

Borders and Boundaries competition announces winner

CALIFORNIA, United States - On 23 January 2019, United for Iran, a Bay-Area NGO working to promote civil liberties and civil society in Iran, is announcing the completion and winner of Borders and Boundaries, a visual art competition of Iranian artists focused on censorship and freedom of expression in Iran.

Participants were asked to submit their visual artworks including photographs, paintings, drawings and graphic designs on **the state of art and creativity under the pressures of censorship in Iran**, and submitted works on a range of social and political issues including political exclusion, female autonomy, internet censorship and more.

The contest, which ended in August 2018, was judged by Parastou Forouhar, Hossein Sarbakhshiaan and Ethan Russell. The winner, Babak Sarbaz, received a certificate of excellence from United for Iran and \$1,000. The top 10 winning works will be shown at Oslo Freedom Forum in 2019.



Artist's name: Babak Sarbaz (pseudonym)
Title: Clergies' Revolution
Dimensions: 100 x 75 cm

“ *This competition was designed as a platform to give voice to issues that Iranian artists struggle with but cannot voice due to cultural, religious or political pressures.* - *Firuzeh Mahmoudi, executive director of United for Iran* ”

“The fact that all the Borders & Boundaries participants submitted their work under pseudonyms speaks volumes to the conditions of free speech in Iran,” said Mahmoudi.

Borders and Boundaries marks United for Iran's second major collaboration with artists. In 2012, the NGO collaborated with a global network of artists and musicians to release an album of music to draw attention to human rights conditions in Iran. 'Azadi: Freedom Songs' received 53,000 streams and thousands of downloads. The album remains online and is available for free streaming and download.

Earlier this year, United for Iran announced the conclusion of the first round of its app incubation contest, the [IranCubator](#), which matched civil society activists with app developers and programmers to build apps for the over 40 million smartphone users currently in Iran. To date, IranCubator apps have been downloaded over 540,000 times. The IranCubator awarded developers and activists with projects that promote human rights in Iran with a \$40,000 grant, and technical support needed to develop apps to fight against the legal and socio-cultural discrimination against women, immigrants, people with disabilities and LGBTQ communities.

“Today, there are more than 40 million smartphones in Iran and a million more are added every month. But the number of human rights apps remains close to zero,” added Mahmoudi. “We've seen technological advances transform the global human rights movement and mobile phone apps have the capacity to enable Iranian citizens to more easily and securely organise, assemble and express themselves. This is why mobile apps [have the] potential to be such a vital tool for Iranian human rights defenders.”

View the final showcase of selected contestants [here](#).