

11 August 2022

To whom it might concern:

**Re: Azadeh Momeni**

Dr. Azadeh Momeni has asked me to prepare a letter of reference in support of her application for the Postdoctoral application for Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto. Although I have not been part of her PhD committee, since I have worked with her prior to her PhD program and she has remained in touch from time to time to discuss her research, I am very happy to support her application.

Dr. Azadeh Momeni received a fellowship (March 2012- February 2013) to work on the Iran section of a large scale project on *Comparative Electoral Politics and Gender Policies In The Middle East And North Africa*, launched under my direction by the Research and Publication Division of Women Living Under Muslim Laws. The project sought to move beyond whether political secularism is the only path to the realization of substantive gender equality and/or whether it is possible to 'secularize/democratize' religion/Islam' through adopting more liberal and women-friendly reading of the Islamic texts to undermine the perspectives that relegate women (and religious minorities) to second-class citizens.

During her fellowship, I worked very closely with Dr. Momeni. As part of the research project, she prepared a thorough analytical research presentation examining the intended and unintended consequences of the Islamic Republic's gender policies on women's political participation in formal elections and street politics. Through analysis of various gender policies, she demonstrated the contradiction state's gender vision, which on the one hand viewed women as primarily belonging to the domestic sphere, and yet its desire to keep them as active supporters of the regime. Additionally, the policy of Islamization had afforded more educational opportunities for women, as the government had viewed education as the best way to indoctrinate the young generation with "Islamic" ideology. Dr. Momeni's findings indicated that the success of this policy had resulted in more women gaining the ability to articulate their demands, often by employing re-interpretations of Islamic texts and sometimes secular discourses and in particular, stressing social justice, which was one of the major motto of the regime as it related to gender and women's rights. Their perspectives frequently clashed with the regime's conservative religious approaches and led to their disillusionment loss of interest in politics, and many more joined the ranks of seculars without necessarily giving up their religion. Others distinguished between organized religion and religion as a system of belief. Her data and research and data analysis were thorough and systematic.

As part of her fellowship at WLUML, Ms. Momeni also researched the way success of women in various contexts -- including South Africa, Afghanistan, and Rwanda -- have managed to influence the political structure and put in place mechanisms to address gender discrimination through public mobilization had been reported in Iranian media and women's magazines. She was interested in

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examining the role of transnational mobilization around international conventions, including the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women, and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Dr. Momeni, as the youngest member of the research team, made valuable contributions to the development of the project. This process also helped her in refining her PhD research program more clearly. During this time, she also participated in my graduate class (Identity and Difference). Although anthropology was new to her, her interventions and her conference paper stimulated much-appreciated discussion. She also translated the book Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women, written by Mona Tajali (2011) and myself for Farsi publication which, due to some unforeseen development, was not published until 2020.

Dr. Momeni is very committed to research and scholarly work. Her intellectual interest is at the intersection of politics, philosophy, and international relations, with a solid inclination to rely on empirical data analysis. There is quite a bit of interest in her PhD work among the scholarly community in Iran, and I understand it is being translated into Farsi with the hope of obtaining permission for publication.

Dr. Azadeh Momeni is personable, accommodating, and full of understanding; a pleasure to work with. She is a team worker with maturity and a sense of responsibility. Given her past experience and academic performance, and her commitment to unravelling the complexities of social and political development to scholarly debate, I am confident that she will make an excellent colleague and will contribute to our scholarly knowledge of Iranian politics and its international relations. I, therefore, recommend her strongly.

I would be glad to answer further questions if you would telephone me at (514) 6604057 (work); or e-mail me at [Homa.Hoodfar@concordia.ca](mailto:Homa.Hoodfar@concordia.ca).

Sincerely

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