



## **Defend the right of Iranians to protest for democratic change**

The Irish Anti War movement condemns the killing of innocent demonstrators and the violent suppression of protests on the streets of Tehran, Shiraz and other cities and notes with concern the escalation of the abuse of human rights in Iran. In addition to the dead and wounded, countless people have been arrested and severe restrictions have been imposed on travel.

Following the deaths of at least 10 demonstrators over last weekend whose only crime was to question the results of the recent election, the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei has warned against further demonstrations.

One of those killed, Neda Soltani, the young woman whose death was captured on YouTube, has come to symbolise the rebellion and the courage of those prepared to protest for the right to democratic change. Yet the authorities banned a scheduled memorial service at the Nilofar mosque in Tehran's Abbas Abad district, in case it became a rallying point for the opposition.

The Iranian authorities, including the powerful Guardian Council, have already admitted irregularities in the disputed presidential poll and that these have occurred on a much wider scale than previously disclosed. The supposed landslide victory for Ahmadinejad, as one study from Exeter University shows, seems to have come about with unusually high turnouts in some areas.

The fight over the election results is really a struggle within Iran's political elite over who will control political power. The ruling institutions were never going to allow serious change whatever the election result. Just a week before the election an article by a military leader in the Revolutionary Guard's weekly magazine 'Sobhehesadegh' threatened to completely suppress any attempt at a velvet revolution.

This same institution has now called for an end to demonstrations and dismissed these as "conspiracy" against Iran. This comes after popular reformer and main contender in the disputed election, Mir Hussein Mousavi continued to defy an injunction against street protests by the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The Irish Anti War Movement is not aligning itself with conflicting factions within the ruling elite in Iran but we do support the right of the Iranian people to protest and to exercise their democratic rights. We also condemn calls on the Obama administration or the EU to intervene in what is a matter for the Iranian people alone to decide.

## Irish Anti War Movement

“The struggle over democratic rights in Iran is living proof that Iranian society is very different from the image painted by Western powers. It is a society with tensions over democracy and a determined opposition. It is also, like our own state, suffering from the economic catastrophe of unemployment and its citizens have had enough of economic hardship. There is 25% inflation and 25% of young University graduates are unemployed with little prospects of work.

Added to this, Iran has found itself castigated as part of the so-called “axis of evil”. We call on the US and the EU to refrain from any intervention that would exacerbate the situation in a region that their war-mongering has already made unstable.”

The IAWM believes that the next few days will be crucial for the right to free protest in Iran.

“ We are very concerned that the deteriorating situation may lead to more deaths. We call on people to show their solidarity with those protesting on the streets of Iran by joining the demonstration called by Free Iran at the GPO at 6.00pm on Thursday 25th June”.