

# Press Release



## **Inauguration of the first Persian online university of social sciences and humanities: Iran Academia launches its first educational program in Social Studies.**

The Hague Netherlands (4 November 2014) – Iran Academia, an online higher education institute of social sciences and humanities, will launch its first equivalent to master's degree program in January 2015, Iran-Academia said today.

“It is with great excitement and pleasure that we announce the launch of the first online Farsi-speaking university for social sciences and humanities. The Social Studies program that Iran Academia will be delivering from January 2015 has been made possible with the efforts of a dedicated team of graduate students and university scholars, who have volunteered their time and expertise over the past three years to set up an educational institution based on fundamental principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and to develop a well-structured curricula”, Ali Reza Kazeemi, Iran Academia’s central coordinator and co-founder, said.

The idea of creating an online university for social sciences and humanities first emerged in 2011, in the wake of the increasing repression to which university students and teachers in Iran were exposed by the authorities following the post-2009 presidential election protests, silencing dissenting voices and barring hundreds of students from higher education. The repression also included surges in “Islamicization” of social science and humanities courses, the introduction of a gender quota system aimed at limiting the number of women accepted to universities, and increased discrimination against students of the Baha’i faith.<sup>i</sup>

“Iran Academia is a collective initiative to resist the curbs on access to social sciences and humanities in Iran, and advance rigorous learning opportunities for students interested in studying social sciences and humanities with a view toward developing a critical understanding of the socio-political situation of Iran and its location within broader regional and global developments.” Professor Said Paivandi, Iran Academia’s Chair of Academic Board said.

Iran Academia’s faculty includes esteemed scholars teaching a broad range of courses in different high-ranking universities around the world.<sup>ii</sup> The Academia has also won the support of many distinguished and renowned figures, both in Iran<sup>iii</sup> and internationally<sup>iv</sup>.

After three years of organization, Iran Academia will announce its official inauguration in a special event in The Hague on 14 November, followed by a public discussion session on the precarious situation of social sciences and humanities in Iran in Amsterdam on 15 November. The keynote speakers will be Mr. Darioush Ashoori and Prof. Nayereh Tohidi. Mr. Kazem Kardavani will moderate a panel discussion featuring panellists Prof. Said Paivandi, Dr. Jalil Roshandel, Dr. Ata Hoodashtian and Dr. Mahmoud Masaeli. The sessions will be streamed live on the Internet.

For more information about the sessions, please contact Ali Reza Kazemi at +31 6 49834896 (ar.kazemi@iran-academia.com).

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<sup>i</sup> Amnesty International, “Persecution in universities as Iran 'squeezes the life out of' academic freedom” (2 June 2014), available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/persecution-universities-iran-squeezes-life-out-academic-freedom-2014-05-30>.

<sup>ii</sup> For more information, see <http://iran-academia.com/about/faculty/>.

<sup>iii</sup> For more information, see <http://iran-academia.com/about/advisory-board/>.

<sup>iv</sup> For more information, see <http://iran-academia.com/about/international-honorary-board/>.