nations cannot leave

Iran's future to chance. A path to higher death and destruction experienced by Iranian society for four long decades under the current regime is not an option. What are the pre-requisites for effective democratic transition in Iran and what are the conditions in which a new Iranian nation can thrive are two timely issues that the ITC was founded to address. The ITC's founding board members, steeped in deep political and social experience in Iran and outside it, are as follows:

Hassan Shariatmadari, Secretary-General. The son of the late Ayatollah Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari, the most prominent Ayatollah in Iran. Shariatmadari is an ITC executive committee member. He asked the Shah not to execute Khomeini, in 1963. But when Khomeini came to power, Khomeini imprisoned Shariatmadari and prevented him from receiving medical treatment. Shariatmadari believes a future democratic Iran should be a republic, not a monarchy.

Mehran Barati, Vice Secretary-General. A prominent Iranian student leader in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s who is well known in Iran. Barati currently resides in Germany.

Shahriar Ahy, ITC spokesperson. Ahy was previously the CEO of AGI, a media holding company whose assets included MBC, the highest revenue radio and television in the Middle East, United Press International, SaraVision, a communications technology company, as well as nine other media and advertising companies.

Abdullah Mohtadi, a top advisor to ITC's Secretary-General, and ITC Regional Affairs director. Mohtadi is one of the three founders of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan. When Khomeini ordered a massive onslaught against Iranian Kurds in 1979, Mohtadi emerged as a leader of the Kurdish resistance movement. He has led Komala since that time.

Yazdan Shohadaei, ITC secretary. Long-time political activist against the regime in Iran.

Mohsen Sazegara, ITC director for Civil Resistance in Iran. Sazegara was one of the founders of the Revolutionary Guards in Iran. He was on the same airplane as Khamenei, when the latter flew from Paris to Tehran before taking over Iran. Sazegara became disillusioned and dissatisfied with the regime and protested against its system of government. Today, he is an ITC leader living in the US.

Kamal Azari directs ITC operations in the US. Azari is a former president of the Iranian Alliance for Democracy, an advocacy group formed in Washington in 2004.

Golaleh Sharafkandi

Nahid Bahmani

The founders of the ITC believe that secular, pro-democracy Iranian opposition forces in Iran and outside should unite around the following fundamental principles:

1. Safeguard Iran's territorial integrity
2. Separate state and religion in Iran
3. Create a pluralist parliamentary structure based on free elections
4. Choose the type of State Iran should become by a freely elected Constitutional Congress or direct popular vote
5. Recognize the United Nations Charter of Human Rights and its Additional Protocols, and reject terrorism in any form
6. Pursue peaceful and friendly relations with all of Iran's neighbors in the MENA Region and Southeast Asia without exception, the United States and Europe, and the broader international community.

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