

The Iranian People Receive the 2026 Freedom Prize

Monday 14 September, 2026

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom awards its Freedom Prize 2026 to the courageous people of Iran who are fighting for freedom, civil rights and democracy.

Potsdam, September 14th 2026

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom honors the Iranian people with its Freedom Prize 2026 on 7 November 2026 at St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt. Reza Pahlavi will accept the award in a fiduciary capacity. Bijan Djir-Sarai, foreign policy spokesperson the Free Democratic Party (FDP), will deliver the laudatory address.

Since 2006, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom has awarded the Freedom Prize every two years in recognition of outstanding commitment to the development of a liberal civil society, thereby contributing to strengthening values and goals of freedom around the world.

Steffen Saebisch, Chairman of the Board of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, comments: "The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom is deliberately awarding the Freedom Prize to the Iranian people rather than to an individual. We seek to honor the desire for freedom of the many hundreds of thousands of people who have risked their lives to overthrow the criminal mullah regime. We are pleased that Reza Pahlavi is accepting to receive the award in trust on behalf of the Iranian people until the day the prize can be presented to the freely elected representatives of Iran."

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom has asked Reza Pahlavi to receive the award in trust on behalf of the Iranian people, as he is the best-known personality of the Iranian opposition and is committed to the return to freedom and democracy in Iran. According to his own statements, he does not advocate one form of government over another, as long as it is democratic. He repeatedly emphasizes that the future political order of Iran must be decided by the Iranian people. According to many, he is currently also the most important political figure of identification for many Iranians (probably the majority) in Iran. In addition, Reza Pahlavi is committed to an end to Iranian-fueled conflicts in the Middle East, the normalization of Iran's relations with its neighboring countries and, in particular, reconciliation with Israel.

The award goes to all those who stand up for their rights, for their own freedom and for a free and democratic society. It is dedicated in particular to those who lost their lives in the fight against a murderous regime and to those who were or are currently persecuted and imprisoned because of their commitment to freedom and democracy.

The award honors the courage of countless people who resist in their everyday lives: women who stand up for their right to self-determination; students who demand freedom of thought and learning; journalists who, despite intimidation and threats, stand up for press freedom; workers who fight for fair conditions and dignity; families who resist paternalism and the denial of individual choices in their conduct of life. Their strength lies not in individual actions, but in the perseverance of a society that refuses to be silenced.

For decades, the theocratic regime has ruled brutally and with great contempt for basic human rights. That is why it is all the more admirable that so many people in Iran are speaking out in various ways against the regime and in support of their freedom and fundamental rights, taking to the streets to make their voices heard. These extraordinarily courageous people deserve the full support of everyone for whom freedom, self-determination and democracy are the highest ideals.

By conferring the Freedom Prize on the Iranian people, the Foundation is deliberately drawing attention to the many unnamed people whose civic courage often remains unseen, but who form the basis of any peaceful change. The Freedom Prize is an expression of respect and solidarity – and at the same time an appeal to the international community to consistently protect the rights of all Iranians and to support their demands for freedom effectively.

The Iranian people stand for the hope that an open society can also emerge where freedom is suppressed. Their commitment reminds us: freedom is indivisible – and it begins with people who have the courage to stand up.

That is why our Foundation is committed to honoring freedom-loving people in Iran. By conferring the Freedom Prize on the Iranian people, the Foundation is sending a clear message to the public: The

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struggle for freedom and democracy has the full support of all liberals.

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