

Brussels, 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2017

**Dear friends and colleagues from the AoIJ,**

It has been almost eight years since the Iranian authorities illegally closed down the offices of the AoIJ without justification or due judicial process and in violation of the Iranian constitution and national laws.

Their actions didn't stop there. Over the past few years, it persecuted the leadership of the AoIJ, several members of the board were detained or sentenced to jail in absentia and some of them are banned from working until today. These brutal attacks also targeted brave and independent voices of journalism and dozens of professionals spent years behind bars. Many more were forced to flee their homeland.

If the authorities believed that by doing this they would be able to silence the authentic voice of Iranian journalists, they have been proved wrong. Iranian journalists at large have demonstrated their professionalism, resilience and independence. Drawing on the great tradition of Iranian intellect and free thinking, you kept the flame of truth telling and independent journalism alive. You have been on the frontline of the global fight for the future of journalism and we thank you for your service.

I, on behalf of 600,000 journalists from around the world, thank you for your steadfastness and the great bond of solidarity that kept you going. The latest news that you are able, despite all the pressure, to launch a new collective endeavour that will unite the voice of journalists and take you a step closer to reinstating the AoIJ as the representative of the Iranian journalists in the country is very welcome.

Today, we are very happy that we are launching a Farsi section on our Middle East website. We will be able to hear your voice and to talk to you in your own language. This is the least we can do in recognition of your work and I hope that it will help you to carry on with your struggle.

In solidarity,



**Philippe Leruth, IFJ President**

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