

Over 200 Cultural Figures Urge Release of Palestinian Leader

LONDON (Dispatches) — Over 200 leading cultural figures have joined a global campaign calling for the release of Palestinian political prisoner Marwan Barghouti, widely seen as a unifying figure capable of advancing a viable path to Palestinian statehood.

The campaign includes writers Margaret Atwood, Philip Pullman, Zadie Smith, and Annie Ernaux, actors Ian McKellen, Benedict Cumberbatch, Tilda Swinton, and Mark Ruffalo, and public figures such as Gary Lineker and Richard Branson.

In an open letter, they expressed “grave concern at the continuing imprisonment of Marwan Barghouti, his violent mistreatment and denial of legal rights whilst imprisoned,” urging governments and the United Nations to act for his release.

Barghouti, 66, has spent 23 years in Israeli prisons following a trial the Inter-Parliamentary Union called “deeply flawed.”

An elected parliamentarian at the time, he remains the most popular political figure in both Gaza and the occupied West Bank, topping



Demonstrators hold placards bearing portraits of Marwan Barghouti, asking for his release during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians in Paris on November 29, 2025.

opinion polls. Israel has kept him imprisoned even during recent prisoner swaps, citing concerns over his political influence rather than security risks.

His son, Arab Barghouti, said Israel views him as a threat “because he wants to bring stability ... a unifying Palestinian vision that is accepted by everyone, and the international community, as well.”

Organizers of the campaign drew inspiration from the cultural move-

ment that helped secure Nelson Mandela’s release, with Mandela himself comparing Barghouti’s situation to his own in 2002.

The campaign includes large “Free Marwan” murals in London, a public art installation in his home village of Kobar, and media outreach by his wife, Fadwa Barghouti, who emphasizes his support for a two-state solution.

British musician Brian Eno said cultural voices “can shift the course

of politics,” while British-Palestinian novelist Selma Dabbagh argued that freeing Barghouti would allow Palestinians “to determine their own leadership, whatever shape that may take.”

Barghouti has endured solitary confinement, three years without family visits, and repeated beatings.

Israel’s extremist security minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, was recently filmed threatening him with execution as the Knesset considers legislation allowing the death penalty for “nationalist-motivated” killings.

Despite international pressure, Israeli officials have said Barghouti will not be included in the first phase of the U.S.-mediated prisoner exchange, which involves roughly 2,000 Palestinians but excludes the high-profile detainee.

The campaign describes Barghouti’s release not only as a personal matter but as a broader call for the freedom of all Palestinian prisoners, highlighting the intersection of legal, political, and human rights concerns in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Naval... (Continued From Page 2)

began after the Iran-Iraq war and continues under the guidance of the armed forces and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. “The main mission of Kordestan is to support combat units and escort missions, but it can also provide services to commercial and fishing vessels,” Irani said, adding that the Navy would assist friendly nations in accordance with Iran’s policy of peace and cooperation. Separately, Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi, deputy commander of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), underscored the permanent mission of the IRGC to safeguard the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, calling it a “red line” for Iran. Speaking at a ceremony in Hormozgan Province, Fadavi described the region as one of the country’s most sensitive areas and a critical gateway for global energy supplies. Fadavi said the IRGC has long been tasked with transmitting the ideals of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, a mission that began under the leadership of the late Imam Khomeini and continues today through nationwide service and defense operations. He highlighted the IRGC’s dual role in serving civilians and countering adversaries, particularly the United States. “All the activities of this institution in the field of service are considered acts of worship, and their scope grows day by day,” Fadavi said. The deputy IRGC commander also emphasized the strategic significance of Hormozgan and the Strait of Hormuz, noting that more than 20 million barrels of oil transit the waterway daily and that the region’s energy resources, including gas reserves shared with Qatar, make the area critical to global energy security. Fadavi warned that any attempt by adversaries to threaten Iran’s security would be met with full force, explicitly identifying the United States and Israel as primary sources of regional instability. “The IRGC will safeguard this strategic region by land, sea, and air,” Fadavi said, adding that Iran’s protection of its territorial waters is a permanent mission and a national red line.

Iran... (Continued From Page 2)

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Russia... (Continued From Page 2)

and Chinese letter said the European attempt “is legally and procedurally flawed, and the claims put forward by Germany, France, and the United Kingdom... are baseless and irrelevant.” The ambassadors recalled that the United States’ withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and “illegal and discriminatory sanctions” imposed by the E3 and EU had affected the operation of the snapback mechanism. “Without prior and adequate resolution of the United States’ substantial non-performance, this mechanism cannot be applied to Iran,” the letter said. It further noted that Iran’s remedial measures, including the suspension of JCPOA commitments, were “adopted solely in reaction to the U.S. withdrawal and its comprehensive violations, and only after a prolonged period of Iran’s continued compliance and the inaction of the E3 and the EU to rectify the situation.” Resolution 2231, the letter said, “is an integrated text, and the JCPOA is an inseparable part of it. Therefore, paragraph 11 of the resolution cannot be interpreted independently of paragraphs 36 and 37 of the JCPOA.” Slovenia, which holds the Security Council presidency this month, said it would receive the Secretary-General’s report on Resolution 2231 concerning Iran on Dec. 13.

Ghalibaf... (Continued From Page 2)

to seek a ceasefire by the sixth or seventh day. He attributed Iran’s success to the “wisdom and courage” of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the sacrifices of the Iranian people, and the precision of the country’s armed forces. “Today, we truly believe that our power is not only in our military and missile capabilities... Our main power, after the grace of God, lies in the hearts of our people,” Ghalibaf said. Highlighting lessons from recent military exercises, he warned that any future aggression by the United States or Israel would be met with a “much stronger, more precise, and more effective response.” Ghalibaf also criticized European countries for “unwise decisions” and a weak foreign policy, saying they are acting under U.S. direction in triggering the nuclear deal’s snapback mechanism. “Europe has effectively removed itself from the Iranian nuclear file and has no meaningful role in the Ukraine issue,” he said, adding that the U.S. exploits Europe economically through weapons sales and energy purchases.

Envoy... (Continued From Page 2)

undermining regional stability and constituting a “grave threat to international peace and security,” stating: “A regime that openly violates the territorial integrity of an independent state has no legal or moral standing to comment on regional security or maritime conduct of others.” Iran further highlighted the humanitarian situation in Gaza, citing the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, including many children, and

UN Urges Israel to Leave Golan Heights, Palestinian Territories

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) — The United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday adopted two resolutions addressing Israeli occupation, calling for withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights and Palestinian territories, including East Al-Quds, and affirming the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination.

The Golan Heights resolution passed with 123 votes in favor, seven against, and 41 abstentions. The United States joined Israel in opposing the measure. It demands Israel withdraw to the June 4, 1967, line, reiterates the illegality of settlements and other activities

in the occupied territory, and affirms that continued occupation and de facto annexation hinder a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace. The resolution also noted Israel’s failure to comply with Security Council Resolution 497.

Separately, a draft resolution on Palestinian territories was approved by 151 countries, with 11 abstentions and 11 votes against.

Presented by Palestine, Jordan, Djibouti, Senegal, Qatar, and Mauritania under agenda item 35, it reaffirmed the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force and stressed Israel’s responsibility to respect Palestinian rights.

It called for the cessation of settlement activity, the halt of unilateral measures altering demographics, and condemned settler attacks and violence against civilians. The resolution emphasized the protection of civilians, particularly children, and highlighted the importance of upholding international law.

The General Assembly underscored the ongoing responsibility of the United Nations to support a just resolution to the Palestinian question, central to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and stressed the need for Palestinian reconciliation and institutional develop-

ment.

It reaffirmed the principle that Palestinians have the right to establish an independent, sovereign state coexisting peacefully alongside Israel within recognized borders.

Hamas condemned ongoing West Bank settler attacks as part of an organized Israeli policy aimed at terrorizing and displacing Palestinians. The UN resolutions collectively call on member states to uphold international law, protect civilians, and foster conditions conducive to peace, stability, and the eventual realization of Palestinian self-determination.

Erdogan Ally Rules Out Amnesty for Senior PKK Figures

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) — Turkey’s nationalist leader Devlet Bahçeli, a key ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, ruled out any amnesty for Kurdish militants on Wednesday, responding to calls from a senior Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) figure for members to return without facing legal penalties. The exchange highlights contrasting visions for resolving the long-running conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, which has waged an armed insurgency since 1984.

Bese Hozat, co-chair of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK)—an

umbrella organization including the PKK and other Kurdish groups—told the PKK-affiliated Medya Haber outlet that no PKK members had committed crimes and therefore did not require amnesty.

She suggested that former fighters could return from northern Iraq, register with legal Kurdish parties, run for parliament, and participate in public life without a criminal record.

Hozat emphasized that this approach is not about seeking a homecoming law or special treatment, but about recognizing former fighters as

legitimate political actors rather than framing their reintegration as an act of mercy.

Bahçeli, who leads the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), took a sharply different stance in an interview with the pro-MHP *Türk*gün daily. He said that any return of PKK members would require individual screening by Turkish authorities.

Some might be allowed to return under supervision or on parole, while those already serving sentences for PKK-related crimes could remain imprisoned or be sent to a third country.

In all cases, the Turkish state would maintain the designation of “terrorist crimes” for PKK activities.

The disagreement comes amid Turkey’s most serious attempt in years to wind down the conflict, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives and destabilized southeastern Turkey.

While Hozat’s position frames reintegration as a political process, Bahçeli underscores security and legal accountability, highlighting the deep divisions in Ankara over how to approach reconciliation with the Kurdish insurgency.

Leader said.

Total... (Continued From Page One)

“When Israeli citizens saw missiles raining down over Tel Aviv, it shocked them. Even official Israeli channels attempted to minimize the reports of damage and casualties. Some images that did emerge revealed widespread destruction, and some of the targeted research and military centers had been costly investments. Israeli authorities worked quickly to limit visibility of this impact, which underscores how successful Iran’s retaliation was.” “The 12-day war demonstrated Iran’s ability to conduct rapid, precise strikes that caused severe casualties and structural damage. At the same time, Iran successfully controlled the narrative, despite extreme Israeli censorship. This dual approach strengthened deterrence and underscored Iran’s strategic depth, showing both military and media capabilities at play in a modern conflict,” he said.

Leader... (Continued From Page One)

women’s nature and the real interests and needs of society; whereas the control of endless and destructive sexual desires in Western culture is completely ignored.”

The Leader described men and women in Islam as “two balanced elements with many commonalities and some differences arising from the body and nature”.

“These two complementary elements play a role in managing human society, continuing the human race, advancing civilization, meeting societal needs, and managing life,” he said. Among the rights of women, he cited justice in social and family behavior, security, dignity and respect, and equality of wages in the same job, as well as insurance for working women and special leave provisions. Ayatollah Khamenei said that forming a family is one of the most important roles. “Unlike the neglect of the family institution in the wrong Western culture, in Islam, for ‘women, men, and children’ as elements forming

the family, reciprocal and specific rights have been established,” he added. Ayatollah Khamenei contrasted the Islamic and capitalist views of women.

“In Islam, women have independence, capability, identity, and the possibility of advancement, but the capitalist perspective subordinates and absorbs the woman’s identity into the man and does not respect women’s dignity, treating women as material tools and objects of desire,” he said.

The Leader criticized the destruction of the family structure and harms such as fatherless children, reduced family ratios, gangs targeting young girls, and the increasing promotion of sexual immorality in the name of freedom as major sins of the capitalist culture in the past one or two centuries. “Western capitalism deceitfully calls this vast array of wrongdoing ‘freedom,’ and even uses this term in our country, whereas this is not freedom but enslavement,” he added. Ayatollah Khamenei said that despite the West’s insistence on exporting its flawed culture worldwide, claiming that certain restrictions on women,

including the hijab, hinder their progress, “the Islamic Republic has disproved this false logic and shown that a Muslim woman, committed to Islamic covering, can move and play roles in all arenas, more than others.” The Leader praised unprecedented achievements of Iranian women in science, sports, thought, research, politics, social activities, health, life expectancy, and voluntary support, including assisting the spouses of honored martyrs. “Iran has never in its history had even one-hundredth of this number of learned, thoughtful, and opinionated women, and it was the Islamic Republic that enabled the advancement of women in all major fields.”

Ayatollah Khamenei cautioned the media against promoting Western capitalist views on women, saying when discussing hijab, women’s dress, and cooperation between men and women, domestic media should not repeat or highlight Western perspectives, but rather present the deep and effective Islamic view within the country and in international forums. “This is the best way to promote Islam and will attract many people around the world, especially women, to it,” the

widespread deprivation of food, water, medicine, and essential supplies, as well as mass displacement. Tehran said these actions, according to UN bodies and independent experts, constitute “serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide,” and that a regime responsible for such acts cannot credibly speak on maritime security, stability, or compliance with international norms. In a separate note responding to the Saudi-backed Yemen’s delegation, Iran categorically denied any military involvement in Yemen, emphasizing that it has never provided support that could be interpreted as military assistance to any party in the conflict. Tehran said such claims are entirely unfounded and lack credible evidence. Both notes stressed that Iran’s policies are “transparent, coherent, and based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference,” and that Tehran consistently supports peaceful resolution in Yemen through genuine dialogue and diplomacy, fully in line with international law and the UN Charter. At the conclusion of both communications, Iran reaffirmed its full commitment to IMO conventions, including the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR), and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS), as well as relevant domestic regulations. The notes emphasized that matters related to ship registration, compliance, and maritime conduct should be addressed through IMO’s established technical procedures, not via politically motivated or baseless claims. Iran warned that attempts to politicize the specialized organization would undermine its mission and conflict with the collective interests of member states.

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Fajr... (Continued From Page 3)

Olive Branch section awarded its Crystal Simorgh for Best Film to *All That’s Left of You*, directed by Cherien Dabis — a sweeping multinational production involving Germany, Cyprus, Palestine, Jordan, Greece, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The Special Jury Award went to *From Ground Zero*, an ambitious collective work directed by 22 filmmakers from Gaza and produced by Rashid Masharawi. The jury praised the film’s unflinching portrayal of life, loss, and resilience across the past two years. A Special Mention was given to *Valley of Exile*, a Canada-Lebanon co-production directed by Anna Fahr, for its bold cinematic vision.

Photo & 60-Second Film Awards
In the festival’s multimedia showcase, jurors Alfred Yaghoubzadeh, Behrouz Shoaibi, and Majid Saeedi awarded: • Certificate of Honor — Best 60-Second Film: Ali Tavasoli • Crystal Simorgh — Best Photograph: Sobhan Farajvand
The ceremony concluded with a screening of the jury-selected winning 60-second film.

Tracing... (Continued From Page 3)

The early 20th century brought the next wave of progress. The Constitutional Revolution, the rise of girls’ schools, and the influence of master painters such as Kamal-ol-Molk paved the way for formal art education for women. Female students such as Forugh-ol-Molouk (Vali-yeh-Safa) mastered watercolor and portraiture, capturing royal subjects like Naser al-Din Shah on horseback. Others, including Efat-ol-Molouk Khajeh-Nouri, Shokuh-ol-Molouk Shaqaqi, and Shams-ol-Zohreh Neshat, left signed works that endure to this day. Modern Iranian women artists gained greater visibility between the 1920s and 1950s, alongside broader educational reforms and the establishment of art schools and the College of Fine Arts. Today, women artists in Iran and across the globe actively contribute to the visual arts, achieving recognition in galleries and museums worldwide.