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**Onderwerp:** Nieuwe golf van executies in Iran en Reza Pahlavi

U ontvangt niet vaak e-mail van 5.1.2.e@gmail.com. [Ontdek waarom dit belangrijk is](#)

Geachte excellentie Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, de heer Berendsen,

Namens de Unie van Iraanse Verenigingen in Nederland wend ik mij tot u.

De ontwikkelingen in Iran volgen elkaar in hoog tempo op. Terwijl de oorlog voortduurt, is er tegelijkertijd sprake van een nieuwe golf van repressie. Sinds 30 maart jl. zijn tien politieke gevangenen geëxecuteerd, onder wie zes leden van de belangrijkste oppositiegroep, de PMOI. Dit onderstreept dat het regime zijn eigen bevolking meer vreest dan externe dreigingen. In de bijlage vindt u een videoboodschap van een van deze geëxecuteerden.

Met zorg hebben wij kennisgenomen van berichten dat Reza Pahlavi mogelijk door de Nederlandse overheid zou worden uitgenodigd. Wij willen benadrukken dat het naar voren schuiven van één specifieke leider van buitenaf schadelijk kan zijn voor zowel de geloofwaardigheid van Nederland als voor de democratische ontwikkeling in Iran.

De geschiedenis leert dat externe inmenging in leiderschap vaak leidt tot instabiliteit. Een voorbeeld hiervan is <sup>5.1.2.e</sup> in Irak. Ook in Iran liggen dergelijke interventies gevoelig, mede door ervaringen zoals de Iraanse staatsgreep van 1953.

Bovendien is Reza Pahlavi geen breed gedragen of verbindende figuur. Zijn politieke positie en visie op de toekomst van Iran blijven onduidelijk en roepen vragen op over democratische legitimiteit. Steun aan één persoon kan de interne verdeeldheid vergroten en de strijd voor een democratisch Iran juist ondermijnen.

Het Iraanse volk wil zelf zijn toekomst bepalen. Pogingen om dit proces van buitenaf te sturen zijn niet alleen ineffectief, maar kunnen ook averechts werken.

Wij verzoeken u dan ook met klem om terughoudendheid te betrachten en de stem van het Iraanse volk centraal te stellen.

In de bijlage treft u tevens een document aan met als titel: “Why Reza Pahlavi is an Obstacle to Democratic Change”. Wij hopen dat u dit informatief en relevant zal vinden.

Wij danken u voor uw aandacht en met vriendelijke groet,

<sup>5.1.2.e</sup> (Unie van Iraanse Verenigingen in Nederland)

# Why Reza Pahlavi Is an Obstacle to Democratic Change

## *Why an Alliance with Him Would Undermine Iran's Democratic Struggle*

March 28, 2026

### Introduction

Following the January 2026 uprising, renewed attention to Iran's opposition has brought back a familiar question: why have opposition groups refused to form a unified front with Reza Pahlavi and monarchist forces? Proponents of such an alliance argue that, under current conditions, all opponents of the Islamic Republic—whether monarchists or republicans—should set aside their differences and unite in order to build a stronger and more effective opposition. While confronting a dictatorship unity among opposition is a noble objective, such unity must be among democratic forces and based on common democratic principles. Thus, the central question remains whether an alliance with son of the shah would in fact strengthen the struggle against the regime, or as many argue, given the historical and symbolic weight associated with both Reza Pahlavi and the idea of monarchy, it would instead constrain the democratic camp, weaken social legitimacy, and erode the confidence of those inside Iran who bear the greatest risks of resistance. In this sense, the issue is not simply how to intensify pressure on the ruling system, but how to do so in a way that expands the democratic front and sustains trust—rather than diverting the momentum of the uprising into new divisions and uncertainties.

### Why the Democratic Opposition Rejects Reza Pahlavi

1. In a popular revolution, the people of Iran overthrew the authoritarian and corrupt one-party Pahlavi dynasty.
2. Reza Pahlavi has refused numerous calls to distance himself from, let alone condemn, the torture and executions carried out during his father's rule against political opponents.
3. His published platform is a blueprint for another authoritarian system: he presents himself as the "leader of the national uprising," would appoint the heads of the executive, judiciary, and legislative branches, and must approve all members of the latter.
4. According to his platform, the transition period is anticipated to last as long as three years, with the power to extend it.
5. He has already declared himself King, despite falsely claiming otherwise in press interviews, and on his website has even announced his heir to the crown.
6. As recently as January 2026, he referred to Iranian ethnic communities — specifically the Kurds — as separatists and called on the army to suppress them.
7. It is on record that his father and grandfather brutally suppressed Iranian ethnic communities, including Kurds, Baluch, Arabs, and Azeris.
8. This deepens mistrust among ethnic communities, who bear deep wounds from being suppressed — even to the point of massacre — by the Pahlavi dynasty.

9. His grandfather and father were both installed by foreign powers. Therefore, given this historical memory, any alliance with him would revive distrust of foreign interference.
10. He has repeatedly over the past several years said that he is contact with IRGC, rejecting it as a terrorist entity and saying they fought for territorial integrity of Iran.
11. He is on the record saying he will not sacrifice his freedom for the sake of Iranian people's freedom.
12. People are unwilling to risk their lives for change if the alternative appears to be another form of authoritarianism.
13. Throughout his life he has not work for one day but lived a luxury life on billions of stolen monies from the Iranian people.
14. During 47 years in exile, he has failed to build any organization lasting more than a few months or to work sustainably with others; his most recent attempt, the 'Georgetown' coalition formed in 2023, collapsed after about three months due to his authoritarian behavior.
15. Alliance with him damages the spirit of popular struggle by suggesting that change may come from outside powers rather than from the Iranian people themselves.
16. An alliance with such a divisive and discredited figure is a gift to the criminal mullahs' regime, enabling it to expand its propaganda that foreign powers are trying to install a puppet regime in Iran through him.
17. The real choice for Iran is not crown versus turban, but democracy versus dictatorship.
18. A democratic alternative must rest on popular sovereignty, free elections, the rule of law, institutional checks and balances, and accountability.
19. For these reasons, an alliance with Reza Pahlavi is counterproductive, as it divides the opposition, alienates key constituencies, and reintroduces the logic of authoritarian rule.
20. Therefore, he is an obstacle to democratic change, as demonstrated during the 2022 uprising and the January 2026 uprising, when he created false perceptions through empty propaganda and then called for war under the pretext of 'humanitarian intervention.' The Iranian people will not forget this.

## **A Closer Examination of Key Issues**

### **He Is Widely Seen Not as a Democratic Unifier, but as the Heir to Monarchical Rule**

This is why an alliance with Pahlavi is, in effect, seen as an alliance against the spirit of the uprising itself. A genuine uprising draws its moral force from the idea that the people are the agents of their own liberation. It is sustained by the conviction that freedom will not be bestowed from above, imported from abroad, or mediated through dynastic entitlement, but won through collective struggle and democratic self-assertion.

Yet Pahlavi's public image remains inseparable, for many Iranians, from the memory of a monarchy associated with autocratic rule, political repression, social privilege, and hereditary entitlement. The issue is not merely his family background as biography; it is the enduring political meaning of that inheritance in the public imagination in a country that has experienced brutal suppression under monarchical system.

### **His Political Image Revives Distrust of Foreign Interference**

Pahlavi's political posture has long suggested an orientation toward external intervention, geopolitical pressure, and the hope that regime change might ultimately be engineered by the United States, Israel, or some wider regional confrontation. Whether or not one accepts that interpretation in full, it is undeniable that many Iranians perceive his politics through precisely that lens. That perception carries immense political cost. It suggests to ordinary Iranians that, once again, their future may be shaped not by their own sacrifice and organization, but by foreign states pursuing their own strategic interests. In a country whose modern political memory has been profoundly shaped by foreign interference, such an impression is deeply corrosive.

### **The Memory of British and U.S. Support for the Pahlavi Dynasty Makes Such Distrust Harder to Overcome**

Reza Pahlavi's dynastic inheritance cannot be separated from that history. His grandfather was installed by the British. When he later aligned himself with Nazi Germany, Britain forced him to abdicate and sent him into exile, first to Mauritius and then to South Africa, while installing his son as king. In 1953, his father was forced to leave the country but was subsequently returned to power through a coup d'état engineered by the CIA and MI6 against the popularly elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. Even where historical interpretations differ in emphasis, the political memory remains powerful.

For many Iranians, the Pahlavi name signifies not national self-determination but the convergence of domestic despotism and external sponsorship—making any alliance with him politically costly for an opposition claiming roots in independent popular struggle

### **Such an Alliance Undermines the Ethos of Popular Struggle**

For that reason, an alliance with Reza Pahlavi sends exactly the wrong message to the Iranian people. It implies, however unintentionally, that the opposition has not escaped the old pattern in which

power is imagined as descending from foreign capitals and elite arrangements rather than rising from the people themselves.

At a moment when the central democratic imperative should be to restore public confidence in its own historical agency, such a message is politically disabling. It weakens the culture of resistance by replacing the ethics of participation with the psychology of waiting.

### **His Transitional Vision Reproduces the Logic of Authoritarian Power**

This strategic concern becomes even sharper when one considers the content of the transitional political model associated with Reza Pahlavi. The plan he has presented for a post-regime transition does not resemble a genuinely democratic framework of dispersed and accountable authority. Rather, it concentrates extraordinary powers in a single individual and places the principal institutions of state under his direction.

Such an arrangement is not simply a provisional guarantee of order. It is a blueprint for personal rule framed in the language of transition. What is particularly striking is that the structure appears, in political logic if not in ideological form, uncomfortably close to the very system it claims to replace: a framework in which ultimate authority is concentrated in one figure who stands above institutional checks.

### **The Real Divide in Iran Is Not Crown Versus Turban, but Democracy Versus Dictatorship**

This is why the true dividing line in Iran is not between the turban and the crown, but between dictatorship and democracy. Under the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*, sovereignty is subordinated to the guardianship of a supreme religious authority. Under monarchy, sovereignty is subordinated to heredity, dynasty, and the sanctification of one ruling family.

The symbols differ, but the political principle remains disturbingly similar: the denial that the people alone are the sole source of legitimate power.

### **A Democratic Alternative Must Be Rooted in Popular Sovereignty and Constitutionalism**

Against both models, the republican alternative advanced by anti-monarchist opposition currents insists on a fundamentally different premise: that no individual by virtue of religion, and no family by virtue of bloodline, possesses any inherent right to govern. Political office must derive from free, transparent, competitive, and verifiable elections. Authority must be limited by law, divided institutionally, and made answerable to the citizenry.

On one side lies the tradition of personal rule, whether clerical or dynastic; on the other lies the idea of a modern republic grounded in popular sovereignty, equality before the law, separation of religion and state, freedom of parties and the press, judicial independence, and the rejection of torture and arbitrary power. The distinction is not cosmetic. It is the difference between a polity structured around obedience and one structured around citizenship.

### **He Has Never Fully Broken with the Authoritarian Record of the Pahlavi State**

Reza Pahlavi's inability to make a full and unequivocal moral break with his father's dictatorship reinforces this anxiety. The objection is not simply that he is the son of the last Shah. The deeper

objection is that he has never convincingly repudiated the central features of that regime: one-man rule, the subordination of political institutions to the monarch, the use of notorious SAVAK and repression against dissidents, and the broader ideology of dynastic entitlement.

This silence, ambiguity is politically decisive. A figure who seeks to lead a democratic transition in a post-dictatorial society must be able to state, without ambiguity, that dictatorship was illegitimate, that torture and political policing were crimes, and that no variant of such a system may return. Where nostalgia, minimization, or selective rehabilitation persists, trust becomes impossible. This is especially significant given that the former second-in-command of SAVAK, responsible for grave crimes, remained his advisor outside Iran for many years, and that his photos were carried alongside Reza Pahlavi at their rallies.

### **This Legacy Deepens Mistrust Among Ethnic Communities**

This mistrust is especially acute among Iran's non-Persian nationalities and historically marginalized communities. Monarchy in Iran is remembered by many Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Azeris, and others not as a neutral constitutional framework, but as a centralizing and chauvinistic order that sought to suppress plural identities in the name of national uniformity.

In this reading, opposition to the Pahlavi legacy in these regions is not a matter of routine political disagreement. It is rooted in a long memory of repression, forced assimilation, military coercion, and even forms of collective punishment and demographic engineering.

### **No Democratic Transition Can Succeed While Alienating Major National and Social Constituencies**

Whether every historical claim is framed identically by all parties is less important than the larger political reality: large segments of Iran's ethnic and national diversity do not regard Pahlavi as a reassuring or inclusive figure. That fact alone has profound strategic implications.

Indeed, Reza Pahlavi's discourse has at times intensified rather than eased these fears, particularly where he and his lieutenants keep accusing these communities of separatism. . It suggests that beneath the language of democracy lies a continued attachment to coercive centralism and the old reflex of rule through force.

### **The Political Culture Surrounding Him Undermines Any Claim to Democratic Credibility**

The same contradiction appears in the broader political culture that has formed around him. In interviews with Western media, Reza Pahlavi speaks in the language of democracy, pluralism, and freedom. Yet his conduct —and that of his close advisers—often reflects the opposite characteristics: intolerance of dissent, personalization of politics, glorification of leadership, and a culture in which criticism is treated as betrayal.

Some slogans used in monarchist demonstrations elevate the leader above institutions and reduce politics to loyalty toward a single figure. Such expressions are not merely incidental excesses. One such slogan chanted by a speaker in a rally in Munich where he himself participated was "One country, One flag, One leader: Prince Reza Pahlavi." They are symptoms of a deeper authoritarian imagination.

## **Rather Than Broadening the Opposition, He Intensifies Fragmentation**

It is therefore unsurprising that Reza Pahlavi functions, in practice, more as a figure of division than of convergence. His role within the opposition has consistently tended to polarize rather than unify, to narrow rather than broaden, and to turn coalition-building into a test of loyalty to monarchy and dynastic symbolism.

This fragmentation is not merely an unfortunate side effect. It has material consequences for the prospects of democratic change. The regime is strengthened whenever the opposition is drawn into sterile disputes over monarchy, dynastic legitimacy, or externally imagined scenarios of salvation.

It also benefits whenever political energy is diverted away from building organization inside Iran and redirected toward symbolic battles in exile. And it benefits whenever the public is encouraged to place its hopes in foreign war, regional escalation, or outside intervention as substitutes for the difficult and sustained work of domestic resistance. In this sense, a Pahlavi-centered narrative is politically disorienting: it invites the public to imagine that liberation may arrive from above or from abroad, rather than through their own organized effort.

However, this helps explain why the clerical regime—particularly the IRGC and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS)—has promoted Reza Pahlavi through a sophisticated campaign. As the state-controlled newspaper *Vatan-e Emrooz* once wrote: “A weak and rootless current such as monarchism can, in fact, contribute to the survival of the Islamic Republic. This is a service the Pahlavi family renders to the Iranian people.” In the context of regime discourse, ‘the Iranian people’ clearly refers to the interests and survival of the Islamic Republic itself

## **People Will Not Risk Their Lives for an Alternative They Do Not Trust**

Such a politics can be profoundly demobilizing. People will not risk imprisonment, torture, disappearance, or death for a political horizon they do not trust. If the post-regime future appears to be a contest between one authoritarian logic and another, many will withdraw in fear, skepticism, or disgust.

If the alternative to theocracy is perceived not as a democratic republic but as a return—however polished—to one-man rule, then the moral energy of the uprising is blunted.

## **The Conduct of His Support Base Reinforces the Fear of Authoritarianism**

The behavior of his support base intensifies this problem. Many Iranians outside monarchist circles describe an atmosphere of verbal abuse, intimidation, and ideological coercion surrounding Pahlavi’s supporters. Individuals and groups who reject monarchist slogans or question his leadership are often met not with reasoned argument, but with threats, smears, and social-media harassment.

This matters politically because it creates the impression that even before attaining power, they already behaves as though dissent must be silenced. To many observers, that is not the prelude to democracy; it is the rehearsal of authoritarian rule. Even when a couple of seasoned journalists challenged Reza Pahlavi, he reacted with anger, after which his supporters approached one of the journalists, insulting and harassing her for having questioned him.

## **A Divisive Figure Cannot Serve as the Basis of Opposition Unity**

An alliance with Reza Pahlavi does not advance the anti-regime struggle; it compromises it. It does so because it brings to the opposition a figure who is not regarded as having any democratic credential, but rather as the political heir to a form of rule that many Iranians associate with autocracy, dynastic privilege, repression, and dependence on foreign power. The problem is not merely that monarchy belongs to Iran's past. It is that the return of monarchic logic—even in revised or modernized language—threatens to reproduce the same political principle that lies at the core of the present religious dictatorship: the subordination of popular sovereignty to a higher and unaccountable authority.

## **For All These Reasons, an Alliance with Him Is Counterproductive**

For all these reasons, an alliance with Reza Pahlavi is not simply mistaken; it is counterproductive. It sends an alienating message to a people with painful historical memories of foreign-backed monarchy. It recenters opposition politics around hereditary symbolism rather than democratic legitimacy. It revives the fears of minorities and of the broader public whose trust is indispensable. It substitutes confusion for clarity by encouraging fantasies of salvation through war or outside intervention. And it surrounds the anti-regime struggle with a political culture that too often appears intolerant, leader-centered, and coercive.

For all these reasons and many others, the people of Iran and all democratic forces have a clear demarcation with Reza Pahlavi, not on personal ground, but what he represents. It would constitute an insult to the Iranian people who once and for all overthrew the Pahlavi's dynasty and have been chanting during the 2022 and most recent uprising in January 2026 "Down with Oppressor, whether the shah or Supreme Leader."

## **He Is an Obstacle to Uprising and regime's overthrow**

A democratic future for Iran cannot be built on the foundations of dynastic nostalgia, concentrated authority, or political exclusion. It must rest on a republic freely chosen by the people, on the equal dignity of all citizens and nationalities, on institutional pluralism, and on a complete break with every form of autocracy, whether religious or monarchic.

From that perspective, the strategic problem with Reza Pahlavi is that he embodies precisely the kind of unresolved authoritarian inheritance that makes him an obstacle to change and not an agent of democratic change. The conclusion therefore follows with considerable force: not only an alliance with Reza Pahlavi would not accelerate the democratic overthrow of the regime, but it would delay it by discouraging the public, alienating essential social constituencies, and reintroducing into the political field the very logic of concentrated and unaccountable power that the uprising must overcome. He is one of its principal obstacles to democratic change in Iran.