

Omid Shekari - مخل (Disruptive)

مخل *Mokhel* in Farsi means disruptive. This word is used 2 times in the Iranian 1979 constitution. In the government-approved English version, it's wrongly translated to *detrimental*. Both times the word *Mokhel* is mentioned are extremely crucial to secure people's rights. First about the freedom of press and publication in Article 24 that says *Publications and the press have freedom of expression except when it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public. The details of this exception will be specified by law.* And the second in Article 27: *Public gatherings and marches may be freely held, provided arms are not carried and that they are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam.* But the constitution doesn't specify who determines what is "detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public". This word allows the power to interpret it as they wish and when needed.

مخل (*Disruptive*) includes an installation and two paintings inspired by the structure of the Iranian judicial system, and the way its aggressiveness has historically served the economic and political programs of the authoritarian governments, both before and after the 1979 revolution. Policing, mass incarceration, execution and violent torture have been used to silence any forms of disapproval whether they are strikes of the workers, teachers and nurses or demonstrations for political, economic and human rights.

Similar to the U.S., China, Brazil, India, Russia, and other countries that hold large numbers of their people in prison, the majority of imprisoned people in Iran are coming from the poor and working class; they had no or very little chance to differ their living conditions, predetermined by the theocratic, neoliberal power that controls the wealth through violence. Massive unemployment due to disastrous political and economic policies in addition to the economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. have left many with no hope and pushed them towards violence and drug related activities, both to consume and/or sell. Majority of prisoners all over the world would most likely never have ended up there if they had a safe home, food security and quality education. Instead they had to deal with generations of trauma on top of constant feelings of failure and despair.

As Angela Davis puts it, "This is the ideological work that the prison performs-it relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism... (Davis, Angela Y. *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press, 2011.)

There are over 225,000 people currently in prison in Iran. In addition to tens of thousands confined temporarily in jails. This information regarding the number of the prisoners and the state of their condition has never been available to the public. All numbers are predicted to be much higher.

Prison abolition is an imperative pathway to heal our society. In order to make such a major shift, we need to transform our systems to include equitable distribution of wealth, quality education from childhood, and accessible and free physical/mental healthcare in order to alleviate fear and misery in our society that does not need to police and confine people.

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The one that melts (metallic large structure)

2022

Metal sheets, wood

22 x 12 x 11.5 ft

Gone looting (vertical painting)

2022

Acrylics on industrial canvas

8 x 6 ft

Potency of the conscious crowd (landscape painting)

2021

Acrylics on industrial canvas

6 x 8 ft