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IRAN

A Strategy Doomed to Fail
**SWEEPING DISMISSAL
OF PROFESSORS**

Across 150 Iranian Universities

Sweeping Dismissal of Professors across 150 Iranian Universities: A Strategy Doomed to Fail

The summoning and expulsion of students, which started months ago, have now escalated to the dismissal of professors in August. This action, occurring on the eve of the first anniversary of the nationwide uprising in 2022 and the reopening of schools and universities in Iran, reflects the Mullah regime's fear of another uprising. They seek to suppress the leaders of last year's uprising, the students, and silence the center of protests, the university.

During last year's nationwide movement, universities played a significant role as protest hubs. Up to now, numerous university students and professors have faced arrests, summonses, bans from entry, suspensions, and terminations.

In August, the pace of dismissal of professors picked up, particularly those who supported protesting students or joined nationwide protests. They were let go under various excuses, including retirement and academic performance. Notably, some of the dismissed professors are women.

As professors are being dismissed, the authorities are also continuing to arrest and imprison teachers, as well as expel and suspend students.

Dismissal of Professors: Changes across 150 Universities on the Brink of the New Academic Year

Dozens of university professors have faced termination or suspension since Raisi assumed office. However, in recent months, the pace of dismissal of professors has significantly accelerated. Some of these professors had experienced salary cuts or suspensions for several months, and they have now received their formal dismissal notices. The dismissals occurred through both written notices and phone calls. (The state-run Tejaratnews.com, August 28, 2023)

These professors hail from a range of universities, including Sharif, Tehran, Allameh, Melli, Azad Tehran, Azad Karaj, Al-Zahra, Kurdistan, Persian Gulf, Ferdowsi Mashhad, Art, Surah, Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Hakim Sabzevari, Bahonar Kerman, Jahrom, Azad Sanandaj, Medical Sciences of Iran, Azad Qom, and Isfahan.

As of September 3rd, the identities of 25 of these professors have been confirmed. Among them, notable female professors such as [Hamideh Khademi](#), [Ameneh Aali](#), Baharak Akhtardanesh, Raheleh Ali Moradzadeh, Lili Varharam, Azin Movahed, and Somayyeh Sima who have been either expelled from the university, suspended, or prohibited from teaching.



From left: Ameneh Aali, Hamideh Khademi, Azin Movahhed, Somayyeh Sima

On August 24, the state-run Etemad newspaper disclosed that 58 professors have been dismissed since Raisi assumed office. Additionally, Etemad has compiled a list of 157 professors who were terminated from universities during the administrations of Ahmadinejad, Rouhani, and Raisi. In its article on August 31, Etemad newspaper emphasized the government's serious pursuit of the "Homogenization of the Higher Education Body" project. It noted the unfortunate ongoing changes

in the educational staff of 150 universities nationwide, all while less than a month remains until the commencement of the new academic year.



From left: Lili Varharam, Raheleh Ali Moradzadeh, Baharak Akhtardanesh

Universities under Security Surveillance and Facing Brain Drain

According to students, security agencies wield significant influence over all university-related decisions, and universities find themselves encircled by repressive forces.

The Islamic Association of Students at Sharif University of Technology issued a statement on August 28, expressing their objection to the dismissal of Ali Sharifi Zarchi. They pointed out the increasing security measures imposed on Sharif University and described the situation as the university being "taken over by security agencies."

In this protest statement, a warning is sounded that the dismissal of professors who do not align with the government's agenda and the security confrontations with students will not only result in the "desperation and disillusionment of the university community towards the government" but also contribute to a daily exodus of Iran's intellectual elites.

Ali Ghanbari, a state-affiliated expert warned, "The effort to homogenize universities originates from the mindset that did the same, some time ago, to the country's administrations, organizations, and official institutions. The mindset dictates everyone should think in a way desirable to a specific political line. In such circumstances, we will soon witness the migration of senior-year high school students or diploma holders to universities in neighboring countries." (The state-run Fararu.com, August 30, 2023)

Amanullah Qaraei Moghadam, a sociologist, has commented on the social consequences of the dismissal of professors: "Today, when a professor is dismissed, there's a prevailing perception that it's because they were highly qualified and deserving individuals. Today, young people are deeply connected to the digital realm and influenced by their peers. When we highlight that 80% of exceptional students, multiple thousands of doctors, engineers, and journalists have left the country, contributing to a brain drain phenomenon, one significant factor at play is the behavior within the university system." (The state-run Entekhab.ir, August 30, 2023)

Expulsion of Dedicated Professors

[Ameneh Aali](#), one of the professors who were terminated from the Faculty of Psychology at Allameh Tabatabai University in Tehran, stated, "They didn't provide us with any explanation, but based on what we've heard within the faculty, we are well aware of the reasons. We had signed statements, supported student sit-ins, and protested against the suspension of students." (The state-run Rouydad24.ir, August 27, 2023)

In an open letter published on September 1, 2023, Ameneh Aali wrote, "To be candid, I am a teacher with many years of experience, having spent nearly a decade in the university setting. It's our duty as educators not to blindly obey governments but to serve as servants of our nation. Schools and universities are the sanctuaries of our students, and we are here to uphold their rights and safeguard the integrity of this sanctuary.

"This has been, and continues to be, my fundamental belief that I have consistently upheld. I have voiced it openly, honestly, firmly, and resolutely. Whether it was during times of suppression, student arrests, or suspensions, or in the face of attacks on schools and threats to students, I have reiterated this stance on numerous occasions. I've expressed it in letters and statements, in meetings, before university authorities, in the presence of security personnel during student confrontations, and even when questioned by Ministry of Intelligence interrogators."

Students at Allameh Tabatabai University, in their protest against the dismissal of professors [Hamideh Khademi and Ameneh Aali](#), hailed them as some of the university's most esteemed educators.

Conversely, those aligned with Khamenei's views welcomed the expulsion of these professors. Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of Kayhan newspaper and Khamenei's representative at the newspaper, described the dismissal of professors as "the least and most minor penalty" for university faculty members who, during the previous autumn, "not only supported the unrest and rioters, but in some cases, were implicated with violent elements in crimes against the oppressed people of this border and the region." (The state-run [asriran.com](#), August 28, 2023)



The First Cultural Coup: The Mullah Regime's Opposition to the University, the Citadel of Freedom

In Iran, the university has consistently served as a stronghold of freedom and a nurturing ground for libertarian ideals, largely owing to its concentration of knowledgeable and educated individuals. As a result, from its inception, the Mullah regime has harbored opposition and hostility toward the university.

Khomeini, the mullahs' first supreme leader, regarded academics as Westernized and products of Western education, labeling them as arrogant. In a speech in March 1980, Khomeini addressed the universities and asserted that everything transpiring in the country was influenced by the actions of these academic institutions.

Following this speech, the regime initiated the "Cultural Revolution," a campaign that led to the dismantling of universities starting in April. On June 5, 1980, the universities were shuttered for a period of three years. The Cultural Revolution, tragically, resulted in the deaths of 17 students and injuries to over 2,000 students. Numerous students and academics were arrested, and detained, and, shockingly, some even faced execution.

The regime's Cultural Revolution Council, under Khomeini's directive, initiated a widespread purge of professors and academics. Many of them were either terminated from their positions or compelled to resign from universities. Over these three years, the Cultural Revolution Council established intelligence and ideological assessment committees to exert control over universities and higher education.

As part of these efforts, 45% of university admission slots were allocated to Basij and IRGC (Revolutionary Guard Corps) members and the families of veterans. Additionally, the mullahs' parliament, or Majlis, passed a law to "facilitate the enrollment of (Iran-Iraq war) combatants in universities." These measures were aimed at reshaping the composition of higher education institutions in alignment with the regime's ideology and control.

The screenshot shows a newspaper article with a grid of 30 portraits of professors. The main headline reads: "موج دوم حذف اساتید به نام خالص سازی" (The Second Wave of Dismissal of Professors in the Name of Purification). Below the portraits, there is a sub-headline: "طی دو سال اخیر بیشترین حذف در دانشگاه‌های آزاد، تهران، علوم پزشکی تهران و علامه طباطبائی رخ داده است" (In the past two years, the highest number of dismissals occurred in Azad, Tehran, Islamic Azad, and Al-Azhar universities). The article text, written in Persian, discusses the Cultural Revolution Council's actions to purge the academic system. It mentions that 52 professors were dismissed from various universities, and 11 were reinstated after a year. The article is dated August 22, 2022, and is from the 'Jam'eh' newspaper.

The Second Cultural Coup in Universities, Employment of 15,000 Loyalists

Simultaneously with the dismissal of professors, certain academic disciplines were eliminated, and the capacity for admitting students in other fields was reduced. Mohsen Rannani, a faculty member in the Department of Economics at Isfahan University, characterized this development as a second cultural revolution and a significant blow to the academic system. (The state-run Tejaratnews.com, August 28, 2023)

Both government and non-governmental experts have referred to the dismissal of professors as a form of "purge." In this process, professors who are terminated for supporting protesting students and opposing the regime's repressive policies are often replaced with individuals aligned with the ruling regime. This appears to be part of an effort to inject members of the Revolutionary Guard and Basij forces, often under the title of "professor," into the universities.

The Union of University Professors issued a statement to express their protest against the dismissal of professors, revealing, "In paragraph 5 of the resolution of the National Security Council, the Ministries of Science and Health are asked to arrange the recruitment of 15,000 aligned faculty members. In this letter, the faculty members are introduced as the biggest cause of the unrest in 2022." (The state-run Arshnews.ir, August 27, 2023)

Recently, the Telegram channel of "Amir Kabir News Letter" disclosed a document from the confidential presidential documents, revealing that during the peak of nationwide protests last year, the clerical regime's Security Council had issued orders for the recruitment of academic staff members who were aligned with the "Islamic Revolution."

This document, dated January 10, 2023, reveals that the Minister of Interior, Ahmad Vahidi, requested the mullahs' President, Ebrahim Raisi, to issue an order to initiate the "infrastructural and revolutionary plan for structural transformation in universities and higher education centers." In the letter, Vahidi wrote to Raisi, stating, "During the recent protests, a significant observation was made: the role of certain professors in provoking student protests and engaging in destructive actions during the riots was a major contributor to the crisis. In universities where revolutionary (pro-regime loyalists) professors were present, even if their numbers were limited, effective management was achieved. However, in most universities, characterized by a network of faculty members not aligned with the system and, at best, a high number of indifferent professors, disturbances were widespread."



Heightened Concern within the Political Structure On the Eve of the New Academic Year

In the above-mentioned document, the fifth paragraph of the National Security Council resolution outlines a plan: "To grant special hiring authority (through the provision of an employment code) for the recruitment of 5,000 faculty members by the Ministry of Health and 10,000 to be considered by the Ministry of Science by the end of the current government's term." A state-run newspaper has expressed concern about this development, stating, "Eagerly welcoming the arrival of 15,000 individuals, who may have secured their academic positions through scholarships and educational quotas, as new faculty members in universities, could potentially lead to a catastrophe for higher and specialized education in Iran. This could result in a sharp decline in the global rankings of Iranian universities, the depletion of prestigious institutions, and the abandonment of our development aspirations—just a fraction of the potential consequences of this catastrophe." (The state-run Etemad daily newspaper, August 31, 2023) Ebrahim Azadegan, a state-affiliated expert, remarked on August 30, "The universities in the country are in their final stages of decline, and the academic essence of these institutions is facing a significant risk... We need to understand that our internal situation is leading us towards destruction." (The state-run Fararu.ir, August 30, 2023) The state-run Hammihan daily wrote on August 29, 2023, "The Ministry of Interior's statement effectively demonstrates that the political establishment is deeply concerned about the beginning (of the school year). It is handling professors in this manner because some of them have occasionally voiced their objections to the treatment of students, whether related to the hijab issue or the arrest and suspension of students for political reasons."

Over 2,800 Students Summoned to Disciplinary Committees

On August 14, the Amir Kabir Student Newsletter reported that the regime's intelligence and security forces had summoned numerous students from universities such as Amir Kabir, Allameh, Khajeh Nasir, Tarbiat Modares, Ferdowsi, Mashhad, and Isfahan. These students were asked to pledge not to participate in protests. They were summoned to both the "Ministry of Intelligence Follow-up Office" and the Niyayesh Follow-up and Legal Office, located near the Tehran Revolution Club.

Over the past two months, a total of 59 students have been expelled from various universities, while 104 students have been barred from one to four semesters of education. Additionally, hundreds of students have been deprived of their dormitory accommodations.

A minimum of 200 students at Bou Ali University of Hamadan discovered, without prior notice, that they had been denied dormitory accommodations only when they attempted to reserve a room within the system. A significant proportion of these deprived students were female.

These summonses, expulsions, and exclusions also affect students from various other universities, including Tehran, Zabol, Sanandaj, Isfahan, Ahvaz, Kerman, Urmia, Kashan, Ardabil, and Semnan universities.

According to the Amir Kabir newsletter dated August 17, a total of 2,843 students from various universities across the country have been summoned to their respective university disciplinary committees. In Tehran province specifically, 1,443 students received summonses, with a breakdown of 324 students from Iran University of Science and Technology, 57 from (all-women) Al-Zahra University, 51 from Tarbiat Modarres University, 153 from Tehran University, 51 from Khajeh Nasiruddin Tusi University of Technology, 126 from Melli University, 157 from Amir Kabir University of Technology, 114 from Sharif University of Technology, 149 from Allameh Tabatabai University, 32 from Dr. Shariati Girls Vocational Technical College and Vali Asr Girls College, 91 from Tehran University of Arts, and 138 from Kharazmi University.



After the Dismissal of Professors, It's the Students' Turn

The state-run Etemad newspaper on August 28 hinted at a forthcoming phase of purges targeting students.

It wrote, Raisi's faction "aims to restructure the Evaluation Organization (deciding admission of university students), currently under the Ministry of Science, by making it a subsidiary of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution.

"The primary objective is to alter the criteria for university admissions, emphasizing political and religious qualifications following the significant wave of dismissal of professors.

"In the present year, disciplinary committees within universities serve as the key instrument in this process. This sets the stage for subsequent years when the Evaluation Organization is likely to be

moved under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, leading to fundamentally different admission quotas for students.

“Currently, various quotas are in place for university entrance exams, including those for veterans, regional preferences, children of war veterans, and other categories. As these quotas expand, the competitive aspect of university entrance exams diminishes, potentially transforming higher education in Iran into an appointment-based system.” (The state-run Etemad newspaper, August 28, 2023)



Regime's Desperate Bid to Control Universities Is Destined to Fail

What is certain is that the Mullah regime will not succeed in closing down universities through the expulsion of protesting professors and students. The regime's attempts to tightly control every facet of governance, beginning with parliament and the government and now extending to educational institutions, reveal its inability to tolerate even the slightest dissent. This is a clear sign of the regime's extreme vulnerability as it approaches the final stage of its rule.

Ahmad Bokharaei, a state-affiliated expert, revealed to the Dideban-e-Iran website on September 2 that more than 90% of university professors hold critical views about the regime. He emphasized that the expulsion of these professors is a retaliatory response that not only incites turmoil within the academic community but also entails long-lasting and irreversible consequences.

In conclusion, we cite the admissions of a state-run media outlet regarding the outcome of the "purification" process in universities. It stated, "Fundamentally, the notion that the new generation will be controlled is entirely false. Consequently, it must be acknowledged that even if all the professors are removed, the students' determination to voice their demands will not wane. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that any purging approach will not only prove ineffective but also exacerbate the seeds of resentment, duplicity, and discontent."

[Mrs. Maryam Rajavi](#), the NCRI President-elect, addressed the dismissal of professors and purging of university students on August 29. She said, "The mullahs' inhuman regime will not attain its objectives by cracking down on #students and purging academics and university faculty. Their efforts to stifle uprisings by widespread arrests cannot shield them from enraged Iranian youth and students."

She urged unions and syndicates of students, professors, and intellectuals worldwide, to condemn the regime's repressive actions targeting universities, and stand in solidarity with Iranian students and professors.