

May 26, 2025

The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Faculty of Arts & Science
Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto
4 Bancroft Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1C1

Dear Professor Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi and Members of the Selection Committee,

I am applying for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto for 2025-2026. This role will allow me to revise and pursue the publication of my dissertation as a book at an academic institution which specializes in contemporary Iranian history and related fields. Professor Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's archival collections, and his Qajar collections would be transformative for my project and will provide solid ground for my long-term research in Iranian studies. Furthermore, the chance to collaborate with the expert scholars in Iranian studies at the University of Toronto, particularly Professor Jenifer Jenkins and Professor Tavakoli-Targhi (the advisor of my dissertation), would be highly beneficial for my post-doc project as well.

My doctoral project, titled "Tabriz Between Socio-political Struggles and Imperial Violence: The Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," was part of the broader Zentrum Moderner Orient project in Berlin (ZMO), in cooperation with the School of Oriental and African Studies in London (SOAS), on "Urban Violence in Middle East" in 2011–2014.

My dissertation contributes to the urban and social histories of Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Situated in the city of Tabriz, the investigation touches upon major themes that formed part of the processes and trajectory of modernization and democratization in Iranian society in this period. To achieve this, the study explores various aspects of religion, economy, society, women's rights, labor, and minorities in Tabriz, aspects of the city that were the cause of the urban collective violence and social and political struggles and transformations. These struggles and transformations are the main topic of the dissertation.

I am confident that my project will contribute not only to a broader understanding of the wide-ranging forces and developments that shaped the urban transformation of cities in the Middle East, but will also shed light on the ramifications of urban transformation itself, linking it to the social and political transition culminating in violent upheavals in the early decades of the twentieth century. In spite of the fact that this topic has so far attracted little attention, it is certainly highly relevant in view of the current events in the region and their future developments.

During the fellowship, I intend to revise my dissertation into a book manuscript. In addition, I would like to publish an article on this project in a peer-reviewed Iranian studies journal. Through teaching and research, my long-term career aim is to remain in the academic world as well as to contribute to the ongoing Women's movement in Iran.

Thank your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Fateme Masjedi
University of Göttingen