



Ardavan Khoshnood
Malmö, Sweden

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Her Excellency Audrey Azoulay
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

Your Excellency Audrey Azoulay,

As the Director-General of UNESCO, you are aware of the importance of cultural heritage. As a member of the United Nations family, you are also aware of the vital importance of inviolable human dignity and human value.

Therefore, I write this letter to your excellency.

On Monday, April 23rd, 2018, the media in the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that a mummified body was discovered in “Shahre Rey”, south of Tehran. Images of the mummified body have been published by the media. Iranian officials, as well as the Iranian diaspora have announced that the mummified body may belong to the founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty, His Majesty Reza Shah Pahlavi, who ruled Iran between 1921 and 1941.

Reza Shah Pahlavi passed away in South Africa, Johannesburg, in 1944. Some years later he was moved to Iran and his final resting place at “Shahre Rey”. After the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979, and the overthrow of His Majesty Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the revolutionaries led by the clerics attacked the mausoleum of Reza Shah Pahlavi and destroyed it. The body of Reza Shah, however, was never found. The newly established Islamic Republic claimed that the body had been removed by the Pahlavi family as they left Iran. This claim has, however, repeatedly been dismissed by both Empress Farah Pahlavi as well as the son of the late Shah, Reza Pahlavi. They state that the body of Reza Shah was never removed and is still at “Shahre Rey”, where he was buried.

It is thus believed that the mummified body found in Tehran, belongs to Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Because of the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran in violating human rights, and the previous attack on the mausoleum of Reza Shah, there is a widespread fear amongst Iranians that the mummified body may be harmed, stolen or in other ways disrespected.

It should, in reality, not matter whether this mummified body belongs to the late Reza Shah Pahlavi or another human being. If not in life, at least in death, we are all equal. A body, irrespective of who it belongs to, must be treated with respect. Furthermore, a mummified body, regardless of its origin, is to be considered cultural heritage of the country.

With this short letter, I humbly ask you to intervene and supervise the treatment of the mummified body and reveal the truth about to whom this body belongs, as the record of the Islamic Republic of Iran makes it impossible to trust its officials.

Respectfully,
Ardavan Khoshnood, PhD