Davis Projects for Peace 2023: Life, Peace, Freedom: Art for Iran
Location: Edmonton, Canada
Nominating Institution: International House Alberta
Project Lead: Shirin Kaviyanifar, Iran, University of Alberta
Project Team: Faiza Noor, Canada, University of Alberta; Ren Wen Lim, Canada, University of Alberta

**Project Summary**
The loss of the 176 people aboard Flight PS752 out of Iran on January 8, 2020, including 13 citizens of Edmonton, was a harrowing moment for our community. Following the now hundreds of lives lost and thousands missing in the 2021-2023 Iranian protests, many grief-stricken family members, relatives and friends of the victims live across Canada - home to the second-largest population of Iranians outside Iran. We therefore aim to create a living community art piece to commemorate the victims of the conflict and create a site for ongoing peace-building. The art piece will include artwork from students at public schools around Alberta by asking them to learn about Iran, and contribute their messages of global peace to the artwork. The final art piece will then be unveiled at the University of Alberta at the end of August 2023 - a date that also marks the first anniversary of famed protester Masha Amini’s death and the rise of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement.

The artwork will also be printed as flyers tailored for different age groups about the conflict in Iran, to be distributed in schools and universities around Edmonton and available online worldwide. The contribution of students and distribution of flyers will be carried out in partnership with the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) and the Iranian Students’ Association of the University of Alberta (ISAUA). Our primary objective will be not only to raise awareness and bring closure to the friends and families of the victims, reassuring them that their loved ones will not be forgotten, but to create a wave of motivation for peace-building globally.

**Background**
To us, peace means being able to express yourself without the fear of violent repercussions. It means not having to live under a regime that systematically disenfranchises women. And, it means not losing loved ones over political power plays. Unfortunately, this is not the reality the Iranian people get to enjoy. Through this project, we aim to generate support for the countless victims of the ongoing Iranian protests, and to spread awareness of the pressing need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

On February 11, 1979, an Islamic regime replaced the Imperial state of Iran. Following that day, violence and injustice became the regime’s currency. Leaders of the Islamic regime started executions against at least 200 members of the old government as a punishment for crimes defined as "crimes against the Revolution" or "corruption on earth". With the rise of activities against their brutality in the late 1980s, the regime conducted mass executions of thousands of political prisoners whose trials lasted barely minutes and their bodies were buried in unmarked mass graves in Khavaran Cemetery.

The oppression against the continual protests occurred silently for decades before the availability of phone cameras and social media. In 2009, 2017 and 2019, the government murdered hundreds of people on the streets with direct shootings but with the regime shutting down the internet, these persecutions were happening inconspicuously. On January 8, 2020, 176 innocent passengers and crew lost their lives in the downing of Flight PS752, 3 minutes after take-off from Tehran’s Imam Khomeini International Airport. Today, months have passed after the death of Mahsa Zhina Amini under the morality police custody which sparked the movement of "Woman, Life, Freedom". Hundreds of people seeking freedom
and peace lost their lives on the streets while many got executed. These are just a few examples of Iranians' uprisings and the consequences of facing the oppression of the Islamic regime.

Over the years, victims' families, relatives and friends continued their path for freedom and peace and as an Iranian, I (Shirin) witnessed and experienced this pain and grief. The persistence of so many to achieve peace motivated us to have a living memorial for our lost ones, assuring their families that they will always be remembered and keeping the peace movement alive outside of Iran, where these voices and expressions can be amplified safely. This is where the idea for the art piece began.

**Implementation**

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| April - May | ● Artist, Danesh Zonoobi, creates beautiful image of Mahsa Zhina Amini out of the images of victims of the conflict in Iran  
● Team and ACGC creates an age-appropriate educational piece to send to schools in Alberta, describing the project and asking for students to create tiles with messages of global peace in any language (Deadline June 12)  
● Information and participation packages are sent to schools |
| June | ● The central image is completed  
● Images contributed by the schools are added to the art piece  
● A website and live digital platform is created where people from around the world can upload and add their own messages of peace digitally to the art piece (and upload to social media) |
| July | ● The art piece is printed as large-scale banners to be displayed at the University of Alberta, Edmonton City Hall, and Libraries around the city (and available online)  
● Posters/smaller scale banners are printed for the schools who contributed to the art piece (and available online) |
| August | ● Memorial event and unveiling of the Peace Artwork  
● Banners are hung, posters are distributed to schools and other contributors |
| Beyond | ● Ongoing digital campaign continues, where people can continue to upload messages of global peace  
● Banners and posters made available for download around the world |
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### Anticipated Results

| Short Term | ● A sense of closure for the friends and family members of the victims, following the art piece’s unveiling and memorial service.  
|           | ● Raised public awareness of the ongoing situation in Iran, highlighting the need for a peaceful resolution to this conflict (and others) in order to minimize further suffering and loss of life.  
| Long Term | ● Continued public interest in the conflict’s developments, and interest in supporting peace movements’ activities, such as public rallies and fundraisers for peacebuilding initiatives and policies.  
| Main Indicators | ● High public engagement with the creation of the artwork and later with online materials  
|           | ● Influx of volunteer and material support for the Iranian support groups and societies we are partnering with.  
|           | ● Contributions from additional schools and public institutions, along with further partnerships with Iranian NGOs across Canada.

### Sustainability & Scalability

Because of the online community art element of this project, we anticipate that it will take on a life of its own. Organizations around the world will also be able to print and display the art piece or share it digitally. We will continue to curate the art piece for many years to come - contributing to Peace in Iran, and a global peace movement whose time has come.