

September 23 Solidarity Statement from Carol Downer

It has been almost a year since Dolly Veale and I initiated this Campaign demanding freedom for ALL Iran's political prisoners. We wrote a statement about a month after the Islamic Republic of Iran launched a wave of raids, arrests that swept up activists from across Iranian society, and amid continuing US sanctions that were devastating to the people of Iran.

As our statement said, "We join the urgent cries for justice and freedom by each new wave of Iranian political prisoners. We are taking up the fight now to free them ahead of fresh atrocities and deaths."

I have been a reproductive rights activist and an abortion provider for over 40 years. In December 1979, I was privileged to be in Iran during the revolutionary upsurge in December 1979, when people from our Feminist Women's Health Centers were invited by the Iranian Students Association to go to Iran with a people-to-people, "Send the Shah Back" delegation (i.e., send the Shah back to Iran from the U.S. so he could stand trial). Even then we saw both the inspiring resistance of masses of people which had wrought many welcome changes, and we saw as well the beginnings of the reinstatement of the patriarchal forces that followed the formation of the government, the IRI. At one point, I was told I could not walk in public unless I covered my head with a scarf. No matter how much I wanted to comply, I simply could not bring myself to put on the scarf. My inability to put on a scarf surprised me. I waited in the car. Looking back, I, Dolly Veale, and all lovers of the Iranian people, now see that the people of Iran did not end up with a regime they had hoped and fought for and initially won, in their Revolution.

I feel as strongly now as I did in 1979 and I repeat the statement that initiated this latest campaign, "People in the U.S. have a special responsibility and opportunity to unite across all social and political movements or divides," and together with people across the globe to compel the actual release of ALL Iran's political prisoners. I close with the announcement of the International Emergency Campaign:

To the Islamic Republic of Iran:

Free ALL Iran's Political Prisoners NOW!

To the United States:

NO THREATS OR WAR MOVES AGAINST IRAN, LIFT U.S. SANCTIONS

"Free all political prisoners in Iran until every cage is empty."