

April 25, 2024

Kay Svensson
Head of Department for External Relations
Linnaeus University
SE- 351 95
Växjö
Sweden
By e-mail: kay.svensson@lnu.se
Cc: info@lnu.se

Re: Ties Between Linnaeus University and the IRGC

Dear Mr. Svensson:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)² – an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “*The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,*” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

We thank you for your response to our letter dated September 14, 2023, and note confirmation that Linnaeus University maintains an ongoing memorandum of understanding with University of Tehran’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as listed on the College’s website.⁵ We further note that your response to our previous letter also confirmed that Linnaeus

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,](#)” February 2021.

⁵ University of Tehran College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, “[انعقاد تفاهم نامه دانشگاه لیناوس سوئد با دانشکدهگان](#),” May 15, 2022.

University does work with Iranian recruitment agencies. One such agency, the Pars Afshin Institute, identifies Linnaeus University as a partner. This agency maintains official ties with the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, tasked with facilitating exchange between Iranian and Swedish universities.⁶ In light of new evidence, and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to clarify if these partnerships remain in effect since our last correspondence, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all of Linnaeus University’s ties to the University of Tehran and regime-affiliated recruitment agencies.

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁷

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including the University of Tehran – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁸ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁹ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, collaboration between Linnaeus University and the University of Tehran supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial

⁶ Pars Afshin Institute, “[About Us](#)”

⁷ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

⁸ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁹ *Ibid.*

intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”¹⁰ The agreement further states that "biology and health," "food and agriculture," and “environmental science,” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹¹ Linnaeus University has previously confirmed that these fields each fall under its existing agreement with the University of Tehran.

Additionally, any student exchanges facilitated by the Pars Afshin Institute or other regime-affiliated recruitment agencies will be used facilitate these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”

درباره دانشکدگان ▾ دانشکده ها و گروه های آموزشی ▾ معاونت ها ▾ مراکز و موسسات تحقیقاتی ▾ مرکز خدمات فناوری دیجیتال

مه دانشگاه لینائوس سوئد با دانشکدگان

انعقاد تفاهم نامه دانشگاه لینائوس سوئد با دانشکدگان

تعداد بازدید: ۳۷۸ | اخبار | کد: ۲۷۷۱۷ | ۰۹:۵۲ | ۱۴۰۱ اردیبهشت ۲۵

دانشکدگان کشاورزی و منابع طبیعی با دانشگاه لینائوس جهت همکاری‌های علمی و پژوهشی در زمینه علوم جنگل چوب تفاهم نامه‌ی همکاری امضا نمودند.

Fig. 1: Partnership with Linnaeus University listed on the University of Tehran College of Agriculture and Natural Resources website

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

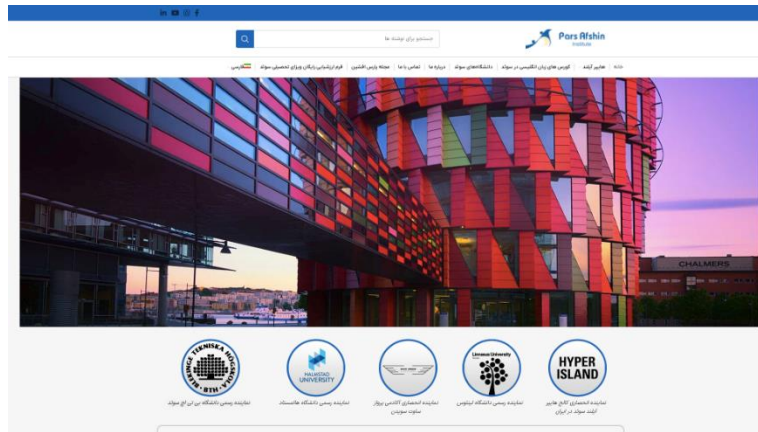


Fig. 2: Linnaeus University listed on the Pars Afshin Institute website

From: Kay Svensson <kay.svensson@lnu.se>
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2023 4:54 AM
To: Ambassador Mark Wallace <ambwallace@uani.org>
Cc: Registrar@lnu.se; Katarina Ek <katarina.ek@lnu.se>; Peter Aronsson <peter.aronsson@lnu.se>;
Jesper Andersson <jesper.andersson@lnu.se>
Subject: DNR: LNU-2023/2886 Correspondence FAO Professor Aronsson, Linnaeus University
#lnureg:518636#

Dear Ambassador Wallace,

Thank you for mail regarding Linnaeus University and Iran.

Regarding your questions.

1. Linnaeus University, Faculty of Technology has currently one MOU with The College of Agriculture and National Resources, University of Teheran.
2. It is open for Iranian citizen to apply to Swedish universities. Historically Linnaeus University has been working with two Iranian recruitment agencies, however in the current situation with the embargo they are rather inactive. The two agencies consist of two Iranian students, one previously graduated from Blekinge Tekniska Högskola and one from Linnéuniversitetet.
3. With regret we will not be able to attend the hearing in Stockholm September 28.

Best regards

Kay Svensson
Avdelningschef externa relationer
Head of Department for External Relations

Fig. 3: Response to our letter dated September 14, 2023

The IRGC and the University of Tehran

In addition to the SCCR strategic agreement, the University of Tehran is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹² There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including the University of Tehran – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹³ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”) ¹⁴ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁵ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁶

Due to its direct control, the University of Tehran is governed by a regime-approved “Moral Charter,” which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁷ This “Moral Charter” enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁸ The SBO’s University of Tehran branch has a gruesome record of violence, as its members have killed students during protests over the last two decades and encouraged acts of terror.¹⁹ The President of the University of Tehran, Seyed Mohammad Moghimi is a member of the PBO and a former member of the SBO. Ideologically aligned with these militias and closely affiliated with IRGC leadership,²⁰ Moghimi has supported the imprisonment, torture, and execution of female students who violate the Iranian regime’s own strict morality laws – in line with the university’s “Moral Charter.”²¹ The repressive actions supported by Moghimi have prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²²

¹² For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

¹³ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁵ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁶ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

¹⁷ Iran International, “[Tehran University Deploys More Hijab Enforcers](#),” February 19, 2024.

¹⁸ The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

¹⁹ New Lines, “[A Shadowy Paramilitary Group Leads the Bloody Crackdown on Iran’s College Campuses](#),” April 20, 2023.

²⁰ Iranian Student News Network, “[فرمانده کل سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی در دانشگاه تهران تجلیل شد](#),”

²¹ Jurist, “[University of Tehran institutes disciplinary procedures for students refusing to wear hijab](#),” January 20, 2023.

²² Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations](#),” May 22, 2023.



Fig. 4: President of the University of Tehran, Seyed Mohammad Moghimi, with Hossein Salami, head of the IRGC

Beyond falling under the IRGC’s jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in the University of Tehran’s academic culture. The University frequently hosts internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment initiatives, and participation in research projects.²³ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at the University to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²⁴ Additionally, members of the IRGC’s terrorist proxies region can freely enroll as students at the University of Tehran, even as Iranians themselves face obstacles in the admissions process.²⁵ The University of Tehran also has a long record of conducting research on behalf of the IRGC’s drone, missile, and other weapons programs.²⁶ Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁷

The IRGC’s Exploitation of Iran’s Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including the University of Tehran, to facilitate its malign activities. In particular, the IRGC has used Iranian universities to support the regime’s nuclear,

²³ Tasnim News Agency, “[Funeral of IRGC Forces to Be Held in Tehran on Int’l Quds Day](#),” April 3, 2024; University of Tehran, “[درخواست تأمین منابع انسانی جهت فرماندهی فضایی نیروی هوافضای سپاه](#),” University of Tehran, “[ارتباط ایمان به حضور خداوند در زندگی زناشویی و رضایت‌مندی زوجین: بررسی نقش میانجی شیوه های مقابله مذهبی](#),” Jerusalem Post, “[Iran will not hesitate to launch missiles at Haifa, IRGC commander warns](#),” October 23, 2023.

²⁴ Tabnak, “[آغاز مراسم نخستین سالگرد شهید سیدسید سلیمانی](#),” January 1, 2021.

²⁵ Iran International, “[Tehran University Students Oppose Admission Of Iraqi Militias](#),” July 14, 2023.

²⁶ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, “[Tehran University](#),” July 28, 2022.

²⁷ Washington Institute, “[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran](#),” February 25, 2019.

ballistic missile and drone programs, which has been aided by the international partnerships these universities maintain.²⁸

Since 2014, Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁹ It must be noted that entities within Iran’s Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.³⁰ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including the University of Tehran, are directly contributing to Iran’s defense industry, particularly “aerospace and quantum technologies.”³¹ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic’s allies like Russia and the Assad regime.³²

There is clear evidence that the IRGC actively exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.³³ Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³⁴ Due to the IRGC’s active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.

²⁸ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, “[Tehran University](#),” July 28, 2022; The US Institute of Peace, “[Iran's Ballistic Missile Program](#),” January 13, 2021; The Guardian, “[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#),” February 14, 2024.

²⁹ ISNA, “وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند.”

³⁰ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, “[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#),” November 14, 2019.

³¹ <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

³² The Guardian, “[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US](#),” November 1, 2023; Reuters, “[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles](#),” February 21, 2024.

³³ Iran International, “[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones](#),” June 8, 2023.

³⁴ The Guardian, “[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#),” February 14, 2024.



Fig.5: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

The IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.³⁵ It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.³⁶ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.³⁷ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

The IRGC’s malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder

³⁵ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

³⁶ Tony Blair Institute, “[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran’s IRGC](#)”, January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, “[Iran’s Revolutionary Guards](#),” January 8, 2024.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Jews in Germany.³⁸ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.³⁹

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime’s malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.⁴⁰ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.⁴¹ These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC’s murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization.⁴²

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁴³ As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate for a Swedish university to maintain any affiliation with any Iranian entity with such close ties to the IRGC. Even a partnership agreement alone legitimizes the paramilitary organization’s extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC’s Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime’s “hostage-diplomacy,” is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

³⁸ Iran International, “[US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists](#),” January 29, 2024; BBC News, “[Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK](#),” April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, “[A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War](#),” March 12, 2024.

³⁹ Iran International, “[UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals](#),” January 23, 2024; Iran International, “[After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran’s Embassy](#),” March 22, 2024.

⁴⁰ Associated Press, “[Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say](#),” February 8, 2024.

⁴¹ Iran Wire, “[IRGC Suspected in Couple’s Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews](#),” February 7, 2024.

⁴² Iran International, “[Swedish Parliament Votes To Designate Iran’s IRGC As Terrorist](#),” May 10, 2023.

⁴³ Geopolitical Monitor, “[IRGC Main Player in Iran’s Amini Protests](#),” December 13, 2022; VOA News, “[Monitor: 516 Killed Since Iran Protests Began](#),” January 3, 2023.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, the University of Tehran's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴⁴ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴⁵ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴⁶

Therefore, it is improper for Linnaeus University to have any partnership agreement with the University of Tehran, an entity that is affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – Linnaeus University's relationship with the University of Tehran poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to: clarify if the university's memorandum of understanding remains in effect since our last correspondence, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all of Linnaeus University's ties to the University of Tehran and regime-affiliated recruitment agencies.

⁴⁴ Universitetsläraren, "[Såpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴⁵ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴⁶ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”) is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI's diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

April 25, 2024

Professor Birgitta Bergvall-Kåreborn
Vice Chancellor
Luleå University of Technology
971 87 Luleå
Sweden
By e-mail: rektor@ltu.se

Re: Luleå University of Technology and the IRGC

Dear Professor Bergvall-Kåreborn:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)²—an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

We note that Luleå University of Technology (“LUT”) maintains an ongoing partnership with the University of Guilan, as confirmed by the university’s website.⁵ Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to clarify if this partnership remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between LUT and Guilan University.

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ Guilan University, “[Scientific cooperation between Iran and Sweden](#)”

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁶

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including Guilan University – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁷ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁸ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between LUT and Guilan University supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”⁹ The agreement further states that “economic security,” “food and agriculture,” “energy,” and “environmental science,” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹⁰ Each of these fields are covered by the partnership between LUT and Guilan University.¹¹ Since forming its partnership with LUT, Guilan University has continuously sought to produce further research in these fields, among others.¹² Additionally,

⁶ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR,](#)” July 26, 2023.

⁷ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,](#)” February 2021.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Guilan University, “[Scientific cooperation between Iran and Sweden](#)”

¹² Guilan University, “[دانشگاه گیلان مسئول کارگروه ملی هماهنگی و پیگیری همکاری های علمی با کشور سوئد شد,](#)” June 14, 2017; Guilan University, “[بازدید هیات دانشگاه گیلان از دانشگاه ها و صندوق حمایت از فعالیت های بین المللی سوئد,](#)” October 27, 2017.

student exchanges or joint conferences facilitated by the partnership are used to further these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”



Fig. 1: Partnership with LUT listed on the Guilan University website

The IRGC and Guilan University

Beyond the SCCR strategic agreement, Guilan University is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹³ There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including Guilan University – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹⁴ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the

¹³ For full IRGC designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

¹⁴ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)¹⁵ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁶ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁷

Due to direct regime control, Guilan University is governed by a moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁸ This also enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁹ The President of Guilan University, Farid Najafi is a member of the PBO and a former member of the SBO.²⁰ Ideologically aligned with these militias and closely affiliated with IRGC leadership,²¹ Najafi has supported the imprisonment, torture, and execution of female students who violate the Iranian regime’s own strict morality laws.²² The repressive actions supported by Najafi have prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²³

¹⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁶ The Washington Institute, “[Iran's Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁷ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

¹⁸ The Times, “[Iran’s forces storm cities at the heart of hijab rebellion](#),” November 21, 2022; The Washington Post, “[How Iran’s universities have become the center of a national uprising](#),” November 4, 2022; The United States Institute of Peace, “[Iran's University Protests](#),” January 5, 2023.

¹⁹ The Times, “[Iran’s forces storm cities at the heart of hijab rebellion](#),” November 21, 2022; The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

²⁰ Guilan University, “[رئیس دانشگاه گیلان: اساتید در صف اول جبهه علمی و فرهنگی قرار دارند](#),” November 21, 2023.

²¹ Iranian Student News Network, “[فرمانده کل سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی در دانشگاه تهران تجلیل شد](#),”

²² The Washington Post, “[How Iran’s universities have become the center of a national uprising](#),” November 4, 2022

²³ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations](#),” May 22, 2023.



Fig. 2: President of Guilan University, Farid Najafi, pictured with uniformed IRGC officer

Beyond falling under the IRGC's jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in the Guilan University's academic culture. Guilan University frequently hosts internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment initiatives, and participation in research projects.²⁴ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at the university to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²⁵ Guilan University also has a long record of encouraging its student body to support IRGC initiatives.²⁶ Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁷

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including Guilan University, to facilitate its malign activities. In particular, the IRGC has used Iranian universities to support the regime's nuclear, ballistic missile

²⁴ Guilan University, "تجمع دانشگاهیان دانشگاه گیلان در حمایت از سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی," April 15, 2019; Guilan University, "تفاهم نامه همکاری مشترک بین دانشگاه گیلان و سازمان بسیج مهندسين سپاه قدس گیلان منعقد شد," December 19, 2023; Guilan University, "رئیس دانشگاه گیلان: اساتید در صف اول جبهه علمی و فرهنگی قرار دارند," November 21, 2023.

²⁵ Guilan University, "تجمع دانشگاهیان دانشگاه در محکومیت ترور شهید سردار سلیمانی," January 2, 2020.

²⁶ Guilan University, "گزارش بازدید دانشجویان دانشگاه گیلان از مرکز آموزش شهای تخصصهای دریایی (سید الشهداء) زیبا کنار," May 29, 2010; Mehr News, "اعزام ۵۵۰ دانشجوی گیلانی به اردوی راهیان نور," March 4, 2024.

²⁷ Washington Institute, "[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran.](#)" February 25, 2019.

and drone programs, which has been aided by the international partnerships these universities maintain.²⁸

Since 2014, Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁹ It must be noted that entities within Iran’s Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.³⁰ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including Guilan University, are directly contributing to Iran’s defense industry, particularly “aerospace and quantum technologies.”³¹ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic’s allies like Russia and the Assad regime.³²

There is clear evidence that the IRGC actively exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.³³ Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³⁴ Due to the IRGC’s active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.

²⁸ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, “[Tehran University](#),” July 28, 2022; The US Institute of Peace, “[Iran's Ballistic Missile Program](#),” January 13, 2021; The Guardian, “[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#),” February 14, 2024.

²⁹ ISNA, “وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند”

³⁰ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, “[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#),” November 14, 2019.

³¹ <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

³² The Guardian, “[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US](#),” November 1, 2023; Reuters, “[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles](#),” February 21, 2024.

³³ Iran International, “[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones](#),” June 8, 2023.

³⁴ The Guardian, “[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#),” February 14, 2024.



Fig.3: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

The IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.³⁵ It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.³⁶ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.³⁷ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

The IRGC’s malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder Jews in Germany.³⁸ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions

³⁵ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

³⁶ Tony Blair Institute, “[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran’s IRGC](#),” January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, “[Iran’s Revolutionary Guards](#),” January 8, 2024.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Iran International, “[US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists](#),” January 29, 2024; BBC News, “[Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK](#),” April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, “[A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War](#),” March 12, 2024.

serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.³⁹

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime’s malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.⁴⁰ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.⁴¹ These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC’s murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization.⁴²

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁴³ As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate for a Swedish university to maintain any affiliation with any Iranian entity with such close ties to the IRGC. Even a partnership agreement alone legitimizes the paramilitary organization’s extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC’s Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime’s “hostage-diplomacy,” is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected

³⁹ Iran International, “[UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals](#),” January 23, 2024; Iran International, “[After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran’s Embassy](#),” March 22, 2024.

⁴⁰ Associated Press, “[Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say](#),” February 8, 2024.

⁴¹ Iran Wire, “[IRGC Suspected in Couple’s Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews](#),” February 7, 2024.

⁴² Iran International, “[Swedish Parliament Votes To Designate Iran’s IRGC As Terrorist](#),” May 10, 2023.

⁴³ Geopolitical Monitor, “[IRGC Main Player in Iran’s Amini Protests](#),” December 13, 2022; VOA News, “[Monitor: 516 Killed Since Iran Protests Began](#),” January 3, 2023.

to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, the Guilan University's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴⁴ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴⁵ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴⁶

Therefore, it is improper for LUT to have any partnership agreement with Guilan University, an entity that is affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – LUT's relationship with Guilan University poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to: clarify if this partnership remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever LUT's ties to Guilan University.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

⁴⁴ Universitetsläraren, "[Såpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴⁵ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴⁶ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”) is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI’s diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

April 25, 2024

Professor Erik Renström
Vice-Chancellor
Lund University
Box 117
SE-221 00 Lund
Sweden
Via email: rektor@rektor.lu.se

Re: Lund University and the IRGC

Dear Professor Renström:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)²—an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

In furtherance to our letter dated September 14, 2023, we note that Lund University maintains partnerships with Malayer University and University of Torbat Heydarieh (“UTH”) in Iran, based on a memorandum of understanding signed between the Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology and the Swedish European Affairs and Foreign Trade.⁵ This is confirmed by the websites of both universities, which describe the use of Erasmus+ funding to facilitate these

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran (Dolat.ir), “[فرهادی: همکاری همه جانبه با دانشگاه‌های سوئد نگاه راهبردی ایران است](#),” February 12, 2017.

partnerships.⁶ We further note that Lund University is identified by the University of Tehran as maintaining a joint master’s program.⁷ Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to clarify if these partnerships remain in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between Lund University and the aforementioned Iranian universities.

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁸

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁹ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.¹⁰ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between Lund University and Iranian universities supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include:

⁶ Malayer University, “[پروژه مشترک اتحادیه اروپایی دانشگاه ملای](#),” February 8, 2017; University of Torbat Heydarieh, “[The University At A Glance](#),” January 1, 2020.

⁷ The University of Tehran, “[Faculty of Geography](#)”

⁸ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

⁹ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

“Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”¹¹ The agreement further states that the fields of “geology,” “computer processing,” and “environmental science,” are critical in supporting regime objectives. According to Lund University’s partnership agreements with Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran, and Lund University’s publications, these partnership agreements involve research on digital mapping, environmental studies, and geography – which fall under these fields.¹²

Additionally, any student exchanges organized as part of these partnership agreements will be used to facilitate these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”¹³

The screenshot shows the Malayer University website with a news article titled "پروژه مشترک اتحادیه اروپایی (Erasmus+) دانشگاه ملایر". The article text is as follows:

این پروژه که تحت عنوان International MSc Educational Programme in Environmental Management and Modeling (به اختصار GeoNetC) و توسط Erasmus+، Higher Education – International Capacity Building حمایت مالی می شود، در خصوص طراحی دروس مقطع کارشناسی ارشد مجازی رشته GIS به زبانهای انگلیسی، فارسی و عربی می باشد. دانشگاه های شرکت کننده در این پروژه، دانشگاه Lund کشور سوئد (مجرى طرح)، دانشگاه Instituto Superior Tecnico کشور پرتغال، دانشگاه Twente کشور هلند، دانشگاه Vilnius Gediminas Technical University کشور لیتوانی، دانشگاه Duhok کشور عراق، دانشگاه Salahaddin کشور عراق، دانشگاه تربیت مدرس و دانشگاه ملایر هستند.

دانشگاه لوند که به عنوان هماهنگ کننده اصلی این پروژه مطرح می باشد، جز دانشگاه های برتر دنیا و جزو دانشگاه های با رتبه زیر ۱۰۰ است. تمام جلسات در GIS Centre در این دانشگاه برگزار می شود. این پژوهشکده بعنوان یکی از مراکز مهم دانشگاه لوند همواره ارتباطات بین المللی متعددی در سطح دنیا با دانشگاه ها و مراکز معتبر بین المللی برقرار کرده و رئیس مرکز (پروفسور پیتر پیلسجو) به عنوان یکی از دانشمندان بنام در حوزه مدلسازی محیطی در سطح دنیا مطرح هستند که به عنوان یکی از افراد مهم و تاثیرگذار در بررسی و تصویب پروژه های اتحادیه اروپا هستند.

در مرحله اول مقرر شد برای طراحی دروس مرتبط با این مقطع تحصیلی مجازی، سر فصل های مربوطه توسط دانشگاه های همکار پیشنهاد شده و به مجری ارائه گردد تا در نشست عمومی بعدی، به بحث گذاشته شده و به تصویب نهایی برسد. بعد از این مرحله، از بین ۸ دانشگاه همکار، آنهایی که توانایی و پتانسیل آماده کردن مطالب و فیلمبرداری دروس به زبان انگلیسی را دارند، شناخته و اعلام شوند. جلسات بعدی، با مشاوره و همکاری اعضای همکار پروژه، موارد مطرح به مشورت گذاشته شده و پس از ارزیابی بیرون از مجموعه مجری و همکاران پروژه (توسط چند دانشگاه دیگر از اتحادیه اروپایی)، این دروس به تصویب نهایی برسند.

Fig. 1: Partnership with Lund University listed on the Malayer University website

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Malayer University, “پروژه مشترک اتحادیه اروپایی دانشگاه ملایر,” February 8, 2017; University of Torbat Heydarieh, “The University At A Glance,” January 1, 2020; The University of Tehran, “Faculty of Geography,” Lund University, “Features of the international MSC educational programme in environmental management and modelling,” December 31, 2018.

¹³ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” February 2021.

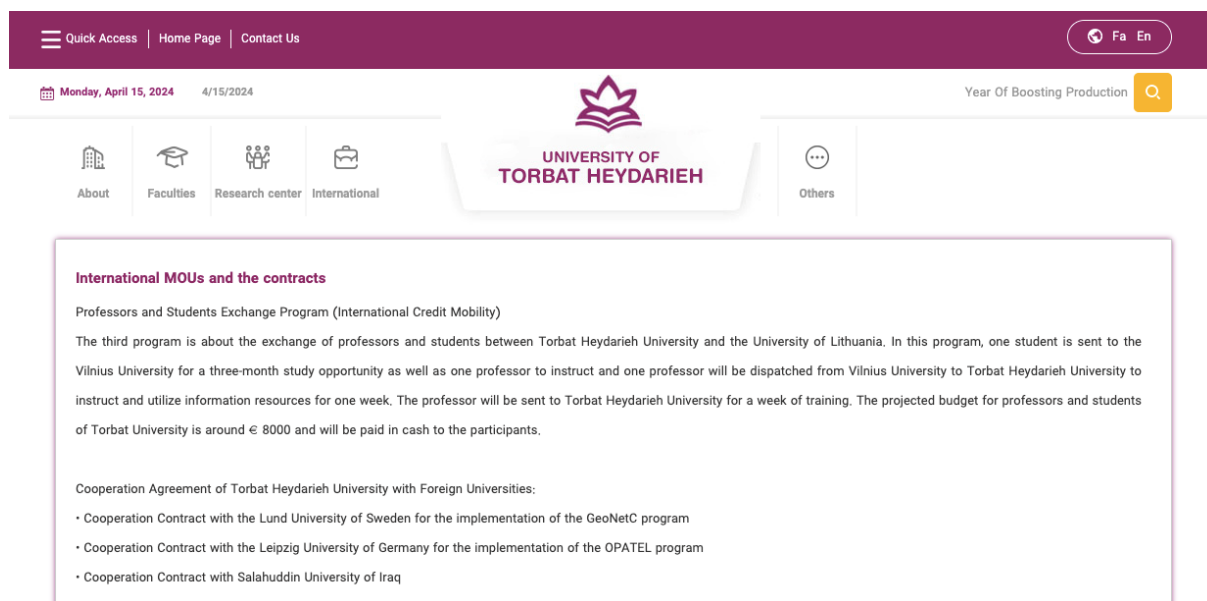


Fig. 2: Partnership with Lund University listed on the UTH website

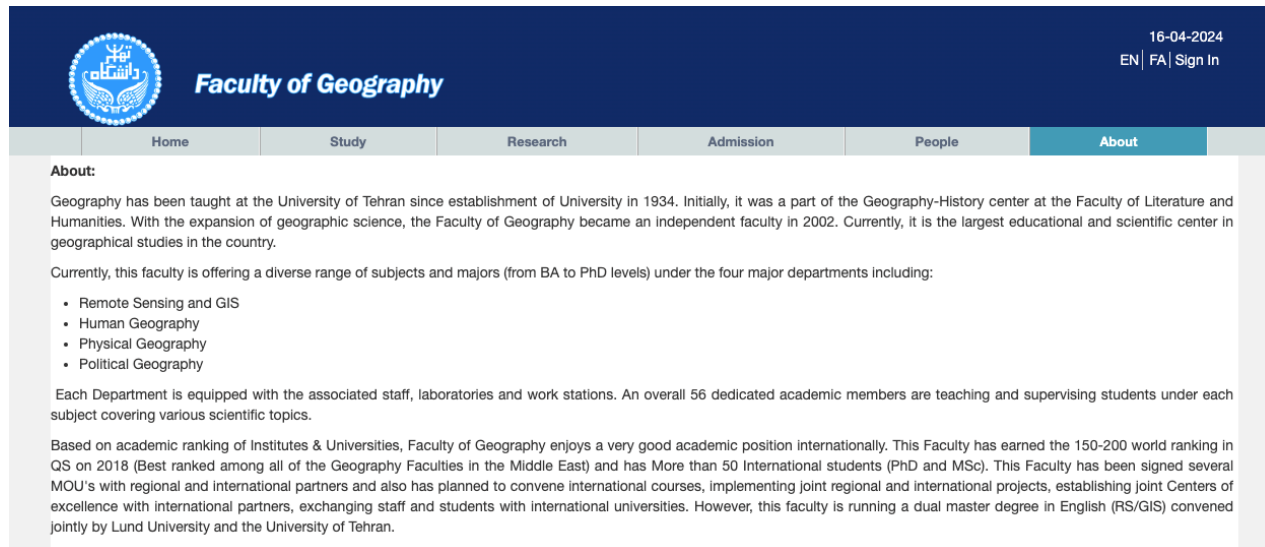


Fig. 3: Lund University listed on the University of Tehran website

The IRGC and Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran

In addition to the SCCR strategic agreement, the Malayer University, UTH, and University of Tehran are all extensively affiliated with the IRGC. There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including these universities – are under the

regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹⁴ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)¹⁵ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁶ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁷

Due to the regime’s direct control, Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran is governed by a regime-approved moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁸ This moral code enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁹ In particular, the SBO’s Malayer University and University of Tehran branches have a gruesome record of violence, as its members have killed students during protests over the last two decades and encouraged acts of terror.²⁰ Due to these repressive acts, the EU has imposed sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²¹ It is important to note that the presidents of Malayer University, UTH, and University of Tehran are required to be members of the PBO, and are all former member of the SBO.²²

Beyond falling under the IRGC’s jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in Iranian academic culture. Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran frequently host internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment

¹⁴ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁶ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁷ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

¹⁸ The United States Institute of Peace, “[Iran’s University Protests](#),” January 5, 2023; Iran Wire, “[Young Iranian Man at Risk of Execution in Case Marred With Contradictions](#),” November 16, 2023; Iran International, “[Tehran University Deploys More Hijab Enforcers](#),” February 19, 2024.

¹⁹ The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

²⁰ New Lines, “[A Shadowy Paramilitary Group Leads the Bloody Crackdown on Iran’s College Campuses](#),” April 20, 2023; Iran Wire, “[Young Iranian Man at Risk of Execution in Case Marred With Contradictions](#),” November 16, 2023.

²¹ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations](#),” May 22, 2023.

²² The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023; Malayer University, “[مراسم تکریم و معارفه مسئول بسیج اساتید دانشگاه ملایر برگزار گردید](#)”

initiatives, and participation in research projects.²³ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at these universities to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²⁴ Members of the IRGC's terrorist proxies region can also freely enroll as students at these universities, even as Iranians themselves face obstacles in the admissions process.²⁵ Therefore, any partnerships with universities which maintain such strong ties to the IRGC are unacceptable, given the organization's extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁶



Fig. 3: President of the University of Tehran, Seyed Mohammad Moghimi, at a ceremony with Hossein Salami, head of the IRGC

²³ Tasnim News Agency, "[Funeral of IRGC Forces to Be Held in Tehran on Int'l Quds Day](#)," April 3, 2024; University of Tehran, "[درخواست تأمین منابع انسانی جهت فرماندهی فضایی نیروی هوافضای سپاه](#)," University of Tehran, "[ارتباط؛ ایمان به حضور خداوند در زندگی زناشویی و رضایت‌مندی زوجین: بررسی نقش میانجی شیوه های مقابله مذهبی حضور فرمانده محترم سپاه تربیت حیدریه جهت تیریک سالروز شهادت استاد بسیجی شهید دکتر مصطفی جمران و روز ملی بسیج](#)," University of Torbat heydariyeh, "[ویژه برنامه ماه مبارک رمضان و محفل انس با قرآن در دانشگاه ملایر برگزار](#)," Malayer University, "[اساتید در دانشگاه شد](#)," April 8, 2024.

²⁴ Tabnak, "[آغاز مراسم نخستین سالگرد شهید سیدسید سلیمانی](#)," January 1, 2021; Malayer University, "[مراسم سومین سالگرد شهادت؛ سردار شهید حاج قاسم سلیمانی برگزار شد](#)," January 2, 2023.

²⁵ Iran International, "[Tehran University Students Oppose Admission Of Iraqi Militias](#)," July 14, 2023.

²⁶ Washington Institute, "[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran](#)," February 25, 2019.



Fig. 4: President of Malayer University, Ebrahim Mohammadi-Manesh, at a PBO meeting with uniformed IRGC personnel



Fig. 5: President of UTH, Mohammad Hassan Fathi, meeting with a uniformed IRGC officer

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran, to facilitate its malign activities. In particular, these universities also have a long record of conducting research on behalf of or otherwise supporting the IRGC's drone, missile, and other weapons programs.²⁷

Since 2014, Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁸ It must be noted that entities within Iran's Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.²⁹ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including those maintaining partnership agreements with Lund University, are directly contributing to Iran's defense industry, particularly "aerospace and quantum technologies."³⁰ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic's allies like Russia and the Assad regime.³¹

There is clear evidence that the IRGC exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.³² Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³³ Due to the IRGC's active

²⁷ Center for Intelligence and Research Analysis, "[Government-Sponsored Research Centers Highlight Iranian Universities' Military Ties, Foreign Collaboration](#)," April 11, 2023; Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Tehran University](#)," July 28, 2022; Malayer University, "[نخستین ماهواره نظامی جمهوری اسلامی ایران با موفقیت در مدار زمین](#)," [قرار گرفت](#)," University of Torbat Heydarieh, "[دیدار ریاست دانشگاه تربت حیدریه با فرمانده سپاه ناحیه مقاومت تربت حیدریه](#)," July 13, 2020.

²⁸ ISNA, "[وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند](#),"

²⁹ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#)," November 14, 2019.

³⁰ <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

³¹ The Guardian, "[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US](#)," November 1, 2023; Reuters, "[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles](#)," February 21, 2024.

³² Iran International, "[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones](#)," June 8, 2023.

³³ The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.

exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.



Fig.4: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

The IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.³⁴ It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.³⁵ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.³⁶ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

³⁴ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

³⁵ Tony Blair Institute, “[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran’s IRGC](#)”, January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, “[Iran’s Revolutionary Guards](#),” January 8, 2024.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The IRGC's malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder Jews in Germany.³⁷ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.³⁸

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime's malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.³⁹ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.⁴⁰ These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC's murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization.⁴¹

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁴² As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate for a Swedish university to maintain any affiliation with any Iranian entity with such close ties to the IRGC. Even a partnership agreement alone legitimizes the paramilitary organization's extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC's Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on

³⁷ Iran International, "[US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists](#)," January 29, 2024; BBC News, "[Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK](#)," April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, "[A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War](#)," March 12, 2024.

³⁸ Iran International, "[UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals](#)," January 23, 2024; Iran International, "[After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran's Embassy](#)," March 22, 2024.

³⁹ Associated Press, "[Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say](#)," February 8, 2024.

⁴⁰ Iran Wire, "[IRGC Suspected in Couple's Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews](#)," February 7, 2024.

⁴¹ Iran International, "[Swedish Parliament Votes To Designate Iran's IRGC As Terrorist](#)," May 10, 2023.

⁴² Geopolitical Monitor, "[IRGC Main Player in Iran's Amini Protests](#)," December 13, 2022; VOA News, "[Monitor: 516 Killed Since Iran Protests Began](#)," January 3, 2023.

fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime's "hostage-diplomacy," is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, the University of Tehran's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴³ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴⁴ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴⁵

Therefore, it is improper for Lund University to have any partnership agreement with Malayer University, UTH, or University of Tehran, entities that are affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – Lund University's relationship with the aforementioned Iranian universities poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to: clarify if these partnerships remain in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all of Lund University's ties to Malayer University, UTH, and the University of Tehran.

⁴³ Universitetsläraren, "[Säpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴⁴ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴⁵ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”) is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI’s diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

April 25, 2024

Professor Kerstin Tham
Vice-Chancellor
Malmö University
205 06 Malmö
Sweden
by email: Kerstin.Tham@mau.se

Re: Malmö University and the IRGC

Dear Professor Tham:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)²—an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

In furtherance to our letter dated September 14, 2023, we note that Malmö University maintains an educational memorandum with Chabahar Maritime University (“CMU”) in Iran, as reported by Iran’s Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and Iranian media.⁵ Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ MANA News Network, “[همکاری چاپهار با دانشگاه جهانی دریاوردی](#),” July 25, 2017; Iran Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, “[جزئیات دیدار مدیر عامل سازمان بنادر و دریاوردی با وزیر حمل و نقل و امور زیربنایی کشور های سوئد و ترکیه](#),” November 29, 2017.

clarify if this partnership remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between Malmö University and the CMU.

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁶

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including the CMU – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁷ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁸ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between Malmö University and the CMU supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”⁹ In order to support these priorities, the agreement also states that “guidance and navigation,” “logistics and vehicles,” and “infrastructure,”

⁶ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

⁷ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

are critical research fields.¹⁰ According to the Iranian government, these fields each fall under the educational memorandum between Malmö University and the CMU.¹¹

Additionally, the extensive student exchanges and conference activities facilitated by the educational memorandum are used facilitate these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement.¹² The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”¹³

The screenshot shows the website interface with a navigation bar at the top, a main content area with a large article, and a sidebar on the left with various news items and a photo of a man in an orange jacket. The article text is in Persian and discusses the meeting between the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization CEO and Swedish ministers, focusing on maritime cooperation and infrastructure development. It mentions the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries.

Fig. 1: Educational memorandum involving Malmö University discussed on the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development website

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Iran Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, “[جزئیات دیدار مدیرعامل سازمان بنادر و دریانوردی با وزرای حمل و نقل و امور زیربنایی کشورهای سوئد و ترکیه](#),” November 29, 2017.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

The IRGC and the CMU

Beyond the SCCR strategic agreement, the CMU is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹⁴ There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including the CMU – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹⁵ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”) ¹⁶ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁷ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁸

Due the regime’s control, the CMU is governed by a moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁹ This enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.²⁰ Such repressive actions have prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²¹ It is worth noting that president of the CMU and all other senior administrators are members of the PBO, like every major university in Iran.²²

Beyond falling under the IRGC’s jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in the CMU’s academic culture, not least a key point of recruitment for the IRGC’s naval forces.²³ The University frequently hosts internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, and participation in research projects.²⁴ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at the

¹⁴ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

¹⁵ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁷ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁸ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

¹⁹ The Guardian, “[Protesters defy crackdown at universities across Iran](#),” October 25, 2022; Radio Farda, “[Iranian Student Groups Issue Warnings As Policing Of Dress Code Rises](#),” June 19, 2023.

²⁰ The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

²¹ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations](#),” May 22, 2023.

²² The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

²³ TINN, “[جذب دریانورد بورسیه از طریق کنکور سراسری برای اولین بار](#),” February 24, 2024.

²⁴ Tasnim News Agency, “[Commander Stresses Navy’s Focus on Development of Iran’s Southeastern Coasts](#),” August 13, 2013; Asiran, “[افتتاح مدرسه امید تجارت در روستای “بمباسری چابهار”](#),” February 9, 2022.

University to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²⁵ Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁶

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including the CMU,²⁷ to facilitate its malign activities. In particular, the IRGC has used Iranian universities to support the regime's nuclear, ballistic missile and drone programs, which has been aided by the international partnerships these universities maintain.²⁸

Since 2014, Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁹ It must be noted that entities within Iran's Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.³⁰ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including the CMU, are directly contributing to Iran's defense industry, particularly "aerospace and quantum technologies."³¹ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic's allies like Russia and the Assad regime.³²

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²⁵ Islamic Republic News Agency, "[هم‌نوایی مردم جنوب سیستان و بلوچستان در سوگ شهید سلیمانی](#)," January 4, 2020.

²⁶ Washington Institute, "[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran](#)," February 25, 2019.

²⁷ Akharin Khabar, "[بازدید فرمانده نیروی دریایی سپاه از دانشگاه دریانوردی چابهار](#)," December 21, 2013.

²⁸ The US Institute of Peace, "[Iran's Ballistic Missile Program](#)," January 13, 2021; The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.

²⁹ ISNA, "[وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند](#),"

³⁰ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#)," November 14, 2019.

³¹ <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

³² The Guardian, "[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US](#)," November 1, 2023; Reuters, "[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles](#)," February 21, 2024.

³³ Iran International, "[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones](#)," June 8, 2023.

similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³⁴ Due to the IRGC's active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.



Fig. 2: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

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³⁴ The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.

³⁵ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

³⁶ Tony Blair Institute, "[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran's IRGC](#)", January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, "[Iran's Revolutionary Guards](#)," January 8, 2024.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The IRGC's malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder Jews in Germany.³⁸ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.³⁹

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime's malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.⁴⁰ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.⁴¹ These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC's murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization.⁴²

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁴³ As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate for a Swedish university to maintain any affiliation with any Iranian entity with such close ties to the IRGC. Even a partnership agreement alone legitimizes the paramilitary organization's extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC's Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on

³⁸ Iran International, "[US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists](#)," January 29, 2024; BBC News, "[Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK](#)," April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, "[A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War](#)," March 12, 2024.

³⁹ Iran International, "[UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals](#)," January 23, 2024; Iran International, "[After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran's Embassy](#)," March 22, 2024.

⁴⁰ Associated Press, "[Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say](#)," February 8, 2024.

⁴¹ Iran Wire, "[IRGC Suspected in Couple's Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews](#)," February 7, 2024.

⁴² Iran International, "[Swedish Parliament Votes To Designate Iran's IRGC As Terrorist](#)," May 10, 2023.

⁴³ Geopolitical Monitor, "[IRGC Main Player in Iran's Amini Protests](#)," December 13, 2022; VOA News, "[Monitor: 516 Killed Since Iran Protests Began](#)," January 3, 2023.

fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime's "hostage-diplomacy," is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, the CMU's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴⁴ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴⁵ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴⁶

Therefore, it is improper for Malmö University to have any partnership agreement with the CMU, an entity that is affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – Malmö University's relationship with the CMU poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to: clarify if the university's educational memorandum with CMU remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all of Malmö University's ties to the CMU.

⁴⁴ Universitetsläraren, "[Säpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴⁵ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

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We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

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April 25, 2024

Helene Hellmark Knutsson
Västerbotten Governor, University Chairman
Mid Sweden University
Holmgatan 10
852 30 Sundsvall
Sweden
By e-mail: helene.hellmarkknutsson@mium.se
Cc: kontakt@miun.se

Re: Mid Sweden University and the IRGC

Dear Governor Hellmark Knutsson:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)² – an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

We note that Mid Sweden University (“MIUN”) maintains an ongoing partnership with the University of Guilan, as confirmed by the university’s website.⁵ Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to: clarify if this partnership remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between MIUN and Guilan University.

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ Guilan University, “[Scientific cooperation between Iran and Sweden](#)”

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁶

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including Guilan University – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁷ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁸ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between MIUN and Guilan University supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”⁹ The agreement further states that “economic security,” “food and agriculture,” “energy,” and “environmental science,” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹⁰ Each of these fields are covered by the partnership between MIUN and Guilan University.¹¹ Since forming its partnership with MIUN, Guilan University has

⁶ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

⁷ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Guilan University, “[Scientific cooperation between Iran and Sweden](#)”

continuously sought to produce further research in these fields, among others.¹² Additionally, student exchanges or joint conferences facilitated by the partnership are used to further these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”

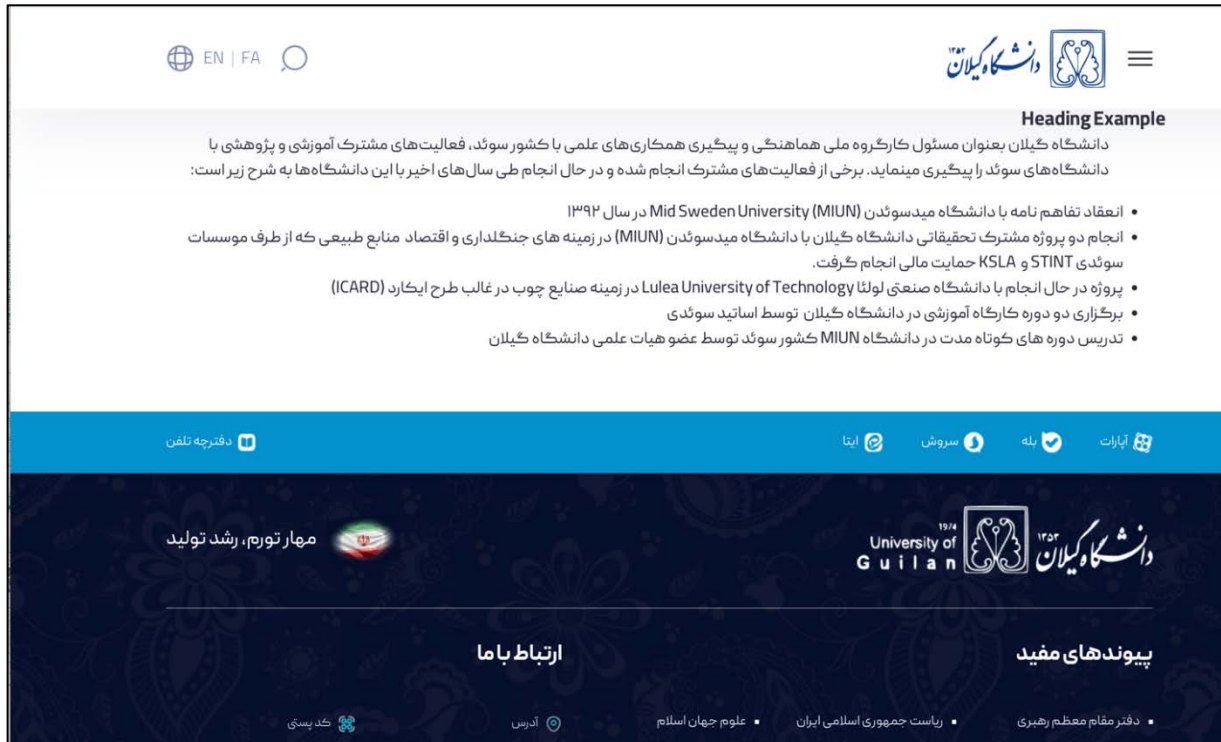


Fig. 1: Partnership with MIUN listed on the Guilan University website

The IRGC and Guilan University

Beyond the SCCR strategic agreement, Guilan University is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹³ There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including Guilan University – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and

¹² Guilan University, “دانشگاه گیلان مسئول کارگروه ملی هماهنگی و پیگیری همکاری های علمی با کشور سوئد شد,” June 14, 2017; Guilan University, “بازدید هیات دانشگاه گیلان از دانشگاه ها و صندوق حمایت از فعالیت های بین المللی سوئد,” October 27, 2017; Mid Sweden University, “[Publications](#),” September 8, 2017.

¹³ For full IRGC designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

administration.¹⁴ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)¹⁵ – tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁶ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁷

Due to direct regime control, Guilan University is governed by a moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁸ This also enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁹ The President of Guilan University, Farid Najafi is a member of the PBO and a former member of the SBO.²⁰ Ideologically aligned with these militias and closely affiliated with IRGC leadership,²¹ Najafi has supported the imprisonment, torture, and execution of female students who violate the Iranian regime’s own strict morality laws.²² The repressive actions supported by Najafi have prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²³

¹⁴ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁶ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁷ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

¹⁸ The Times, “[Iran’s forces storm cities at the heart of hijab rebellion](#),” November 21, 2022; The Washington Post, “[How Iran’s universities have become the center of a national uprising](#),” November 4, 2022; The United States Institute of Peace, “[Iran’s University Protests](#),” January 5, 2023.

¹⁹ The Times, “[Iran’s forces storm cities at the heart of hijab rebellion](#),” November 21, 2022; The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

²⁰ Guilan University, “[رئیس دانشگاه گیلان: اساتید در صف اول جبهه علمی و فرهنگی قرار دارند](#),” November 21, 2023.

²¹ Iranian Student News Network, “[فرمانده کل سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی در دانشگاه تهران تجلیل شد](#),”

²² The Washington Post, “[How Iran’s universities have become the center of a national uprising](#),” November 4, 2022

²³ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations](#),” May 22, 2023.



Fig. 3: President of Guilan University, Farid Najafi, pictured with uniformed IRGC officer

Beyond falling under the IRGC’s jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in the Guilan University’s academic culture. Guilan University frequently hosts internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment initiatives, and participation in research projects.²⁴ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at the university to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²⁵ Guilan University also has a long record of encouraging its student body to support IRGC initiatives.²⁶ Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁷

²⁴ Guilan University, “تجمع دانشگاهیان دانشگاه گیلان در حمایت از سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی,” April 15, 2019; Guilan University, “تفاهم نامه همکاری مشترک بین دانشگاه گیلان و سازمان بسیج مهندسين سپاه قدس گیلان منعقد شد,” December 19, 2023; Guilan University, “رئیس دانشگاه گیلان: اساتید در صف اول جبهه علمی و فرهنگی قرار دارند,” November 21, 2023.

²⁵ Guilan University, “تجمع دانشگاهیان دانشگاه در محکومیت ترور شهید سردار سلیمانی,” January 2, 2020.

²⁶ Guilan University, “گزارش بازدید دانشجویان دانشگاه گیلان از مرکز آموزش شهای تخصصهای دریایی (سید الشهداء(زیبا کنار),” May 29, 2010; Mehr News, “اعزام ۵۵۰ دانشجوی گیلانی به اردوی راهیان نور,” March 4, 2024.

²⁷ Washington Institute, “[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran.](#)” February 25, 2019.

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including Guilan University, to facilitate its malign activities. In particular, the IRGC has used Iranian universities to support the regime's nuclear, ballistic missile and drone programs, which has been aided by the international partnerships these universities maintain.²⁸

Since 2014, Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁹ It must be noted that entities within Iran's Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.³⁰ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including Guilan University, are directly contributing to Iran's defense industry, particularly "aerospace and quantum technologies."³¹ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic's allies like Russia and the Assad regime.³²

There is clear evidence that the IRGC exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.³³ Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³⁴ Due to the IRGC's active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.

²⁸ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Tehran University](#)," July 28, 2022; The US Institute of Peace, "[Iran's Ballistic Missile Program](#)," January 13, 2021; The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.

²⁹ ISNA, "[وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند](#),"

³⁰ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#)," November 14, 2019.

³¹ <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

³² The Guardian, "[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US](#)," November 1, 2023; Reuters, "[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles](#)," February 21, 2024.

³³ Iran International, "[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones](#)," June 8, 2023.

³⁴ The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.



Fig.4: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

The IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.³⁵ It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.³⁶ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.³⁷ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

The IRGC’s malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder Jews in Germany.³⁸ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions

³⁵ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

³⁶ Tony Blair Institute, “[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran’s IRGC](#)”, January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, “[Iran’s Revolutionary Guards](#),” January 8, 2024.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Iran International, “[US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists](#),” January 29, 2024; BBC News, “[Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK](#),” April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, “[A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War](#),” March 12, 2024.

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³⁹ Iran International, [“UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals,”](#) January 23, 2024; Iran International, [“After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran’s Embassy,”](#) March 22, 2024.

⁴⁰ Associated Press, [“Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say,”](#) February 8, 2024.

⁴¹ Iran Wire, [“IRGC Suspected in Couple’s Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews,”](#) February 7, 2024.

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Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – MIUN's relationship with Guilan University poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to clarify if the university's partnership with Guilan University remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever MIUN's ties to Guilan University

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

⁴⁴ Universitetsläraren, "[Såpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴⁵ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴⁶ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

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April 25, 2024

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Re: SLU and the IRGC

Dear Professor Wedel:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)² – an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

We note that SLU maintains an ongoing memorandum of understanding with Ilam University, as confirmed by the university’s website.⁵ Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to clarify if this memorandum of understanding remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between SLU and Ilam University.

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ Ilam University, “[انعقاد تفاهم نامه همکاری در زمینه علمی بین دانشکده علوم کشاورزی سوئد ودانشگاه](#)”

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁶

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including Ilam University – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁷ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁸ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between SLU and Ilam University supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”⁹ The agreement further states that “energy,” “food and agriculture,” and “environmental science,” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹⁰ According to the memorandum of understanding, these fields each fall under its existing agreement with Ilam University.¹¹ Additionally, any student exchanges, conferences, or symposia facilitated by the memorandum of understanding are used facilitate these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students”

⁶ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

⁷ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Ilam University, “[انعقاد تفاهم نامه همکاری در زمینه علمی بین دانشکده علوم کشاورزی سوئد ودانشگاه](#)”

affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”



Fig. 1: Partnership with SLU listed on Ilam University College of Agriculture and Natural Resources website

The IRGC and Ilam University

Beyond the SCCR strategic agreement, Ilam University is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹² There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including Ilam University – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹³ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)¹⁴ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁵ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁶

¹² For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

¹³ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁵ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁶ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

Due to its direct control, Ilam University is governed by a regime-approved moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁷ This moral code enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁸ The president of Ilam University, Ali Mohammadi, is a member of the PBO and a former member of the SBO.¹⁹ Ideologically aligned with these militias and closely affiliated with IRGC leadership, Mohammadi has supported the imprisonment, torture, and execution of female students who violate the Iranian regime’s own strict morality laws.²⁰ The repressive actions supported by Mohammadi have prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²¹

The paramilitary organization is also deeply engrained in Ilam University’s academic culture. The University frequently hosts internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment initiatives, and participation in research projects.²² Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at the University to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²³ The university president has also stated that he “wishes honor and glory” for the IRGC and its terrorist proxies in the “Axis of Resistance.”²⁴ Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁵

¹⁷ The Guardian, “[Protesters defy crackdown at universities across Iran.](#)” October 25, 2022; Radio Farda, “[Iranian Student Groups Issue Warnings As Policing Of Dress Code Rises.](#)” June 19, 2023.

¹⁸ The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran.](#)” November 22, 2023.

¹⁹ Ilam University, “[افتتاح ساختمان جدید سازمان بسیج اساتید استان ایلام در دانشگاه ایلام](#)”

²⁰ Jurist, “[University of Tehran institutes disciplinary procedures for students refusing to wear hijab.](#)” January 20, 2023.

²¹ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations.](#)” May 22, 2023.

²² Ilam University, “[برگزاری نشست هم‌اندیشی رئیس دانشگاه ایلام و نماینده بنیاد اقتصادی](#),” Ilam University, “[تقدیر فرمانده سپاه ناحیه ایلام از پایگاه مقاومت اداری دانشگاه ایلام](#),” Ilam University, “[تعاون سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی](#)”

²³ Ilam University, “[برگزاری مراسم بزرگداشت شهید سیهید حاج قاسم سلیمانی و شهدای مسیر زائران گلزار شهدای کرمان در دانشگاه ایلام](#)”

²⁴ Ilam University, “[پیام تبریک دکتر علی‌محمدی رئیس دانشگاه ایلام به مناسبت سالروز تأسیس سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی](#)”

²⁵ Washington Institute, “[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran.](#)” February 25, 2019.



Fig. 2: President of Ilam University, Ali Mohammadi, with uniformed IRGC personnel

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including Ilam University, to facilitate its malign activities. In particular, the IRGC has used Iranian universities to support the regime's nuclear, ballistic missile and drone programs, which has been aided by the international partnerships these universities maintain.²⁶

Since 2014, Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁷ It must be noted that entities within Iran's Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.²⁸ As a result of this

²⁶ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Tehran University](#)," July 28, 2022; The US Institute of Peace, "[Iran's Ballistic Missile Program](#)," January 13, 2021; The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.

²⁷ ISNA, "[وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند](#),"

²⁸ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#)," November 14, 2019.

partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including Ilam University, are directly contributing to Iran’s defense industry, particularly “aerospace and quantum technologies.”²⁹ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic’s allies like Russia and the Assad regime.³⁰

There is clear evidence that the IRGC exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.³¹ Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³² Due to the IRGC’s active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.



Fig.3: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

²⁹ <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

³⁰ The Guardian, “[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US,](#)” November 1, 2023; Reuters, “[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles,](#)” February 21, 2024.

³¹ Iran International, “[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones,](#)” June 8, 2023.

³² The Guardian, “[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime,](#)” February 14, 2024.

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

The IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.³³ It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.³⁴ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.³⁵ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

The IRGC’s malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder Jews in Germany.³⁶ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.³⁷

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime’s malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.³⁸ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.³⁹ These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC’s murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization.⁴⁰

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini

³³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

³⁴ Tony Blair Institute, “[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran’s IRGC](#)”, January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, “[Iran’s Revolutionary Guards](#),” January 8, 2024.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Iran International, “[US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists](#),” January 29, 2024; BBC News, “[Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK](#),” April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, “[A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War](#),” March 12, 2024.

³⁷ Iran International, “[UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals](#),” January 23, 2024; Iran International, “[After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran’s Embassy](#),” March 22, 2024.

³⁸ Associated Press, “[Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say](#),” February 8, 2024.

³⁹ Iran Wire, “[IRGC Suspected in Couple’s Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews](#),” February 7, 2024.

⁴⁰ Iran International, “[Swedish Parliament Votes To Designate Iran’s IRGC As Terrorist](#),” May 10, 2023.

by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁴¹ As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate for a Swedish university to maintain any affiliation with any Iranian entity with such close ties to the IRGC. Even a partnership agreement alone legitimizes the paramilitary organization's extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC's Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime's "hostage-diplomacy," is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, Ilam University's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴² This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴³ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Geopolitical Monitor, "[IRGC Main Player in Iran's Amini Protests](#)," December 13, 2022; VOA News, "[Monitor: 516 Killed Since Iran Protests Began](#)," January 3, 2023.

⁴² Universitetsläraren, "[Säpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴³ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴⁴ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.

Therefore, it is improper for SLU to have any partnership agreement with Ilam University, an entity that is affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI’s investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – SLU’s relationship with Ilam University poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to clarify if this memorandum of understanding remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all of SLU’s ties to Ilam University.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”) is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI’s diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

April 25, 2024

Professor Mats Tinnsten
Vice-Chancellor
University of Borås
S-501 90 Borås
Sweden
By e-mail: mats.tinnsten@hb.se

Re: The University of Borås and the IRGC

Dear Professor Tinnsten:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)² – an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

In furtherance to our letter dated September 14, 2023, we note that the University of Borås has signed a memorandum of understanding with Babol Noshirvani University of Technology (“BNUT”), according to BNUT’s website.⁵ According to the language of the memorandum, the University of Borås and BNUT are engaged in efforts to engage in joint research projects and facilitate faculty and student exchange. Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to clarify if this memorandum of understanding

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ BNUT Website, “[Memorandum of Understanding](#),” June 27, 2018.

remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between University of Borås and BNUT.

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁶

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including BNUT – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁷ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁸ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, collaboration between the University of Borås and BNUT supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”⁹ The agreement further states that “energy” and “chemistry” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹⁰ The memorandum of understanding between the University of Borås and BNUT lists “process engineering” and “chemical engineering” as the focus of the university partnership. Research on these subjects clearly benefits the IRGC, given their dual-use nature.

⁶ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR,](#)” July 26, 2023.

⁷ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,](#)” February 2021.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Additionally, any student exchanges facilitated the memorandum of understanding are used facilitate the IRGC's aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all "professors, researchers, students" affiliated with Iranian universities are used to "build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs."¹¹

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned being duly authorized thereto, has signed this Memorandum of Understanding.

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF
UNIVERSITY OF BORÅS SWEDEN:

Prof. Björn Berström, Vice Chancellor



27 / 06 / 2018

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF
BABOL NOSHIRVANI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY:

Prof. Kurosh Sedighi, Vice Chancellor



27 / 06 / 2018



MOU between BNUT, Iran and University of Borås, Sweden

6

Fig. 1: Signed memorandum of understanding between University of Borås and BNUT

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The IRGC and BNUT

In addition to the SCCR strategic agreement, BNUT is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹² There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including BNUT – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹³ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)¹⁴ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁵ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁶

Due to its direct control, BNUT is governed by a regime-approved moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, enforces bans against certain students, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the university community.¹⁷ This enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁸ The President of BNUT, Bahram Azizollah Ganji, is a militant member of the PBO and a former member of the SBO.¹⁹ This links Ganji to the gross human rights violations that prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO.²⁰

Beyond falling under the IRGC’s jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in BNUT’s academic culture. The University frequently hosts IRGC commanders and other regime public events, ceremonies, and participation in research projects.²¹ BNUT also has a long record of conducting research on behalf of the IRGC’s drone, missile, and other weapons

¹² For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

¹³ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁵ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁶ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

¹⁷ IRIB News Agency, “[گردهمایی جبهه علمی و فرهنگی اساتید، دانشگاه‌ها در دانشگاه صنعتی نوشیروانی بابل](#),” Iran Wire, “[Protests Unabated At Iranian Universities Despite Crackdown](#),” November 8, 2022; United States Institute of Peace, “[Iran’s University Protests](#),” January 5, 2023.

¹⁸ The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran](#),” November 22, 2023.

¹⁹ IRIB News Agency, “[گردهمایی جبهه علمی و فرهنگی اساتید، دانشگاه‌ها در دانشگاه صنعتی نوشیروانی بابل](#)”

²⁰ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations](#),” May 22, 2023.

²¹ Voice of America Farsi, “[«ابر از نگرانی از هم‌نشینی با «دانشمندان»؛ واکنش کاربران فضای مجازی به «پایتون گیت»](#),” April 12, 2023; Basij News, “[دیدار و بازدید فرمانده سپاه کربلا از دانشگاه نوشیروانی بابل](#),” July 12, 2023.

programs, including those related to electronics – the same field covered by is memorandum of understanding with the University of Borås.²² Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²³



Fig. 2: President of BNUT Bahram Azizollah Ganji pictured with the head of the IRGC's Karbala Division

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities, including the BNUT, to facilitate its malign activities.²⁴ In particular, the IRGC has used Iranian universities to support the regime's nuclear, ballistic missile and drone programs, which has been aided by the international partnerships these universities maintain.²⁵

²² Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis, "[Government-Sponsored Research Centers Highlight Iranian Universities' Military Ties, Foreign Collaboration](#)," April 11, 2023.

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Since 2014, Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.²⁶ It must be noted that entities within Iran’s Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.²⁷ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including BNUT, are directly contributing to Iran’s defense industry, particularly “aerospace and quantum technologies.”²⁸ In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic’s allies like Russia and the Assad regime.²⁹

There is clear evidence that the IRGC exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran’s Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.³⁰ Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.³¹ Due to the IRGC’s active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.

²⁶ ISNA, “وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند,”

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Fig.4: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

The IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.³² It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.³³ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.³⁴ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

The IRGC’s malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder Jews in Germany.³⁵ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions

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serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.³⁶

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime’s malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.³⁷ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.³⁸ These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC’s murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization.³⁹

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁴⁰ As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate for a Swedish university to maintain any affiliation with any Iranian entity with such close ties to the IRGC. Even a partnership agreement alone legitimizes the paramilitary organization’s extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC’s Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime’s “hostage-diplomacy,” is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected

³⁶ Iran International, “[UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals](#),” January 23, 2024; Iran International, “[After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran’s Embassy](#),” March 22, 2024.

³⁷ Associated Press, “[Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say](#),” February 8, 2024.

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to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, BNUT's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴¹ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴² Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴³

Therefore, it is improper for the University of Borås to have any partnership agreement with BNUT, an entity that is affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – the University of Borås's relationship with BNUT poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to clarify if the university's memorandum of understanding with BNUT remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between the University of Borås and BNUT.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

⁴¹ Universitetsläraren, "[Såpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴² Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴³ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”) is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI’s diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

April 25, 2024

Professor Anders Hagfeldt
Vice-chancellor
Uppsala University
Box 256
751 05 Uppsala
Sweden
By e-mail: rektor@uu.se

Re: Uppsala University and the IRGC

Dear Professor Hagfeldt:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)² – an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

We note that Uppsala University maintains an ongoing memorandum of understanding with Golestan University, according to university’s website.⁵ Given this evidence and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to clarify if this memorandum of understanding remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all ties between Uppsala University and Golestan University.

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ Golestan University, “[تفاهنامه های بین المللی](#)”

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”⁶

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including Golestan University – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”⁷ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.⁸ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between Uppsala University and Golestan University supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”⁹ The agreement further states that “geology,” “physical sciences,” and “environmental science,” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹⁰ According to the text of the memorandum of understanding, these fields fall under the partnership between Uppsala University and Golestan University.¹¹ Additionally, the memorandum of understanding calls for the exchange of students and staff, and

⁶ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

⁷ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Golestan University, “[Memorandum of Understanding Between Uppsala University and Golestan University](#),” August 22, 2016; Golestan University, “[تفاهنامه های بین المللی](#)”

for joint conferences and symposia to be held.¹² This is concerning, as the strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.” The language of the strategic agreement reveals IRGC will access and benefit from any and all research produced in conjunction with an Iranian university.

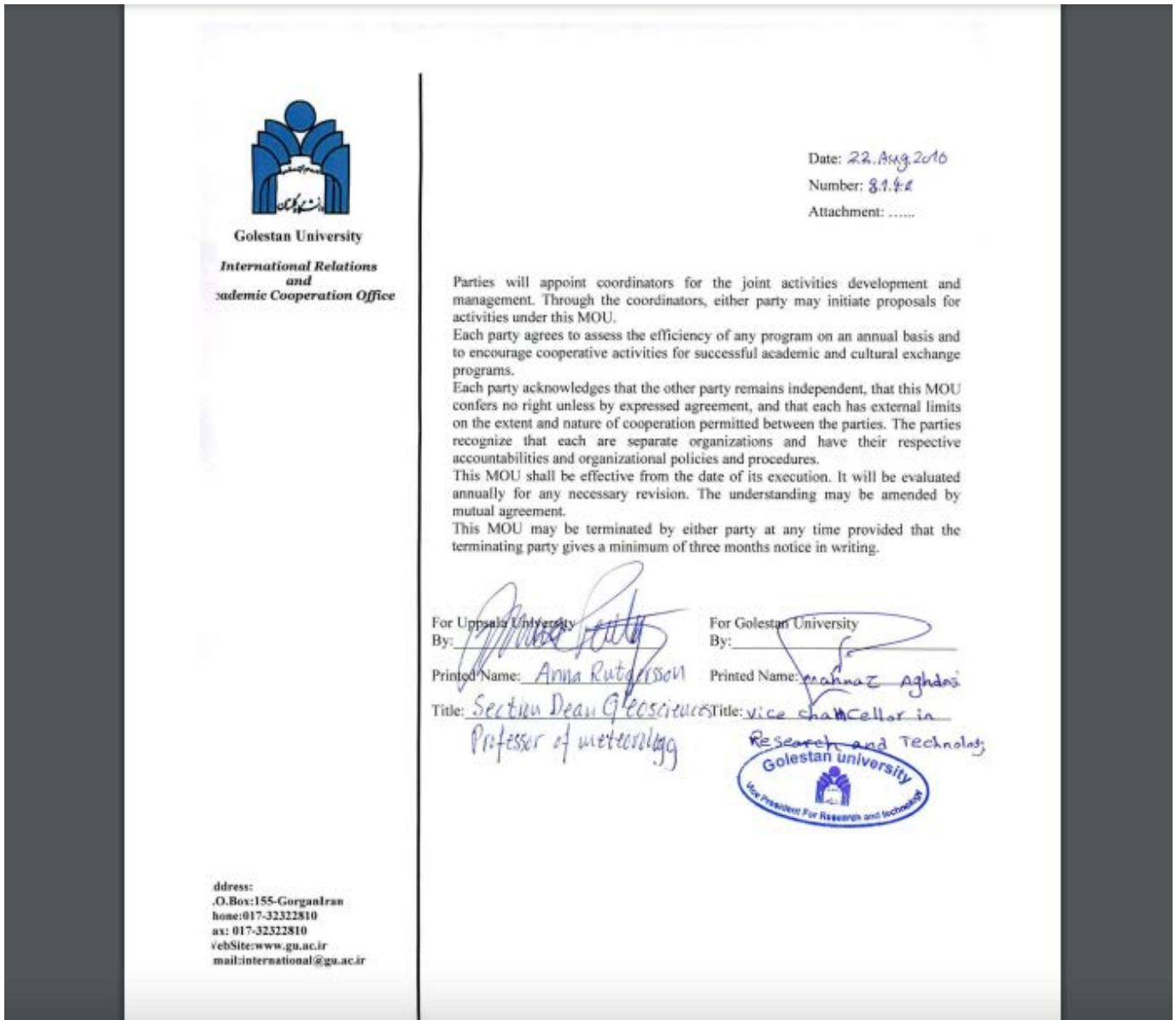


Fig. 1: Signatories of the memorandum of understanding with Uppsala University included on Golestan University website

¹² Ibid.

The screenshot shows the website of Golestan University. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the university's name in Persian and English, and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there is a main menu with various categories. The main content area features a section titled 'تفاهمنامه های بین المللی' (International Agreements). This section includes a list of international partners, with Uppsala University listed as a partner. The list is presented in a table-like format with columns for the partner's name and the type of agreement. Other partners listed include various international organizations and universities. The website also features a sidebar with navigation options and a footer with contact information.

Fig. 2: Uppsala University listed as a partner on Golestan University's website

The IRGC and Golestan University

In addition to the SCCR strategic agreement, Golestan University is extensively affiliated with the IRGC.¹³ There are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including Golestan University – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.¹⁴ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)¹⁵ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.¹⁶ Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.¹⁷

Due to its direct control, Golestan University is governed by a regime-approved moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes IRGC surveillance of the

¹³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

¹⁴ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

¹⁶ The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

¹⁷ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

university community.¹⁸ This also enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.¹⁹ The president of Golestan University, Alireza Khajeshahkoohi, is a member of the PBO and a former member of the SBO.²⁰ Ideologically aligned with these militias and closely affiliated with IRGC leadership,²¹ Khajeshahkoohi has supported the imprisonment, torture, and execution of female students who violate the Iranian regime’s own strict morality laws.²² The repressive actions supported by Khajeshahkoohi have prompted the EU to impose sanctions against the SBO for gross human rights violations.²³



Fig. 3: President of Golestan University, Alireza Khajeshahkoohi, with uniformed IRGC officer

¹⁸ The Guardian, “[Protesters defy crackdown at universities across Iran.](#)” October 25, 2022; Radio Farda, “[Iranian Student Groups Issue Warnings As Policing Of Dress Code Rises.](#)” June 19, 2023.

¹⁹ The Atlantic Council, “[Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran.](#)” November 22, 2023.

²⁰ Golestan University, “[دکتر علیرضا خواجه شاهکویی به عنوان سرپرست دانشگاه گلستان منصوب شد.](#)” January 23, 2022.

²¹ Iranian Student News Network, “[فرمانده کل سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی در دانشگاه تهران تجلیل شد.](#)”

²² Golestan University, “[پیام تبریک رئیس دانشگاه گلستان به مناسبت 5 آذر روز بسیج و قیام مردم گرگان.](#)” November 26, 2022.

²³ Council of the EU, “[Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations.](#)” May 22, 2023.

Beyond falling under the IRGC's jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in Golestan University's academic culture. The University frequently hosts internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment initiatives, and participation in research projects.²⁴ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at the University to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.²⁵ Additionally, members of the IRGC's terrorist proxies region can freely enroll as students at Golestan University, even as Iranians themselves face obstacles in the admissions process.²⁶ Any partnership with a university maintaining such strong ties to the IRGC is unacceptable, given its extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.²⁷

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²⁴ Golestan University, "[گر امیداشت یاد و خاطره شهدای مدافع حرم استان در غرفه عزت](#)," December 3, 2017; Golestan University, "[یا حکم وزیر علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری؛ دکتر علیرضا خواجه شاهکویی به عنوان سرپرست دانشگاه گلستان منصوب شد](#)," January 23, 2022.

²⁵ Golestan University, "[مراسم گرامیداشت سومین سالگرد شهادت سردار دلها حاج قاسم سلیمانی برگزار شد](#)," January 4, 2023.

²⁶ Iran International, "[Tehran University Students Oppose Admission Of Iraqi Militias](#)," July 14, 2023.

²⁷ Washington Institute, "[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran](#)," February 25, 2019.

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Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threatens the safety of academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This policy, which is widely recognized as the regime's "hostage-diplomacy," is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, Golestan University's extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the university.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁴⁴ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁴⁵ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁴⁶ One of the individuals arrested for espionage and accused of acting on behalf of Russia previously collaborated with Uppsala University, contributing to ongoing research.⁴⁷

Therefore, it is improper for Uppsala University to have any partnership agreement with Golestan University, an entity that is affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and

⁴⁴ Universitetsläraren, "[Säpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁴⁵ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁴⁶ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.

⁴⁷ Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.

anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Beyond potential legal ramifications – including sanctions violations and facilitating acts of terror – Uppsala University's relationship with Golestan University poses major reputational damage to the university, as an otherwise prestigious Swedish academic institution. Given the foregoing, we urge you to clarify if the university's memorandum of understanding remains in effect, confirm that no further affiliations exist, and immediately sever all of Uppsala University's ties to Golestan University.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran ("UANI") is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI's diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

April 25, 2024

Minister for Education Mats Persson
Swedish Ministry for Education and Research
Herkulesgatan 17
SE 103 33
Stockholm
Sweden

Via email: utbildningsdepartementet.registrator@gov.se; agnes.eklund@regeringskansliet.se

Re: Swedish Universities and the IRGC

Dear Minister Persson:

Per a recent investigation, United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ has obtained a copy of a strategic agreement, heretofore unknown to Swedish authorities, between all Iranian universities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (“IRGC”)²—an entity subject to United States, United Kingdom, and European Union sanctions.³ This strategic agreement, entitled “The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” reveals for the first time that the IRGC will have full access to all collaborative work product between Iranian universities and their international academic partners. Therefore, this document confirms that any collaboration with an Iranian university will support the IRGC and other armed regime elements to further the Islamic Republic’s military program and the IRGC’s nefarious hard and soft power capabilities.⁴

We note that at least nine Swedish universities maintain partnerships with Iranian universities. These include partnerships between Lund University and Malayer University, University of Torbat Heydarieh (“UTH”), and the University of Tehran;⁵ The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (“SLU”) and Ilam University;⁶ Mid Sweden University (“MIUN”) and

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/about/leadership.

² The IRGC was designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in the United States as of April 2019: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

³ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

⁵ Malayer University, “[پروژه مشترک اتحادیه اروپایی دانشگاه ملای](#),” February 8, 2017; University of Torbat Heydarieh, “[The University At A Glance](#),” January 1, 2020; The University of Tehran, “[Faculty of Geography](#)”

⁶ Ilam University, “[انعقاد تفاهم نامه همکاری در زمینه علمی بین دانشکده علوم کشاورزی سوئد ودانشگاه](#)”

Guilan University;⁷ Uppsala University and Golestan University;⁸ Malmö University and Chabahar Maritime University (“CMU”);⁹ University of Borås and Babol Noshirvani University of Technology (“BNUT”);¹⁰ Linnaeus University and the University of Tehran;¹¹ and Luleå University of Technology (“LUT”) and Guilan University.¹²

Given this evidence of extensive collaboration between Swedish and Iranian universities, and the extremely concerning implications of the strategic agreement, we urge you to open immediate inquiry into the status of these partnerships.

Strategic Agreement Between Iranian Universities and IRGC

“The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran” was implemented in February 2021 by the Iranian regime’s highest educational and cultural authority, the Khamenei-led “Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution” (“SCCR”) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Defense. The EU and UK imposed sanctions designations on the SCCR for gross human rights violations in March and July of 2023, respectively – citing it as “responsible for” and “engag[ed] in” ongoing “violations of the right to liberty and security and the right to freedom of expression through determining and enforcing mandatory dress codes for women, including the use of unreasonable force against individuals they deem to be non-compliant.”¹³

Since the implementation of the strategic agreement, all Iranian universities – including those partnering with Swedish universities – are required to transfer the intellectual property and rights of all research and academic materials to the IRGC and other armed elements of the regime. In the agreement, this policy is described as “maximum use of all national academic [and] research capacities” to acquire “soft, semi-soft and hard defense and security sciences and technologies.”¹⁴ These are to be acquired from both “national” and “international” university departments – transforming international university partnerships into a means “for achieving regime objectives.” The agreement further states that this research will be used for “hostility with enemies in the path of achieving the scientific defense goals of the Islamic Revolution,” meaning that it may be used against Sweden, especially given its status as a NATO member-state. These efforts are facilitated by not only the Ministry of Defense, but also the IRGC, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and

⁷ Guilan University, “[Scientific cooperation between Iran and Sweden](#)”

⁸ Golestan University, “[تفاهنامه های بین المللی](#)”

⁹ MANA News Network, “[همکاری جابهار با دانشگاه جهانی دریانوردی](#),” July 25, 2017; Iran Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, “[جزئیات دیدار مدیر عامل سازمان بنادر و دریانوردی با وزیرای حمل و نقل و امور زیربنایی کشور های سوئد و ترکیه](#),” November 29, 2017.

¹⁰ BNUT Website, “[Memorandum of Understanding](#),” June 27, 2018.

¹¹ University of Tehran College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, “[انعقاد تفاهم نامه دانشگاه لیناوس سوئد با دانشکدگان](#),” May 15, 2022.

¹² Guilan University, “[Scientific cooperation between Iran and Sweden](#)”

¹³ The Atlantic Council, “[Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: UK designates the SCCR](#),” July 26, 2023.

¹⁴ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

the Office of the Supreme Leader, all of which are signatories on the strategic agreement.¹⁵ As a result, any and all collaboration with an Iranian university facilitates the malign activities of the Islamic Republic.

Therefore, any collaboration between Swedish and Iranian universities supports the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime. The SCCR agreement explicitly states the regime’s “main science and technology priorities for defense and security,” which include: “Automated and unmanned equipment (drones), aerospace propulsion systems, artificial intelligence, advanced warfare software and military science and technology.”¹⁶ The agreement further states that fields including “geology,” “computer processing,” “agriculture,” “environmental science,” “energy,” “chemical engineering,” are critical in supporting regime objectives.¹⁷ According to partnership agreements and memoranda of understanding, each of these fields are emphasized in collaboration between Swedish and Iranian universities. All of the university partnerships identified by UANI are in focused on one of the critical fields identified by the strategic agreement.¹⁸

Additionally, any student exchanges organized as part of these partnership agreements will be used to facilitate these aims, in accordance with the strategic agreement. The strategic agreement explicitly states that all “professors, researchers, students” affiliated with Iranian universities are used to “build capabilities and create capabilities in responding to defense needs.”¹⁹ This is concerning, as many of the partnership agreements identify the exchange of students and faculty as priorities for the participating universities. Should these agreements remain in place, any future exchanges, symposia, or conferences will be exploited by the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime for malign purposes.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See for example: Malayer University, “[پروژه مشترک اتحادیه اروپایی دانشگاه ملای](#),” February 8, 2017; University of Torbat Heydarieh, “[The University At A Glance](#),” January 1, 2020; The University of Tehran, “[Faculty of Geography](#),” Lund University, “[Features of the international MSC educational programme in environmental management and modelling](#),” December 31, 2018; Golestan University, “[Memorandum of Understanding Between Uppsala University and Golestan University](#),” August 22, 2016; Golestan University, “[تفاهمنامه های بین المللی](#),” Guilan University, “[دانشگاه گیلان](#),” June 14, 2017; Guilan University, “[بازدید هیات](#),” October 27, 2017.

¹⁹ Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution, “[The Comprehensive Act on Science and Technology in the Defense and Security Field of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#),” February 2021.

Heading Example

دانشگاه گیلان بعنوان مسئول کارگروه ملی هماهنگی و پیگیری همکاری‌های علمی با کشور سوئد، فعالیت‌های مشترک آموزشی و پژوهشی با دانشگاه‌های سوئد را پیگیری مینماید. برخی از فعالیت‌های مشترک انجام شده و در حال انجام طی سال‌های اخیر با این دانشگاه‌ها به شرح زیر است:

- انعقاد تفاهم نامه با دانشگاه میدسوئدن (MIUN) در سال ۱۳۹۲
- انجام دو پروژه مشترک تحقیقاتی دانشگاه گیلان با دانشگاه میدسوئدن (MIUN) در زمینه‌های جنگلداری و اقتصاد منابع طبیعی که از طرف موسسات سوئدی STINT و KSLA حمایت مالی انجام گرفت.
- پروژه در حال انجام با دانشگاه صنعتی لولئا (Lulea University of Technology) در زمینه صنایع چوب در قالب طرح ای‌کارد (ICARD)
- برگزاری دو دوره کارگاه آموزشی در دانشگاه گیلان توسط اساتید سوئدی
- تدریس دوره‌های کوتاه مدت در دانشگاه MIUN کشور سوئد توسط عضو هیات علمی دانشگاه گیلان

دفعه تلفن | اپارت | بیه | سروش | اپنا

مهار تورم، رشد تولید | دانشگاه گیلان ۱۳۵۲ | University of Guilan 1974

ارتباط با ما | پیوندهای مفید

کد پستی | آدرس | علوم جهان اسلام | ریاست جمهوری اسلامی ایران | دفتر مقام معظم رهبری

Fig. 1: Partnerships with MIUN and LUT listed on the Guilan University website

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Monday, April 15, 2024 | 4/15/2024 | Year Of Boosting Production

UNIVERSITY OF TORBAT HEYDARIEH

International MOUs and the contracts

Professors and Students Exchange Program (International Credit Mobility)

The third program is about the exchange of professors and students between Torbat Heydarieh University and the University of Lithuania. In this program, one student is sent to the Vilnius University for a three-month study opportunity as well as one professor to instruct and one professor will be dispatched from Vilnius University to Torbat Heydarieh University to instruct and utilize information resources for one week. The professor will be sent to Torbat Heydarieh University for a week of training. The projected budget for professors and students of Torbat University is around € 8000 and will be paid in cash to the participants.

Cooperation Agreement of Torbat Heydarieh University with Foreign Universities:

- Cooperation Contract with the Lund University of Sweden for the implementation of the GeoNetC program
- Cooperation Contract with the Leipzig University of Germany for the implementation of the OPATEL program
- Cooperation Contract with Salahuddin University of Iraq

Fig. 2: Partnership with Lund University listed on the UTH website

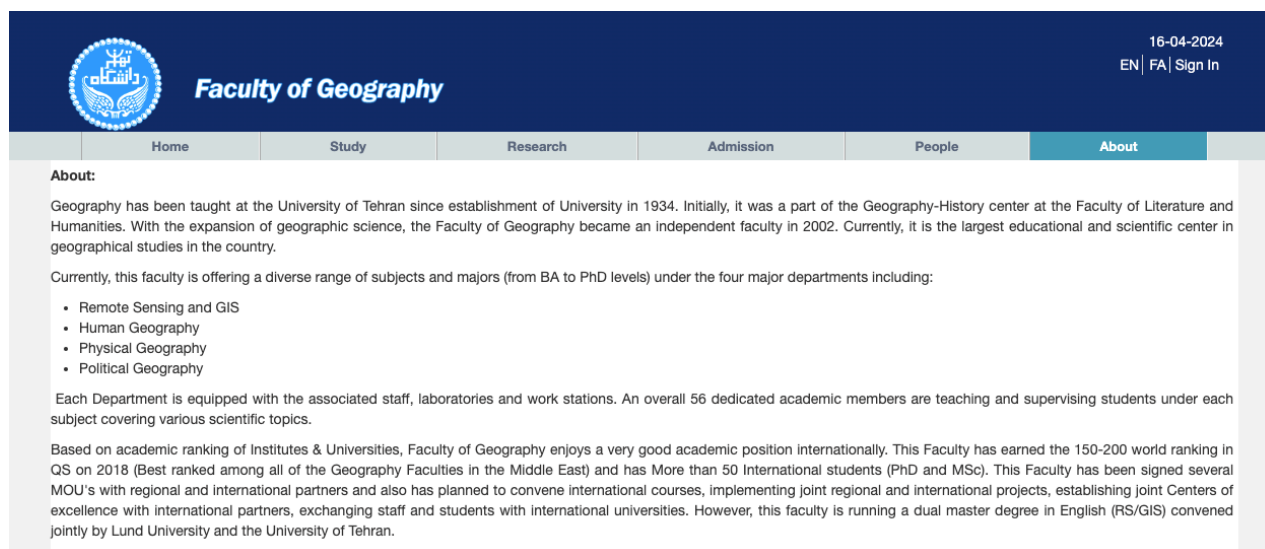


Fig. 3: Lund University partnership mentioned on the University of Tehran website

The IRGC Presence Within Iranian Universities

In addition to the SCCR strategic agreement, each of the Iranian universities identified maintain extensive affiliations with the IRGC. To be sure, there are no “independent” or fully “private” universities in Iran, as all academic institutions – including these universities – are under the regime’s direct control, with university heads appointed by Khamenei’s SCCR. Khamenei also maintains an official SCCR-selected representative within each faculty, implementing regime directives on teaching and administration.²⁰ Furthermore, every Iranian university has a Herasat department – an arm of the sanctioned Ministry of Intelligence (“MOIS”)²¹ tasked with monitoring the activities of students and faculty.²² Through the Herasat departments, the MOIS enforces stringent reporting processes for Iranian students and faculty who study, attend conferences, or conduct research abroad. The MOIS also actively nurtures relationships with western scholars as a means of infiltrating western scholars for intelligence purposes. These policies effectively transform institutions of higher learning into a conduit for espionage and coercion.²³

Due to the regime’s direct control, these Iranian universities are governed by a regime-approved moral code which prohibits political dissent, imposes mandatory hijab, and authorizes

²⁰ Iran Wire, “[Decoding Iran’s Politics: All the Supreme Leader’s Institutions](#),” August 31, 2018; Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Third Cultural Revolution](#),” February 28, 2022.

²¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “[Treasury Sanctions Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Minister for Malign Cyber Activities](#),” September 9, 2022.

²² The Washington Institute, “[Iran’s Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire](#),” January 5, 2018.

²³ The Jewish Chronicle, “[This is clear evidence of how far Iran is going to infiltrate the UK](#),” August 17, 2023.

IRGC surveillance of the university community.²⁴ This moral code enables the IRGC and its Student Basij Organization (“SBO”) and Professors Basij Organization (“PBO”) militias to raid university campuses, regulate academic research, and engage in acts of brutal violence against dissenting students and faculty.²⁵ Across Iran, the SBO has developed a gruesome record, frequently killed students during protests over the last two decades and encouraging acts of terror.²⁶ Due to these repressive acts, the EU has imposed sanctions against the entirety of the SBO for gross human rights violations.²⁷ Furthermore, it is important to note that the presidents of all Iranian universities required to be members of the PBO.²⁸ As such, the presidents of Shiraz University,²⁹ the University of Tehran,³⁰ Golestan University,³¹ Guilan University,³² Malayer University,³³ and others have actively participated in PBO initiatives, signed agreements facilitating an IRGC presence, or otherwise supported PBO and SBO activities.³⁴

Beyond falling under the IRGC’s jurisdiction, the paramilitary organization is deeply engrained in Iranian academic culture. All of the universities listed in this letter frequently host internationally-sanctioned IRGC leadership for prayers, public events, recruitment initiatives, and participation in research projects.³⁵ Notably, IRGC officials have gathered at these universities to commemorate the death of Qassem Soleimani, who was known for facilitating acts of terrorism across the region.³⁶ Members of the IRGC’s terrorist proxies region can also freely enroll as students at Iranian universities, even as Iranians themselves face obstacles in the admissions process.³⁷ Therefore, any partnerships with universities which maintain such strong ties to the IRGC are

²⁴ The United States Institute of Peace, [“Iran’s University Protests,”](#) January 5, 2023; Iran Wire, [“Young Iranian Man at Risk of Execution in Case Marred With Contradictions,”](#) November 16, 2023; Iran International, [“Tehran University Deploys More Hijab Enforcers,”](#) February 19, 2024.

²⁵ The Atlantic Council, [“Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran,”](#) November 22, 2023.

²⁶ New Lines, [“A Shadowy Paramilitary Group Leads the Bloody Crackdown on Iran’s College Campuses,”](#) April 20, 2023; Iran Wire, [“Young Iranian Man at Risk of Execution in Case Marred With Contradictions,”](#) November 16, 2023.

²⁷ Council of the EU, [“Iran: five individuals and two entities targeted by EU’s eighth package of sanctions for human rights violations,”](#) May 22, 2023.

²⁸ The Atlantic Council, [“Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran,”](#) November 22, 2023.

²⁹ Islamic Republic News Agency, [“حمایت از نخبگان جوان محور تفاهنامه دانشگاه شیراز و سپاه بود,”](#) September 15, 2019

³⁰ Iran International, [“Tehran University Deploys More Hijab Enforcers,”](#) February 19, 2024.

³¹ Golestan University, [“با حکم وزیر علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری؛ دکتر علیرضا خواجه شاهکویی به عنوان سرپرست دانشگاه گلستان منصوب شد,”](#) January 23, 2022.

³² Guilan University, [“رئیس دانشگاه گیلان: اساتید در صف اول جبهه علمی و فرهنگی قرار دارند,”](#) November 21, 2023.

³³ Malayer University, [“مراسم تکریم و معارفه مسئول بسیج اساتید دانشگاه ملایر برگزار گردید,”](#)

³⁴ The Atlantic Council, [“Meet the secret IRGC entity purging university professors in Iran,”](#) November 22, 2023.

³⁵ See for example: Tasnim News Agency, [“Funeral of IRGC Forces to Be Held in Tehran on Int’l Quds Day,”](#) April 3, 2024; University of Tehran, [“درخواست تأمین منابع انسانی جهت فرماندهی فضایی نیروی هوافضای سپاه,”](#) University of Tehran, [“ارتباط ایمان به حضور خداوند در زندگی زناشویی و رضایت‌مندی زوجین: بررسی نقش میانجی شیوه های مقابله مذهبی,”](#) University of Torbat heydarieh, [“حضور فرمانده محترم سپاه تربیت حیدریه جهت تبریک سالروز شهادت استاد بسیجی شهید دکتر مصطفی چمران و روز ملی ویژه برنامه ماه مبارک رمضان و محفل انس با قرآن در دانشگاه ملایر,”](#) [“بسیج اساتید در دانشگاه ملایر برگزار شد,”](#) April 8, 2024.

³⁶ Tabnak, [“آغاز مراسم نخستین سالگرد شهید سپهبد سلیمانی,”](#) January 1, 2021; Malayer University, [“مراسم سومین سالگرد شهادت,”](#) [“بیردار شهید حاج قاسم سلیمانی برگزار شد,”](#) January 2, 2023.

³⁷ Iran International, [“Tehran University Students Oppose Admission Of Iraqi Militias,”](#) July 14, 2023.

unacceptable, given the organization's extremist ideology, involvement in gross human rights violations, and its record of committing acts of terror around the world.³⁸



Fig. 4: President of the University of Tehran, Seyed Mohammad Moghimi, at a ceremony with IRGC head Hossein Salami



Fig. 5: President of the Shiraz University, Hamid Nagdaran, with IRGC Brigadier General Seyed Hashem Ghiathi

³⁸ Washington Institute, "[The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran.](#)" February 25, 2019.



Fig. 6: President of Malayer University, Ebrahim Mohammadi-Manesh, at PBO meeting with uniformed IRGC officer



Fig. 7: President of UTH, Mohammad Hassan Fathi, meeting with uniformed IRGC officer



Fig. 8: President of Guilan University, Farid Najafi, pictured with uniformed IRGC officer



Fig. 9: President of Ilam University, Ali Mohammadi, with uniformed IRGC personnel



Fig. 10: President of Golestan University, Alireza Khajeshahkoohi, with uniformed IRGC officer



Fig. 11: President of BNUT Bahram Azizollah Ganji pictured with uniformed IRGC personnel

The IRGC's Exploitation of Iran's Academic Sector

The SCCR strategic agreement and other partnerships have allowed the IRGC to exploit its control over Iranian universities to facilitate its malign activities.³⁹ Since 2014, Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, a government body involved in managing higher education, has maintained a formal partnership with the Ministry of Defense.⁴⁰ It must be noted that entities within Iran's Ministry of Defense provide extensive logistical support to the IRGC, resulting in extensive U.S. and EU sanctions.⁴¹ As a result of this partnership, deputy defense minister and IRGC commander Seyed Mahdi Farhani revealed in 2022 that at least 80 universities, including those maintaining partnership agreements with Lund University, are directly contributing to Iran's defense industry, particularly "aerospace and quantum technologies."⁴² In effect, by participating in this partnership, Iranian universities are directly contributing to the capability of the IRGC and its proxies to engage in acts of terror throughout the region, and support the Islamic Republic's allies like Russia and the Assad regime.⁴³

There is clear evidence that the IRGC exploits international partnerships maintained by Iranian universities. In June 2023, it was revealed that at least 11 British universities, including Imperial College and Cambridge, were involved in long-standing academic collaborations with Iranian universities relating to dual-use technology. Research from this collaboration has been used by the IRGC to enhance drone engines, improving their altitude, speed, and range. This research, supported by Iran's Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, has directly increased the efficacy of drones which have since been deployed by Russia in Ukraine.⁴⁴ Universities in the United States and Australia have come under immense criticism more recently for participating in similar research, to the direct benefit of the IRGC and its partners.⁴⁵ Due to the IRGC's active exploitation of intellectual property, any international cooperation with Iranian universities brings significant reputational and security risk.

³⁹ Center for Intelligence and Research Analysis, "[Government-Sponsored Research Centers Highlight Iranian Universities' Military Ties, Foreign Collaboration](#)," April 11, 2023; Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Tehran University](#)," July 28, 2022; Malayer University, "[نخستین ماهواره نظامی جمهوری اسلامی ایران با موفقیت در مدار زمین](#)," [قرار گرفت](#)," University of Torbat Heydarieh, "[دیدار ریاست دانشگاه تربت حیدریه با فرمانده سپاه ناحیه مقاومت تربت حیدریه](#)," July 13, 2020.

⁴⁰ ISNA, "[وزارت دفاع از ظرفیت بزرگ دانشی مؤسسات آموزش عالی استفاده کند](#),"

⁴¹ Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, "[Ministry of Defense Armed Forces Logistics \(MODAFL\)](#)," November 14, 2019.

⁴² <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5653406/>

⁴³ The Guardian, "[How Iran uses proxy forces across the region to strike Israel and US](#)," November 1, 2023; Reuters, "[Iran sends Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles](#)," February 21, 2024.

⁴⁴ Iran International, "[British Universities Help IRGC Develop Drones](#)," June 8, 2023.

⁴⁵ The Guardian, "[Academics in US, UK and Australia collaborated on drone research with Iranian university close to regime](#)," February 14, 2024.



Fig. 12: Tasnim News Agency article on cooperation between 92 Universities and the Defense Ministry

Implications of Facilitating IRGC Activity

As you are aware, the IRGC is a designated terrorist organization in the U.S., and subject to EU, UK, and UN terrorism sanctions.⁴⁶ It operates as an ideological paramilitary organization – and is not a conventional military force. This is apparent from its formal program of indoctrination designed to radicalize members to adopt its hardline Islamist-extremist ideology as well as its use of terrorism, militancy, hostage-taking, and hijacking as a modus operandi.⁴⁷ The IRGC is responsible for facilitating acts of terror committed by its proxy organizations like Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia extremist militias in Iraq, and the Houthis.⁴⁸ It is also responsible international terrorist plots in Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Germany, India, Iraq, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S., among numerous other countries.

The IRGC’s malign activities have become increasingly pervasive in Europe – particularly terror plots targeting the Iranian diaspora and Jews. In the last month, the IRGC has attempted to assassinate and kidnap dissident journalists in the United Kingdom, and orchestrated plots to murder

⁴⁶ For full designation list, see: <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/irgc-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

⁴⁷ Tony Blair Institute, “[Making the Case to Proscribe Iran’s IRGC](#)”, January 23, 2023; Council on Foreign Relations, “[Iran’s Revolutionary Guards](#),” January 8, 2024.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Jews in Germany.⁴⁹ Partnerships with academic entities and other ostensibly soft-power institutions serve as entry points for the IRGC, facilitating its hard-power objectives – including surveillance, radicalization efforts, assassination, and other acts of terror.⁵⁰

Sweden has been especially impacted by the Iranian regime’s malign activities. In recent years, Swedish security services have successfully identified and neutralized threats from IRGC. Notably, two Iranians, associated with the IRGC and suspected of planning attacks against members of the Swedish Jewish community, were arrested in 2021 and deported in 2022.⁵¹ In 2024, Aron Verständig, chair of the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities, disclosed a thwarted plot against him orchestrated by the IRGC involving sleeper agents residing in Sweden.⁵² These incidents highlight the ongoing threat posed by the IRGC to members of the Swedish public. In response to these plots and the IRGC’s murder of Swedish citizens in Iran, the Swedish Parliament voted in favor of proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organization – though full proscription has yet to occur.⁵³

Domestically, the IRGC has a long record of committing atrocities on behalf of the Islamic Republic. In 2019 it murdered 1,500 Iranians for engaging in legitimate protests – and demanded that the families of its victims pay for the bullets. In the year following the killing of Mahsa Amini by Iranian police while in custody, the organization murdered a further 500 Iranians.⁵⁴ As a result of these malign activities, the IRGC is officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. and is subject to extensive terrorism, nuclear and weapons proliferation and human rights sanctions.

Given these circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate the Swedish Ministry of Education and the Government of Swedish to allow its universities to collaborate with entities extensively affiliated with the IRGC. These partnership agreements alone legitimize the paramilitary organization’s extremist ideology and acts of terror.

IRGC’s Hostage-Taking of Foreign Academics in Iran

Beyond the risks to reputation and security, partnerships with Iranian universities threaten the safety of Swedish academic staff. For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has implemented a callous policy of unlawfully detaining foreign nationals, and, increasingly, those working in academia, on fictitious allegations in order to extract political concessions from other nations. This

⁴⁹ Iran International, [“US, UK Sanction Iran Over Plot to Kill Iran International Journalists,”](#) January 29, 2024; BBC News, [“Pouria Zeraati: Three accused of TV presenter attack have left UK,”](#) April 4, 2024; Wall Street Journal, [“A New Terror Threat Is Emerging in Europe Linked to Iran, Gaza War,”](#) March 12, 2024.

⁵⁰ Iran International, [“UK Investigates Antisemitic Speeches By Iranian Generals,”](#) January 23, 2024; Iran International, [“After Iran-Backed Synagogue Plot, Calls To Close Tehran’s Embassy,”](#) March 22, 2024.

⁵¹ Associated Press, [“Sweden has thwarted Iranian attack plots, counterintelligence police say,”](#) February 8, 2024.

⁵² Iran Wire, [“IRGC Suspected in Couple’s Murder Plot Against Swedish Jews,”](#) February 7, 2024.

⁵³ Iran International, [“Swedish Parliament Votes To Designate Iran’s IRGC As Terrorist,”](#) May 10, 2023.

⁵⁴ Geopolitical Monitor, [“IRGC Main Player in Iran’s Amini Protests,”](#) December 13, 2022; VOA News, [“Monitor: 516 Killed Since Iran Protests Began,”](#) January 3, 2023.

policy, which is widely recognized as the regime's "hostage-diplomacy," is spearheaded by the IRGC and the MOIS.

In April 2016, Swedish resident Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, was arrested on espionage charges by the MOIS while visiting Iranian universities. Without a fair trial, Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death in 2017 and has been subjected to torture. He remains in Iran's brutal prison system today. In a separate case, Johan Floderus, a 33-year-old Swedish EU diplomat, has been detained in Iran since April 2022. Iran has accused Floderus of spying for Israel and "corruption on earth," crimes that carry the death penalty under Tehran's laws. Floderus faces imminent risk of the death penalty. German nationals Jamshid Sharmahd and Nahid Taghavi are also being held by the regime, under threat of death.

Of course, extensive affiliation with the IRGC elevates the risk of any academic exchange with, or travel to, the universities identified in this letter.

Conclusion

Swedish authorities have identified partnerships with countries like Iran as an increasingly significant security threat because they provide cover for espionage activities and are readily exploited by actors like the IRGC.⁵⁵ This has prompted recent warnings that Swedish universities must be cautious in maintaining international partnerships, since they carry immense risks to reputation and security.⁵⁶ Already this year, Chinese and Russian espionage activities have been revealed at Swedish universities, demonstrating the extent of this threat.⁵⁷

Therefore, it is improper for Swedish universities to have any partnership agreements with Iranian universities that are affiliated with the IRGC – a violent, Islamist extremist and anti-Semitic organisation that radicalises its members to kill non-Muslims as part of its official programme of indoctrination. Given the recently obtained evidence revealed by UANI's investigation, any partnership with an Iranian university directly benefits the IRGC and other armed elements of the Iranian regime, posing a significant threat of espionage and exploitation.

Partnerships between Swedish and Iranian universities pose a significant security threat, in addition to international legal and ethical concerns. Given the foregoing, we urge you to open an inquiry into these partnerships, take immediate punitive action, and proscribe the IRGC as a terrorist organization; making it clear that any person or entity that collaborates with the IRGC either directly or via a third party — such as an academic institution — would be committing a terror offence.

⁵⁵ Universitetsläraren, "[Såpo: Ökad hotbild mot Sveriges lärosäten](#)," May 12, 2022.

⁵⁶ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁵⁷ Svenska Dagbladet, "[Så ska spionerna på universiteten stoppas](#)," April 12, 2024; Aftonbladet, "[Misstänkt spion kopplas till Uppsala universitet](#)," January 18, 2024.

We trust that you share our grave concerns, and we respectfully request that you conduct a thorough review into the foregoing. Please let us hear from you within 10 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Alireza Akhondi, Riksdagman



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”) is a nonprofit and non-partisan policy organization formed to combat the threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran. UANI’s diverse Advisory Board includes policy experts and distinguished former government officials. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).