Patriotic Doctors of Iran

An Opinion Still Needs Evidence – Reply to Ronya Othmann's FAZ Column

1 November 2026

Reply to Ronya Othmann's column "Political naivety or calculation?" (FAZ, 1 November 2026)

Dear Ms Othmann,
Dear editorial team,

We, the Patriotic Doctors of Iran, strongly disagree with your column. Criticism of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's decision is of course legitimate. But even a pointed column can be expected to keep facts, personal experiences and assumptions apart. That is precisely what your text fails to do at decisive points.

You write, for instance, that Prince Reza Pahlavi lives to this day off his father's fortune. You offer no evidence for this, and an estimate ranging from 20 million to two billion dollars cannot replace it. Nor can we see what the term "royal offspring" is supposed to contribute to an assessment of his positions.

Nor did he only appear once regime change became conceivable. He has been politically active in exile for decades. The fact that interest in him is growing shows rather that many people see a perspective in him. According to the police, around 250,000 people came to his rally in Munich on 14 February; the FAZ reported on it. Of course, that is not an electoral mandate. But this indication of his social significance cannot be ignored.

On his support inside the country, you yourself concede that there is no independent opinion polling in Iran, and then nevertheless assume that Kurds and other minorities reject him. Kurdish Iranians, however, are as politically diverse as anyone else. The Patriotic Kurdish Iranians Party, for example, co-signed a statement supporting the Foundation's decision. Moreover, Kurds suffer the most

severe persecution under the Islamic Republic. Defending Iran's territorial unity and rejecting separatism is not directed against Kurds. And he can hardly be blamed for calling Jina Amini "Mahsa" – that was her official name, and it was under this name that she became a worldwide symbol of the protests.

We take the heckling you describe seriously. We reject insults and intimidation, as well as the logic that anyone who is not for the Shah is for the regime. But individual experiences do not justify a judgement about an entire body of supporters. Prince Reza Pahlavi must be measured by his own statements, not by those of every individual who invokes his name.

You present courageous women activists as possible representatives of the Iranian people. This recognition is justified. But then one would also have to ask about their mandate to represent. Whether someone is politically credible must not depend on whether he or she matches one's own ideas.

The Foundation has declared that the prize belongs to the Iranian people and is to be handed over later to their freely elected representatives. Prince Reza Pahlavi accepts it only in trust. You offer no evidence for your insinuation that the aim is to impose a leader on the protests. The choice is entirely compatible with the Foundation's values, as he has campaigned for years for a secular, democratic Iran with free elections.

His father's rule may also be examined critically, and human rights violations must be named. But Prince Reza Pahlavi must be measured by his own statements, his actions and verifiable commitments. His family background is not a political counter-argument.

We expect from you a debate that takes contrary evidence seriously, does not generalise personal experiences and applies the same standards to all political actors. A column may judge sharply – but sharpness cannot replace evidence and sound reasoning. The political self-determination of Iranians also includes the right to support Prince Reza Pahlavi. These voices deserve the same serious attention as those of his opponents.

Yours sincerely,

Patriotic Doctors of Iran