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Iran – moral clarity needed



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'Nor can freedom be indefinitely postponed by a regime that governs through repression and force', writes Dr. A. Rashied Omar

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I denounce the Iranian regime's lethal repression on largely peaceful protestors and, with equal moral clarity, unequivocally reject imperial calls for bombing or foreign intervention, because history shows that violence, whether imposed by the state at home or by powerful outsiders from abroad, has never delivered peace with justice, protected human dignity, or brought genuine freedom.

It is this same ethical commitment to justice and human dignity that compels an unambiguous condemnation of the Iranian regime's violent crackdown on its own citizens. The killing, imprisonment, and intimidation of Iranians demanding dignity, accountability, and meaningful socio-political reform constitute grave violations of human rights and stand in direct contradiction to core Islamic principles of *'adl* (justice), *karamah* (human dignity), and *amanah* (moral trust and responsibility). Any state that claims Islamic legitimacy is therefore both religiously and morally obligated to uphold these values. Calls for radical and structural reform are not only understandable; they are necessary for Iran's social healing and long-term stability.

At the same time, any credible condemnation of state violence inside Iran requires the unequivocal rejection of violence imposed from outside. I categorically oppose threats by external powers to bomb Iran or to impose regime change through coercion and force. Such actions would constitute clear violations of international law, undermine the foundations of a rules-based global order, and risk deepening human suffering rather than alleviating it. These positions are not driven by genuine concern for the well-being or agency of the Iranian people, but by geopolitical



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agendas that have, time and again, devastated societies and undermined authentic struggles for justice. From a peace studies perspective, imperial interventions do not advance liberation or positive peace; they instrumentalise civilian populations and reproduce cycles of structural and direct violence.



To oppose repression inside Iran while endorsing violence from outside is a moral contradiction. It is precisely the rejection of imperial coercion that allows the genuine, indigenous voices for justice and reform within Iran to be heard on their own terms. These voices have emerged organically from within Iran's own religious, intellectual, and political traditions. For decades, respected Iranian figures such as the late Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, Ebrahim Yazdi, and Mohsen Kadivar have publicly challenged coercive state policies, recognizing their deep incompatibility with justice, freedom of conscience, and the ethical

spirit of Islam itself. Ironically, and tragically, many of these principled reformist voices have been subjected to harassment, marginalisation, and repression. Their treatment exposes the regime's profound intolerance of faith-grounded internal critique and its reliance on coercion rather than moral persuasion. Islamic ethics emphasize education, wisdom, and voluntary moral commitment, not state violence, as the pathway to cultivating genuine belief and ethical practice.

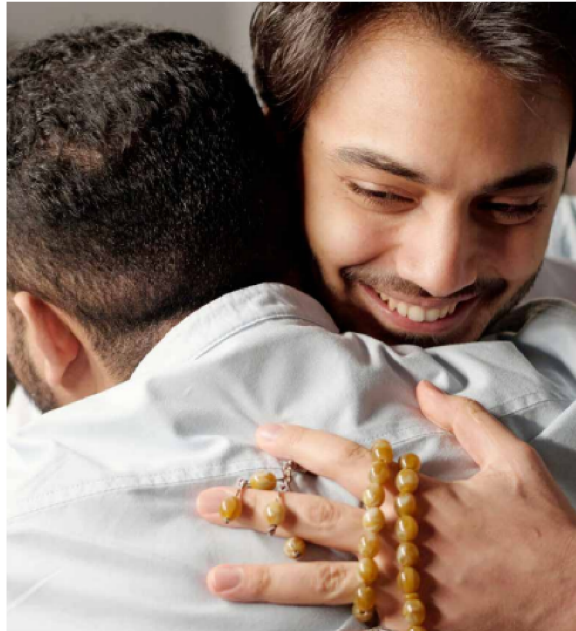
It is this long-standing tradition of internal moral critique, combined with the courage, discipline, and agency of ordinary Iranians, that makes the current protest movement one of the most significant challenges to authoritarian rule in decades. Genuine democratic change must therefore emerge and grow from within, rooted in the aspirations, strategies, and leadership of Iranians themselves, not imposed, engineered, or hijacked from outside.

Historical experience and comparative scholarship consistently show that foreign military strikes do not advance internal movements for freedom. In the Iranian context, threats of attack or external military pressure, whether framed as limited strikes or as "assistance" to protestors, are already being used by the regime to delegitimise the uprising by portraying it as foreign-orchestrated. Rather than weakening authoritarian rule, military escalation predictably strengthens regime narratives and measurably undermines nonviolent, indigenous movements for political change.

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The path forward must therefore be shaped by Iranians themselves. I call on the legitimate leaders emerging from these grassroots, nonviolent protests, not Western proxies or agent provocateurs, to seize this moment with wisdom, restraint, and courage. This is an opportunity to apply sustained, principled, and nonviolent civic pressure on the Iranian authorities to commit to deep and irreversible reforms: an end to lethal repression, the release of political prisoners, meaningful protections for women and minorities, and the opening of genuine civic and political space.

Justice will not come from bombs dropped on Iran by external powers, nor can freedom be indefinitely postponed by a regime that governs through repression and force. Meaningful and enduring change can only emerge through moral clarity, sustained nonviolent action, and reforms

grounded in the lived realities and aspirations of the Iranian people themselves.

**Dr. A. Rashied Omar is an Imam of the Claremont Main Road Masjid; Associate Teaching Professor of Islamic Studies & Peace Studies; Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame*

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