The right to the city is like a cry and a demand’, wrote Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le droit à la ville*. In the noted urban scholar Peter Marcuse’s words, Lefebvre’s right is ‘a cry out of necessity and a demand for something more’.

Despite rather astonishing efforts of former IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) Commander turned mayor Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, to portray a deceptive picture of Tehran on a global stage – either by inviting world-renowned urban thinkers such as Setha Low, David Harvey and Saskia Sassen, or by being invited as a key-note speaker by world-renowned institutions such as LSE, the Iranian capital fails to respond to the fundamental demand; and the demand, as Marcuse once wrote:

comes from those directly in want, directly oppressed, those for whom even their most immediate needs are not fulfilled: the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, the prosecuted on gender, religious, racial [and political] grounds. It is a demand of […] those whose income is below subsistence, those excluded from the benefits of urban life. The aspiration comes rather from those superficially integrated into the system and sharing in its materials benefits, but constrained in their opportunities for creative activity, oppressed in their social relationships, guilty perhaps about an undeserved prosperity, unfulfilled in their lives’ hopes.
In this paper, through a critical reading of Tehran, both as a physical, as well as a socio-political entity, I would argue that what we see today, is, indeed, a city of oppression, discrimination, hypocrisy and despair which predominantly failed to serve its citizenry. I would also argue that there is no such thing as citizen in the Iranian city while an institutionalised discriminatory system driven by a corrupt, dysfunctional theocratic sovereignty dominates not only the urban managerial structures, but also all aspects of city life.

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Ahmadreza is an architect, urbanist, researcher and educator based at the Coventry University. He has studied architecture, urban design and spatial planning in Iran and the UK and has previously worked in several architecture and design practices in the Middle East. He holds a PhD degree in Built Environment – with a focus on urban sustainability in Iran - from University of West London, and an MA in Spatial Planning and Urban Design from London Metropolitan University. Prior to joining the Coventry University, he has taught in places such as University of West London and University of Westminster. Ahmadreza’s research interests centre around politics of space, urban sociology, and urban and architectural history and theory. His latest research output ‘The House of Tyranny; Thoughts on Iran’s Pyramid of Power’ was presented as part of the Parliament Buildings Conference jointly hosted by the Bartlett School of Architecture and the UCL European Institute.