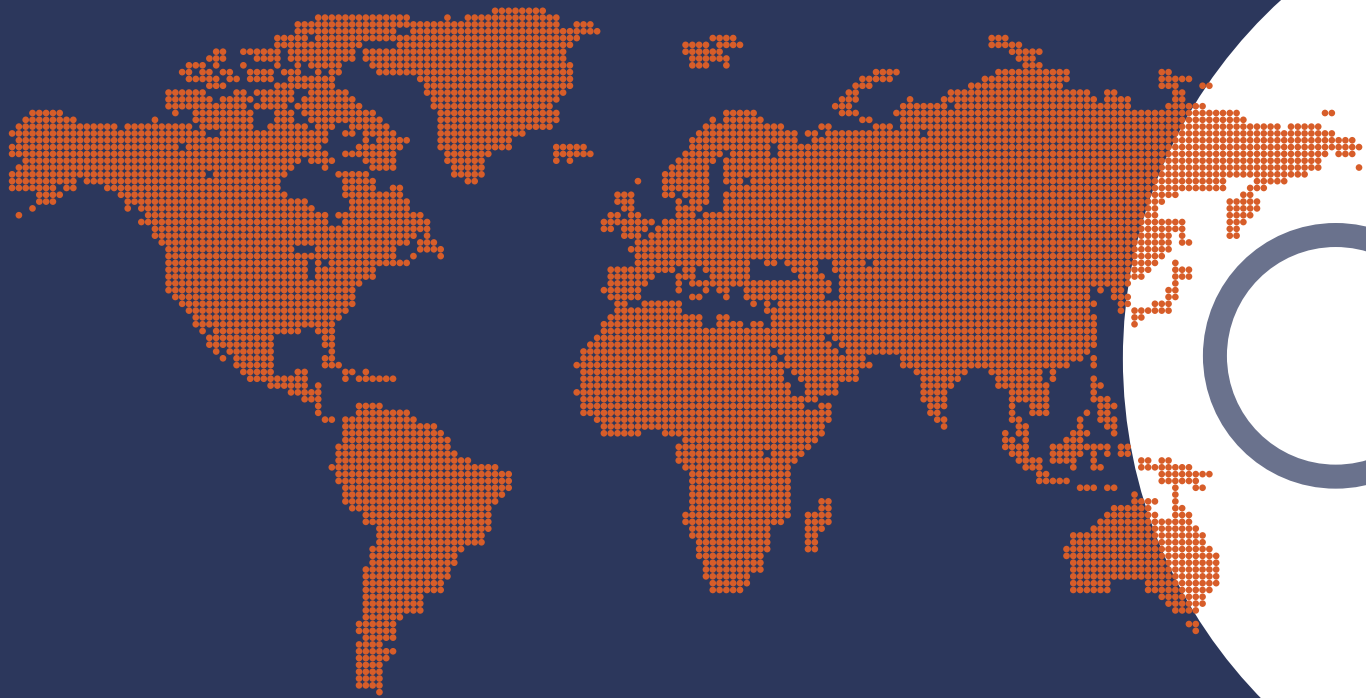


COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

U.S. Department of State's Country Reports
on Human Rights Practices (2016–2019)

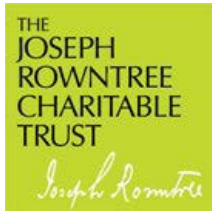


IRAN

OCTOBER 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was researched and written by Liz Williams and Stephanie Huber, with invaluable input provided by Lizzy Galliver, Ariel Plotkin and Mike Kaye.



We are extremely grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for their support of this project.

FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS

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Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

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Summary of Findings: Iran

This comparative analysis of the U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* chapters on Iran compared the full content of the 2016 edition to the subsequent annual editions covering events in 2017, 2018, and 2019. Each section of the Iran chapter was analysed against the following set of criteria:

- Structure of the report: Were sections omitted, renamed, condensed, or new sections proposed;
- Language used: Whether any changes in terminology or semantics were observed when describing human rights issues, including changes in specificity, description of general patterns or number of incidents documented;
- Improvements: What improvements in the human rights situations were observed compared to the previous report that were not corroborated by country information available from illustrative sources at the time of publication of the annual reports;
- Omissions: Which human rights issues were omitted compared to the previous report that continued to be documented by other illustrative sources at the time of publication of the annual reports.

A. Structure of the report

Length

The 2016 and 2017 Iran reports were 48 pages long. The 2018 and 2019 reports were increased to 56 and 57 pages respectively. Most significantly, the subsection *Reproductive Rights* (re-named *Coercion in Population Control* in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports), which in the 2016 edition had 65 words, was scaled down to 25 words in the 2017 report, and to just 10 words in the 2018 and 2019 editions (see section [D. Omissions](#) below).

Section headings

Numerous changes were made to section headings, with the majority being made from 2016 to 2017 and then replicated in the 2018 and 2019 editions. Significant changes included:

- Changing the title of the subsection on *Reproductive Rights* to *Coercion in Population Control*. This resulted in substantive changes to the type of information included and the issues addressed (see section [D. Omissions](#) below);
- Omitting the following subsections and related content despite publicly available sources continuing to document these issues:
 - *Amnesty*: The removal of the subsection resulted in the complete exclusion of relevant information in relation to past and current amnesty decrees or provisions.
 - *Public Access to Information*: Information relating to public access to government information was omitted, which meant that sources referring to the limitations imposed by the Iranian authorities for individuals and journalists alike to access information that may conflict with state interests was no longer included.

- *Other Societal Violence or Discrimination*: Information previously included in 2016 on the societal discrimination faced by non-native Persian speakers and non-Shia individuals was omitted from the subsequent editions.

In addition, the 2019 report omitted the subsection on *Exile* previously found under section 2.d. *Freedom of Movement*, omitting contextual information.

Furthermore, the 2019 report omitted the subsections *Role of the Police and Security Apparatus* and *Detainee’s Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court*, both previously included in section 2.d. *Arbitrary Arrest or Detention* of the 2016, 2017 and 2018 reports. However, the content, save for one issue – police corruption – was kept in the 2019 edition, but moved to the *Executive Summary* and repeated elsewhere within section 2.d.

The 2017 and subsequent editions condensed the section title 2.d. *Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons* to 2.d. *Freedom of Movement*. Given that this section continued to document issues including access to legal protection and services for refugees, it is considered that the heading no longer fully encompasses all the issues addressed, which may result in new or less familiar users of these publications missing out on information included.

For further details see [Table 1](#) and section [D. Omissions](#) below.

B. Language used

The most notable changes to language were observed when comparing the 2016 edition to the 2017 report, with the majority of these repeated in 2018 and 2019. Most of these language points related to the inclusion of softening of language or toning down of previously made statements, potentially implying an improvement of the situation.

Section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking* was by far the section with the highest number of language observations throughout the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports, followed by section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person*.

Softening of language was the main language change observed, such as illustrated by the following examples:

- Prison conditions described in 2016 as “often harsh and life threatening” were amended in 2017 and 2018 to “potentially life threatening”. The 2019 report changed the way it described prison conditions again suggesting a worsening of the situation. Interestingly, all these descriptive changes occurred despite the content on prison conditions not having changed substantially in that section across all four reports;
- Whilst the 2016 report stated that Human Rights Watch reported that undocumented Afghans were recruited by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to fight in Syria threatening them with forced deportation if they didn’t, the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports all added a ‘softener’ to the same sentence as follows [emphasis added]: “According to HRW [Human Rights Watch], the IRGC since 2013 **allegedly** recruited thousands of undocumented Afghans living in Iran to fight in Syria, threatening forced deportation **in some cases**”;
- In 2018 it was noted that [emphasis added] “Media and human rights groups also documented **numerous** suspicious deaths while in custody”. Interestingly in the 2019 report “numerous” was removed, possibly implying an improvement on the situation: “Media and

human rights groups also documented suspicious deaths while in custody or following beatings of protesters by security forces throughout the year”.

In the following instances a previously made statement in 2016 was no longer included in the subsequent editions, potentially implying an improvement of the situation:

- In the 2019 report a previously included specific statement was replaced with a more general one, compared to the 2016, 2017 and 2018 editions. Whilst the 2016 report noted that the Iranian authorities made “few attempts to investigate allegations of deaths” specifically caused by “torture or other physical abuse or after denying detainees medical treatment”, the 2019 report limited this to the authorities not initiating “credible investigations” into “suspicious deaths in custody”, thus neglecting to mention that these may have been caused by torture and other ill-treatment or denial of medical treatment;
- Whilst the 2016 report stated that [emphasis added] “Some prison facilities [...] **were notorious for the use** of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents”, the subsequent editions noted [emphasis added] “Human rights organizations frequently cited some prison facilities [...] **for their use** of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents of the government”;
- “Cases of rape were difficult to document due to nonreporting”.

The introduction of source attributions was also observed of which some notable examples are presented below, which may be read to undermine the veracity of information:

- Whilst the 2016 report stated that “Some prison facilities, including Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, were notorious for the use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents”, the subsequent editions started this sentence with [additions highlighted in bold] “**Human rights organizations frequently cited** some prison facilities, including Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, for their use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents of the government”;
- In relation to where Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) was mostly practiced, the reports differed in their approach to presenting such information from one year to the next, potentially casting doubt on the veracity of the information: Whilst in 2016 it was noted that the “UN Committee on the Rights of the Child noted in its January periodic review”, this was changed in 2017 to “FGM was reportedly” and further amended in the 2018 and 2019 reports to “Little current data was available [...] although older data and media reports suggested”;
- In 2017 and 2018 “according to activist reports” was added to the exact same information as previously included in 2016 [bold indicates added text]: “**According to activist reports** the law limited Sunni Baluchis’ employment opportunities and political participation”.

The 2017 report noted that “Several teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentences”. Interestingly in the 2018 report the emphasis was added that “several **prominent** teachers and union activists” remained in prison, providing the impression that only those teachers and union activists who might be known to the authorities (or others), or have a public profile, might remain in prison, thereby potentially ignoring the plight of teachers and union activists without such a ‘prominent’ profile.

In the 2019 report, the assessment introduced by the U.S. Department of State in the 2018 edition that “corrective treatment” of LGBTI persons “may constitute torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment under international law” was no longer included.

Some contextual information, such as the existence of specific laws, was completely omitted in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports compared to the 2016 report.

For further details see the *Use of language* sections below.

Notable language changes in the *Executive Summary* of the U.S. Department of State report

The 2016 *Executive Summary* identified what it defined as the “most significant human rights problems” followed by seven separate lists, which introduced additional human rights issues as:

- “Other HR [human rights] problems”;
- “Other reported human rights problems”;
- “Of additional concern”;
- “Also of concern”;
- “Additionally there were severe restrictions”;
- “There was also violence against”; and
- “There were significant HR problems with”.

In comparison, the 2017 report only provided one list of what it termed “the most significant human rights issues”. The 2018 edition continued to provide one list of issues, termed “human rights issues” and in 2019 the categorisation was slightly amended again to “significant human rights issues”.

C. Improvements

One reported improvement in the human rights situation was observed in the 2017 report and repeated in 2018 and 2019, which was found not to be consistent with the situation as reported by other publicly available sources. Whilst the 2016 report noted that the government restricted freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration and repatriation, the subsequent editions all explained that this concerned ‘particularly migrants and women’. However, publicly available information located for those years documented that movement restrictions continued to also be applied to perceived opponents of the regime, including journalists and human rights activists, and not just to migrants and women. For further details see [2.2.1. Improvements in 2017](#) below.

Notable improvements from the *Executive Summary* of the U.S. Department of State’s report

Freedom of religion was described in the 2016 *Executive Summary* as being “severely restricted”, whilst the 2017 and 2018 *Executive Summaries* noted the “egregious restrictions of religious freedom”. However, in the 2019 *Executive Summary* it returned to describe religious freedom as being severely restricted again, potentially implying a small improvement to the years 2017 and 2018. Interestingly, these changes were observed despite references to religious freedom throughout the four reports being almost identical.

D. Omissions

The majority of omitted issues were observed comparing the 2017 report to the 2016 edition. Thirty seven issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017 edition despite publicly

available information continuing to document their existence. These issues almost always continued to be omitted from subsequent reports and for the vast majority of issues, information was found to document their continued existence. An additional twelve omissions were observed in the 2018 report and a further eight omissions were observed in the 2019 report. In all of these instances publicly available information continued to document the persistent existence of these issues.

More than half of the omissions observed across the three reports were found in section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons*, in particular the subsections on *Women* and *National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities*. Almost one quarter of the human rights issues omitted across the reports were from section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person*.

Examples of significant omissions included the following:

- Impunity for past unlawful killings was no longer mentioned in section 1.a. *Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings* in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports. For further details see [1.3.1. Omissions in 2017](#).
- The extent to which the Iranian government sought to prevent or investigate disappearances was not reported in the 2017 and 2018 editions (although this issue was re-inserted in the 2019 report). For further details see [1.3.1. Omissions in 2017](#).
- The renamed *Coercion in Population Control* subsection in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports did not include contextual information about the legal rights of married couples to freely decide the number, spacing and timing of children, their entitlements to reproductive healthcare free from discrimination, coercion, and violence, and that government family planning cuts meant that previously included full free access to contraception and family planning was no longer available. Instead in 2017 the following statement was included: “There were no reports of coerced abortion, involuntary sterilization, or other coercive population control methods” and a link provided to estimates on maternal mortality and contraception prevalence. In the 2018 and 2019 editions this was further reduced to “There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization”. For further information see [6.3.1. Omissions in 2017](#) and [6.3.2. New omissions in 2018](#).
- The only societal harassment and violence reported on against LGBTI persons was in the 2016 report and related specifically to “young gay men” facing “harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders and community elders”. This issue was omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports, thereby omitting any information on societal harassment and violence targeting LGBTI persons from those reports. For further information see [6.3.1. Omissions in 2017](#).
- Information on the societal discrimination on linguistic grounds faced by non-Persians or discrimination on religious grounds against non-Shia persons. For further information see [6.3.1. Omissions in 2017](#).

Other notable omitted information from the subsection on *Women* in the 2017 report, all of which continued to be omitted from subsequent reports, related to:

- Lack of information on the principal of “qisas” (punishment in kind);
- Legal restrictions on women’s economic, social, political, academic, and cultural rights;
- The continued limits placed on women to seek divorce;
- The social and legal constraints limiting women’s professional opportunities.

In the 2017 report, the following notable additional issues were omitted from *section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person*, all of which continued to be omitted from the 2018 and 2019 reports:

- That family members were arrested for demanding justice for those who died in custody;
- That prolonged solitary confinement and sexual humiliation continued to be reported methods of torture;
- That corruption remained a problem within the police forces;
- That defendants did not always have access to government-held evidence.

Additional notable issues omitted from the 2018 report, some of which continued to be omitted in the 2019 edition, included:

- Executions continued without due process;
- Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence;
- Firing of labour activists for trade union activities.

In the 2019 report, the following notable additional issues were omitted:

- Limited attempts by the Iranian government to investigate allegations of deaths that occurred after or during torture or other physical abuse;
- Threats issued against prisoners accused of contacting the UN Secretary-General's office;
- Repression of civilians accused of violation Iran's strict moral code;
- The lengthy pre-trial detention and continued imprisonment of teachers and union activists.

In all these instances, the information was omitted despite publicly available sources documenting their continued existence.

For further details see the *Omissions* sections below.

Notable omissions from the *Executive Summary* of the U.S. Department of State's report

Most of the omissions to the *Executive Summary* were observed when comparing the 2017 *Executive Summary* to the 2016 edition, the majority of which were found to be internally inconsistent with the respective sections of the U.S. State Department report.

Seventeen such omissions were observed in 2017, most of which continued to be omitted in 2018 and 2019 [words in bold indicates omission]:

- Cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities [...] unlawfully detained;
- Disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities arbitrarily and unlawfully [...] killed;
- Politically motivated violence and repression;
- Harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities, **including lengthy solitary confinement**;
- Harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities [...] **with instances of deaths in custody**;
- Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado;
- Denial of fair public trial;

- Lack of an independent judiciary;
- Arbitrary interference with [...] **family, home, and correspondence**;
- Academic freedom;
- Restrictions on freedom of movement;
- Lack of government transparency;
- Constraints on investigations by international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into alleged violations of human rights;
- Legal and societal discrimination;
- Violence against women;
- Violence against ethnic and religious minorities.

An additional three issues were omitted from the 2018 *Executive Summary*, the first of which continued to be omitted from the 2019 edition despite being reported on in the main body of the U.S. Department of State report:

- Refoulement of refugees;
- Imprisonment of journalists;
- Lack of an independent judiciary;

No additional issues were omitted from the 2019 *Executive Summary*.

Findings by section of the report

1. Section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person*

1.1. Use of language

1.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and some in 2019

1.c. *Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*

A source attribution is introduced for the following point, which may be read to undermine the veracity of information:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
[...] <i>Some prison facilities, including Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, were notorious for the use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents of the government, particularly Wards 209 and Two of Evin Prison, which were reportedly controlled by the IRGC [...]</i>	[...] Human rights organizations frequently cited some prison facilities, including Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, for their use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents of the government, particularly Wards 209 and Two of Evin Prison, which were reportedly controlled by the IRGC [...]

1.c. *Prison and Detention Center Conditions*

Softening in language was introduced in the 2017 and 2018 editions compared to the 2016 report, thereby potentially suggesting an improvement in the situation. The 2019 report changed the way it described prison conditions again suggesting a worsening of the situation. Interestingly, all these description changes occurred despite section 1.c.'s content not having changed substantially with regards to prison and detention center conditions:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017 and 2018 reports [emphasis added]	2019 report [emphasis added]
[...] <i>Prison conditions reportedly were often harsh and life threatening [...]</i>	[...] <i>Prison conditions were harsh and potentially life threatening [...]</i>	[Note that the 2019 report implied a worsening of the situation: [...] <i>Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening [...]</i>]

1.e. *Denial of Fair Public Trial / Trial Procedures*

It was further observed that the following contextual information found in the 2016 report was no longer included in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions:

2016 report	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports
[...] <i>According to the Constitution, the Supreme Leader may pardon or reduce the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from the head of the judiciary [...]</i>	[Removed]

1.1.2. New observations in 2018, all repeated in 2019

1.c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and 1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflict

A source attribution is introduced for the following point, which may be read to undermine the veracity of information:

2017 report [emphasis added]	2018 report [emphasis added]	2019 report [emphasis added]
<p>[...] Prison and Detention Center Conditions [...] Physical Conditions [...] "Frequent water shortages, intolerable heat, unsanitary living spaces, and poor ventilation were regularly reported [...]"</p>	<p>[...] Prison and Detention Center Conditions [...] Physical Conditions [...] The human rights community and international media reported on frequent water shortages, intolerable heat, unsanitary living spaces, and poor ventilation in prisons throughout the country [...]"</p>	<p>[...] Prison and Detention Center Conditions [...] Physical Conditions [...] The human rights community and international media reported on frequent water shortages, insufficient food, intolerable heat, unsanitary living spaces, poor ventilation, infestations with cockroaches and mice, chronic overcrowding, and prisoners being forced to sleep on the floor with little bedding in prisons throughout the country [...]"</p>

1.c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and 1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflict

A softening in language was introduced, which may be read to undermine the veracity of information:

2017 report [emphasis added]	2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
<p>[...] Syria [...] According to HRW (see section 1.d.), the IRGC has recruited thousands of undocumented Afghans living in Iran to fight in Syria since at least 2013, allegedly both offering incentives to potential recruits, such as legal residence, and threatening forced deportation [...]"</p>	<p>[...] Syria [...] According to HRW, the IRGC since 2013 allegedly recruited thousands of undocumented Afghans living in Iran to fight in Syria, threatening forced deportation in some cases [...]"</p>

1.e. Denial of Fair Public Trial / Trial Procedures

It was further observed that the following contextual information found in the 2017 report was no longer included in the 2018 and 2019 editions:

2017 report [emphasis added]	2018 and 2019 reports
<p>[...] Under this method judges may find a person guilty based on their own "divine knowledge," or they may issue more lenient sentences [...]"</p>	<p>[...] Under this method judges may find a person guilty based on their own "divine knowledge [...]"</p>

1.1.3. New observations in 2019

1.a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

By softening the language slightly an improvement in the situation is implied in following two examples:

2018 report [emphasis added]	2019 report
[...] <i>Media and human rights groups also documented numerous suspicious deaths while in custody or following beatings of protesters by security forces throughout the year [...]</i>	[...] <i>Media and human rights groups also documented suspicious deaths while in custody or following beatings of protesters by security forces throughout the year [...]</i>

1.a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings and 1. d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The following example highlights how a specific statement was replaced with a more general one in the 2019 report, compared to the 2016, 2017 and 2018 editions. Whilst the 2016 report noted that the Iranian authorities made “few attempts to investigate allegations of deaths” specifically caused by “torture or other physical abuse or after denying detainees medical treatment”, the 2019 report limited this to the authorities not initiating “credible investigations” into “suspicious deaths in custody”, thus neglecting to mention that these may have been caused by torture and other ill-treatment or denial of medical treatment. For further information on this point see [1.3.3. New omissions in 2019 \(compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016\)](#):

2016, 2017 and 2018 reports [emphasis added]	2019 report [emphasis added]
[...] <i>The government made few attempts to investigate allegations of deaths that occurred after or during torture or other physical abuse, after denying detainees medical treatment [...]</i>	[...] <i>Administration [...] Authorities did not initiate credible investigations into allegations of inhuman or suspicious deaths in custody [...]</i>

1.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

1.3. Omissions

1.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), some omitted in 2018 and 2019

Ten issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017 edition, nine of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2018 edition and eight from the 2019 report despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. Green indicates issue reinserted.

Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

1. a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

1. "Impunity for past unlawful killings continued"

[Note that the respective 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary*, all include a separate paragraph stating that "Impunity remained pervasive throughout all levels of the government and security forces", but nowhere does it specifically mention impunity for past unlawful killings]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

2. No mention of family members being arrested for demanding justice for those who died in custody

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

1. b. Disappearance

3. "The government made no effort to prevent or investigate such acts [disappearances] and punish those responsible"

[Note that in the 2019 report this sentence was re-inserted]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[The sources consulted did not specify whether the government was making any effort to prevent disappearance but documented how the authorities did not investigate disappearances]

1. c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

4. "Commonly reported methods of torture and abuse in prisons included prolonged solitary confinement or "white" torture [...] sexual humiliation [...]"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[The sources identified relating to 2019 did not specifically mention 'sexual humiliation' as a reported method of torture]

5. "Under the penal code, 149 offenses are punishable by flogging"

[Note that in the 2018 and 2019 reports the number of offences punishable by flogging were re-inserted]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

6. *Administration*: “Authorities sometimes used alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders, including probation, house arrest, employment bans, religious rehabilitation study, internal exile from their province of residence, and foreign travel bans”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

7. *Role of the Police and Security Apparatus*: “Corruption [...] remained **problems within police forces**”

[Note that the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports omitted to mention that corruption remained a problem within the police force. Instead in their respective *Executive Summary* they noted the “pervasive” or “widespread” level of corruption at “all branches and levels of government”]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

8. *Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees*: “[...] dual nationals generally faced a variety of due process violations, including [...] brief trials during which they were not allowed access to evidence against them”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[None of the sources located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2017, 2018 and 2019 specifically mentioned ‘brief trials’ but documented instead other due process violations]

9. *Amnesty*: “The supreme leader pardoned 705 prisoners on the holiday commemorating the birth of Imam Reza; none was a political prisoner, according to Fars News”

[Note that the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions removed *Amnesty* as a subsection and any information in relation to current or past amnesty provisions as previously included in the 2016 report]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

1. e. Denial of Fair Public Trial / Trial Procedures

10. “Human rights activists reported trials in which authorities appeared to have determined the verdicts in advance, and defendants did not have [...] access to government-held evidence”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Limited information was found amongst the sources consulted in 2017, 2018 and 2019 on determined verdicts in advance]

1.3.2. New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017), most omitted in 2019

Five issues documented in the 2017 report were omitted in the 2018, four of which continued to be omitted in the 2019 editions despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. Green indicates issue reinserted. Illustrative information is presented on each of these

issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

1. a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

1. “Drug offenders, like others, continued to be executed without due process”

[2018](#) [2019](#)

2. “Authorities carried out many executions in public”

[2018](#) [2019](#)

3. “The law allows the judge to determine whether the individual understood the nature and consequences of the crime committed, potentially offering an alternative punishment to the death penalty in certain cases, although reports threw into doubt whether these alternative punishments were applied”

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[The sources located covering the years 2018 and 2019 report on alternative punishment to the death penalty being offered but do not provide an assessment as to whether these were applied and sustained in practice]

4. *Prison and Detention Center Conditions*: “Authorities often held political prisoners in separate prisons, wards [...] for long periods”

[Note that in the 2019 report this sentence was re-inserted]

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2018 that reported that political prisoners were often held in solitary confinement over a long period of time and that political prisoners were threatened with transfer to criminal wards, possibly suggesting that they were initially held in separate wards]

1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflicts

5. “Iran provided arms, financing, and training to Syrian militias”

[2018](#) [2019](#)

1.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

Four issues documented in the 2018 report were omitted from the 2019 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

1.a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

1. *Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees*: “In some cases courts sentenced such individuals [dual Iranian nationals] to 10 years or more in prison”

[Note that this was also omitted in the 2018 report but no information was found amongst the sources consulted]

[2019](#)

1.a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings and 1. d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

2. “The government made few attempts to investigate allegations of deaths that occurred after or during torture or other physical abuse, after denying detainees medical treatment”

[Note that this sentence was omitted in the 2019 report in section *1.a.* and instead the following information was included in section *1.d.*: “Authorities did not initiate credible investigations into allegations of inhuman or suspicious deaths in custody”]

[2019](#)

[Whilst the sources located report on the government making few attempts to investigate allegations of deaths that occurred after or during torture, no information was located amongst the list of sources consulted specifically reporting on the death of detainees following the denial of medical treatment]

1.c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment / Prison and Detention Center Conditions

3. “UNSR Jahangir reported that authorities sometimes threatened prisoners after accusing them of contacting her office”

[2019](#)

1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention / Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

4. “Basij units often engaged in repression of [...] civilians accused of violating the country’s strict moral code, without formal guidance or supervision from superiors”

[2019](#)

[The sources located do not specify whether these Basij units engaged in acts of repression ‘without formal guidance or supervision’]

2. Section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties*

2.1. Use of language

2.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and 2019

2.d. *Freedom of Movement / Protection of Refugees*

Whilst the 2016 report provided an assessment of the kind of support offered to refugees, the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports did not include such a statement.

2016 report	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports
<i>[...] The government had a mixed record in providing support for refugees, mostly from Afghanistan and some from Iraq [...]</i>	[Removed]

2.1.2. New observations in 2018, some of which repeated in 2019

2.b. *Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association*

In the following example, by adding ‘prominent’ in the 2018 edition the impression is provided that only those teachers and union activists who might be known to the authorities (or others), or have a public profile, might remain in prison, thereby potentially ignoring the plight of teachers and union activists without such a ‘prominent’ profile:

2017 report	2018 report
<i>[...] Freedom of Association [...] Several teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentences [...]</i>	<i>[...] Freedom of Association [...] Several prominent teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentences [...]</i>

2.1.3. New observations in 2019

It was observed that the following contextual information found in the 2018 (and 2016 and 2017) report was no longer included in the 2019 edition:

2016, 2017 and 2018 reports	2019 report
<i>[...] Exile The law does not provide for forced exile abroad [...]</i>	[Removed]

2.2. Improvements

2.2.1. Improvements in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and 2019

The following improvement in the situation in 2017, and repeated in 2018 and 2019, compared to 2016 in section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties* was observed, which was found not to be commensurate with the situation as reported by other sources:

2.d. Freedom of Movement

1. “The constitution provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, but the government restricted these rights”

[The 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions stated: “The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights, with some exceptions, particularly concerning migrants and women”]

Publicly available information continues to document that internal movement restrictions are applied, not just against migrants and women.

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

2.2.2. New improvements in 2018

There were no notable improvements observed in section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties* of the 2018 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

2.2.3. New improvements in 2019

There were no notable improvements observed in section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties* of the 2019 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

2.3. Omissions

2.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), all omitted in 2018 and some omitted in 2019

Five issues documenting the situation in 2016 in the following subsections of section 2. were omitted from the 2017 reports despite available information documenting the issues. All of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2018 reports and information was found documenting the existence of all of these. Four of these continued to be omitted from the 2019 report and information was found documenting the existence of three of these. Green indicates issue reinserted. Years marked in red indicates where no information was found. Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

2.a. Freedom of Speech and Press

1. *Violence and Harassment*: “Reporters without Borders estimated that 19 journalists and 15 netizens remained in prison at year’s end [2016]”

[Note that the 2017 and 2018 reports did not include the number of journalists and/or netizens that remained in prison at their respective year's end. Figures for 2019 were re-inserted in the 2019 report]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

2. *Internet Freedom*: "According to the UN special rapporteur's reports, serious difficulties persisted, including severe content restrictions, intimidation and prosecution of users, and limitations on access through the intentional slowing of service and filtering. The most heavily blocked websites were in the arts, society, politics, and news categories"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

3. "RWB [Reporters Without Borders] reported there were more than 800 cases of censorship since the start of the year"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Sources beyond the 'Reporters Without Borders' were located and included in the Appendix]

4. *Academic Freedom and Cultural Events*: "Authorities in several provinces cancelled concerts they deemed "inappropriate" throughout the year"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[No such information was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2019]

2.d. *Freedom of Movement / Protection of Refugees / Refoulement*

5. "According to a HRW report, government military recruiters threatened unregistered Afghan refugees with deportation or barred them from registering as refugees if they did not join military forces when asked to do so"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

2.3.2. **New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017)**

No additional omissions were documented in section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties* of the 2018 report compared to the 2017 edition.

2.3.3. **New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)**

Three issues documented in the previous three reports were omitted from the 2019 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

2.a. Freedom of Speech and Press/ Internet Freedom

1. “According to the International Telecommunication Union, 60 percent of the population used the internet in 2017. According to the Ministry of Culture, 70 percent of youth between the ages of 15 and 29 used the internet”.

[2019](#)

2.b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association/ Freedom of Association

2. “The government barred teachers from commemorating International Labor Day and Teachers’ Day”.

[2019](#)

[Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted]

3. “Several prominent teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentence”

[2019](#)

[The sources located do not necessarily specify whether the teachers and union activists who remained in prison or were awaiting new sentence were ‘prominent’, which is a subjective description]

3. Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

3.1. Use of language

3.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and 2019

3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process / Elections and Political Participation

An example of softening of language was observed in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports as the Guardian Council’s role was described as “controlling” compared to the 2016 report where it was described as “preeminent”. Moreover, it is suggested in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions that only “in certain instances” were winning candidates “arbitrarily” removed whilst the 2016 report included more of a bold statement as follows:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
<i>[...] Elections and Political Participation [...] The country’s electoral system continued to fall short of international standards for free, fair elections because of the Guardian Council’s preeminent roles in the political process, including determining which individuals could run for office, and removing elected candidates. [...]</i>	<i>[...] Elections and Political Participation [...] The country’s electoral system continued to fall short of international standards for free and fair elections because of the Guardian Council’s controlling role in the political process, including determining which individuals could run for office, and in certain instances, arbitrarily removing winning candidates [...]</i>

3.1.2. New observations in 2018, all repeated in 2019

Another example of softening of language was observed in the 2018 and 2019 reports as follows - by adding the word “sometimes” in front of violence it implies that violence against members of political parties and person with any political affiliation somewhat diminished during 2018:

2017 report	2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
<i>[...] Elections and Political Participation [...] Political Parties and Political Participation [...] Members of political parties and persons with any political affiliation that the regime deemed unacceptable faced harassment, violence, and sometimes imprisonment [...]</i>	<i>[...] Elections and Political Participation [...] Political Parties and Political Participation [...] Members of political parties and persons with any political affiliation that the regime deemed unacceptable faced harassment and sometimes violence and imprisonment [...]</i>

3.1.3. New observations in 2019

No additional language observations were made in the 2019 report on section 3. *Freedom to Participate in the Political Process.*

3.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 3. *Freedom to Participate in the Political Process* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation as reported by other publicly available sources.

3.3. Omissions

There were no notable omissions observed in section 3. *Freedom to Participate in the Political Process* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation as reported by other publicly available sources.

4. Section 4. *Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government*

4.1. Use of language

4.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and 2019

The 2016 report noted that “corruption was a serious and ubiquitous problem”. This was omitted in section 4. of the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions. Instead the 2017 *Executive Summary* described government corruption as “pervasive”, whilst it was described as “widespread” in the 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary*. For further information about this observation see [8. Executive Summary of USDOS report.](#)

Whilst the 2016 report described that the government did not implement the law that provides criminal penalties for official corruption “effectively”, this was amended in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions to “arbitrarily”:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
<i>[...] The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively [...]</i>	<i>[...] The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government implemented the law arbitrarily, sometimes pursuing apparently legitimate corruption cases against officials while bringing politically motivated charges against regime critics or political opponents [...]</i>

In addition, the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions no longer mentioned the regularity with which officials “engaged in corrupt practices” compared to the 2016 edition:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017 and 2018 reports [emphasis added]	2019 report [emphasis added]
<i>[...] Officials in all branches of government frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity [...]</i>	<i>[...] Most officials continued to engage in corrupt practices with impunity [...]</i>	<i>[...] Officials continued to engage in corrupt practices with impunity [...]</i>

4.1.2. New observations in 2018

Whilst the 2017 report explicitly mentioned that entities close to and/or affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) engaged in illicit trade and business activities including “smuggling pharmaceutical products, narcotics, and raw materials”, the 2018 edition only included incidents of such activities without describing the broader issue, potentially undermining the scale of the problem.

4.1.3. New observations in 2019

No additional language observations were made in the 2019 report on section 4. *Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government.*

4.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 4. *Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation as reported by other publicly available sources.

4.3. Omissions

4.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), all omitted in 2018 and 2019

Two issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

1. “Numerous government agencies existed to fight corruption, including the Anticorruption Headquarters, the Anticorruption Task Force, the Committee to Fight Economic Corruption, and the General Inspection Organization. Parliament’s Article 90 Commission also had authority to investigate complaints of corruption within the government”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Limited sources were found for the year 2018 amongst the list of sources consulted]

2. “Public Access to Information: While parliament has a centralized website with the docket of pending legislation, lists of committee representation, and voting patterns, the law does not mandate public access to government information. Some government agencies maintain websites documenting their activities, but they published only those documents they selected, and there is no public mechanism for forcing open records of activity for public review.

Fars News Agency reported on October 26 that journalist, Yashar Soltani, was arrested in September and charged with “publishing a confidential report” by Tehran’s Revolutionary and Public Prosecutor’s office. His news website published a State Inspectorate Organization report that contained a list of officials, mostly Tehran Council members and senior municipal managers, who allegedly bought properties in Tehran’s prestigious districts at “a remarkable discount.” He remained in prison at year’s end and has been denied bail”.

[Note that this subtitle and all of its content was removed from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[The focus of the issue for research was on finding information on the existence of a Public Access to Information Law and its implementation in practice]

4.3.2. New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017)

No additional omissions were documented in section 4. *Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government* in the 2018 report compared to the previous editions.

4.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018)

No additional omissions were documented in section 4. *Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government* in the 2019 report compared to the previous editions.

5. Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

5.1. Use of language

5.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018

Compared to the 2016 report, the 2017 and 2018 reports did not include any information on who the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran was, especially in light of the fact that Ms Asma Jahangir passed away in February 2018 and was replaced by Javaid Rehman in July 2018. This issue was of less relevance for the 2019 report as the report mentioned the UN Special Rapporteur by name several times throughout the report.

In another example, the 2016 report noted that the UN General Assembly resolution of November 2016 highlighted Iran's "poor implementation of the recommendations it accepted during the universal periodic review [the last one took place in October 2014]". The 2017 and 2018 reports omitted to include this particular point. With regards to 2019, the report actually failed to highlight that the latest universal period review (UPR) on Iran took place in November 2019. Relevant documentation in relation to this UPR is available [here](#)

5.1.2. New observations in 2018

No additional language observations were made in the 2018 report on section 5. *Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights*.

5.1.3. New observations in 2019

No additional language observations were made in the 2019 report on section 5. *Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights*.

5.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 5. *Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

5.3. Omissions

There were no notable omissions observed in section 5. *Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation as reported by other publicly available sources.

6. Section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons*

6.1. Use of language

6.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018, some of which repeated in 2019

6. Women / Rape and Domestic Violence

Whilst the 2016 report stated that “cases of rape were difficult to document due to nonreporting”, the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions only included the reasons for why rape victims were unlikely to report the crime:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports
<i>[...] Cases of rape were difficult to document due to nonreporting. Most rape victims likely did not report the crime because they feared retaliation or punishment for having been raped, including charges of indecency, immoral behavior, or adultery, the last of which carries the death penalty. They also feared societal reprisal or ostracism [...]</i>	<i>[...] Most rape victims likely did not report the crime because they feared official retaliation or punishment for having been raped, including charges of indecency, immoral behavior, or adultery, the last of which carries the death penalty. Rape victims also feared societal reprisal or ostracism [...]</i>

6. Women / Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

In relation to where FGM/C was mostly practiced, the reports differed in their approach to presenting such information from one year to the next, potentially casting doubt on the veracity of the of information:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017 report [emphasis added]	2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
<i>[...] The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child noted in its January periodic review that despite the criminalization of FGM/C, it continued to occur with impunity, especially in the provinces of Kurdistan, Western Azerbaijan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, and Hormozgan [...]</i>	<i>[...] FGM was reportedly most common in Hormozgan Province and also practiced in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan province [...]</i>	<i>[...] Little current data was available on the practice inside the country, although older data and media reports suggested it was most prevalent in Hormozgan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan Provinces [...]</i>

6. Children

The 2017 and 2018 reports omitted a descriptive terminology of the body responsible for the promotion of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely “is not independent”, thereby implying that the body has improved and become independent. No information was found amongst the list of sources consulted for 2017 and 2018 that would justify a departure of such a statement as made in 2016.

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017 report [emphasis added]	2018 report [emphasis added]
<i>[...] The country established the National Body on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2012 to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Iran is signatory. The body, which reviews draft regulations and legislation relating to child rights, is not independent and is overseen by the Ministry of Justice [...]</i>	<i>[...] The country established the National Body on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2012 to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which it is a signatory. The body, which reviews draft regulations and legislation relating to children's rights, is overseen by the Ministry of Justice [...]</i>	<i>[...] The country established the National Body on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2012 to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which it is a signatory. The Ministry of Justice oversees the body, which reviews draft regulations and legislation relating to children's rights [...]</i>

6. National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Specific forms of discrimination against the Baluchi minority described in the 2016 report were removed in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions, as was the emphasis on the severity of such discriminatory practices suggesting an improvement in the situation:

2016 report [emphasis added]	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports
<i>[...] Local and international human rights groups alleged serious economic, legal, and cultural discrimination during the year against the predominantly ethnic Baluchi minority, estimated to be between 1.5 and two million persons [...]</i>	<i>[...] Local and international human rights groups alleged discrimination during the year against the Baluchi ethnic minority, estimated at between 1.5 and two million persons [...]</i>

In the following example another form of discrimination faced by ethnolinguistic minorities was omitted from the subsequent editions despite no changes in the law and/or practice:

2016 report	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
<i>[...] Ethnolinguistic minorities are not free to name their children; the country's civil registry maintains a list of acceptable names, and individuals who wish to choose a name not on this list (in their own language) cannot register the birth of their child [...]</i>	[Removed]

6. National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

A source attribution is introduced for the following point, which may be read to undermine the veracity of information:

2016 report	2017 and 2018 reports [emphasis added]
<i>[...] The law limited Sunni Baluchis' employment opportunities and political participation [...]</i>	<i>[...] According to activist reports, the law limited Sunni Baluchis' employment opportunities and political participation [...]</i>

- 6. Women
- 6. Children
- 6. Persons with Disabilities

It was further observed that the following contextual information found in the 2016 report was no longer included in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions:

2016 report	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports
<p><i>[...] Rape and Domestic Violence [...]</i> <i>The Census Bureau, the government agency responsible for data collection, does not permit international organizations to study domestic violence in the country [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Discrimination [...]</i> <i>The law does not grant temporary wives and any resulting children rights associated with traditional marriage, but the contract is enforceable, and recognized children can obtain documentation and have limited rights [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Discrimination [...]</i> <i>According to ISNA if a personal maintenance allowance is not paid, the wife may “reject all legal and religious obligations” to her husband. By law such an allowance may be requested during the marriage as well as after a divorce, and if it is not paid, the woman may sue her former husband in court [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Discrimination [...]</i> <i>Courts determine custody in disputed cases. Once children reach the legal age of maturity, the court must also consider the preference of the child in determining the custody arrangement [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Sexual Exploitation of Children [...]</i> <i>The law prohibits all forms of pornography, including child pornography [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Early and Forced Marriage [...]</i> <i>there were major shortcomings in the country’s legal system that “allows sexual intercourse with girls as young as nine lunar years and that other forms of sexual abuse of even younger children is not criminalized [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Early and Forced Marriage [...]</i> <i>The law requires court approval for the marriage of boys younger than 15 years old [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Early and Forced Marriage [...]</i> <i>Iran’s 2011 national census recorded 11,289 married girls under the age of 18 had at least one child before their 15th birthdays [...]</i></p>	[Removed]
<p><i>[...] Persons with Disabilities [...]</i> <i>The State Welfare Organization of Iran, under the Ministry of Cooperation, Labor, and Social Welfare, is the principal governmental agency charged with protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. It was founded in 1980 to assist persons with disabilities and disadvantaged persons financially and through support to 16 government entities. In addition to supporting low-income groups, it is charged with trying to prevent physical disabilities and support rehabilitation [...]</i></p>	[Removed]

6.1.2. New observations in 2018, most repeated in 2019

- 6. Children
- 6. Anti-Semitism
- 6. Persons with Disabilities

It was further observed that the following contextual information found in the 2017 report was no longer included in the 2018 edition, and in one instance this continued in the 2019 edition. By omitting such information, no specific attention is being raised to the efficacy of the respective legal provisions:

2017 report	2018 report	2019 report
<i>[...] Children [...] Child Abuse [...] The law does not directly address sexual molestation nor provide punishment for it [...]</i>	[Removed]	<i>[...] Children [...] Child Abuse [...] The law does not directly address sexual molestation nor provide punishment for it [...]</i>
<i>[...] Persons with Disabilities [...] The law generally prohibits discrimination by government actors against persons with disabilities but does not apply to private actors [...]</i>	[Removed]	[Removed]

6.1.3. New observations in 2019

- 6. Children / Displaced Children

A previous statement included in the 2018 edition was introduced in the 2019 report with “There were reports of”, which may be read to undermine the veracity of the information:

2018 report [emphasis added]	2019 report [emphasis added]
<i>[...] There were thousands of Afghan refugee children in the country, many of whom were born in Iran but could not obtain identity documents [...]</i>	<i>[...] There were reports of thousands of Afghan refugee children in the country, many of whom were born in Iran but could not obtain identity documents [...]</i>

- 6. Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

It was observed that a previously made assessment provided by the U.S. Department of State in the 2018 report was no longer included in the 2019 edition. By omitting such information, no specific attention is being raised to the severity of “corrective treatment” of LGBTI persons:

2018 report [emphasis added]	2019 report
<i>[...] According to a May report by 6Rang, the number of private and semigovernmental psychological and psychiatric clinics allegedly engaging in “corrective treatment” of LGBTI persons continued to grow during the</i>	<i>[...] According to a July report by the NGO 6Rang, the number of private and semigovernmental psychological and psychiatric clinics allegedly engaging in</i>

<p>year. 6Rang reported the increased use at such clinics of electric shock therapy to the hands and genitals of LGBTI persons, prescription of psychoactive medication, hypnosis, and coercive masturbation to pictures of the opposite sex. Many of these practices may constitute torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment under international law [...]</p>	<p>“corrective treatment” or reparative therapies of LGBTI persons continued to grow. The NGO 6Rang reported the increased use at such clinics of electric shock therapy to the hands and genitals of LGBTI persons, prescription of psychoactive medication, hypnosis, and coercive masturbation to pictures of the opposite sex. According to the NGO 6Rang, one such institution is called The Anonymous Sex Addicts Association of Iran, with branches in 18 provinces [...]</p>
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6.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons* that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by publicly available sources.

6.3. Omissions

6.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), most omitted in 2018 and 2019

Twenty issues documenting the situation in 2016 in the following subsections of section 6. were omitted from the 2017 reports despite available information documenting the issues. All of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2018 reports and information was found documenting the existence of seventeen of these. Nineteen of these issues continued to also be omitted from the 2019 report and information was found documenting the existence of fourteen of these. Green indicates issue reinserted. Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

Women - Other Harmful Traditional Practices

1. “Under the law the principal of “qisas” (punishment in kind) does not apply to murders within the family committed by the father”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

Women - Reproductive Rights

2. “The law recognizes the basic right of married couples to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2017, 2018 and 2019]

3. "Couples are entitled to reproductive healthcare, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[For the year 2019 no relevant information could be located amongst the sources consulted, whilst only one source was located for 2017 and 2018]

4. "While government healthcare previously included full free access to contraception and family planning for married couples, state family planning cuts in 2012 reducing the budget to almost zero remained in place"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[For the year 2019 no relevant information could be located amongst the sources consulted, whilst only one source was located for 2017 and 2018]

Women - Discrimination

5. "The law [...] "restricted women's economic, social, political, academic, and cultural rights"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

6. "The law states that a virgin woman or girl wishing to wed needs the consent of her father or grandfather or the court's permission, **even if she is over the age of 18**"

[The words in bold are those omitted in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

7. "and the ability of a woman to seek divorce was limited"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

8. "Social and legal constraints limited women's professional opportunities"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

9. "The law requires a married woman to obtain her husband's permission to work"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

10. "The law does not provide that women and men must be paid equally for equal work"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

11. "Women may not serve in many high-level political positions or as judges, except as consultants or research judges without the power to impose sentences"

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

12. “While riding a bicycle is not legally a crime for women in Iran, religious and local authorities in Marivan, Kurdistan banned women from riding bicycles in public”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[For the years 2018 and 2019 no relevant information could be located amongst the sources consulted]

Children – Education

13. “According to 2012 UN statistics, the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary school is 98 percent”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Statistics from 2019 were not found amongst the list of sources consulted for the year 2019]

Children - Early and Forced Marriage

14. “UNICEF’s state of the child report for 2015 estimates 3 percent of girls are married before the age of 15”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Statistics from 2018 and 2019 could not be found amongst the list of sources consulted]

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

15. “IRGC forces allegedly controlled security in two provinces, Sistan-va Baluchistan and Kurdistan, home to large ethnic minority Baluch and Kurdish communities, respectively”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

16. “In his March report [2016], the UN Special Rapporteur reported the continued indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of unarmed Kurdish smugglers or border couriers in Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Sistan-va Baluchistan, and West Azerbaijan”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[This information was also omitted in the 2018 report but no publicly available information was found amongst the sources consulted]

17. “Authorities did not prohibit the use of Kurdish language, **but authorities prohibited most schools from teaching it with the exception of the Kurdish language program at the University of Kurdistan**”

[The words in bold are those omitted in the 2017 and 2018 reports. The full content, though slightly re-worded was re-inserted in the 2019 report as follows: “Authorities did not prohibit the use of the Kurdish language in general but did not offer education in Kurdish in public schools]

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

18. “Azeris reported the government, nevertheless, discriminated against them by prohibiting the Azeri language in schools”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

19. “International LGBTI NGOs reported that many young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders, and community elders”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

[Only one source was found in 2017 that referred in general terms to the harassment and discrimination LGBT people face though it did not specifically mention ‘young gay men’]

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

20. “There was societal discrimination on linguistic grounds against groups whose native language was not Persian, and on religious grounds against non-Shia persons (see International Religious Freedom Report). The extent of such discrimination, largely at the individual level, was difficult to determine”

[2017](#) [2018](#) [2019](#)

6.3.2. New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017), some omitted in 2019

Six issues documenting the situation in 2017 in the following subsections of section 6. Were omitted from the 2018 report despite available information documenting the issues. All of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2019 and information was found documenting the existence of two of these. Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented on each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

Women - Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

1. “When the mutilation occurred, it was usually performed on girls under the age of 10”

[Note that this was also omitted in the 2017 and 2019 reports but no information was found amongst the sources consulted]

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2018]

2. "Traditional midwives were said to perform approximately 98 percent of the mutilations"

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[The information found in 2018 did not specify the percentage of FGM/Cs performed by traditional midwives. No information was located covering 2019]

Women - Coercion in Population Control

3. " There were no reports of [...] other coercive population control methods"

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2018 and 2019]

4. "Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence are available at: www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality2015/en"

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[For the year 2019 no maternal mortality rate estimates were located amongst the list of sources consulted]

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

5. "Baluchi rights activists reported that families of those in prison were often pressured to remain silent and threatened with retaliation for speaking out about cases"

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[This information was also omitted in the 2019 report but no publicly available information was found amongst the sources consulted for those two years. Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2018]

Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

6. "The government provided transgender persons financial assistance in the form of grants of up to 45 million rials\$1,240 and loans up to 55 million rials \$1,500 to undergo gender reassignment surgery. Additionally, the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare required health insurers to cover the cost of such surgery. Individuals who undergo gender reassignment surgery may petition a court for new identity documents with corrected gender data, which the government reportedly provided efficiently and transparently"

[2018](#) [2019](#)

[No information was found amongst the sources consulted for 2018 and 2019 on “Individuals who undergo gender reassignment surgery may petition a court for new identity documents with corrected gender data, which the government reportedly provided efficiently and transparently”]

6.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

One issue documented in the 2018, 2017 and 2016 reports was omitted from the 2019 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document its existence. Illustrative information is presented, available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated:

Children - Early and Forced Marriage

1. “NGOs reported that many girls committed suicide to escape such marriages”

[Note that this was also omitted in the 2017 and 2018 reports but no information was found amongst the sources consulted]

[2019](#)

7. Section 7. *Worker Rights*

7.1. Use of language

7.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and 2019

7.e. *Acceptable Conditions of Work*

It was observed that a source attribution was introduced to a previously made statement, potentially undermining the perceived veracity of the information:

2016 report	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports [emphasis added]
[...] <i>Many workers continued to be employed on temporary contracts under which they lacked protections available to full-time, noncontract workers and could be dismissed at any time without cause [...]</i>	[...] According to media reports, <i>many workers continued to be employed on temporary contracts under which they lacked protections available to full-time, noncontract workers and could be dismissed at any time without cause [...]</i>

7.1.2. New observations in 2018

No additional language observations were made in the 2018 report on section 7. *Worker Rights*.

7.1.3. New observations in 2019

No additional language observations were made in the 2019 report on section 7. *Worker Rights*.

7.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 7. *Worker Rights* across the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by publicly available sources.

7.3. Omissions

7.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016)

There were no notable omissions observed in section 7. *Worker Rights* in the 2017 report compared to the 2016 edition that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by publicly available sources.

7.3.2. New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017), all omitted in 2019

The following issue documented in 2017 was omitted from the 2018 and 2019 reports despite country information on this issue being located amongst the list of sources consulted. Illustrative information available at the time of publication of the respective USDOS reports, as included in the

Appendix, indicate that labor activists continued to be dismissed due to their trade union activities in 2018 and 2019:

7.a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

1. “Human rights organizations reported that employers routinely fired labor activists for trade union activities”

[2018](#) [2019](#)

7.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018)

There were no notable omissions observed in section 7. *Worker Rights* in the 2019 report compared to the 2018 edition that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by publicly available sources.

8. Executive Summary of USDOS report

[Table 2](#) in the Appendix presents the changes in how the *Executive Summary* categorises human rights issues in Iran in the 2016 report compared to the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions.

As Table 2 illustrates, several language changes were observed in how human rights issues were described in the respective reports' *Executive Summary*. The most notable of these are presented below.

In a few instances language observations resulted in the downgrading of the descriptions used for human rights issues, possibly implying an improvement of the human rights situation in Iran. However, in most cases this was not in line with information included in the relevant respective sections of the main text.

It was also observed that a number of human rights issues were omitted from certain *Executive Summaries*. In almost all occasions, this was despite these omitted human rights issues continuing to be documented in the body text of the respective U.S. State Department report. In three instances human rights issue were omitted from both the *Executive Summary* and the relevant section of the U.S. State Department report despite continuing to be documented as occurring by other publicly available sources. Most of the observations in relation to 'omissions' related to human rights issues of relevance to section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person* and section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons of the reports*.

Notable language changes

The 2016 *Executive Summary* defined the "most significant human rights problems" to be "severe restrictions on civil liberties, including the freedoms of assembly, association, speech, religion, and press". This was followed by seven separate lists, which introduced additional human rights issues as:

- "Other HR [human rights] problems";
- "Other reported human rights problems";
- "Of additional concern";
- "Also of concern";
- "Additionally there were severe restrictions";
- "There was also violence against"; and
- "There were significant HR problems with".

In comparison, the 2017 report only provided one list of what it termed "the most significant human rights issues". The 2018 edition continued to provide one list of issues, termed "human rights issues" and in 2019 the categorisation was slightly amended again to "significant human rights issues".

Interestingly the 2018 *Executive Summary* described Iran's human rights record as having "remained extremely poor and worsened in several key areas". This was not included in the 2016, 2017 and 2019 reports' *Executive Summary*.

The human rights issues described as "most significant" in 2016 (i.e. "severe restrictions on civil liberties, including the freedoms of assembly, association, speech, religion, and press") as well as those listed as among the "significant HR [human rights] problems" (i.e. trafficking and "severe restrictions" on labor rights) were all repeated in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary*, with the exception of 'labor rights' which in the subsequent editions was narrowed down to "severe

restrictions on independent trade unions” in 2017 and “outlawing of independent trade unions” in 2018 and 2019.

The 2016 human rights issue “harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities” was amended in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ *Executive Summary* to “harsh and life-threatening prison conditions” thereby possibly restricting the types of facilities experiencing these conditions as “detention” implies a broader range of facilities than “prisons”. This is despite very similar reporting of the situation in the subsection *Prison and Detention Center Conditions* in all four U.S. Department of State reports.

Whilst the 2016 *Executive Summary* documented “severe restrictions on civil liberties, including the freedoms of [...] speech [...] and press” the respective 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary* went into greater detail describing what exactly the violations were. For example, the 2017 *Executive Summary* differentiated between “severe restrictions on freedom of expression, including criminalization of libel”, the “suppression of virtually all expression deemed critical of the regime or its officials” and “severe restrictions on the press, including imprisonment of reporters, and of the internet which the government disrupted and censored, as well as on academic and cultural freedom”. The 2018 *Executive Summary* stripped it back to “severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel”, whilst the 2019 edition also added to that sentence “violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests and prosecutions against journalists”. This resulted in the omission of mentioning the suppression of **all** critical expression of the regime, imprisonment of reporters and restrictions imposed on academic and cultural freedoms, despite little change in reporting amongst the three reports in their respective section 2.a. *Freedom of speech and press*.

Reported improvements

Freedom of religion was described in the 2016 *Executive Summary* as being “severely restricted”, whilst the 2017 and 2018 *Executive Summaries* noted the “egregious restrictions of religious freedom”. However, in the 2019 *Executive Summary* it returned to describe religious freedom as being severely restricted again, potentially implying a small improvement to the years 2017 and 2018. Interestingly, these changes were observed despite references to religious freedom throughout the four reports being almost identical and mainly referring to the respective annual U.S. Department of State International Religious Freedom reports.

Omissions

It is noteworthy that almost all of the observed changes to the *Executive Summary* were not consistent with the situation as reported in the body of the report and that the vast majority relate to the downgrading of human rights abuses perpetrated by state actors i.e. state agents of persecution in the language of refugee status determination.

Seventeen omissions were observed comparing the 2017 *Executive Summary* to the 2016 edition, fifteen of which continued to be omitted in 2018 and thirteen of which in 2019.

An additional human rights issue was omitted from the 2018 *Executive Summary*, which continued to be omitted from the 2019 edition. This was considered to be internally inconsistent with the respective section of the 2018 and 2019 report.

As described above under *Notable language changes* compared to the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summaries*, the 2016 report categorised human rights issues pertinent to Iran in eight distinct lists. Two of these lists included human rights issues which were repeated throughout the

four years' *Executive Summaries*. The remaining six lists in the 2016 report described human rights issues which were then not repeated in subsequent editions as described below.

Human rights issues that were categorised in 2016 as "other HR [human rights] problems" and which were omitted in subsequent *Executive Summaries* were:

- "Cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment" in 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- "Disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities [...] unlawfully detained" for 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- "Disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities arbitrarily and unlawfully [...] killed" for 2017.

The following issue included in the 2016 report as among "Other reported human rights problems" was omitted from subsequent *Executive Summaries*:

- "Politically motivated violence and repression" for 2017, 2018 and 2019;

The 2016 *Executive Summary* listed issues "Of additional concern". The following human rights issues included in 2016 were omitted from subsequent *Executive Summaries* [emphasis added for those words that were removed]:

- "Harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities, **including lengthy solitary confinement** for 2017, 2018 and 2019;
- "Harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities [...] **with instances of deaths in custody**" for 2017.

The list of issues "Also of concern" included the following human rights issues in 2016, which were omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summaries* [emphasis added for those words that were removed]:

- "Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado";
- "Denial of fair public trial" for 2017 and 2018
- "Lack of an independent judiciary" for 2017 and 2018;
- "Arbitrary interference with [...] **family, home, and correspondence**."

The following issues included in the 2016 report as having "severe restrictions on" that were then omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summaries* were:

- "Academic freedom";
- "Restrictions on freedom of movement";
- "Lack of government transparency"
- "Constraints on investigations by international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into alleged violations of human rights"
- "Legal and societal discrimination"

Lastly, the 2016 list of other issues "There was also" omitted the following human rights issues from the three subsequent *Executive Summaries*:

- "Violence against women";
- "Violence against ethnic and religious minorities".

Interestingly, almost all of these omissions in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summaries* were found to be internally inconsistent with the respective sections of the U.S. Department of State report, but not with other information in the public domain. All omissions are described below by section of the U.S. Department of State report.

Omitted human rights issues relevant to Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person of the reports

Whilst the 2016 *Executive Summary* listed “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” as one of its “other HR problems”, this was omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ *Executive Summary*. This was despite none of the three reports documenting an improved situation in their respective section 1.c. *Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment*.

Similarly, the description that there was a “disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities [...] unlawfully detained” and which was omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summaries* continued to be reported in their respective section 1.c. *Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment*.

Only the 2017 *Executive Summary* failed to include ‘arbitrary or unlawful killing’ despite such information included in the body text under section 1.a. *Arbitrary deprivation of life and other unlawful or politically motivated killings*.

Whilst “politically motivated violence and repression” was highlighted as a “human rights problem” in the 2016 *Executive Summary*, it was omitted in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ *Executive Summary* despite all three reports continuing to document its occurrence in various sections. For example section 1.b. *Disappearance* in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports detailed “There were reports of politically motivated abductions during the year attributed to government officials”, whilst section 1.c. *Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment* noted in all three years that “Some prison facilities, including Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, [were known] for the use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents of the government”.

The 2016 *Executive Summary* highlighted “Harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities, including lengthy solitary confinement”. However, the subsequent editions all neglected to include “lengthy solitary confinement” despite such information being included in all three reports in sections 1.c. *Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment* and 1.d. *Arbitrary Arrest or Detention*.

Compared to the 2016, 2017 and 2018 edition where “instances of deaths in custody” were noted, the 2017 *Executive Summary* remained silent on this human rights abuse although in its sections 1.c. *Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment* and 1.d. *Arbitrary Arrest or Detention* it continued to describe its occurrence.

The 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ *Executive Summary* no longer included that “arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado” was a concern, despite such information included in section 1.d. *Arbitrary Arrest or Detention*. For example, subsection *Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees* in all three reports noted that “Authorities, however, held some detainees, at times incommunicado for days, weeks, or months [“for prolonged periods” in the 2019 report] without charge or trial and frequently denied them contact with family or timely access to legal representation”.

The respective 2017 and 2018 *Executive Summary* did not mention the “denial of fair public trial” and “lack of an independent judiciary”, compared to the 2016 *Executive Summary*, despite such information being included in their section *1.e. Denial of fair public trial*.

Interestingly “arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence” as listed in the 2016 *Executive Summary* was amended and reduced to “unlawful interference with privacy” in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports despite such information continuing to be featured in section *1.f. Arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence* of the three reports. For example the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports noted that “Security forces monitored the social activities of citizens, entered homes and offices, monitored telephone conversations and internet communications, and opened mail without court authorization”, with the 2019 report adding that “places of worship” were also entered by security forces.

Omitted human rights issues relevant to Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties of the reports

Whilst the 2016 *Executive Summary* highlighted “severe restrictions on academic freedom” as additional human rights issues affecting Iranians, the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ *Executive Summary* neglected to mention this. This was despite continued reference to these human rights violations in sections *2.a. Freedom of speech and press* and *2.d. Freedom of movement*. For example subsection *Academic Freedom and Cultural Events* in all three reports stated that “The government significantly restricted academic freedom and the independence of higher education institutions”.

Interestingly, the 2016 *Executive Summary* mentioned “restrictions on freedom of movement” which were omitted in the *Executive Summary* of the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports. This is consistent with amendments to the respective reports in section *2.d. Freedom of movement* of these reports which stated that “the government generally respected [...] freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation”, with some exceptions in relation to migrants and women. However, publicly available information suggested that this is inconsistent with other available sources which is addressed further above at [2.2.1. Improvements in 2017 \(compared to 2016\), repeated in 2018 and 2019](#).

The 2017 *Executive Summary* was the only one to add “refoulement of refugees” under its “most significant human rights issues”, despite the 2018 and 2019 U.S. Department of State reports at section *2.d. Freedom of Movement* documenting that Iranian authorities “routinely arrested Afghan refugees” and “sometimes threatened them with refoulement”.

Omitted human rights issues relevant to Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

With regards to “lack of government transparency”, whilst the 2016 *Executive Summary* included this human rights issue, the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports omitted it in their respective *Executive Summaries*. This, however, is not commensurate of information included in the related section *4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government*.

Omitted human rights issues relevant to Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights of the reports

The 2016 *Executive Summary* highlighted “constraints on investigations by international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into alleged violations of human rights”, which was omitted

in the respective 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary*. This is inconsistent with information included in these three U.S. Department of State reports at section 5., which is not suggesting an improvement of the situation towards being omitted from their *Executive Summaries*.

Omitted human rights issues relevant to Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons of the reports

The 2016 *Executive Summary* described the existence of “legal and societal discrimination” without attributing it to a specific profile or group of individuals. This was omitted in the respective 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary* despite various subsections in sections 5. and 6. in the three U.S. Department of State reports describing various legal provisions that discriminated against individuals or groups and documented continued societal discrimination against a variety of groups.

Notably, “**violence** against women” and “**violence** against ethnic and religious minorities” as listed under the heading “There was also” of the 2016 *Executive Summary* were omitted as human rights concern from the respective 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary* and instead downgraded to “**government restrictions** on the rights of women and minorities” in 2017 and “**harsh governmental restrictions**” in 2018 and 2019. The 2019 *Executive Summary* re-listed “violence against ethnic minorities” (but not religious minorities) as a “significant human rights issue”. This is all the more surprising as respective subheadings in section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons* continued in all three reports to report on **violence** affecting these particular profiles. However, the fact that the 2017, 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summaries* focused on ‘government restrictions’ instead of societal discrimination and violence is compatible with the omission of such information in their respective sections 6. despite publicly available information continuing to document their occurrence. For more information see [6.3.1. Omissions in 2017 \(compared to 2016\)](#).

Whilst the 2016 *Executive Summary* listed that “There was also violence against [...] lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons” implying that violence could be both interpreted as originating from state and non-state actors, this was amended in the 2017 report to “LGBTI persons faced arrest, official harassment, and intimidation, as well as cruel and degrading treatment by security officials” thereby omitting possible societal violence against LGBTI persons. This corresponds to the subsection on *Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* having removed the following from the 2017 U.S. State Department report: “International LGBTI NGOs reported that many young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders, and community elders”. However, societal discrimination of LGBTI persons continued to be documented by other available information and is thus addressed as an omission above in section [6.3.1. Omissions in 2017 \(compared to 2016\)](#). Interestingly, the 2018 and 2019 *Executive Summary* amended the wording again to “crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting” LGBTI persons as a human rights issue not specifying whether this violence originates from state or non-state actors nor specifying the state perpetrated human rights abuses that LGBTI persons faced as outlined in the 2017 report’s *Executive Summary*. This is despite such information continuing to be included in the subsection on *Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*.

Appendices

A. Sources and databases consulted

Not all of the sources listed here have been consulted for each issue addressed in the report. Additional sources to those individually listed were consulted via database searches. This non-exhaustive list is intended to assist in further case-specific research. To find out more about an organisation, view the 'About Us' tab of a source's website.

Databases

[Asylos's Research Notes](#)
[EASO COI Portal](#)
[European Country of Origin Information Network \(ECOI\)](#)
[Google \[with specific search terms\]](#)
[Relief Web](#)
[UNHCR Refworld](#)

News

[Al Arabiya – Inside Iran](#)
[Al Jazeera \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Al-Monitor Iran Pulse](#)
[FARS News Agency \[Note: Affiliated to the Revolutionary Guard\]](#)
[Inter Press Service](#)
[Iran Focus](#)
[Iran News Daily \[Note: English language news published by state news agency IRNA\]](#)
[The Islamic Republic News Agency \(IRNA\) \[Note: State-run news agency\]](#)
[The New Humanitarian \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)
[Reuters \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Rudaw](#)
[Tehran Times \[Note : State-run English language daily\]](#)
[Thomson Reuters Foundation News](#)

Sources

[76 Crimes \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Amnesty International \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project \(ACLED\) \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Assessment Capacities Project \(ACAPS\) \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Association for the Prevention of Torture](#)
[Atlantic Council](#)
[Atlas of Torture](#)
[Brookings Institution](#)
[Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies](#)
[Care International Insights](#)
[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)
[Center for Human Rights in Iran](#)
[Centre for Security Governance](#)
[Centre for Strategic and International Studies](#)
[Child Rights International Network](#)
[CHR Michelsen Institute \[Iran pages\]](#)

[CIA World Factbook \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Combating Terrorism Center](#)
[Doctors Without Borders](#)
[The Economist Intelligence Unit \[Iran pages\]](#)
[EASO's List of sources in its report 'Researching the situation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons \(LGBT\) in countries or origin' \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Edge Media Network \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Eldis](#)
[Equal Rights Trust](#)
[Foreign Affairs \(published by Council on Foreign Relations\) \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Foreign Policy Centre \[Middle East and North Africa pages\]](#)
[Freedom House – Freedom in the World 2019 \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Fund for Peace – Fragile States Index 2019](#)
[GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal](#)
[Gay Star News \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Global Aids Program Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation](#)
[Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#)
[Global Fund for Peace](#)
[Global Gayz \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Governance Social Development Humanitarian Conflict \(GSDRC\)](#)
[Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research](#)
[Hudson Institute](#)
[Human Rights Watch \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](#)
[Institute for Economics & Peace – Global Peace Index 2019](#)
[Institute for the Study of War](#)
[Institute for War and Peace Reporting](#)
[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\) \[Iran pages\]](#)
[International Bar Association](#)
[International Centre for Prison Studies](#)
[International Commission of Jurists](#)
[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)
[International Crisis Group \[Iran pages\]](#)
[International Federation for Human Rights \[Asia pages\]](#)
[International Institute for Strategic Studies](#)
[International Labour Organisation \(ILO\) \[Iran pages\]](#)
[International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans and Intersex Association \(ILGA\) \[LGBTI\]](#)
[International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#)
[International Refugee Rights Initiative](#)
[International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims](#)
[International Rescue Committee](#)
[IPI Global Observatory](#)
[Iran Human Rights Documentation Center](#)
[The Iran Primer \(United States Institute of Peace\)](#)
[Iranian Queer Organization \(IRQO\) \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Jamestown Foundation](#)
[Kaleidoscope Trust \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Long War Journal](#)
[Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders \[Iran pages\]](#)
[Minority Rights Group International](#)
[Minorities at Risk Project](#)

[Oakland Institute](#)
[OECD's Social Institutions & Gender Index](#)
[Open Society Foundations](#)
[Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration \(ORAM\)](#)
[Out Right Action International \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#)
[Oxfam](#)
[Peace Women](#)
[Penal Reform International](#)
[Physicians for Human Rights](#)
[Pink News \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Refugees International](#)
[Reporters Without Borders](#)
[Right to Education](#)
[Saferworld](#)
[Save the Children](#)
[Sexual Rights Initiative \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Small Arms Survey](#)
[SOGICA's Database \[LGBTI\]](#)
[Transparency International](#)
[Transparency International Anti-Corruption Knowledge](#)
[Their World](#)
[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office \[Annual Human Rights Report 2018\]](#)
[United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\) \[Iran pages\]](#)
[United Nations Committee Against Torture](#)
[United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
[United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)
[United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#)
[United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)
[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#)
[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)
[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)
[United Nations News Centre](#)
[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#)
[United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)
[United Nations Population Fund \(UNPFPA\)](#)
[United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#)
[United Nations Secretary General](#)
[United Nations Women](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](#)
[United States Commission on International Religious Freedom \[Iran pages\]](#)

[United States Congressional Research Service](#)

[United States Department of State \[Annual religious report; annual labour report; annual trafficking report; annual terrorism report\]](#)

[United States Institute of Peace](#)

[Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisation](#)

[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#)

[Women Living Under Muslim Laws](#)

[Women News Network \(WNN\)](#)

[Women's Refugee Commission](#)

[Women Under Siege Project](#)

[World Organisation Against Torture](#)

[World Prison Brief](#)

B. List of issues where no or little information was found amongst the sources consulted

Improvements

The following two improvements were observed where no or limited information was found amongst the sources consulted to refute the improvement:

2.d. Freedom of Movement / Protection of Refugees / Refoulement

1. “According to activist groups and NGOs, authorities routinely arrested Afghan refugees and sometimes threatened them with refoulement” in 2017

The 2018 and 2019 editions provided further clarification [emphasis added] “According to activist groups and NGOs, authorities routinely arrested Afghans **without amayesh cards** and sometimes threatened them with deportation”. It could be implied that in 2018 and 2019 only Afghan refugees without an *Amayesh* card faced ‘routine arrest’, whilst in 2017 any Afghan refugee faced the possibility of arrest. No sources were located amongst the sources consulted to either corroborate or refute that only Afghan refugees without an *Amayesh* were arrested in 2018 and 2019; sources were instead located that reported on the continued arrest of Afghan refugees without specifying whether or not they had the *Amayesh* card.

7.c. Prohibition of Child labour and Minimum Age for Employment

2. “There were reportedly significant numbers of children, especially of Afghan descent, detained as street vendors in major urban areas” in 2017

Whilst the 2017 report stated that street child vendors, especially those of Afghan descent, were detained in major urban areas, the 2018 and 2019 editions no longer mentioned the detention of these children, but instead only stated that street children worked as street vendors in major urban areas. No sources were located amongst the list of sources consulted to refute that street child vendors continued to be detained in 2018 and 2019.

Omissions

The following twenty seven omissions were observed where no or limited information was found amongst the sources consulted documenting that the issue occurred:

1.c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

1. “Refugee detainees were sometimes held in separate facilities and in some cases deported” in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

1.c. Prison and Detention Center Conditions

2. “Authorities often held political prisoners in separate prisons, wards [...] for long periods” in 2017.

1.c. Prison and Detention Center Conditions / Administration

3. "Official public statistics on the prison population were limited. There were no reports on steps to improve recordkeeping or confirmation whether the penal system employed prison ombudspersons to respond to complaints" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention / Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

4. "In some cases courts sentenced such individuals [dual Iranian nationals] to 10 years or more in prison" in 2018.

2.a. Freedom of Speech and Press / Violence and Harassment

5. "International NGOs reported that authorities forced several citizen journalists into internal exile during the year" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

2.a. Freedom of Speech and Press/ Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

6. "Authorities in several provinces cancelled concerts they deemed "inappropriate" throughout the year" in 2019.

2.d. Freedom of Movement

7. "Exile [...] Many citizens practiced self-imposed exile to express their beliefs freely or escape government harassment" in 2019.

2.d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees

8. "The government sometimes imposed fees for children of registered refugees to attend public schools" in 2019.

2.d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees / Access to Basic Services

9. Lack of mention of access to education for Iraqi refugee children in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government / Financial Disclosure

10. "Government officials capped salaries for public employees and politicians after leaked salary pay slips of government officials exposed high salaries and unregistered bonuses, according to local media" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

6. Women / Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

11. "When the mutilation occurred, it was usually performed on girls under the age of 10" in 2017 and 2019.
12. "Whether there were prosecutions for FGM/C during the year is unknown" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
13. "Traditional midwives were said to perform approximately 98 percent of the mutilations" in 2019.

6. Women / Coercion in Population Control

14. "Couples are entitled to reproductive healthcare, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence" in 2019.
15. "While government healthcare previously included full free access to contraception and family planning for married couples, state family planning cuts in 2012 reducing the budget to almost zero remained in place" in 2019.
16. "Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence are available at: www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality2015/en" in 2019.

6. Women / Discrimination

17. "While riding a bicycle is not legally a crime for women in Iran, religious and local authorities in Marivan, Kurdistan banned women from riding bicycles in public" in 2018 in 2019.

6. Children

18. "Male juvenile detainees were held in separate rehabilitation centers in most urban areas, but female juvenile detainees and male juvenile detainees in rural areas were held alongside adults in detention facilities, according to NGO reports presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child" in 2019.

6. Children / Child Abuse

19. "According to NGO reports presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, a girl can be denied education if she is pregnant or if her husband so wishes" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

6. Children / Early and Forced Marriage

20. "NGOs reported that many girls committed suicide to escape such marriages" in 2017 and 2018.

21. "UNICEF's state of the child report for 2015 estimates 3 percent of girls are married before the age of 15" in 2018 and 2019.
22. "According to the newspaper Shahrvand, there were more than 40,000 registered marriages for girls under the age of 15 in 2014. The number may be higher because NGOs reported that many families did not register underage marriages" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

6. Children / Education

23. "According to 2012 UN statistics, the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary school is 98 percent" in 2019.

6. National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

24. "Baluchi rights activists reported that families of those in prison were often pressured to remain silent and threatened with retaliation for speaking out about cases" in 2017 and 2019.
25. "In his March report [2016], the UN Special Rapporteur reported the continued indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of unarmed Kurdish smugglers or border couriers in Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Sistan-va Baluchistan, and West Azerbaijan" in 2018.
26. "According to activist reports, during the summer authorities set many houses on fire in villages in the Chahbahar region, destroying person's homes" in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

6. Acts of Violence, Discrimination and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

27. "UNSR Jahangir reported in March [2018] receiving reports of the continued discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, punishment, and denial of rights of LGBTI persons" in 2019.

C. Table 1: Comparative analysis of structure of the Iran reports

✓ = indicates that the section heading has been retained compared to the previous year

X = indicates that the section has been omitted from the respective annual report

2016	2017	2018	2019	Observations
Executive Summary	✓	✓	✓	
Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:	✓	✓	✓	
a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings	✓	✓	✓	
b. Disappearance	✓	✓	✓	
c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	✓	✓	✓	
Prison and Detention Center Conditions	✓	✓	✓	
Physical Conditions	✓	✓	✓	
Administration	✓	✓	✓	
Independent Monitoring	✓	✓	✓	
d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention	✓	✓	✓	
Role of the Police and Security Apparatus	✓	✓	X	The 2019 edition no longer included such a separate subsection and includes the information instead in its <i>Executive Summary</i>
Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees	✓	✓	✓	
Arbitrary Arrest	✓	✓	✓	
Detainee is [sic] Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court	Changed to <i>Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	X	Minor language change in title in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 edition; 2019 edition omits heading but information included under section heading <i>d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention</i> .
Pretrial Detention	✓	✓	✓	
Amnesty	X	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017-edition]	The 2017, 2018 and 2019

				editions neglect to include such a section heading or any information in relation to current and past amnesty decrees or provisions. For more information on this see 1.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016) .
e. Denial of Fair Public Trial	✓	✓	✓	
Trial Procedures	✓	✓	✓	
Political Prisoners and Detainees	✓	✓	✓	
			New subsection <i>Politically Motivated Reprisal Against Individuals Located Outside the Country</i>	New subsection in 2019 report with information included which was previously not included anywhere in the 2016, 2017 and 2018 editions.
Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies	✓	✓	✓	
Property Restitution	✓	✓	✓	
f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence	✓	✓	✓	
	New section <i>g. Abuses in Internal Conflicts</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	New section and subsections in 2017 edition, repeated in 2018 and 2019 reports. Information included here was previously not included anywhere in the 2016 report. The 2019 edition also added the subsection on <i>Yemen</i> .
	New subsection <i>Syria</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	
	New subsection <i>Child Soldiers</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	
	New subsection <i>Iraq</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	
		New subsection <i>Yemen</i>	✓ [same as 2018 edition]	
Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:	✓	✓	✓	
a. Freedom of Speech and Press	Changed to <i>a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Minor language change in title in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 and 2019 editions.
Freedom of Speech and Expression	Changed to <i>Freedom of Expression</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Minor language change in title in 2017 report, repeated in

				2018 and 2019 editions.
Press and Media Freedoms	Changed to <i>Press and Media Freedom</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Changed to <i>Press and Media, Including Online Media</i>	Minor language change in title in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 edition; Additional minor language change in title in 2019 report.
Violence and Harassment	✓	✓	✓	
Censorship or Content Restrictions	✓	✓	✓	
Libel/Slander Laws	✓	✓	✓	
			New subsection <i>National Security</i>	New subsection in 2019 report with information included which was previously not included anywhere in the 2016, 2017 and 2018 editions.
Internet Freedom	✓	✓	✓	
Academic Freedom and Cultural Events	✓	✓	✓	
b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association	✓	✓	✓	
Freedom of Assembly	Changed to <i>Freedom of Peaceful Assembly</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Minor language change in title in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 and 2019 editions.
Freedom of Association	✓	✓	✓	
c. Freedom of Religion	✓	✓	✓	
d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons	Changed to <i>d. Freedom of Movement</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Changed title in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 and 2019 editions.
	New subsection heading <i>Abuses of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons</i>	✗ [changed back to 2016 edition]	✗ [changed back to 2017 edition, but included in section 2.e. further below]	A new subsection heading included in 2017 report but no additional information. The 2018 edition no longer included this subheading but continued to include the information, whilst the 2019 edition included this heading and its content but elsewhere within the report under

				section 2.e. <i>Protection of Refugees</i>
In-country Movement	✓	✓	✓	
Foreign Travel	✓	✓	✓	
Exile	✓	✓	X	The 2019 edition no longer included such a separate subsection thereby omitting some of the previously included contextual information, as well as omitting information that continued to be documented in other publicly available information. For more information on this see 2.1.3. New observations in 2019 and 2.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018) .
			New section e. <i>Internally Displaced Persons</i>	New subsection in 2019 report but only included 'Not applicable'
Protection of Refugees	✓	✓	✓ [Changed to <i>F. Protection of Refugees</i>]	Minor language change in 2019
			New subsection <i>Abuses of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons</i>	This subsection was previously added in the 2017 report, subsequently removed in the 2018 report and then re-included in the 2019 edition, but in a different section.
Access to Asylum	✓	✓	✓	
Refoulement	✓	✓	✓	
	New subsection <i>Freedom of Movement</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	New subsection heading in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 and 2019 editions. Information included under this subheading is the same as

				that included under <i>In-country Movement</i> in the 2016 report
Employment	✓	✓	✓	
Access to Basic Services	✓	✓	✓	
Stateless Persons	✓	✓	✓	
Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process	✓	✓	✓	
Elections and Political Participation	✓	✓	✓	
Recent Elections	✓	✓	✓	
Political Parties and Political Participation	✓	✓	✓	
Participation of Women and Minorities	✓	✓	✓	
Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government	✓	✓	✓	
	New subsection <i>Corruption</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	New subsection heading in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 and 2019 editions. Examples of specific corruption-related cases are included here, which can be found in the 2016 report in the same section but without the subheading.
Financial Disclosure	✓	✓	✓	
Public Access to Information	X	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Omission of section in 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports thereby omitting information on public access to government information and mechanisms available to access such documents. For more information on this see 4.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016) .
Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights	Changed to <i>Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Minor language change in title in 2017 report, repeated in 2018 and 2019 editions.

	<i>Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights</i>			
The United Nations or Other International Bodies	✓	✓	✓	
Government Human Rights Bodies	✓	✓	✓	
Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons	✓	✓	✓	
Women	✓	✓	✓	
Rape and Domestic Violence	✓	✓	✓	
Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)	✓	✓	✓	
Other Harmful Traditional Practices	✓	✓	✓	
Sexual Harassment	✓	✓	✓	
Reproductive Rights	Renamed to <i>Coercion in Population Control</i>	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Renaming of section and hence the detail and content of information has been changed. For more information on this see 6.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016) .
Discrimination	✓	✓	✓	
Children	✓	✓	✓	
Birth Registration	✓	✓	✓	
Education	✓	✓	✓	
Child Abuse	✓	✓	✓	
Early and Forced Marriage	✓	✓	✓	
Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C)	X	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Omission of link to the FGM/C subsection in <i>Women</i>
Sexual Exploitation of Children	✓	✓	✓	
Displaced Children	✓	✓	✓	
International Child Abductions	✓	✓	✓	
Anti-Semitism	✓	✓	✓	
Trafficking in Persons	✓	✓	✓	
Persons with Disabilities	✓	✓	✓	
National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities	✓	✓	✓	

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	✓	✓	✓	
HIV and AIDS Social Stigma	✓	✓	✓	
Other Societal Violence or Discrimination	X	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	✓ [same as 2017 edition]	Omission of section in 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports thereby neglecting to include information on the societal discrimination faced by non-native Persian speakers and non-Shia individuals. Also omission of link to the USDOS 'International Religious Freedom Report'. For more information on this see 6.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016) .
Section 7. Worker Rights	✓	✓	✓	
a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining	✓	✓	✓	
b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor	✓	✓	✓	
c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment	✓	✓	✓	
d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation	✓	✓	✓	
e. Acceptable Conditions of Work	✓	✓	✓	

D. Table 2: Comparative analysis of how the Iran <i>Executive Summary</i> categorises human rights issues				
2016	2017	2018	2019	Observations
X	X	The government's human rights record remained extremely poor and worsened in several key areas.	X	[Note: The 2016, 2017 and 2019 reports did not make such an assessment in its <i>Executive Summary</i> but under section 5. stated: "According to NGO sources, including HRW and AI, the government's rights record and its level of cooperation with international rights institutions remained poor"]
The most significant human rights (HR) problems were	The most significant human rights issues included	Human rights issues included	Significant human rights issues included	2016 distinguished between "most significant", "other human rights problems" and "of additional concern", whilst the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports did not have such distinguishing paragraphs. 2018 report further omitted to include "the most significant" but instead included the assessment made above
X	hundreds of political prisoners;	systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment, including hundreds of political prisoners;	systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment [...] hundreds of political prisoners;	[Note that 2017 does not mention "systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment" although section 1.d. is the same for all three reports]
X	refoulement of refugees;	X	X	All reports with the exception of the 2017 report omitted "refoulement of refugees" as a human rights issue although all continued to include such information in section 2.d
severe restrictions on civil liberties	X	X	X	[Note that the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports omitted to include this general assessment that there were "severe restrictions on civil liberties"; instead outlined in greater detail what these civil liberties were and introduced them with

				the words 'severe restrictions on...']
including the freedoms of assembly, association, speech, religion, and press.	severe restrictions on freedom of expression, including criminalization of libel and suppression of virtually all expression deemed critical of the regime or its officials;	severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel;	severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests and prosecutions against journalists, censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel;	2018 report: No longer mentioned "imprisonment of reporters" and "severe restrictions on [...] academic and cultural freedom" and changed "severe restrictions on the rights of assembly and association" to "substantial interference". 2018 and 2019 reports: Did not specify when such restrictions were imposed, whilst the 2017 report mentioned that "all expression deemed critical of the regime or its officials" were suppressed. These omissions took place despite section 2. continuing to include the same information as included in the 2017 report
X	severe restrictions on the press, including imprisonment of reporters, and of the internet which the government disrupted and censored, as well as on academic and cultural freedom;	X		
X	severe restrictions on the rights of assembly and association to block any activity it deemed "anti-regime", including repression of nationwide protests that began on December 28;	substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws;	substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws;	Minor language change observed: 2018 and 2019 reports: Changed "severe restrictions" to "substantial interference" with regards to assembly rights and freedom of association
X	egregious restrictions on religious freedom;	egregious restrictions of religious freedom;	severe restrictions of religious freedom	2019 report: Changed "egregious restrictions" to "severe restrictions" with regards to religious freedom, suggesting a slight improvement although all reference to religious freedom in the three reports remaining the same
Other HR problems included	X	X	X	

abuse of due process combined with use of capital punishment for crimes that do not meet the requirements of due process,	a high number of executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of “most serious crimes” and without fair trials of individuals, including juvenile offenders;	executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of “most serious crimes” and without fair trials of individuals, including juvenile offenders;	executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of “most serious crimes” and without fair trials of individuals, including juvenile offenders	[Note: 2018 and 2019 reports: No longer quantifies its assessment by omitting “a high number of executions [...] but info. included in 2018 and 2019 and other publicly sources confirm that less executions took place than in previous years]
as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” although such information continued to be included in section 1.c.
and disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities arbitrarily and unlawfully detained, tortured, or killed.	torture; [...] arbitrary detention and imprisonment;	numerous reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings [...] and torture by government agents [...] systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment, including hundreds of political prisoners;	numerous reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings [...] and torture by government agents [...] systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment [...] hundreds of political prisoners;	[Note that some of what was included here in the 2016 report has been included elsewhere in the <i>Executive Summary</i> in the respective 2017, 2018 and 2019 <i>Executive Summary</i> section] and in the case of 2017 ‘arbitrary killing’ was included in section 1.a.
Other reported human rights problems included	X	X	X	
politically motivated violence and repression;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted this human rights issue although such information continued to be included, especially in sections 1.b., 1.d., and 4.
disappearances;	disappearances by government agents;	forced disappearance	forced disappearance	2018 and 2019 reports: Language change from ‘disappearance’ to specifying ‘forced disappearance’

limitations on citizens' ability to choose their government peacefully through free and fair elections.	elections where the regime pre-selected the candidates and that otherwise did not meet international standards and severely limited political participation;	restrictions on political participation;	restrictions on political participation through arbitrary candidate vetting;	[Note 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include violations with regards to elections and limited the human rights issue down to "restrictions on political participation" instead of "severely limited" although such information continued to be included in section 3. All of this may be explained that elections took place in 2017 in Iran and therefore that specific year description was a bit more specific]
Of additional concern were	X	X	X	
harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities, including lengthy solitary confinement, with instances of deaths in custody.	harsh and life-threatening prison conditions;	harsh and life-threatening prison conditions;	harsh and life-threatening prison conditions;	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include "lengthy solitary confinement, with instances of deaths in custody" although such information continued to be included in sections 1.c. and 1.d. [Note that deaths in custody was included in a separate paragraph in the <i>Executive Summary</i> of the 2018 report but only in relation to those arrested as part of the crackdown of protesters] 2019 report: Omitted to include "deaths in custody" and only includes it in a separate paragraph within the <i>Executive Summary</i> section in relation to impunity of security services for past abuses.
Also of concern were arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include "lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado" although such information continued to be included in section 1.d.
continued impunity of the security forces;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include this human rights issue from the

				list of human rights issue although all reports included in the <i>Executive Summary</i> that “Impunity remained pervasive throughout all levels of the government and security forces” but in a separate paragraph
denial of fair public trial;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include “denial of fair public trial” although such information continued to be included in section 1.e.
the lack of an independent judiciary;	X	X	significant problems with independence of the judiciary, particularly the revolutionary courts;	2017 & 2018 reports: Omitted to include “lack of an independent judiciary” although such information continued to be included in section 1.e.
arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence.	unlawful interference with privacy;	unlawful interference with privacy;	unlawful interference with privacy;	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Minor language point changing “arbitrary interference” with “unlawful interference”; Omitted to include unlawful interference with “family, home, and correspondence” although such information continued to be included in section 1.f.
Additionally there were severe restrictions on academic freedom;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include “severe restrictions on academic freedom” although such information continued to be included in section 2.a.
restrictions on freedom of movement;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include “restrictions on freedom of movement” although such information continued to be included in section 2.d.
official corruption and lack of government transparency;	pervasive government corruption in all branches and at all levels of government;	widespread corruption at all levels of government;	widespread corruption at all levels of government;	Omission in 2017, 2018 and 2019” Lack of government transparency”; 2018 and 2019 reports: Slight change in tone from “pervasive” to “widespread compared to 2017 edition, suggesting an improvement although section 4. In 2018 and 2019 not

				portraying such a picture.
constraints on investigations by international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into alleged violations of human rights;	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include “constraints on investigations [...]” although such information continued to be included in section 5.
legal and societal discrimination.	X	X	X	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include this general assessment although information included throughout the reports continued to support such a summary
There was also	X	X	X	
violence against women,	and governmental restrictions on the rights of women and minorities.	harsh governmental restrictions on the rights of women and minorities;	harsh governmental restrictions on the rights of women and minorities;	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Limited “violence against women, ethnic and religious minorities, and [...] LGBTI” to “government restrictions on the rights of women and minorities” thereby leaving out societal violence directed against these particular profiles
ethnic and religious minorities,			violence against ethnic minorities;	
and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons.	[Note: Separate sentence] LGBTI status and/or conduct remained criminalized and subject to the death penalty and LGBTI persons faced arrest, official harassment, and intimidation, as well as cruel and degrading treatment by security officials.	criminalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) status or conduct; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting LGBTI persons;	crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; criminalization of LGBTI status or conduct;	
Lastly, there were significant HR problems with	X	X	X	
trafficking in persons	trafficking in persons;	trafficking in persons;	trafficking in persons;	

and severe restrictions on the exercise of labor rights.	[Note: Separate sentence] There were severe restrictions on independent trade unions.	and outlawing of independent trade unions.	and outlawing of independent trade unions.	2017, 2018 and 2019 reports: Omitted to include “severe restrictions on the exercise of labor rights” and instead limited it to “severe restrictions on independent trade unions” although such information continued to be included in section 7.
X	X	unlawful recruitment of child soldiers by government actors to support the Assad regime in Syria;	unlawful recruitment of child soldiers by government actors to support the Assad regime in Syria;	2017 report: Omission of such human rights issue despite section 1.g. reporting on exactly same situation

E. Repository of COI on Iran

Illustrative country of origin information is presented on the following issues in chronological order.

1. Section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person*

1.3. Omissions

1.3.1 Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), some omitted in 2018 and 2019

Impunity in 2017 for past unlawful killings

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Silencing the Streets, Deaths in Prison: The December 2017 Crackdown in Iran, February 2018](#)

[...] Most disturbingly, at least two detainees died between December 2017 and January 2018. In February, a third detainee, whose arrest was unrelated to the protests, also died in custody. Their quick burial without an investigation or autopsy and official claims that the deaths were “suicides,” as well as pressure by state authorities on family members not to speak publicly, all suggest a concerted attempt to cover up egregious ill-treatment of the prisoners. [p. 5]

[...] For all of the above violations—unlawful arrests, denials of due process, ill-treatment and deaths in the prisons—there are few effective grievance mechanisms in Iran.

Regarding deaths in custody, the regulatory framework for Iran’s State Prisons Organization, which is responsible for prisoners and reports to the Judiciary, is deeply lacking in terms of accountability for deaths in custody. There is no mandatory investigation or autopsy, or requirement that a medical examiner’s report be available for review, when a death occurs in custody.¹⁹

Families can try to press their cases in court, but with the Iranian Judiciary’s demonstrated lack of independence from the country’s security and intelligence agencies, accountability through the courts is an unpromising course. In cases where intelligence officials, interrogators or prison guards are subjected to investigation or charges, the judiciary typically protects their own.

[...] Iranian legal experts have noted that an autopsy may be carried out with the permission of a judge to determine the cause of death. This may be undertaken at the request of the victim’s parents or without, if it is in the public interest; if this is determined to be necessary by the judge, then the medical examiner is required to carry it out.²¹ However, this requires either the family taking the case to the courts, or a judge acting on his own initiative in the “public interest,” both of which are undermined by the above-mentioned issue of the lack of independence of the Judiciary.

Families can also ask the Iranian Parliament’s Article 90 Commission, which is charged with investigating public complaints regarding Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary, and which can send inspectors to conduct investigations to deal with such complaints, to investigate the deaths.²² However, the efficacy of the Article 90 Commission as a public grievance mechanism is limited by the fact that it has no real enforcement capabilities. Moreover, its track record has been mixed; while at times it has served in an investigative capacity, its activities are dependent upon the political proclivities of its members at any given time. The Judiciary has not proven to be particularly responsive to the Article 90 Commission’s questions or criticism in the past.²³ [...]

19 “When a prisoner dies, the prison’s director is required to immediately inform the relevant local judicial authorities, the medical examiner and the presiding judge. After permission is granted by the judicial authorities, the corpse should be delivered to the family or buried after a funeral. ...”

[...] 21 Yousef Mojtahedi, PhD student in criminal law, Mehdi Mojtahedi, Head of Branch 106 of Zanjan Criminal Court, Mehdi Forouzesh, Zanjan medical examiner’s office director, “Armed Forces Judicial Organization,” October 30, 2010 <https://tinyurl.com/yalc7c9g>

22 For the regulations regarding the Article 90 Commission, see: <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/news/features/3558-internal-regulation-on-the-com-mission-of-article-90-of-the-constitution.html>

23 See for example the Human Rights Watch report, “Like the Dead in Their Coffin: Torture, Detention and the Crushing of Dissent in Iran,” June 2004 <http://pantheon.hrw.org/reports/2004/iran0604/iran0604.pdf>

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Iran: End Persecution of Families Seeking Truth and Justice For Detainees Who Died in Detention, 13 March 2018](#)

[...] The Iranian authorities should end their cruel campaign of harassment and intimidation against the families of detainees who have died in detention under suspicious circumstances, Amnesty International, the Center for Human Rights in Iran, Human Rights Watch and Justice for Iran said today. The human rights organizations expressed concerns that the bereaved families are facing reprisals for seeking truth and justice and renewed their calls on the authorities to establish an independent commission of inquiry and invite the UN Special Rapporteurs on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to visit. The authorities should ensure that if there is sufficient evidence of unlawful deaths in detention, the perpetrators responsible will be prosecuted and punished [...]

Since December 2017, there have been at least five known deaths incurred by state security officials, with at least four of these deaths occurring during detention. In three of the cases – those of Sina Ghanbari, Vahid Heydari and Kavous Seyed-Emami – the authorities announced immediately that the deaths were the result of suicide – claims which family members and human rights groups strongly disputed. In the case of the fourth individual, Saro Ghahremani, the authorities claimed that he was shot during the course of an armed confrontation with security forces. His family also disputed the official claim, saying that he died in custody after he was arrested during the nationwide protests of December 2017 and his body bore marks of torture.

The most recent case concerns Mohammad Raji, a member of Iran’s persecuted Gonabadi Dervishes community, who was arrested on 20 February, following the violent dispersal of a peaceful protest by Gonabadi Dervishes in Tehran. His family were informed by the police 15 days later on 4 March that he had died from the injuries caused by repeated blows to his head.

The details concerning the exact manner, place and time of death and all of the surrounding circumstances remain unclear. The authorities have only stated that he was fatally injured during the clashes that occurred between protesting Dervishes and security forces on 19 February and he died either during his transfer to Baqiyatallah Hospital or after his admission to hospital. His family have emphasized that Mohammad Raji was injured but alive at the time of the arrest and expressed outrage at the concealment of his fate and whereabouts for 15 days following his arrest, and the authorities’ refusal to clarify the sequence and timing of events that led to his death.

In all five cases, Iran’s judicial and security authorities have threatened the bereaved families in a bid to silence their pleas for truth and justice. They have also engaged in what seems to be an orchestrated campaign to cover up any evidence of torture, other ill-treatment, and unlawful deaths while defaming the deceased publicly.

Systematic harassment and intimidation of families and lawyers and smear campaigns

Family members have been subjected to various forms of harassment and intimidation, including before being informed of the death of their loved ones. Their lawyers have also received threats for pursuing legal action, faced pressure to withdraw their representation, and, in at least one case, a lawyer has been detained for speaking to the media.

[...] Suppression of potentially incriminating evidence

The repeated harassment and intimidation of families has been accompanied by official conduct that appears to be aimed at suppressing incriminating evidence of torture, ill-treatment, and unlawful death in detention. The authorities have consistently denied families’ requests to receive the bodies of their loved ones unless they agree to bury the deceased immediately and make no attempt to secure an independent autopsy [...]

Failure to conduct independent and transparent investigations

On 14 February, President Rouhani appointed a committee comprised of a legal deputy to the president and Interior, Intelligence and Justice Ministers to investigate what the president called “recent regrettable incidents” at detention centres in Iran.

However, this committee does not meet the requirements of impartiality and independence provided under international law and standards. According to the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, members of a commission of inquiry “shall be chosen for their recognized impartiality, competence and independence as individuals. In particular, they shall be independent of any institution, agency or person that may be the subject of the inquiry” (Principle 11).

The committee President Rouhani established neither meets the standards of transparency and effectiveness. The terms of reference guiding the committee's investigation and the procedures to be followed in the investigation are not known. The committee is not open to the scrutiny of the general public and is not bound to ensure the participation and protection of family members during the investigation. There is also no known order requiring the committee to make its findings, including their factual and legal basis, public.

The Iranian authorities' failure to conduct independent, impartial and transparent investigations into the recent cases of deaths in custody fits into a long-standing pattern of impunity in the country. [...]

Impunity in 2018 for past unlawful killings

❖ [UN General Assembly, Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, 10–28 September 2018, 30 July 2018](#)

[...] 105. The Working Group regrets that no information has been received from the Government in connection with the general allegation transmitted on 28 February 2017, concerning the alleged lack of action to investigate unmarked graves and impunity for the disappearance and extrajudicial execution of 5,000 political prisoners in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 1980s (see A/HRC/WGEID/111/1 para. 68 and annex II). [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] 27. The spokesperson of the judiciary reported that 25 people, including children and two security officers, had been killed during the protest.²⁹ At the time of reporting, OHCHR had not received information confirming that an independent investigation into the reported deaths of protesters had been launched. Moreover, families were not allowed to access the bodies of their family members or to hold memorial ceremonies.

28. At least five people arrested in connection with the protests of January 2018 were reported to have died while in custody, including cases from Tehran (Evin prison), Arak, Ilam and Sanandaj. The authorities claimed that some of those who died had been arrested on charges of possession of narcotics or collusion with dissident groups, and that all the deaths were suicides, contrary to reports or statements, including by officials,³⁰ suggesting that ill-treatment or forced administration of substances might have contributed to the deaths. Limited information was provided by the judicial authorities on the circumstances of the deaths, and reports indicated that families of some of the deceased had been pressured not to discuss their cases publicly. Some families made statements on television attesting to the fact that their loved ones had committed suicide.³¹

29. In a positive development, on 30 January a parliamentary delegation visited Evin prison following the allegations of the deaths and ill-treatment of protesters in detention.³² On 14 February, the President, Hassan Rouhani, ordered an investigation into the allegations³³ by a committee comprising the Ministries of the Interior, Justice and Intelligence³⁴. As at 1 July, the results of the investigation have yet to be made public.

30. The Secretary-General is concerned about the fate of individuals who have been arrested in conjunction with the protests and who remain in custody. The Secretary-General urges the Government to ensure that the rights of all people in detention are respected and protected, and that information is made available on their location and status, in particular to their families. The Secretary-General further calls upon the Government to ensure that families are offered the possibility to seek an independent investigation into the circumstances and cause of deaths in custody. The Secretary-General notes the position of the Government in its comments that "it has always responded to the legitimate demands of its citizens, including the right to participate in political and social affairs, security and the right to peaceful assembly". The Secretary-General calls upon the Government to end widespread and serious restrictions, in law and in practice, on the right to freedom of expression, opinion, association and peaceful assembly, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/189, and also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arrested for the legitimate exercise of these rights. [...]

29 See https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran_judiciary_mohseni_ezhei_protests/28974896.html.

30 See https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran_judiciary_mohseni_ezhei_protests/28974896.html.

31 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okHJomtg3uQ>.

32 See <https://ilnanews.com/fa/tiny/news-588932>.

33 See <http://www.ilna.ir/fa/tiny/news-593743>.

34 See <http://www.ilna.ir/fa/tiny/news-594000>.

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Protesters Sentenced in Unfair Trials, 5 November 2018](#)
[...] On July 31, a wave of protests began in the city of Esfahan and quickly spread to other cities, including Karaj in Alborz province and Tehran, the capital. On August 3, a protester identified by social media accounts as Reza Otadi was shot and killed during protests in Karaj. Authorities announced the establishment of a special committee to investigate his death, consisting of the Revolutionary Guards, police counterintelligence units, and a prosecutor, but have yet to disclose their findings. [...]

- ❖ [Amnesty International, Iran Committing Crimes Against Humanity by Concealing fate of Thousands of Slaughtered Political Dissidents, 4 December 2018](#)
[...] Iran committing crimes against humanity by concealing fate of thousands of slaughtered political dissidents
 - Thousands forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in prison in 1988
 - Ongoing campaign to deny and distort truth and abuse victims' families
 - UN must establish independent investigation into crimes against humanity
 - High-profile figures accused of involvement in 1988 prison massacres namedBy concealing the fate and whereabouts of thousands of political dissidents who were forcibly disappeared and secretly executed in prison 30 years ago, Iranian authorities are continuing to commit crimes against humanity, said Amnesty International in a damning report published today. [...]

- ❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Impunity reigns in murders of journalists in Iran, 6 December 2018](#)
[...] As well as Darioush and Parvaneh Forouhar, the many intellectuals and government opponents murdered in November and December 1998 included Majid Sharif, a columnist for the monthly Iran-e-Farda, and the writers and journalists Mohamad Mokhtari and Mohamad Jafar Pouyandeh. Pirouz Davani, the editor of the newspaper Pirouz, disappeared a few months before the others were murdered. His body was never found.
The murders (and Davani's disappearance) triggered an outcry in much of the reformist press that forced the authorities into creating a commission of enquiry.
In January 1999, the intelligence ministry formally acknowledged the involvement of some of its operatives and announced the arrest of dozens of suspects. Fifteen intelligence ministry agents were convicted in January 2001 for the murder of the Forouhars. Three were sentenced to death. The other 12 received prison sentences. The authorities never showed any interest in solving the Davani case. In none of these cases were those who gave the orders ever prosecuted.
Although the involvement of high-level figures has been demonstrated, there has never been any political will to bring them to justice. The suspects include Mostafa Pourmohamadi (the former justice minister), Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejei (the judicial system's current spokesman) and Ghorbanali Dorri-Najafabadi (the intelligence minister at the time of the murders), but none has ever been questioned or arrested. Only around 15 intelligence ministry operatives were convicted and given sentences ranging from three to 12 years in prison. All are now free.
Impunity is one of the most important reasons for violence against journalists in Iran, and many other murders of journalists remain unsolved and unpunished, in addition to the 1998 murders of journalists and intellectuals. [...]

- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Iranian-Canadian Academic Dies in Custody While Under Interrogations, 10 February 2019](#)
[...] "The rising number of deaths in Iranian prisons is an unfolding tragedy that must stop now," said Hadi Ghaemi, the executive director of CHRI.
"This stems from the widespread impunity of judicial and security officials who are getting away with murder, time after time. The interrogators and the judicial authorities are directly responsible for prisoners' lives. In addition to independent investigations and an autopsy to determine the cause of death, the perpetrators must be held accountable in a transparent process." [...]

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Serious Rights Violator to Lead Judiciary - Ebrahim Raeesi Oversaw Mass Executions in 1988, 7 March 2019](#)

[...] The appointment of a former judge responsible for mass executions to be head of Iran's judiciary reflects the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, Human Rights Watch said today. On March 7 2019, Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appointed Ebrahim Raesi, who served on a four-person committee that ordered the execution of several thousand political prisoners in 1988, to lead Iran's judicial branch. [...]

The Iranian authorities extrajudicially executed thousands of political prisoners during the summer of 1988. Most were serving prison sentences for their political activities after unfair trials in revolutionary courts. The authorities have never acknowledged these executions, nor provided any information about the number of prisoners killed.

But in August 2016, the family of Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, the former deputy supreme leader, who died in 2009, released an audio file online in which he is recorded harshly criticizing the executions in a conversation with the committee that included Raesi, calling it "the biggest crime in the Islamic Republic, for which history will condemn us."

On November 27, 2016, following the release of the audio file Iran's Special Court of Clergy sentenced Ahmed Montazeri, Montazeri's son, to 21 years in prison, but subsequently reduced the sentence to six years. The charges included "acting against national security" and "revealing state secrets." Authorities then arrested the younger Montazeri on February 23, 2017 but released him after eight days. Zahra Amlashi Rabbani, Montazeri's wife, told the Center for Human Rights in Iran that Raesi, the prosecutor in Iran's Special Court of Clergy, played a role in her husband's trial and arrest.

Raesi has had a long career in Iran's judiciary, an institution that has not acted independently of the government. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly documented abuses by the judiciary against the citizens whose rights it is supposed to protect. Raesi served as a first deputy to the judiciary during the crackdown that followed the 2009 presidential elections, in which authorities arrested thousands of activists and protesters, torturing and harassing many and imposing long prison terms after unfair trials.

Raesi reportedly defended the August 2009 trial of Mohammad-Reza Ali-Zamani and Arash Rahmanipour, both of whom were sentenced to death in a mass trial on charges of "enmity against God" (moharebeh) for their alleged involvement with armed groups. The authorities executed them on January 28, 2010 without providing any notice to their lawyers or family members. Raesi insisted that the two men were arrested during the post-election unrest in Tehran even though both had been arrested before the 2009 presidential elections. [...]

Impunity in 2019 for past unlawful killings

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] Regarded by the Iranian authorities and by the Iranian criminal justice system as "unprotected infidels",⁴⁷ Baha'is have been murdered with impunity and violations of their human rights have not been investigated. [...]

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See

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572660/CPIN.IR.N.Baha_is.v.2-November-2016.pdf.

- ❖ [Amnesty International, Iran: Shocking Statements by Senior Official Highlight Impunity for 1988 Prison Massacres, 30 July 2019](#)

[...] Recent statements by Mostafa Pour Mohammadi, advisor to Iran's head of the judiciary and a former minister of justice, defending the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988 provide shocking confirmation of the authorities' wilful flouting of international human rights law both at the time and now and a stark reminder of the sense of impunity that senior officials linked to the killings enjoy, Amnesty International said today.

The organization is particularly concerned about comments by Mostafa Pour Mohammadi accusing those advocating for truth and accountability of "terrorism" and "collusion" with Iran's geopolitical enemies, and warning that they shall face prosecution. These comments, coupled with the appointment, in March 2019, of Ebrahim Raisi, who, like Mostafa Pour Mohammadi, was involved with the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988, to the position of the head of the judiciary, put survivors, family members of those

executed and human rights defenders at increased risk of harassment and persecution simply for seeking truth and justice.

Current and former Iranian officials must not be allowed to shield themselves from accountability for the mass extrajudicial executions through campaigns of disinformation and threats of reprisals against anyone looking to shed light on them.

Amnesty International therefore renews its call on the UN and its member states to speak firmly and openly about the systematic impunity surrounding the crimes against humanity related to the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988.

[...] Grotesque distortion of the nature and context of 1988 prison massacres

In an interview published by the weekly magazine *Mosalas* on 25 July 2019, Mostafa Pour Mohammadi was asked about the criticisms that the Islamic Republic continues to receive about the executions that it carried out following the July 1988 armed incursion into Iran of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), an opposition group based in Iraq at the time, targeting prisoners who had not "repented" for their political opinions and activities.

In response, he lashed out, saying that those killed were "criminals and terrorists" who had "temporarily" qualified for commutation of their death sentences, but had to be "fought with" after they started colluding with the PMOI secretly from inside prison to support and join its armed incursion. He proceeded to focus on the military co-operation of the PMOI with Saddam Hossein, Iraq's president at the time, during the Iran-Iraq war.

Mostafa Pour Mohammadi's comments propagate the same false narratives that Iranian authorities have used for decades to hide the truth that, between July and September 1988, they forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed several thousand unjustly imprisoned political dissidents in secret as part of a systematic effort to eliminate political opposition.

Contrary to these narratives, which demonize the victims as "terrorists" and "murderers", those forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in 1988 were mostly young men and women, some just teenagers, unjustly imprisoned because of their political opinions and non-violent political activities such as distributing opposition newspapers and leaflets, taking part in demonstrations, collecting donations for prisoners' families or associating with those who were politically active.

Some of the prisoners were arbitrarily held without ever having been tried or sentenced; some were serving unjust prison terms ranging from life to as little as two or three years; some had completed their sentences and were due to be released, or had been told that they would remain in prison because they were not deemed "sufficiently repentant".

It should be emphasized that enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions are prohibited under all circumstances, irrespective of what the victim is suspected of or has been convicted of doing.

The mass enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of 1988 constitute crimes against humanity under international law.

Beyond this, the authorities have never provided any explanation of how thousands of prisoners held in Iran's high-security prisons could possibly have communicated with PMOI members outside the country or been involved in the armed incursion. Testimonies from survivors at the prison and leaked official records all confirm that prisoners being interrogated between July and September 1988 were not asked about accusations of secret collusion with the PMOI.

In addition, the mass executions did not only target prisoners with PMOI ties; hundreds affiliated with leftist and Kurdish opposition groups were among the victims.

Contempt for international law and standards

In his comments, Mostafa Pour Mohammadi compared, without any logic, the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988 to deaths occurring on the battlefield and asked mockingly, "Are we really expected to talk about legal debates and civil and humanitarian protections when we are in the middle of a war?"

These comments are emblematic of the Iranian authorities' contempt for international law and standards, and inadvertently confirm the horrific truth, long established by survivors and human rights defenders, that the proceedings leading to the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988, were extremely arbitrary in nature and had none of the characteristics of a judicial proceeding, as required by international law. The executions followed interrogation sessions before committees which survivors refer to as "death commissions"; they consisted of prosecution, judicial and intelligence officials, who aimed to discover the political opinions of the prisoners and order the execution of those not willing to "repent".

Threats against those seeking truth and justice

In his interview, Mostafa Pour Mohammadi likened documentation and condemnation of the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988 to support for “terrorism” and the PMOI, and stated that “now is the time to conduct prosecutions... and put the criminal world that defends terrorism in its place.”

He also emphasized the need to keep official documents and records related to the executions secret, and claimed that the release in 2016 of the audio recording of a high-level official meeting that took place in August 1988 and included himself and several other officials responsible for overseeing the extrajudicial executions in Tehran was part of a “joint operation by the USA, the CIA, Mossad and Saudi Arabia” aimed at “overthrowing the Islamic Republic system”.

These statements put survivors, family members of victims and human rights defenders seeking truth and justice on behalf of individuals who were forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in 1988 at increased risk of harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and prosecution on spurious national security charges.

Systematic impunity

In his interview, Mostafa Pour Mohammadi described calls for accountability regarding the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988 as foreign elements “blowing their propaganda horns” in order to create a hostile “psychological atmosphere” and exploit “the ignorance and stupidity of some people”.

When asked about his own role in the executions, he compared his position to that of a combatant who was obliged to fire gunshots at the enemy and said that he must not be questioned or criticized if some of his shots were directed at people who mistakenly appeared in his line of fire or if his grenades hit a nearby village by mistake. He added: “Because of monafeqin [a pejorative term used by the Iranian authorities to refer to members and supporters of the PMOI], many were martyred. We suffered many casualties and defeats. And now you want me to come forward and answer, in legal terms, why I threw a grenade into the wrong place?”

These comments highlight the systematic impunity prevailing in Iran, where senior officials linked to the mass extrajudicial executions feel confident that they will never face justice. They hold crucial positions of power, including, ironically, in key judicial and government bodies responsible for upholding the rule of law and ensuring truth and justice. They are also given ample opportunities to spread disinformation, deflect criticism and reinforce impunity.

This situation makes it all the more urgent for the UN and its member states to speak openly and firmly against the systematic impunity surrounding the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988 and the ongoing concealment of the fate of the victims and the whereabouts of their remains.

Their failure to do so only serves to embolden the authorities to persist in their disavowal of the truth, and further abuse survivors, family members of victims and others seeking truth and justice. This has a devastating impact not only on survivors and victims’ families but also on the rule of law and respect for human rights in the country.

Amnesty International therefore renews its call on the UN and its member states to explore concrete pathways to truth, justice and reparation. These pathways should ensure that the truth regarding the mass extrajudicial executions of 1988 is disclosed, including the number of those killed in 1988, their identities, the date, location, cause and circumstances of each enforced disappearance and extrajudicial execution and the location of the remains; that those suspected of responsibility are prosecuted in fair trials without imposition of the death penalty; and that survivors and families of victims are provided reparations in accordance with international standards. [...]

❖ [Abdollah Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, On Protests: Hold Iran Accountable Or Worse May Lay Ahead, 29 November 2019](#)

[...] The protests began on November 15, 2019, quickly spreading across the country, and Iranian authorities’ response to unarmed protesters has been swift and disproportionate. Authorities shut off Iranians’ access to the World Wide Web, caused injuries and deaths as early as November 15, and quashed the demonstrations within a few days. The exact number of casualties is unknown, but so far, at least 143 deaths have been confirmed,[2] and many more have been injured. Iran has acknowledged the death of five members of Iran’s security forces. According to one parliamentarian, at least 7,000 have been arrested, and repeated threats of harsh punishment from high-ranking officials do not bode well for others who participated in the protests.[4] Iran must be held accountable. Without a strong international response, the death toll will rise, including with a new wave of politically-motivated summary executions.

[...] The first casualty among protesters was reported from Sirjan where some protesters reportedly attempted to enter an oil storage facility on the evening of November 15, 2019. The following day, deadly

shootings by security forces were reported in several cities. In videos that have circulated on social media since then, security forces can be seen using firearms in circumstances that do not appear to be life threatening. Videos have also circulated of protesters gathered in front of police stations and a Basij militia base. In some cases protesters are seen in standoffs with the security forces or chasing them away with stones. Plainclothes militias can also be seen beating and arresting protesters.

[...] Strikingly uniform and threatening statements by Iranian officials since the outset of the protests were not meant to restrain the use of deadly force by security forces.

In a Saturday, November 16 televised interview, the Minister of the Interior indicated that security forces had acted with restraint on Friday [November 15] and warned that no restraint would be shown in the face of protesters' "illegal acts." He mentioned the existence of cameras that will allow authorities to identify offenders and "take the necessary measures." [9]

On the same day, Attorney General Mohammad Ja'far Montazeri was quoted saying that the disturbances were "rooted outside the country" and that "tendencies hostile to [our] system of government" were "using social media to try to provoke people." [10]

On November 17, Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, referred to protesters as "evildoers" (or "hooligans") and asserted that the Pahlavi family and the Mojahedin Khalq Organization were encouraging the protests. [11]

As reports of hundreds of injured and killed protesters surfaced from Iran, menacing statements accusing protesters of acting on behalf of outside forces from the country's highest authorities continued, sanctioning the disproportionate use of force against protesters.

[...] Damage to public property does not justify the arbitrary killing of protesters. The 1990 United Nations' Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials clearly states that "intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life." Even in circumstances where law enforcement personnel intend to disperse violent assemblies, they "may use firearms only when less dangerous means are not practicable and only to the minimum extent necessary" and only "in self-defence or defence of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury, to prevent the perpetration of a particularly serious crime involving grave threat to life, to arrest a person presenting such a danger ..." [20]

[...] The Islamic Republic's lack of tolerance for dissent and peaceful assembly is embedded in the country's constitution and laws. Additionally, successive administrations have violently stifled both protests and persecuted protesters since 1979. [21] Human rights groups are not able to operate freely in the country and human rights defenders who try to monitor the violations of citizens' rights are imprisoned or forced into exile. [22]. The fact that the prosecution of the November 2019 protesters is being overseen by a Chief Justice, Ebrahim Raisi, accused of committing crimes against humanity for presiding over the killing of thousands of unrepentant political prisoners should also raise alarm. [23]

Iran has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Yet, Iran blatantly violates its international obligations by refusing to develop a mechanism for citizens to organize protests legally, [24] using firearms against peaceful protesters, hiding the bodies of killed protesters or threatening their families into silence in return for the bodies, [25] shutting off the Internet (mobile phones access remains blocked) and arresting citizen journalists attempting to report on the protests, [26] denying medical access to injured arrestees, interrogating protesters in the absence of legal counsel, and concealing the whereabouts of detainees. The urgency of the situation on the ground cannot be overstated, and responses from the International community to the events of the past week have not been strong enough to make a sizable impact. [27] World leaders, particularly those who engage with Iran on human rights, should express outrage and hold Iran to account. The international community's silence will reinforce the culture of impunity that rules in Iran and encourage the persecution and arbitrary killing of citizens who have no other venue for their grievances but the street. [...]

[2] As of November 23, Human Rights Activists in Iran had identified 99 killed out of 134 suspected killed or whose whereabouts were unknown (<https://www.hra-news.org/periodical/a-69/>). In a November 25 statement, Amnesty International, citing "credible reports," asserted that the death toll had risen to 143 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/iran-world-must-strongly-condemn-use-of-lethal-force-against-protesters-as-death-toll-rises-to-143/>).

[3] Fars reports on the death of a police officer at a police station in Kermanshah Elahieh neighborhood (<https://www.farsnews.com/kermanshah/news/13980826000497/>); Mashreq News reported the death of two revolutionary Guards and two members of Basij militia in Mahshahr and Malard, and Baharestan: (<https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/1012477>; <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/1011327>)

[4] Parliamentary National Security Commission Spokesman, Hossein Nagavi Hosseini, November 26, 2019. (<http://www.etemadnewspaper.ir/fa/main/detail/137501>)

[...] [9] Mosalasan Online, November 17 (<https://www.mosalasonline.com/fa/tiny/news-52867>)

[10] Fars News, November 16 (<https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980825000772>)

[11] Farda News, November 17 (<https://www.fardanews.com/fa/news/961921>)

[...] [20] <https://www.iranrights.org/library/document/165/basic-principles-on-the-use-of-force-and-firearms-by-law-enforcement-officials>

[21] Examples of those killed in crackdowns on protest activity or executed for their role in such activity include: Gholam Hossein Purshirzad, sentenced to death in ten days for involvement with spring 1992 protests in Mashhad against a government slum clearance project (<https://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-4767/gholam-hosseini-purshirzad>); Ezzatollah Ebrahimnejad, killed during crackdowns on widespread student protests at the University of Tehran in July 1999 (<https://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-5108/ezzatollah-ebrahimnejad>); Mohammad Shariati, killed in a crackdown on protests in Kurdistan occasioned by mass outrage over images of a young Kurdish man who had died in custody in 2005 (<https://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-5368/mohammad-shariati>); Razi Abaiat, an 18-year-old killed in a crackdown on protests in Khuzestan against reports of state demographic engineering against the Arab minority in 2005 (<https://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-7155/razi-abaiat>); and Mostafa Karim Beigi, killed by security forces in the crackdown on widespread street protests against the officially announced the results of a presidential election (<https://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-7007/mostafa-karim-beigi>).

For a chronology of the history of state repression of protest activity and lawyers at the forefront of defending the right to assembly and other fundamental rights, see ABC's timeline: "The Cost of Defending the Rule of Law: Four Decades of Persecution of Lawyers in Iran" (<https://www.iranrights.org/projects/timeline>).

[22] For a chronology of the history of state repression of protest activity and lawyers at the forefront of defending the right to assembly and other fundamental rights, see ABC's timeline: "The Cost of Defending the Rule of Law: Four Decades of Persecution of Lawyers in Iran" (<https://www.iranrights.org/projects/timeline>).

[23] https://www.huffpost.com/entry/iran-dont-let-ahmadinejads-candidacy-distract-you_b_58f28864e4b04cae050dc7db

[24] According to the Islamic Republic's Law on Political Parties, only licensed political parties, which do not include parties opposed to the Islamic Republic laws and constitution, (for more on limitations to political organizing in Iran, see ABC's report, "Neither Free Nor Fair, Elections in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (<https://www.iranrights.org/library/document/604/neither-free-nor-fair-elections-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran>) can petition to organize protests by requesting authorization in advance (which may or not be granted). Subject matter, speeches, and speakers must all be known and approved prior to the gatherings. The person in whose name the permit is issued must take on responsibility to control all slogans, declarations, leaflets, and signs. Furthermore, agents of the Information Ministry have the right to monitor and videotape the gatherings. Principle 27 of the Constitution, which deals with freedom of assembly, also stipulates that a demonstrations "are allowed provided they do not violate the fundamental principles of Islam."

[25] Abdorrahman Boroumand Center interview with a victim relative, November 26, 2019; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/iran-world-must-strongly-condemn-use-of-lethal-force-against-protesters-as-death-toll-rises-to-143/>; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/11/23/iranian-masks-spiraling-protest-death-toll-stealing-bodies-morgues/>

[26] <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25338&LangID=E>; <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/11/1051981>

[27] <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25338&LangID=E>; <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/11/1051981>

❖ [OHCHR, Bachelet calls on Iran to address multiple human rights violations in context of recent protests, 6 December 2019](#)

[...] As more information gradually filters out of Iran in the wake of the recent protests, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on Friday expressed alarm at the continuing lack of transparency about casualties and the treatment of thousands of detainees, as well as continuing arrests reported to be taking place across the country.

[...] During the five days of demonstrations, which according to official Government sources involved between 120,000 and 200,000 protestors, the UN Human Rights Office has information suggesting that at least 208 people were killed, including 13 women and 12 children. There are also reports, which the UN Human Rights Office has so far been unable to verify, suggesting more than twice that number killed.

"In such circumstances, with so many reported deaths, it is essential the authorities act with far greater transparency," Bachelet said. "They must undertake prompt, independent and impartial investigations into all violations that have taken place, including the killing of protesters and reported deaths and ill-treatment in custody. And those responsible must be held accountable. There appear to be multiple

violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has ratified and is obliged to uphold.”

Security forces responded to the protests with water cannon, tear gas, batons, and in some cases live ammunition against unarmed demonstrators who posed no imminent threat of death or serious injury. According to reports, members of the Basij militia and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRCG) were involved in shooting protestors.

“Verified video footage indicates severe violence was used against protesters, including armed members of security forces shooting from the roof of a justice department building in one city, and from helicopters in another,” Bachelet said. “We have also received footage which appears to show security forces shooting unarmed demonstrators from behind while they were running away, and shooting others directly in the face and vital organs – in other words shooting to kill. These are clear violations of international norms and standards on the use of force, and serious violations of human rights.”

In what appears to be one of the worst incidents, which took place on 18 November, the High Commissioner said her Office had received information partially corroborating reports that Iranian security forces used machine guns against protesters in Jarahi Square in Mahshahr – including against people fleeing the area and people hiding in nearby reed-beds – resulting in at least 23 people killed, and possibly many more.

As well as protestors, it is reported that bystanders in the street and people watching from their homes were also hit with bullets during the Mahshahr incident. “There are conflicting reports about whether or not there were one or more armed people among the protestors,” Bachelet said. “But this does not in any way justify such an indiscriminate, horrifying and deadly reaction by the security forces.” [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] 3. The Special Rapporteur is shocked at the number of deaths, serious injuries and reports of ill-treatment of persons detained during the November 2019 protests.

[...] He is concerned about reports that families of individuals killed by the security forces have been threatened not to speak out.

[...] In its comments, the Government rejects these allegations and states that during the incidents law enforcement agencies displayed restraint while exercising their duty to maintain security.

[...] 6. The authorities reacted strongly to the protests, warning that decisive action would be taken if the unrest continued, and reportedly deployed a heavy police presence in major cities to deter protesters.⁴ The Special Rapporteur is alarmed at the reported deaths and injuries of protesters caused by the Iranian security forces. According to credible reports, at least 304 people, including 12 children, are confirmed to have died; unconfirmed reports indicate that the total number of deaths is over 400.⁵ In the days following the demonstrations, footage and reports emerged of brutal tactics employed by the security forces, including the use of live ammunition against unarmed individuals.⁶

[...] 7. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned about the Government’s excessive use of force during the protests in November 2019 in provinces with a majority population of ethnic minorities. According to reports, some of those provinces have the highest numbers of deaths, with 84 and 52 people being killed in Khuzestan and Kermanshah Provinces respectively.

[...] 8. Government officials, including the Supreme Leader, the President and the head of the judiciary, have all issued public statements denouncing the protests, attributing them to foreign meddling in the affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹¹ There has been a public admission by the Governor of Quds City that she herself ordered the security forces to shoot protesters who had entered the Governor’s building. Iranian media sources have reported that protesters were violent and burned businesses and public buildings. In contrast, human rights organizations have reported that the protests were largely peaceful. Footage and reports have recorded unarmed protesters being shot by security forces as they were running away, as well as security forces aiming directly at protesters’ heads and vital body organs.¹² The Special Rapporteur expresses grave concern about reports that lethal force was used against unarmed protesters. As set out in principle 9 of the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, the intentional lethal use of firearms is permitted only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Moreover, everyone is allowed to participate in lawful and peaceful assemblies, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In its comments, the Government challenges the peaceful nature of the protests by

claiming that a number of protesters were armed and by noting the destruction of public and private property. The Supreme Leader reportedly issued an order addressed to the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council to promptly address the situation of detainees and provide the required assistance to the families of the deceased. In addition, the Government reports the creation of a committee, consisting of the Vice President for Legal Affairs, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Justice, to investigate the events and ensure compensation to all those affected by the violence and destruction. [...]

4 www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-gasoline-protests/irans-guards-warn-of-decisive-action-if-unrest-continues-idUSKBN1XS1BU; www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-gasoline-protests/more-than-100-protestors-killed-in-iran-during-unrest-amnesty-international-idUSKBN1XT0X7.

5 www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/12/iran-thousands-arbitrarily-detained-and-at-risk-of-torture-in-chilling-post-protest-crackdown/.

6 www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50562584; www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/27/iran-deliberate-coverup-brutal-crackdown.

[...] 11 www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-gasoline-protests-minister/hundreds-of-banks-and-government-sites-burned-in-iran-unrest-interior-minister-idUSKBN1Y10GY; <https://fr.reuters.com/article/media-News/idUKL5N27X0LP>.

12 www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/iran-world-must-strongly-condemn-use-of-lethal-force-against-protesters-as-death-toll-rises-to-143/; www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/iran-more-than-100-protesters-believed-to-be-killed-as-top-officials-give-green-light-to-crush-protests/; www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50562584.

Arrest of family members in 2017 demanding justice for those who died in custody

❖ [Amnesty International, Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran's Human Rights Defenders Under Attack, July 2017](#)

[...] The authorities have also undertaken renewed efforts to suppress human rights defenders seeking truth, justice and reparation on behalf of individuals who were summarily executed or forcibly disappeared during the 1980s and their families. Amongst the defenders are also relatives of victims who are still demanding to know what happened to their loved ones and bring those responsible to justice. Mansoureh Behkish and Raheleh Rahemipour are among those recently sentenced to prison terms on national security-related charges simply for trying to find out the truth, holding commemorative gatherings or visiting the sites of mass graves where their loved ones are believed to be buried. Maryam Akbari-Monfared, who is serving a 15-year prison sentence, is facing reprisals, including denial of medical care and threats of an additional three-year prison term and exile to a remote prison, for filing a complaint with the Office of the Prosecutor from inside prison in October 2016 in which she requested an official investigation into the mass extrajudicial executions of political prisoners, including her siblings, in 1988. The renewed crackdown follows recently revived calls for an inquiry into the killings of several thousand political prisoners in a wave of extrajudicial executions across the country in the summer of 1988. This was triggered by the release of an audio recording in September 2016 of a meeting in 1988 in which senior officials are heard discussing and defending the details of their plans to carry out the mass executions. The release of the audio recording triggered a chain of unprecedented reactions from high-level officials, leading them to admit for the first time that the mass killings of 1988 were planned at the highest levels of government. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Stop Persecuting Families of People Who Died in Jail, 13 March 2018](#)

[...] The Iranian authorities should end their cruel campaign of harassment and intimidation against the families of detainees who have died in detention under suspicious circumstances, Amnesty International, the Centre for Human Rights in Iran, Human Rights Watch, and Justice for Iran said today.

The human rights organizations expressed concerns that the bereaved families are facing reprisals for seeking truth and justice and renewed their calls on the authorities to establish an independent commission of inquiry and invite the UN special rapporteurs on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment and on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions to visit. The authorities should ensure that if there is sufficient evidence of unlawful deaths in detention, those responsible will be prosecuted and punished.

[...] Since December 2017, there have been at least five deaths in custody. In three of the cases – those of Sina Ghanbari, Vahid Heydari and Kavous Seyed-Emami – the authorities announced immediately that the

deaths were the result of suicide – claims that family members and human rights groups strongly disputed. In the case of the fourth individual, Saro Ghahremani, the authorities claimed that he was shot during the course of an armed confrontation with security forces. His family also disputed the official claim, saying that he was arrested during the nationwide protests of December 2017 and his body bore marks of torture.

The most recent case concerns Mohammad Raji, a member of Iran's persecuted Gonabadi Dervishes community, who was arrested on February 20, following the violent dispersal of a peaceful protest by Gonabadi Dervishes in Tehran. His family were informed by the police 15 days later, on March 4, that he had died from the injuries caused by repeated blows to his head.

The details concerning the exact manner, place, and time of death and all of the surrounding circumstances remain unclear. The authorities have only stated that he was fatally injured during the clashes that occurred between protesting Dervishes and security forces on February 19 and he died either during his transfer to Baqiyatallah Hospital or after his admission to the hospital. His family have emphasized that Raji was injured but alive at the time of the arrest and expressed outrage at the concealment of his fate and whereabouts for 15 days following his arrest, and the authorities' refusal to clarify the sequence and timing of events that led to his death.

In all five cases, Iran's judicial and security authorities have threatened the bereaved families in a bid to silence their pleas for truth and justice. They have also engaged in what seems to be an orchestrated campaign to cover up any evidence of torture, other ill-treatment, and unlawful deaths while defaming the deceased publicly.

Systematic Harassment and Intimidation of Families and Lawyers, and Smear Campaigns

Family members have been subjected to various forms of harassment and intimidation, including before being informed of the death of their loved ones. Their lawyers have also received threats for pursuing legal action, faced pressure to withdraw their representation, and, in at least one case, a lawyer has been detained for speaking to the media.

Maryam Mombeini, the wife of Kavous Seyed-Emami, was kept in the dark about the fate and whereabouts of her husband for two weeks following his arrest on January 24. On February 9, the Office of the Prosecutor in Tehran called her to ask her to visit him in Evin prison. Once there, she was taken to an interrogation room and interrogated for about three hours.

She has said that during the session, an official from the prosecutor's office and three agents from the Intelligence Unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) bombarded her with questions about her husband's environmental work and his various personal and professional associations. She was put under pressure to sign a statement "confessing" that her husband was a "spy," which she refused to do. In response, she said the authorities yelled and swore at her, threatened her with imprisonment, and claimed that her resistance indicated that she too was a "trained spy."

The manner in which the authorities ultimately informed her of the death of her husband was sudden and cruel. According to the family, once the interrogation finished, the authorities told her, "You can now see your husband, but there is just one thing – he is dead, having committed suicide in his cell."

The authorities then forced her to sign a paper promising not to speak to the media, before taking her to the coroner's office to see her husband's body. She was threatened that, if she spoke to the media, her family would be in danger and "anything could happen to them." Crucially, Mombeini said that the prosecution and Revolutionary Guards officials made threatening remarks that could be perceived as implying their complicity in Seyed-Emami's death and contradicting the claim that the death resulted from suicide. She said this included a specific remark that, if the family talked to the media, "They would be taken to the same place as her husband."

In the days that followed and as the news of Seyed-Emami's death sparked a public outcry, the harassment escalated. His son, Ramin Seyed-Emami, said that in the course of a week, he received over 100 text messages on his phone and social messaging accounts containing death threats and demands that he stop pursuing and publicizing his father's case.

IRGC officials raided the family's home twice, on January 24 and 26, seized many of their belongings, including their title deeds, electronic devices, and photo albums, as well as their cars, and threatened that they would be stripped of their assets if they pursued legal action. The authorities' harassment also extended to the two neighbors living on other floors; the Revolutionary Guards entered their flats and confiscated a computer from one home and damaged a computer in the other one.

On February 12 or 13, several IRGC officials went to the home of Kavous Seyed-Emami's brother, and forced him to make a video-recorded statement saying that he had seen the body of his brother and believed that he had committed suicide

The statement was aired on Iranian state TV on 15 February, as part of a program that falsely accused Kavous Seyed-Emami of using surveys of endangered Asiatic cheetahs as a pretext for spying in strategically sensitive areas. The program failed to present any evidence and violated the presumption of innocence and other due process guarantees. Kavous Seyed-Emami's family subsequently stated that the video statement had been made under coercion and that his brother was not in a position to determine the cause of death. In fact, all he could confirm was that there were bruises on the body of the deceased, which he was not allowed to state in front of the camera.

The authorities also created a climate of intimidation around the memorial ceremony that was held for Kavous Seyed-Emami on February 21. The family reported that there was heavy police security at the memorial ceremony and the IRGC officials who had conducted the raids on their home were noticeably present.

On March 7, when Seyed-Emami's family attempted to leave the country, authorities prevented Mombeini from accompanying her two sons and imposed a travel ban on her. According to a statement the family issued, Mombeini has been suffering from serious medical issues since her husband's death and has had to receive hospital care regularly for panic attacks.

The families of other detainees who have recently died in custody have suffered similar treatment at the hands of prosecution officials and intelligence and security bodies. In the case of Saro Ghahremani, who died in a Ministry of Intelligence detention center in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, in early January, the authorities released a program on state media outlets on January 14 in which Ghahremani's father "admitted" to his son's involvement in "an armed anti-revolutionary group." His family later retracted the video statement, saying that it was made under coercion. Ministry of Intelligence officials also repeatedly warned the family to refrain from registering a legal complaint and speaking to the media.

Authorities coerced Raji's family to bury his body at 2 a.m. on March 6 with police present at a cemetery in the city of Aligudarz in Lorestan province. They also threatened to arrest Raji's family members if they continue to speak to the media.

In the case of Vahid Heydari, who died in early January under suspicious circumstances in Arak prison in Markazi province, the authorities did not stop at harassing his family to remain silent. They also arrested a human rights lawyer, Mohammad Najafi, in reprisal for exposing Heydari's death in custody and reporting that his body bore marks of torture and other ill-treatment, including cuts and bruises. Najafi has remained in detention in Arak prison since his arrest on January 16 and faces several spurious national security-related charges.

In the case of Sina Ghanbari, the authorities exploited the taboos surrounding drug addiction to defame his character. Officials said that he was "a drug addict" without elaborating on how this claim, even if true, was relevant to the circumstances of his death. His family was warned against speaking to the media and human rights groups and put under pressure to cancel the arrangements for a memorial ceremony that would be open to the public. [...]

Arrest of family members in 2018 demanding justice for those who died in custody

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] 55. In 2018 to date, OHCHR has continued to receive reports of reprisals against individuals and their families, including confiscation of passports, threats and intimidation through subjection to repeated interrogations. In particular, the Secretary-General reiterates his concern at the treatment of Raheleh Rahemipor, the sister of Hossein Rahemipor, whose case was reviewed by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in 2017. Ms. Rahemipor was sentenced to imprisonment for "spreading propaganda against the system" but was released on bail pending appeal (see A/HRC/36/31, para. 37). In May, however, new charges were brought against her. The Secretary-General reiterates the right of family members, including Ms. Rahemipor, to seek clarification of the fate of their loved ones without retaliation. In its comments on the present report, the Government stated that sanctions were not applied for solely communicating with the human rights mechanisms, and that Ms. Rahemipor was tried for allegedly committing abusive acts related to making allegations about the fate of her imprisoned family member and organizing a protest rally. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2019: Iran – Events of 2018, 17 January 2019](#)

[...] On March 4, authorities informed the family of Mohammad Raji, one of those arrested, that he had died in custody. Authorities have refused to provide any explanation for Raji's death and have threatened reprisals against his family if they speak publicly about it. [...]

Arrest of family members in 2019 demanding justice for those who died in custody

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Mother of Slain Son to Serve One year in Prison for Seeking Justice, 2 October 2019](#)

Shahnaz Akmali, the mother of a protester who was killed in a pro-democracy rally, must serve a year in prison, an Appeals Court in Iran has decided, for her attempts to seek justice for her son.

"My mother's sentence was upheld by the Appeals Court while my brother's murder case is gathering dust in the same court that convicted my mother," tweeted Maryam Karim Beigi on September 30th, 2019. "It's not too much to expect his killer to be in prison, instead of my mother for seeking justice."

Akmali has been ceaselessly campaigning for justice for her son, Mostafa Karim Beigi, who died from a bullet wound to the head at a protest rally in Tehran on December 27, 2009, during what came to be known as the Green Movement against the widely disputed outcome of that year's presidential election. Iranian authorities have refused to conduct an investigation [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iran: Review Of 2019, 18 February 2020](#)

[...] Hundreds of others were arbitrarily detained in relation to the peaceful exercise of their rights, generally on spurious national security charges. At least 240 were human rights defenders, including lawyers, labour rights activists, environmental activists, minority rights activists, women's rights activists, anti-death penalty campaigners and those seeking truth, justice and reparation for the mass extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances of the 1980s. Several family members of human rights defenders were subjected to interrogation and other forms of harassment. [...]

Government efforts to prevent or investigate disappearances in 2017

❖ [UN General Assembly, Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Thirty-sixth session 11-29 September 2017, 31 July 2017](#)

[...] 85. The Working Group is concerned at the information received concerning cases of individuals who have disappeared from within the prison system in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including after their detention in Evin Prison. The Working Group stresses that, as provided for in article 10 (2) of the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, accurate information on the detention of any persons deprived of liberty and their place or places of detention, including transfers, should be made promptly available to their family members, their counsel or to any other persons having a legitimate interest in the information.

86. The Working Group also remains concerned at information received concerning acts of harassment and intimidation against persons who have reported cases of enforced disappearances or who have actively campaigned to learn the truth about their disappeared relatives and sought justice for them. The Working Group emphasizes that, according to article 13 (3) of the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, "steps shall be taken to ensure that all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal".

87. The Working Group once again recalls that the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to a visit by the Working Group in 2004, which was delayed at the request of the Government. The visit has not taken place yet, in spite of reminders sent on 20 July 2009, 16 August 2010, 18 August 2011, 8 November 2012, 18 September 2013, 28 October 2014, 27 November 2015 and 18 November 2016. The Working Group calls upon the Government to set the dates for a visit as soon as possible. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Arrest of Human Rights Defender Seeking Truth About Disappeared Family Members, 11 September 2017](#)

[...] Raheleh Rahempour has spent years trying to uncover the truth about what happened to her brother and baby niece who were forcibly disappeared while in custody during the early 1980s. She was sentenced to a year in prison earlier this year in connection with these efforts and has been awaiting the outcome of her appeal. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] 21. Since the issuance of her previous report, the Special Rapporteur has continued to receive documentation and letters concerning the reported summary execution and forced disappearance of thousands of political prisoners, men, women, and teenagers in 1988. Over 150 individual submissions were received in the course of 2017. The Special Rapporteur also met with families of some of the victims during her missions. They described the difficulty they had faced in obtaining information of these events, known as the 1988 massacres, which continue to be officially unacknowledged. The Special Rapporteur also heard first-hand accounts about the harassment of those continuing to advocate for further information related to the events that took place in 1988.

22. The Special Rapporteur reiterates that families have the right to remedy, reparation, and the right to know about the truth of the 1988 massacres and about the fate of the victims. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned by reports received of the reported desecration of sites believed to be mass graves in the city of Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan Province and in Ahvaz, and urges the Government to ensure that all locations are preserved and protected until investigations into the events can be carried out. [...]

Government efforts to prevent or investigate disappearances in 2018

❖ [UN General Assembly, Report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, 10–28 September 2018, 30 July 2018](#)

[...] 104. The Working Group remains concerned at the information received concerning acts of harassment and intimidation against persons who have reported cases of enforced disappearances or who have actively campaigned to learn the truth about their disappeared relatives and sought justice for them (see A/HRC/WGEID/113/1, para. 66, and A/HRC/WGEID/114/1, para. 65). The Working Group would like to emphasize that, according to article 13 (3) of the Declaration, steps should be taken to ensure that all those involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigation, are protected against ill-treatment, intimidation or reprisal. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Iran Committing Crimes Against Humanity by Concealing fate of Thousands of Slaughtered Political Dissidents, 4 December 2018](#)

[...] Iran committing crimes against humanity by concealing fate of thousands of slaughtered political dissidents

- Thousands forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in prison in 1988
- Ongoing campaign to deny and distort truth and abuse victims' families
- UN must establish independent investigation into crimes against humanity
- High-profile figures accused of involvement in 1988 prison massacres named

By concealing the fate and whereabouts of thousands of political dissidents who were forcibly disappeared and secretly executed in prison 30 years ago, Iranian authorities are continuing to commit crimes against humanity, said Amnesty International in a damning report published today. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, The Human Rights Council Should Address the Crisis of Impunity Resulting from Iran's Ongoing Crimes Against Humanity: Amnesty International's written statement to the 40th session of the Human Rights Council \(25 February – 22 March 2019\), 11 February 2019](#)

[...] Distressingly, the Iranian authorities have never taken measures to end the enforced disappearances or bring the perpetrators to justice. Instead, they have resorted to blanket denials and distortions to shield themselves from accountability. They have also subjected survivors, families of victims and human rights defenders to reprisals for seeking truth and justice²

Iran's crimes against humanity

Between late July and early September 1988, and following an armed incursion that the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), an outlawed opposition group, launched into Iran from their base in Iraq, the Iranian authorities forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed thousands of unjustly imprisoned dissidents in secret for their political opinions and religious beliefs, pursuant to at least one secret fatwa issued by Iran's then Supreme Leader, Rouhollah Khomeini. Most of the bodies were secretly dumped at night in unmarked mass graves. Minimum estimates put the death toll at around 5,000.³

Still today, the Iranian authorities persist in refusing to officially acknowledge the extrajudicial killings. They systematically conceal the fate of thousands of victims, including through refusing to clarify the circumstances and reasons of executions and failing to issue death certificates stating the place, date and cause of death for each victim.⁴ They keep the whereabouts of victims' remains a secret, excluding names from public burial records⁵ and destroying mass grave sites believed to contain the remains, by bulldozing the sites and constructing buildings, roads, concrete slabs or new burial plots over them.⁶

These enforced disappearances continue to cause untold suffering and anguish to the victims' families, amounting to torture or other inhumane treatment prohibited under international law.

Families also face ongoing intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment for gathering at mass grave sites, holding commemorations, and seeking truth and justice.⁷

Given their systematic and widespread nature, the continued enforced disappearance of the victims and the ill-treatment of their families amount to ongoing crimes against humanity.

Denial and impunity

To date, no official has been brought to justice for the mass enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of 1988. Many of the officials involved continue to hold positions of power, including, ironically, in key judicial, prosecutorial and government bodies responsible for ensuring that victims receive justice.⁸

The crisis of impunity extends beyond the lack of accountability.

For years, Iranian officials at all levels have sought to disguise, distort and "justify" the mass extrajudicial executions by denying their scale and focusing on the armed incursion of the PMOI in July 1988, presenting the executions as "battlefield deaths" and defending their actions as a necessary response against those involved.

The authorities, however, have never explained how thousands of prisoners held in high-security prisons from long before the armed incursion could have communicated with PMOI members outside the country or been otherwise involved. Nor have they explained why hundreds affiliated with leftist and Kurdish opposition groups were also among the victims. In any event, mass enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions constitute crimes against humanity under international law, which no circumstances can ever justify.

The wall of secrecy has further cracked in recent years, particularly since 2016, through leaked official records related to the planning and co-ordinated implementation of the extrajudicial killings.⁹ Yet the authorities have only intensified their campaign of denial and misinformation. This has involved high level officials, including the Supreme Leader, the head of the judiciary and the country's chief prosecutor, making statements:

- demonizing the victims as "murderers" and "terrorists";
- glorifying the purge and describing those responsible as worthy of receiving "medals of honour";
- likening any public criticism or documentation of the extrajudicial executions to support for "terrorism"; and
- threatening severe reprisals against anyone seeking to shed light on the truth or empathizing with the victims and their families.¹⁰

This situation has reinforced the reality that there is no domestic possibility for victims to access justice, truth and reparations and that impunity has become ingrained into the country's institutional framework.

International action long overdue

In August 2017, after decades of silence by the international community, the then UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran dedicated a section of her report to the issue of the "1988 massacres". The report highlighted the reprisal that families face for seeking truth about the fate of their loved ones and demanding justice, and called for "effective investigation of the facts and public disclosure of the truth".¹¹

To date no such investigations have occurred; the Iranian authorities have been emboldened by the ongoing impunity. They continue to suppress the rights to freedoms of belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly; unjustly imprison hundreds of peaceful political dissidents, journalists, workers and human rights defenders, including lawyers, women's rights activists, minority rights activists and trade unionists; conduct systematically unfair and predominantly secret trials; commit torture and other ill-treatment on a widespread basis; execute hundreds of people every year including those who were a child at the time of the crime; and keep thousands more including juvenile offenders on death row. This succession of grave human rights violations committed in Iran is inextricably linked to the impunity the Iranian authorities have enjoyed. [...] [pp.1-4]

- 2 Amnesty International, Iran: Repression of those seeking truth and justice for 1980s killings needs to stop, 8 March 2017 (Index: MDE 13/5840/2017).
- 3 Amnesty International, Blood-soaked secrets: Why Iran's 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity (Index: MDE 13/9421/2018). 4 Blood-soaked secrets, pp. 37-53.
- 5 Blood-soaked secrets, pp. 53-64.
- 6 Amnesty International and Justice for Iran, Criminal cover-up: Iran destroying mass graves of victims of 1988 killings (Index: MDE 13/8259/2018); Amnesty International, Iran: Road to be built over individual and mass graves, 26 July 2018 (Index: MDE 13/8828/2018).
- 7 Blood-soaked secrets, pp. 107-115, 124-127. 8 Blood-soaked secrets, pp. 127-129.
- 9 Blood-soaked secrets, pp. 95-107.
- 10 Blood-soaked secrets, pp. 121-124.
- 11 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 14 August 2018, UN Doc. A/72/322, www.ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=183, paras 71-74, 109.

Practiced torture methods include prolonged solitary confinement (also known as 'white' torture) and sexual humiliation in 2017

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] Since her appointment, the Special Rapporteur has received numerous reports about the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. These include amputations¹⁵, blinding and flogging as forms of punishment¹⁶, physical and mental torture or ill-treatment to coerce confessions (mostly during pretrial detention), prolonged periods of solitary confinement and denial of access to proper and necessary medical treatment for detainees. [...] [pp. 6-7]

15 See Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Penal Code (2013), arts. 217-288.

16 See A/71/418, para. 22.

❖ [The Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation \(ABF\) for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Iran, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and The Advocates for Human Rights, Iran's Compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: The Death Penalty, 20 March 2017](#)

[...] Some defendants with psycho-social disabilities face torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during the interrogation and investigation stage of judicial proceedings. For example, the family of Hadi Hosseini reported that Mr. Hosseini experienced "mental issues and abnormal behavior," and that he reported that his interrogators had severely tortured him, including by burning his genitals.³⁴ He spent over 15 months in solitary confinement, and, according to information collected by the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation, he was denied the right to an attorney during interrogation and "was continually subjected to physical and psychological torture during his detention."³⁵ [...]

34 ABF 13 February 2017 correspondence.

35 Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation's Omid Memorial, One Person's Story: Hadi Hosseini, last visited 13 February 2017, <http://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-7625/hadi-hosseini>.

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Ailing Political Activist Detained Without Charge Subjected to Three-Month Solitary Confinement and Renewed Interrogations, 18 June 2017](#)

[...] More than three months after her arrest and detainment, ailing political activist Hengameh Shahidi has not been charged and is in poor health while being subjected to interrogations and solitary confinement in Evin Prison, an informed source told the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

"(Shahidi) has been in solitary confinement for 98 days," the source told CHRI on June 15, 2017. "She has been subjected to long interrogations without seeing daylight. She is suffering from heart disease and her incarceration and hunger strike have brought about severe pains in her kidneys and ovaries for which she has been transferred to the hospital and the prison clinic several times."

Shahidi's family has also been told to stop talking to the media about her case. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran's Human Rights Defenders Under Attack, July 2017](#)

[...] Unfair trials

Trials of human rights defenders on national security-related charges in Iran take place before Revolutionary Courts, which are characterized by unfair, summary and predominantly secret processes. All the human rights defenders whose cases are documented in the report were denied access to a lawyer from the time of arrest and during investigations. Those arrested were frequently held in prolonged solitary confinement, which may amount to torture, and were given little or no access to their families and lawyers. Many were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment during interrogations conducted by Ministry of Intelligence or Revolutionary Guard officials and compelled to “confess”. Judges failed to order investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, in breach of Iran’s own Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 14 August 2017](#)

[...] The use of torture and ill-treatment, such as amputation, blinding and flogging, remains legal and a regular practice in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Reliance on physical and mental torture to coerce a confession (mostly during pretrial detention), the use of prolonged solitary confinement and the denial of access to proper and necessary medical treatment for detainees continue to be widely reported. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] 28. Cases of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, especially political prisoners, remains a cause of serious concern. Instances of torture reportedly can take place during lengthy interrogations, with the person under arrest not being provided with any kind of legal assistance. The main purpose of such practice is to extract confessions which are then used as admissible evidence in court. Long periods of solitary confinement, degrading detention conditions in many prisons, as well as the denial of medical treatment, also continued to be well documented. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remained common, especially during interrogations. Detainees held by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Revolutionary Guards were routinely subjected to prolonged solitary confinement amounting to torture.

Failure to investigate allegations of torture and exclude “confessions” obtained under torture as evidence against suspects remained systematic. [...] [p. 198]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] B. Right to be free from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

1. Torture and other ill-treatment in detention

23. Consistent reports received suggest a pattern of physical or mental pressure applied upon prisoners to coerce confessions, some of which are broadcast. A recent report prepared by the Freedom from Torture organisation also found that the majority of interviewees described being interrogated and tortured concurrently, either during all or some incidences of torture and other ill-treatment, commonly with a view to extracting information about them, as well as third parties including family and friends, and to force confessions. Incidents documented include sexual violence, including rape; blunt force trauma; positional torture; burns; sharp force; electric shocks; use of water; crushing; pharmacological torture; asphyxiation; amputation; sleep deprivation; threats and humiliation; and prolonged solitary confinement, including on the basis of ethnicity, religion, political views, or having transgressed expected social norms.²³

The Special Rapporteur met at least six persons during her missions who had had been detained but were able to subsequently flee the country who still bore marks of torture. They appeared to be still in a trauma and feared reprisals for their families if they were suspected of speaking to the Special Rapporteur. [...]

23 See Report, Turning a blind eye, Freedom From Torture, page 33, available at www.freedomfromtorture.org/sites/default/files/documents/iran_report_2017_a4_final_final_web_optimised_1.pdf

❖ [Abdollahian Boroumand Center Blog, Activism is the Right of Every Citizen: Ramin Hossein Panahi Given Death Sentence After Unfair Prosecution and Trial, 16 March 2018](#)

[...] On June 23, 2017, Hossein Panahi and three other individuals were caught in an ambush by Revolutionary Guards. Hossein Panahi was taken into custody after being wounded by three bullets to the stomach and foot; the other three individuals were killed. Available reports indicate that he was held incommunicado for four months. Hossein Panahi spent more than 200 days being interrogated in solitary confinement, either in custody of the Revolutionary Guards' Intelligence division or the Ministry of Intelligence, and was subjected to abuse and torture for more than eight months despite his need for medical attention after sustaining gunshot wounds. [...]

Practiced torture methods include prolonged solitary confinement (also known as 'white' torture) and sexual humiliation in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Iran is not a signatory to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. However, Article 38 of the Constitution prohibits all forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information. Article 169 of the 2013 Penal Code states that a confession obtained under coercion, force, torture, or mental and physical abuses, shall not be given any validity and weight.

Despite these legal protections, human rights organisations report that torture and other ill-treatment of detainees remains common in Iranian detention facilities, especially as a means to force confessions during interrogation. International sources report that commonly reported methods of torture and abuse include prolonged solitary confinement, threats of execution or rape, forced virginity tests, sexual humiliation, sleep deprivation, electroshock, burnings, the use of pressure positions, severe and repeated beatings, and the denial of medical care. [...]
- ❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] 10. The Secretary-General is further concerned by the treatment of those persons on death row who have repeatedly been informed that they will be executed imminently. Mr. Sharahi was repeatedly moved into solitary confinement in preparation for his imminent execution. This occurred four times before his execution. In his statement of 28 June 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that, inter alia, this treatment may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.⁶ [...]

6 OHCHR, "Zeid urges Iran to stop violating international law by executing juvenile offenders".
- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, Joint Letter to All Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York, 12 November 2018](#)

[...] Iran has by and large failed to implement key recommendations by UN human rights bodies. For instance, torture and other ill-treatment at the time of arrest and in detention, including prolonged solitary confinement, continue to be committed on a widespread basis and with complete impunity. Judicial authorities also continue to impose and implement sentences that constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments, including floggings and amputations, which amount to torture. [...]
- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Human Rights Situation in Iran – Annual Report 2018, January 2019](#)

[...] In the category of violations of prisoners' rights in 2018, a total of 413 reports have been registered, 300 reports on physical assault of prisoners, 142 reports of deprivation /neglected of medical care, 65 reports of illegal transfer to solitary confinement, 467 attempted hunger strikes, 36 cases of forced transportation or exile, 48 cases of threatening prisoners, 1 case of death by hunger strike, 94 cases of lack of access to lawyers, 69 cases of torture, 18 case of deaths by diseases, 1157 reports of prisoners being held in unsuitable circumstances. Also, in this category, there has been 95 cases of keeping prisoners in unsure state about their sentence and situation. [...]
- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Eight Conservationists Tried in Iran on Basis of Retracted False "Confessions", 30 January 2019](#)

[...] Held Incommunicado, Denied Due Process

Until today, the conservationists' cases had been shrouded in secrecy other than occasional accusations or comments by judicial officials published by state media outlets.

An informed source that spoke with CHRI on January 24 stated that all of the detainees had been subjected to prolonged periods of solitary confinement and only sporadically granted severely limited access to counsel or phone calls with family members. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] Torture and other ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement, remained systematic, especially during interrogations. Authorities failed to investigate allegations of torture or exclude "confessions" obtained under torture as evidence against suspects. [...]

Practiced torture methods include prolonged solitary confinement (also known as 'white' torture) and sexual humiliation in 2019

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran \(CHRI\), Female Activist in "Very Poor" Health after Nine Months and Counting of Solitary Confinement, 5 April 2019](#)

[...] Political activist Hengameh Shahidi is in poor health after a nine-month stint in solitary confinement, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has been informed.

Arrested on June 26, 2018, Shahidi has since been held in isolation in Ward 241 under the control of the judiciary's Security and Intelligence Center in Tehran's Evin Prison.

She is awaiting a decision on her appeal against a 12.9-year prison sentence issued on December 10, 2018, primarily for her public criticisms of former Judiciary Chief Sadegh Larijani.

"Hengameh's physical and mental state has been described as very poor and one of the reasons is the long-term solitary confinement," a former colleague told CHRI on April 4, 2019. "All this heavy-handed treatment is because she sharply criticized the judiciary chief and demanded a performance report on his nine-year tenure."

"It's rare that a prisoner is held in solitary confinement after being interrogated and prosecuted," said the source who requested anonymity for security reasons. "But months have gone by and Hengameh is still being kept isolated."

On March 16, 2019, Shahidi's attorney Mostafa Tork Hamedani took to social media to complain about the repeated postponement of her appeal hearing [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] 20. The Haft Tappeh sugar mill workers' protests in Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province, resurfaced in May 2019 when a joint indictment was issued for five journalists and two labour activists, including Sepideh Qoliyani, the editor-in-chief of the Gam independent Telegram app news channel, Amir Hossein Mohammadifard, his colleague and wife Sanaz Allahyari, and two staff reporters, Ali Amirgholi and Asal Mohammadi, as well as worker's rights activists Esmail Bakhshi and Ali Nejati.²⁷

[...] Sepideh Qoliyani and Esmail Bakhshi face additional charges of "disturbing public opinion" and "publishing falsehoods". Ms. Qoliyani has reportedly been sent to Gharchak prison, where she reportedly remains detained in solitary confinement.

[...] One Baha'i was held in solitary confinement for almost three weeks following his arrest and forced to close his business after serving a prison sentence.

[...] 61. According to information received from a physician who has reportedly recently treated former detainees, Christian converts are subjected to sexual abuse and ill-treatment. One young woman had reportedly been repeatedly subjected to sexual assault by a policeman, leaving her traumatized and requiring treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder in a psychiatric hospital. In a separate case, a young male Christian convert detained in Tehran was allegedly hit with wooden sticks and his head banged against a wall. [...]

[...] 27 See <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/05/seven-to-face-trial-in-connection-with-labor-protests/> [...]

❖ [World Organisation Against Torture \(OMCT\) and the International Federation of Human Rights \(FIDH\), Iran - Indefensible: Iran's Systematic Criminalisation Of Human Rights Defenders: Report, August 2019](#)

[...] On July 8, 2019, Ms. Maryam Mohammadi, another member of “Neday-e Zanan-e Iran” [Voice of Women of Iran], was arrested at her home in the city of Garmsar, Semnan Province, by Ministry of Intelligence personnel. She is detained in Ward 209 in Evin prison. The reason for her arrest and the charges against her are not known as of the publication of this report. She is held in solitary confinement.

[...] On January 4, 2019, Mr. Farhad Mohammadi, a Kurdish human rights lawyer and environmental activist, was arrested in Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province. He was detained in solitary confinement at the detention centre of the Intelligence Department in Sanandaj until May 25, 2019, and was pressured into making self-incriminating “confessions.” It is not clear what charges Mr. Mohammadi is facing. He was transferred to Sanandaj prison on May 25, 2019. On July 9, he was released on bail pending trial.

[...] Prison conditions in Iran are below international standards. Hunger strikes by prisoners to protest their treatment in custody are common and there have been reports of prisoners who died as a result of being denied medical treatment or who committed suicide because of particularly harsh conditions, including solitary confinement and torture.

[...] There are at least four sections in Evin prison with solitary cells in which artificial light is on 24 hours a day. Ward 240, which is run by the Prisons Organisation, has more than 300 solitary confinement cells, which are used to detain both political prisoners and common criminals. Ward 241, which is run by the judiciary's Intelligence Protection Unit, also has solitary cells, where human rights defenders may be detained, and a dormitory section. Human rights lawyer Mr. Amir Salar Davoodi spent more than six months in solitary confinement in Ward 241. The dormitory section of Ward 241 is used to detain a number of former top government officials, mostly convicted for corruption, who spend their prison terms in conditions that are much more comfortable than those in ordinary prison wards. Ward 209, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence, has more than 100 cells. Detainees held there are generally political activists or human rights defenders.

[...] Human rights defenders jailed in Iran generally face harsher detention conditions than common criminals. They may face a higher risk of torture or other forms of ill-treatment, particularly when detained incommunicado. They are kept for extended periods of time in solitary confinement, are deprived of essential medical care, and are frequently denied visits by their family or lawyer.

[...] Several women human rights defenders arrested in the context of the protests against mandatory hijab laws or for their defence of women's rights were detained incommunicado in the first days of their detention, without any contact with family, friends, lawyers or medical doctors. This practice violates fair trial standards and exposes detainees to the risk of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. For example, Ms. Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi were both held incommunicado in the IRGC-run Ward 2A of Tehran's Evin prison during most of their detention. Ms. Vahedi was also detained in solitary confinement for 10 days. Similarly, Ms. Rezvaneh Mohammadi was detained incommunicado in the Intelligence Ministry-run Ward 209 in Evin prison, while Ms. Maryam Azad is also believed to be detained incommunicado in Ward 2A of Evin prison since September 25, 2018.

Ms. Zeinab Taheri was detained incommunicado in Qarchak women's prison in Shahr-e Rey, southern Tehran, where she was subjected to ill-treatment as a result of which she was subsequently transferred to a hospital.

[...] 3.6.3 solitary confinement

At the beginning of their detention, most, if not all, human rights defenders were placed in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time, in breach of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the ‘Nelson Mandela Rules’) and the UN Rules of the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the ‘Bangkok Rules’). This practice is used to break the individuals' morale and to force them to cooperate with the authorities in order to obtain confessions.

[...] Similarly, Mr. Amir Salar Davoodi was detained in solitary confinement in Evin prison from his arrest on November 20, 2018 until June 3, 2019, when he was transferred to a dormitory ward in Evin prison. During this period, he was not allowed to receive any visits except a visit from his parents on January 21, 2019, and was not allowed to consult with either his lawyer or the prison doctor.

On May 21, 2019, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network reported that Mr. Farhad Mohammadi had been in solitary confinement since his detention on January 4, 2019 and had only received one short visit from

his family in the presence of the interrogators. Interrogators told him that he would neither be moved out of solitary confinement nor receive visits from his family so long as he did not incriminate himself. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Urgent Action: A Decade In Jail For Defying Forced Veiling, 8 August 2019](#)

[...] Two women's rights defenders, Yasaman Aryani and her mother, Monireh Arabshahi, were unjustly sentenced on 31 July 2019 to 16 years in prison, while a third, Mojgan Keshavarz, was unjustly sentenced to 23 years and six months in prison. All three prison sentences consist of a one-year term for "spreading propaganda against the system", a five-year term for "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", and a 10-year term for "inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution" through promoting "unveiling". Mojgan Keshavarz's sentence includes an additional prison term of seven years and six months for "insulting Islamic sanctities". If these convictions and sentences are upheld on appeal, each woman would be required to serve 10 years of her prison sentence, as per sentencing guidelines in Iran's penal code.

[...] The three women's rights defenders were arrested in April 2019 in relation to a video that went viral on social media, showing them without their headscarves, distributing flowers to female passengers on a metro train on International Women's Day on 8 March 2019, and discussing their hopes for a future when all women in Iran would have the freedom to choose what to wear. Following their arrests, they were held in prolonged solitary confinement, which violates the absolute prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment under international law, and pressured to appear before a camera, "confessing" that foreign elements were behind their activism against forced veiling and "repenting" their actions.

[...] Following her arrest, Yasaman Aryani was held in solitary confinement in Vozara detention centre, without access to her family and lawyer, for nine days. During this period, the authorities concealed her fate and whereabouts from her family, so subjecting her to enforced disappearance. After persistent inquiries by her family, she was allowed to call them briefly six days after her arrest. According to information obtained by Amnesty International, she sounded distressed over the phone and could not speak freely, which indicated that security officials were present. While held in solitary confinement, she was regularly threatened with, among other things, the arrest of her younger sibling and father unless she appeared before a camera retracting her opposition to forced veiling, denouncing the White Wednesdays campaign against compulsory veiling laws and expressing "regret" for allowing herself to be "incited" by "anti-revolutionary opposition agents" outside the country. She was also taunted with claims that her case had been forgotten by the outside world. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Thirty-fourth session, 4–15 November 2019: Compilation on the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 30 August 2019](#)

[...] 29. The Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed concern about the pattern of reported violations related to due process and fair trial in the State, in particular with respect to human rights defenders, trade unionists, journalists, political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, members of opposition, minority and religious groups, and foreign and dual nationals. The pattern was often characterized by an arbitrary arrest; prolonged solitary confinement; interrogation; denial of access to a lawyer of choice, in particular during the investigative phase; short trials after which the verdict was rarely published or provided in written form; and the issuance of long prison or death penalty sentences based on charges related to espionage or national security. [...]

❖ [Women Committee of Iran - National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Common practice of long-term solitary confinement to torture prisoners in Iran, 24 December 2019](#)

[...] Use of long-term solitary confinement is a common practice of the Iranian regime's judges to torture prisoners.

The unprecedented admission reported even by the state-media in Iran was made by Mohammad Kazemi, a member of the mullahs' parliament, on Sunday, December 22, 2019.

He said: "We have given our judges unbridled authority to use solitary confinement... The Judiciary makes forbidden, extensive, and extreme use of solitary confinement."

Kazemi said the regime's agencies use long-term solitary confinement "on the pretext that keeping the accused in solitary cells will force the individual to confess or will help collect information against that individual."

Confirming that prisoners are tortured in this manner, he brazenly added: "Solitary cell, which is a harsh punishment, should only be used for security matters that relate to the country's interests."

Many among the 12,000 arrested during the nationwide uprising in November, are currently under savage torture to extract forced and made-for-television confessions.

Ms. Halimeh Samiri was arrested during the protests in Abadan and killed under torture. Her body was then abandoned outside her father's residence. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests, 15 January 2020](#)

[...] Amnesty International has received information that, in at least two cities, Amol and Tehran, the authorities are denying the families of some detainees information about their fate and whereabouts, amounting to the crime of enforced disappearance under international law.

The organization also received shocking allegations of sexual violence against at least one woman arbitrarily arrested by plain-clothes security agents and detained for several hours in a police station. According to an informed source, while in detention, the woman was taken to a room where she was questioned by a security official who raped her by forcing her to perform oral sex on him and then attempted forced sexual intercourse. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] 22. On 1 June 2019, Saba Kord Afshari was arrested due to a video of her protesting against compulsory veiling, which appeared on the social media account of the founder of the "My stealthy freedom" campaign, Masih Alinejad. Ms. Afshari was interrogated on multiple occasions with threats that her family would be harassed if she did not record a confession. She was held in solitary confinement for 11 days and reportedly forcibly disappeared for 12 days in July. [p.6]

[...] Shargh newspaper journalist Marzieh Amiri was reportedly detained for covering the protests of 1 May 2019 and inquiring about arrested protestors.⁴⁷ She was taken to a secret location for one week and was then held in Evin Prison in solitary confinement and interrogated by Ministry of Intelligence officials for 35 days. [...] [pp. 8-9]

47 See www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1306632019ENGLISH.pdf;
<https://plus.irna.ir/news/83378584/> (in Farsi); and <https://plus.irna.ir/news/83324087/> (in Farsi).

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] Solitary confinement

54. Depending on its aims, length and conditions, solitary confinement may amount to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.⁹⁸ The Nelson Mandela Rules provide detailed guidelines on solitary confinement, which is defined as the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact, and prolonged solitary confinement, which is understood to be solitary confinement for a period in excess of 15 consecutive days (rule 44). According to the Nelson Mandela Rules, solitary confinement should be used only in exceptional cases as a last resort, for as short a time as possible and subject to independent review, and only pursuant to authorization by a competent authority; moreover, solitary confinement should be prohibited in the case of prisoners with mental or physical disabilities when their conditions would be exacerbated by such confinement (rule 45). The prohibition on the use of solitary confinement involving women and children referred to in other United Nations standards on criminal justice and crime prevention need to be applied.⁹⁹ In its comments, the Government indicates that solitary confinement is used only in rare instances during the judicial investigation, as well as a punitive measure in places of detention for a maximum of 20 days, which may therefore constitute prolonged solitary confinement according to the Nelson Mandela Rules. The Government also noted that this punitive measure is mostly used in national security cases and that prisoners are entitled to all their rights.

55. The Human Rights Committee has noted that the prolonged solitary confinement of the detained or imprisoned person may amount to acts prohibited by article 7 of the Covenant.¹⁰⁰ According to the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, efforts addressed to the abolition of solitary confinement as a punishment, or to the restriction of its use, should be undertaken and encouraged (principle 7). The Special Rapporteur remains concerned about reports of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees conducted during solitary confinement, which is a violation of international human rights law.¹⁰¹

56. One former detainee and student activist who spent four months in solitary confinement at Evin Prison reported that she had been held in a windowless cell measuring 2m by 3m. She reported that artificial lighting was turned on 24 hours a day and that she was allowed to go to the bathroom only twice in any 24-hour period. She would have to press a button when she needed to use the bathroom and someone would come to take her, but sometimes that person would come two or three hours after she had pressed the button. As a result, she tended not to drink. This had an impact on her kidneys and digestive system that has lasted even after her release from prison. In fact, she has never recovered, despite being treated.

57. Another former detainee who was an activist for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights and for gender equality and who had spent 19 days in solitary confinement in ward 209 at Evin Prison informed the Special Rapporteur that she was kept in a cell measuring 2m by 3m and could not talk to her family or the outside world for the first 15 days of her detention. She was not allowed to have any books. In the bathroom, only hot water was available, and in her cell the lights were on 24 hours a day. She developed an anxiety disorder that caused panic attacks, as a result of which she was taken to the prison clinic, where she was given medication. Another person who was in solitary confinement in ward 209 reports having been kept in such confinement for 83 days. For three weeks he had access only to the bathroom. He could ring a bell to ask for assistance and, when taken to the bathroom, he was blindfolded. During that period, he could not receive visits. His parents came every week but were sent back every time. Another detainee who was held in solitary confinement in Zahedan Prison was not allowed to talk to his family for 30 days. [...]

98 The Nelson Mandela Rules, rules 43–45.

99 See the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, para. 67, and the Bangkok Rules, rule 22.

100 General comment No. 20 (1992) on the prohibition of torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, para. 6.

101 A/66/268, paras. 76 and 87–88.

❖ [Iran Wire, Sexual Torture in Iranian Prisons, 10 March 2020](#)

[...] The shocking story of Niloufar Bayani, an Iranian conservationist currently held in prison along with seven other environmental activists, has once again shed light on the use of sexual torture in Iran's prisons. In her narrative about her ordeal, which was published on February 18 by BBC Persian, Bayani described the ways in which the security agency of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (the IRGC) had sexually harassed and threatened her during "at least 1200 hours of interrogations" to extract fabricated confessions.

[...] In the past, many women have reportedly been subjected to sexual threats and harassment in Iranian prisons. However, only a small fraction of them have dared to speak out and reveal what they have experienced.

Despite the fact that the defendants have been in prison for two years, it was only after Niloufar Bayani's recent disclosure that the lawyer of another female environmentalist prisoner, Sepideh Kashani, announced that her client had also been subjected to similar treatment.

Torture involving sexual threats has been a relatively common practice in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the last two or three decades, sexual threats have been used to force prisoners to confess to whatever their interrogators desire. This practice has been particularly commonplace with regards to the prisoners of so-called national security cases.

[...] In addition to the cases where female prisoners have been systematically harassed in order to get them to confess, there are also reports of sexual assaults on detainees in situations where the agents do not necessarily want to extract false confessions. For instance, after the November 2019 protests in Iran, various cases of sexual misconduct against arrested protesters were reported, including detainees being inappropriately touched. In a January 25, 2020 report, Amnesty International announced it had received

shocking information about severe sexual violence against at least one woman arbitrarily arrested by plainclothes security agents and detained for several hours in a police station. [...]

Number of offences that are punishable by flogging under the Penal Code in 2017

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report of the Secretary-General, 30 March 2017](#)

[...] Flogging, blinding and amputation

23. A wide range of acts considered as crimes under the Penal Code are punishable by flogging, including the consumption of alcohol and drugs, petty drug dealing, theft, adultery, “flouting” of public morals, illegitimate relationships and mixing of the sexes in public. Children can also be sentenced to this type of ill-treatment. The Secretary-General does not share the view of the Government, which argues that Islamic punishments are effective deterrent penalties and more humane in comparison with long-term imprisonment. [...]

❖ [Abdollah Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, Iran's Judiciary Continues to Humiliate and Harm Citizens With Flogging Sentences, 21 August 2017](#)

[...] In the Islamic Republic of Iran, at least 148 crimes are punishable by flogging. The laws related to flogging are broad and encompass a wide array of acts recognized as crimes. The criminal code recognizes corporal punishment (hadd and ta'zir) for offenses such as: consumption of alcohol, drug use and petty drug dealing, theft, adultery, "flouting" of public morals, illegitimate relationships, and mixing of the sexes in public. Flogging is also used in interrogations, presumably to punish the detainee for not telling the truth. In the case of political prisoners, flogging was routinely used in the 1980s and it continues to be used to extract confessions, though less systematically.

Owing to the Iranian judiciary's failure to provide transparency and fair and open trials, many cases go unreported in Iranian media; moreover, the shame and trauma associated with corporal punishment makes many of those subjected to it reticent to share their stories. Thus, real numbers are necessarily higher than those for which ABF collects reports. Regardless, this cruel and unusual punishment continues to be issued in high numbers and demands the attention of the Iranian public and human rights community. ABF has collected reports of 103 flogging sentences issued by the Iranian judiciary from January 1, 2017 through August 21, 2017 and at least 39 flogging sentences implemented in the same period.

Those subjected to this cruel and unusual punishment include Nasratollah Kh., given 50 lashes in Qazvin Central Prison for hashish trafficking alongside a death sentence; Hossein Movahedi, a young journalist flogged for reporting an incorrect number of motorcycles seized by law enforcement; Ali Bidi, an Iran-Iraq war veteran who was flogged on charges he alleges were trumped up by a parliament member bearing a grudge against him; V.F, an alleged rapist who was flogged publicly before being put to death in Kerman; 20 unknown persons flogged for publicly breaking the Ramadan fast in Qazvin; seven alleged gang members flogged for disturbing public order through armed brawls in Quchan; and Hassan Rastegar Majd, a Kurdish political prisoner given 20 lashes for “disrupting prison order.” [...]

Authorities used alternatives to incarceration (e.g. probation, house arrest, employment bans, religious rehabilitation study, internal exile from their province of residence, and foreign travel bans) for nonviolent offenders in 2017

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Iran Should Immediately Release Critically Ill Opposition Leaders Under House Arrest, 2 August 2017](#)

[...] More than six years into their extrajudicial house arrest, the health of leading Iranian political opposition leaders is in grave danger, renewing urgent calls in Iran for their freedom.

The Iranian authorities should immediately release and provide full medical care to Mehdi Karroubi, who was recently hospitalized, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Zahra Rahnava, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) said in a statement today. The three have been imprisoned in their homes without trial since 2011 for leading the peaceful protests against the 2009 presidential election. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

[...] Opposition leaders Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi and the latter's wife, Zahra Rahnavard, remained under house arrest without charge or trial since 2011. [...]

In May [2017], a woman arrested for having an intimate extramarital relationship was sentenced by a criminal court in the capital, Tehran, to two years of washing corpses and 74 lashes. The man was sentenced to 99 lashes. [...]

Authorities used alternatives to incarceration (e.g. probation, house arrest, employment bans, religious rehabilitation study, internal exile from their province of residence, and foreign travel bans) for nonviolent offenders in 2018

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Rouhani's Citizens' Rights Charter: A Harmful Distraction, May 2018](#)

[...] The three Green Movement political opposition leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi and Zahra Rahnavard, have been under house arrest without charge or trial for more than seven years. [...]

❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), Appeals Court Fines Poet and Filmmaker in Connection with 2016 Instagram Post, 20 September 2018](#)

[...] Bektash Abtin, a poet, filmmaker, and former board member of the Iranian Writers Guild, was fined \$1,200 USD (5 million IRR) on a charge of "propaganda against the regime" for a photo he posted on Instagram in 2016.

The above order is an appeal of his June sentencing, in Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court of Karaj, to three months of forced labor in the State Welfare Office in addition to the 5 million IRR fine. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] 27. In July, State-run media reported that Pakdasht State security forces paraded eight convicts on the streets.²⁴ Similar degrading treatment was also applied in April to three individuals who were paraded in the town of Dehloran in Ilam Province, pursuant to an order by Dehloran's Prosecutor.²⁵ [...] [p. 17]

24 Reported by Mehr State run news Agency (1 July 2017).

25 Available from www.mehrnews.com/news/3951403.

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] Gonabadi Dervishes faced a vicious crackdown, particularly since February [2018], when a peaceful protest was violently quashed. Hundreds were arrested and over 200 were sentenced after unfair trials to between four months and 26 years in prison, flogging, internal "exile", travel bans, and bans on membership of political and social groups. In February, 92-year-old Nour Ali Tabandeh, the spiritual leader of the Gonabadi Dervish religious minority, was put under house arrest. [...]

Authorities used alternatives to incarceration (e.g. probation, house arrest, employment bans, religious rehabilitation study, internal exile from their province of residence, and foreign travel bans) for nonviolent offenders in 2019

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] Meanwhile, the spiritual leader of the Gonabadi Sufi order in the Islamic Republic of Iran remains under house arrest following the protests led by members of the Gonabadi order in Tehran in February 2018. [...]

❖ [The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Iran, Indefensible: Iran's systematic criminalisation of human rights defenders, August 2019](#)

[...] 3.5 Harsh prison sentences and ban on future activities [...]

In some cases, the prison sentence included blanket prohibitions of future activities related to their professional, social or political life, such as bans on membership in certain groups, bans on international travel, and restrictions on freedom of expression. These curbs were almost always linked to the activities that caused the judicial harassment and were seemingly aimed at restricting the defenders' human rights work.

For instance, on January 22, 2019, Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court in Tehran sentenced Messrs. Reza Khandan and Farhad Mayssami to six years in prison and banned them from "membership in social and political groups and parties, undertaking activities in cyberspace, the media and the press" and from travelling abroad for two years.

For many lawyers, these restrictions included bans on practising their profession. Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani, who was sentenced to 13 years in prison on June 10, 2012, was also handed down a 10-year ban on practising law, although the ban was later reduced to two years. Mr. Soltani was conditionally released on November 21, 2018, after serving more than seven years of prison, but remains barred from practising law, as the two-year ban's enforcement started from the date of his release.³² In 2011, Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh was also banned from practising law [...]

[...] 32 Article 58 of the Islamic Penal Code provides for conditional release for convicts who have been sentenced to more than 10 years' imprisonment after serving half of the sentence and in other cases after serving one-third. Conditions for release include: a) constant good behaviour while in custody; b) confidence that the convict will not commit an offence after release; c) confirmation by the court that the convict has compensated or arranged to pay for any losses or damages contained in the judgement or otherwise agreed upon; and d) the convict has not previously benefited from conditional release [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] On 2 June 2019, journalist Masoud Kazemi was sentenced to four and a half years' imprisonment, of which he must serve two years, and was barred from working in journalism for two years.⁵⁰

[...] 50 See www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/05/28/slow-death-journalism-iran/?arc404=true; and www.irna.ir/news/83429693/ (in Farsi) [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iran: Review Of 2019, 18 February 2020](#)

[...] Political dissidents

Authorities detained at least 16 people who signed open letters in July demanding fundamental changes to the country's political system; some were charged with "insulting the Supreme Leader".

Political dissidents Mehdi Karroubi, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Zahra Rahnnavard remained under house arrest without charge or trial. [...]

Police corruption in 2017

❖ [BTI, 2018 Country Report – Iran, December 2017](#)

[...] I. Political Transformation

1. Stateness [...]

The government delivers basic public services to the citizens in most parts of the country, but often state services and administrative institutions operate inefficiently, due to red tape, nepotism, corruption and interference by other authorities [...]

Police forces are also highly inefficient. Driven by religious views and affected by high levels of corruption, the police in coordination with the Basij militia and the IRGC immediately take action against socially and politically motivated protests but are less responsive when it comes to protecting citizens against criminal activity [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018 – Iran, January 2018](#)

[...] C2 0-4pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective 0/4

Corruption remains endemic at all levels of the bureaucracy, despite regular calls by authorities to tackle the problem [...]

Police corruption in 2018

- ❖ [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(DFAT\), DFAT Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)
[...] Police [...]
5.9 International observers concur that corruption is widespread in the police, with systems of patronage and cronyism pervasive in overall law enforcement. While professionalism varies across the police, the force in general operates highly inefficiently. The Attorney-General has responsibility for investigating and punishing abuses by the security forces, but the process is not transparent and there are few reports of action to punish abusers [...]
- ❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)
[...] C. Restrictions on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association, expression and opinion and to privacy
Freedom of peaceful assembly [...]
23. According to reports, popular discontent was fuelled, inter alia, by falling living standards, high inflation, widespread unemployment and perceived corruption of public officials [...]
- ❖ [Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, Practicing Law in Iran: Risks and Challenges, 3 November 2018](#)
[...] 1. Background on the Iranian Judiciary
1.1. The Pre-Modern Judiciary [...]
Although the judges' services were free of charge in theory, they process of securing a judgment, which involved civil authorities, did often involve giving bribes [...]
- ❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019 – Iran, 4 February 2019](#)
[...] C2 0-4pts
Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective 0/4
Corruption remains endemic at all levels of the bureaucracy, despite regular calls by authorities to tackle the problem[...]

Police corruption in 2019

- ❖ [UN Human Rights Council, Summary of Stakeholders' submissions on the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 August 2019](#)
[...] 2. Civil and political rights [...]
Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law [...]
25. Partners for Transparency recommended that the authorities find effective ways to combat corruption in public institutions, including the judiciary.⁴⁴

44 PFT [Partners for Transparency], p. 5 [...]
- ❖ [Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Iran: Dress codes, including enforcement \(2016-February 2020\), 21 February 2020](#)
[...] 2.2 Dress Code Violations in Vehicles [...]
The doctoral candidate also noted that offenders are "sometimes able to pay bribes" to avoid punishment or give "fake names" to avoid being charged with succeeding offences (Doctoral Candidate 30 Jan. 2020a). Similarly, according to the Assistant Professor, [p]enalties that reported individuals face will initially be a fine and impounding of their vehicle for several days to weeks. For subsequent offences, offenders may receive lashes. ... [O]utside of a few days'

detention, jail time is more [often] applied to anti-hijab protesters, as incarceration is expensive for the regime and they would rather receive income from fines. ... [T]he judicial system is corrupt and ... individuals may bribe their way out of jail or lashes. (Assistant Professor 30 Jan. 2020) [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020 – Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] C2 0-4pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective 0/4

Corruption remains endemic at all levels of the bureaucracy, despite regular calls by authorities to tackle the problem [...]

[Due process violations for dual nationals including brief trials and not being allowed access to evidence against them in 2017](#)

❖ [UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its seventy-eighth session, 19-28 April 2017: Opinion No. 7/2017 concerning Kamal Foroughi \(Islamic Republic of Iran\), 30 May 2017](#)

[...] 40. In the present case, there is no evidence that Mr. Foroughi had a criminal record, including in relation to national security offences. There is also nothing to indicate that his movements between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Kingdom since the early 1990s were for any purpose other than legitimate business and family reasons. As the source points out, and the Government has not contested, no evidence of espionage is known to have been presented during Mr. Foroughi's court appearances. This suggests that Mr. Foroughi was targeted for other reasons, including on the basis of his "national or social origin" as a dual national, similarly to the recent pattern of detaining dual nationals on national security charges. Moreover, despite knowing that Mr. Foroughi is a dual national who has a family in the United Kingdom, the Iranian authorities have insisted that he speak only in Farsi when communicating with his family. This requirement is further indicative of the discriminatory attitude adopted by the Iranian authorities in relation to dual nationals. Accordingly, the Working Group considers that there is a sufficient basis to conclude that Mr. Foroughi has been arbitrarily deprived of his liberty according to category V because of discrimination against him as a dual national. [...]

❖ [OHCHR, Iran: UN rights experts urge immediate release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe after fresh charges, 20 October 2017](#)

[...] United Nations human rights experts have appealed to Iran to immediately release a jailed dual British-Iranian citizen who is now facing fresh charges, saying they have "grave" concerns for her welfare. Ms. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is already serving a five-year term in Tehran's Evin Prison and could face an additional 16 years of imprisonment if convicted on the new charges.

"We consider that Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been arbitrarily deprived of her liberty and that her right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal has been violated," the experts said. "These are flagrant violations of Iran's obligations under international law."

They added: "We are gravely concerned over the mental and physical impact that the new charges have had on Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe. We call on the Iranian authorities to release her at once and to guarantee her physical and psychological wellbeing."

Last week, Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was taken alone to court to hear the new charges against her, and was not allowed access to a lawyer during the hearing. Her lawyer had also not been informed of the new charges.

The experts say they are also concerned that Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's application for temporary release, granted to prisoners after they serve a sixth of their sentence, has been blocked and her family was required to pay bail for the new charges to prevent her being transferred to solitary confinement. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] 61. Reports have shown that procedures against these dual nationals have been marred by due process and fair trial violations, including incommunicado detention, denial of access to a lawyer and, in the case of Dr. Djalali, emotional and psychological pressure to sign statements. In May [2017], the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that the detention of another dual national, Khamal

Foroughi, detained since 2011, was arbitrary and called for his immediate release (A/HRC/WGAD/2017/7). [...]

❖ [OHCHR, UN rights experts call on Iran to annul death sentence against academic and free him, 20 December 2017](#)

[...] United Nations human rights experts* have appealed to Iran to annul the death sentence against an Iranian academic, saying they are deeply “disturbed” by ongoing reports of due process failings during his trial.

Doctor Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian national and resident of Sweden, is a medical doctor, lecturer and researcher in disaster medicine who was arrested in April 2016. The procedure against him was marred by numerous reports of due process and fair trial violations, including incommunicado detention, denial of access to a lawyer, and forced confession.

“The execution of Dr. Djalali must be immediately halted and he must be released and accorded an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations,” the experts said.

“No formal charges were brought against him for nearly 10 months and he was effectively prevented from exercising his right to challenge the legality of detention. Furthermore, Dr. Djalali’s rights to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal and to an effective defence have been violated.”

During Dr. Djalali’s detention, he was reportedly threatened with torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and threatened with being sentenced to death through an expedited process. Following this he was allegedly forced to confess to certain crimes, and forced to repeat dictated statements before video cameras.

In January 2017, he was taken before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, without his lawyer, and was informed that he was accused of “espionage” and could face the death penalty.

Dr. Djalali was sentenced to death on 21 October 2017. Information received indicates that he was not given a meaningful opportunity to appeal against his conviction and no defence submission was made. It is understood that the Supreme Court subsequently reaffirmed his death sentence earlier this month.

In a further concerning development, Iranian State television aired a video of his apparent “confession” on 17 December 2017.

In November [2017], the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found the deprivation of liberty of Dr. Djalali to be arbitrary (PDF) and in contravention of relevant provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The experts deplored the public airing of Dr. Djalali’s apparent “confession”, especially in the light of the coercion allegations, and are concerned by the lack of information available during the trial and apparent appeal process. The timing of the video release, as well the allegations of coercion beg serious questions about its legitimacy, they added.

“We have been in dialogue with the Iranian authorities regarding Dr. Djalali’s situation,” the experts said.

They had previously raised their concerns regarding his situation, including in a communication issued in February 2017. The Government responded, noting that Dr. Djalali had been charged with “corruption on the earth” and had been allowed meetings and phone calls with his family. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] E. Situation of dual and foreign nationals

51. In an opinion rendered in August 2017, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention noted a pattern in the way that those affiliated with different pro-democracy institutions of the West – especially those with dual nationality – are treated in the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁶² The Working Group pointed to findings of arbitrary detention with respect to several cases⁶³ involving dual nationals, noting the “emerging pattern involving the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of dual nationals in Iran”.

52. In December 2017, the Special Rapporteur issued a joint statement with other special procedure mandate holders calling for the annulment of the death sentence against Ahmadreza Djalali and his release.⁶⁴ Dr. Djalali is an Iranian national and resident of Sweden. He is a medical doctor, lecturer and researcher in disaster medicine who was arrested in April 2016 and sentenced to death in October 2017 amidst reports of serious due process failings, including incommunicado detention, denial of access to a lawyer and forced confession. It is understood that the Supreme Court subsequently reaffirmed his death sentence in December without according Dr. Djalali with a meaningful opportunity to appeal his conviction. In the same month, Iranian State television aired a video of his apparent “confession”. Dr.

Djalali has explained he had been coerced.⁶⁵ In their statement, special procedure mandate holders deplored the airing of the video in light of the allegations of coercion and further highlighted the opinion rendered by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in November 2017 which found that the deprivation of liberty of Dr. Djalali to be arbitrary, and called for his release.⁶⁶

53. The Special Rapporteur also remains concerned about the situation of Siamak and Baquer Namazi, who hold dual Iranian-American citizenship. Both were sentenced to ten years in prison on the charges of “collusion with an enemy State” in October 2016, and their sentences were confirmed in August 2017. In the same month, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention rendered an opinion that their deprivation of liberty was arbitrary, and called for their release. The Working Group further considered that they were targeted on the basis of their “national or social origin” as dual nationals,⁶⁷ and expressed grave concern about their deteriorating health, and the allegations that Baquer Namazi had not been provided with adequate medical care.

54. The situation of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, an Iranian-British dual national imprisoned since April 2016, was addressed by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention which called for her release,⁶⁸ and highlighted most recently by a number of special procedure mandate holders in October 2017,⁶⁹ following reports that she may face new charges which carried additional years of imprisonment upon conviction. The Special Rapporteur notes the conflicting statements issued as to whether new charges will be pursued, and reiterates the call for her release amidst ongoing concerns for her welfare.

55. The Special Rapporteur is also worried by reports about the deteriorating health situation of Nizar Ahmed Zakka, an information and communications technology consultant. He travelled to Tehran in 2015 to participate in a conference on women in development. He was arrested prior and denied access to a lawyer for a number of months. In 2016 he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and a fine, prompting concerns expressed by special procedure mandate holders that his arrest may be related to his exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Information received indicates he is in urgent need of appropriate medical care and examination.

56. Xiye Wang, a student, was arrested in 2016 and charged and sentenced in 2017 to ten years in prison, after a period of time marked by incommunicado detention, solitary confinement, and interrogation without the presence of a lawyer. He has been imprisoned amidst very difficult conditions and subjected to assaults in prison, which have contributed to a severe decline in his health, amidst limited access to medical care despite multiple requests. In December 2017, he was transferred to a ward with worse conditions, and a State television channel aired an apparent “confession”, which is understood to have been coerced.

57. In addition to the above-mentioned cases, other dual nationals, including Sabiri Hassanpour and Kamel Foroughi, remain imprisoned in the Islamic Republic of Iran with estimates suggesting at least 30 dual nationals have been imprisoned since 2015.⁷⁰ The Special Rapporteur urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to address the concerns highlighted in the context of detained dual and foreign nationals in the country, which represent an ongoing pattern of deep concern and emblematic examples of due process failings. This is supported by the fact that the cases that are brought to the attention of the Special Rapporteur are commonly related to the mere suspicion of anti-State activities with no detailed charge sheets made available nor any victim specified in any of the offences. [...]

62 A/HRC/WGAD/2017/49.

63 See, for example, opinions No. 7/2017, No. 28/2016, No. 44/2015 and No. 18/2013.

64 See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22556&LangID=E>.

65 See www.bbc.com/persian/iran-42420138.

66 A/HRC/WGAD/2017/92.

67 A/HRC/WGAD/2017/49.

68 A/HRC/WGAD/2016/28.

69 See <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22267&LangID=E>.

70 See www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-arrests/exclusive-irans-revolutionary-guards-arrest-more-dual-nationals-idUSKBN1D90TB

❖ [The Independent, Ahmadreza Djalali: Sweden grants citizenship to academic facing death penalty in Iran, 17 February 2018](#)

[...] An Iranian scholar facing the death penalty in Iran has been granted Swedish citizenship.

Ahadreza Djalali, a resident in Sweden who had been working as a researcher at the Karolinska Institute of medicine in Stockholm, was arrested during a trip to Iran in April 2016.

In October 2017, he was found guilty of spying activity which led to the Israeli intelligence agency assassinations of four scientists working on Iran's nuclear programme and sentenced to death.

Dr Djalali, a medical doctor and university lecturer who had studied and taught in Sweden, Italy and Belgium, denies the allegations and says they were fabricated by Iranian Ministry of Intelligence interrogators.

Speaking to Sweden's Sveriges Radio, a spokesperson for the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Dr Djalali had now been granted citizenship, which is hoped to give Sweden a better position to stand on in its talks with Iran.

"We will continue to stay the course and our demands will not change. We demand that his death penalty not be enforced," the spokesperson said.

Appeals to overturn the academic's sentence have been rejected, according to his lawyer.

Last year, Amnesty International reported Dr Djalali had been given a death sentence after a "grossly unfair trial" and said the father of two had not been given access to a lawyer for seven months, three of which were spent in solitary confinement.

Dr Djalali said he had been twice forced to make "confessions" in front of a video camera by reading out statements pre-written by his interrogator.

He maintains he was subjected to psychological torture and threatened with execution. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] Foreign nationals and Iranians with dual nationality continued to face arbitrary arrest and detention, grossly unfair trials and lengthy imprisonment. The authorities claimed that they were countering foreign-orchestrated "infiltration projects". In reality, such individuals were often charged with vague national security offences in connection with the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. [...]

[Due process violations for dual nationals including brief trials and not being allowed access to evidence against them in 2018](#)

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] 56. The Secretary-General remains concerned about the situation of imprisoned dual and foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Ahmadreza Djalali; Siamak and Baquer Namazi; Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; Kamal Foroughi; Karan Vafadari and his wife, Afarin Neyssari; Xiyue Wang; and Nizar Zakka. Recent reports raised concern for the mental and physical health of a number of the aforementioned individuals, including Mr. Djalali, who reportedly has suffered serious health complications recently. He was sentenced to death in October 2017 on the charge of "corruption on earth".⁶¹ In January, an application for judicial review of the sentence was dismissed without explanation. The Secretary-General reiterates the call of special procedures of the Human Rights Council in February 2017 to annul Mr. Djalali's death sentence⁶² and in December 2017 to release him in the light of his arbitrary detention (see A/HRC/WGAD/2017/92). In its comments on the present report, the Government noted that Mr. Djalali had refused to be transferred to hospital. [...] [pp.14-15]

61 OHCHR, "United Nations rights experts call on Iran to annul death sentence against academic and free him", 20 December 2017, and "United Nations rights experts urge Iran to annul death sentence against Ahmadreza Djalali", 9 February 2018.

62 OHCHR, "United Nations rights experts urge Iran to annul death sentence against Ahmadreza Djalali".

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Targeting of Dual Citizens, Foreigners - Prolonged Detention, Absence of Due Process, 26 September 2018](#)

[...] Iran's security apparatus has escalated its targeting of Iranian dual citizens and foreign nationals whom they perceive to have links with Western academic, economic, and cultural institutions, Human Rights Watch said today.

Human Rights Watch has documented and reviewed the cases of 14 dual or foreign nationals whom Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Intelligence Organization has arrested since 2014. In many cases courts have charged them with cooperating with a "hostile state" without revealing any evidence. People interviewed about the cases said they believed that in the cases of those targeted, authorities

perceived these individuals shared an ability to facilitate relationships between Iran and Western entities outside the control of Iranian security agencies.

“At a time when Iran was getting ready to open its door to international trade and cultural exchanges, security authorities were apparently throwing in prison some of the people best suited to rebuild relationships with the international community,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “This targeted campaign against foreign and dual nationals sends a threatening message to Iranian expatriates and foreigners interested in working in Iran, that their knowledge and expertise are a liability if they visit the country.”

In May and June 2018, Human Rights Watch interviewed 10 people with close knowledge of the 14 cases documented, including former detainees, lawyers, family members, and Iran policy experts. Human Rights Watch also reviewed Persian-language videos featuring these cases on Iran’s state TV, statements of Iranian officials, and submissions made on behalf of Iranian cases to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Based on this evidence, it is apparent that Iranian authorities have violated detainees’ due process rights and carried out a pattern of politically motivated arrests. The exact number of those detained since 2014 is most likely considerably higher than the 14 cases Human Rights Watch confirmed. On November 9, 2017, Reuters reported that authorities had detained at least 30 dual nationals in Iran since 2015.

While detainees have ranged from academics to art curators, during interrogations, intelligence personnel accused detainees of spying or espionage based simply on their affiliations with Western public institutions, as opposed to any specific action or document that could raise the possibility of wrongdoing. The supposed incriminating videos Iranian state media broadcast also mirror the interrogators’ questions, highlighting detainees’ affiliations with various legitimate institutions and accusing them of espionage without offering any evidence.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has ruled that the arrests and detentions in several of these cases were arbitrary, and that authorities targeted people based on their “national or social origin” as dual nationals or foreign nationals. It also noted that there was an emerging pattern of Iran detaining dual nationals.

The detention of these individuals is marked by serious due process violations. Iranian authorities systematically deny people charged with national security crimes access to lawyers of their choosing during the investigation phase. Sources familiar with detention of dual and foreign nationals have said that many of them did not have access to any legal counsel during investigation.

Branch 15 of Tehran’s revolutionary court has tried and sentenced a majority of the accused in these cases under article 508 of the Islamic penal code, which states that “any person or group who cooperates with hostile states in any shape or form... if not deemed Mohareb [a sentence which involves the death penalty], will be sentenced to 1 to 10 years in prison.” The revolutionary court verdicts, however, do not align with a 2014 opinion of Iran’s Supreme Court that stated, “Iran is not in conflict with any country and the phrase ‘hostile state’ does not refer to political differences with countries.”

Some Iranian media outlets close to the rights-abusing intelligence agencies, including the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) news agency, play an important role in undermining fair trial rights and the presumption of innocence by shaping public opinion about detainees’ alleged offenses. The outlets broadcast smear-campaign “documentaries” claiming that the accused are part of Western attempts to “infiltrate” the country. Some of the broadcasts include film of the accused making apparently coerced confessions.

Dual nationals who were detained and later released were usually not acquitted but released on what authorities have often called “humanitarian grounds.” Since the prisoner exchange between Iran and the United States in 2016, there have been several indications that Iranian authorities might be willing to again release detained dual and foreign nationals in return for bilateral agreements with the detained people’s countries.

“Having citizens with deep connections to other cultures and countries is an asset, not a criminal offense,” Whitson added. “But Iran’s security apparatus has apparently made the despicable decision to use these individuals as bargaining chips to resolve diplomatic disputes.”

[...] Since 2013, the IRGC has also arbitrarily arrested dozens of Iranian journalists, activists, and academics on vaguely defined national security charges accusing them of being connected to Western entities and kept them in solitary confinement for months, among them dual and foreign nationals.

On October 11, 2017, a court sentenced Abdol Rasoul Dorri Esfehani, a dual Canadian-Iranian citizen and a member of Iran’s nuclear negotiations team arrested by Revolutionary Guards’ intelligence, to five years in prison for “espionage.” Intelligence Minister Alavi then said that he did not consider Dorri Esfehani a

spy and that it is the Intelligence Ministry that makes such determinations. Mizan Online News Agency, the judiciary's news agency, published an article the next day saying that other intelligence agencies, such as the Revolutionary Guards, have similar mandates.

The Intelligence Ministry continues to target people on vaguely defined espionage charges, but the IRGC Intelligence Organization, led by Hossein Taeb, appears to have established itself as the leading security agency in repressing dissent and perceived threats to the autocratic control of the Islamic Republic's unelected political bodies, extending its reach to foreign and dual nationals.

On September 2, Javad Karimi Ghodussi, a Parliament member from the city of Mashhad, released a "documentary" that, without providing any evidence, accused Dorri Esfahani of cooperating with American and British intelligence. The video, allegedly produced by people close to Revolutionary Guards' intelligence, directly attacked the intelligence minister's statement that he did not consider Dorri Esfahani a spy. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Family Planning Scholar Arrested on Vague Accusations in Tehran - Authorities Treat Experts as 'Infiltrators,' Deny Access to Lawyer, 7 December 2018](#)

[...] There has been an increase in targeting dual and foreign nationals since 2014. Then in October 2015, Ayatollah Khamenei advised against negotiating beyond the nuclear deal with the US, as it could open doors for "cultural, economic, political, and security infiltration."

The phrase "infiltration" became the watchword for Iranian intelligence agencies for domestic enemies they claimed were national security "threats." Since then, dozens of dual and foreign nationals, as well as Iranian citizens, have been arrested by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization and accused of being part of the Western "infiltration" network.

The detained dual and foreign nationals come from all walks of life, but the cases have in common a near-total absence of due process. Officials use smear campaigns against them and lack concrete evidence of any crime. Iranian authorities should ensure the rights of these detainees and grant them fair trials to end this grave misjustice. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 30 January 2019](#)

[...] B. Right to a fair trial and liberty

[...] 15. The Special Rapporteur reviewed reports of violations of the right to a fair trial and liberty of dual and foreign nationals detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the basis of ongoing reports, information reviewed and interviews conducted, the Special Rapporteur considers that there is a pattern involving the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of dual nationals and foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as identified by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.¹⁹ The Special Rapporteur concurs with the Working Group's assessment that many of the cases follow a familiar pattern, which includes, inter alia, arrest and detention outside of legal procedures, lengthy pretrial detention, denial of access to legal counsel, prosecution under vaguely worded criminal offences with inadequate evidence to support the allegations, torture and ill-treatment, and denial of medical care.²⁰ The patterns identified point to an urgent need for the Government to address the situation of all dual and foreign nationals detained in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Ahmadreza Djalali, Kamran Ghaderi, Robert Levinson, Saeed Malekpour, Siamak and Baquer Namazi, Xiyue Wang, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Nizar Zakka. The Working Group has issued opinions calling for the release of a number of the aforementioned individuals,²¹ including Ahmadreza Djalali who has been sentenced to death. The Special Rapporteur is further alarmed by reports indicating that a number of them need urgent and appropriate medical care, and calls upon the Government to address such concerns. In its comments, the Government denied that Mr. Levinson was detained and stated it had "initiated investigations, on the basis of its legal obligations toward the missing allegation, and the case is still open and under further investigation". The Government further described national security-related charges against the other aforementioned individuals. [...] [pp. 4-5]

19 See the Working Group's opinions No. 49/2017, para. 44; and No. 52/2018, para. 82.

20 See the Working Group's opinion No. 52/2018, para. 86.

21 See the Working Group's opinions Nos. 52/2018, 92/2017, 49/2017, 50/2016 and 28/2016.

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Widow of Dual National Who Died in Iranian Custody Sues Judiciary for Banning Her from Travel, 13 March 2019](#)

[...] The widow of an Iranian Canadian academic who died under suspicious circumstances in Tehran's Evin Prison has sued a judicial official for extending a travel ban imposed on her a year ago, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has learned.

Kavous Seyed-Emami's widow, Maryam Mombeini, filed the suit on March 6, 2019, against Amir Nasser, the judiciary's security chief at Tehran's Evin Prison where her husband died while held in solitary confinement there for interrogations in February 2018.

"From now on, we are going to file objections everywhere we can against this unlawful travel ban so that eventually someone will listen and give us an answer," Mombeini's son Ramin Seyed-Emami told CHRI on March 12, 2019.

"What's strange is that Iranian authorities don't even respect their own laws," he added. "The travel ban is illegal because my mother has not been charged with anything."

Mombeini, who also holds Canadian citizenship, was prevented from leaving Iran on March 7, 2018, as she was waiting to board a flight to Canada with her two sons. Ramin and her other son Mehran were eventually able to board but Mombeini's passport was confiscated without explanation.

"When we went to inquire about lifting the ban, Mr. Nasser's office told us they would give a response within a week," said Ramin Seyed-Emami. "Then when my mother went there last week, she realized that the ban had been extended."

Attorney Payam Derafshan, who represents the family, told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on March 12, 2019, that the travel ban was not only illegal but was extended without giving Mombeini a chance to appeal.

"The ban is still standing despite the end of investigations and lack of any charges against my client," said Derafshan. "We filed several requests to meet the judiciary's security official at Evin Prison but he refused."

The managing director of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), Kavous Seyed-Emami was among nine conservationists arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC's) Intelligence Organization in Iran in late January 2018 under trumped-up espionage charges.

His death, which occurred within two weeks of being held virtually incommunicado for interrogations in Evin Prison, was reported to his wife as a "suicide" on February 9, 2018, after security agents interrogated her. [...]

Due process violations for dual nationals including brief trials and not being allowed access to evidence against them in 2019

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] 12. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the release by the Iranian authorities, on 11 June 2019, of Nizar Zakka, a Lebanese businessman with residency in the United States, who was imprisoned in 2015 for 10 years on charges of spying for the United States. He remains deeply concerned, however, by the arbitrary arrest, detention, ill-treatment and denial of appropriate medical treatment of dual and foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran. There are estimated to be at least 30 such cases, including including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe,¹³ Xiyue Wang, Ahmadreza Djalali,¹⁴ Siamak and Baquer Namazi, and Kamran Ghaderi, an Iranian-Austrian dual national detained in Iran since January 2016 and suffering from a tumour in his leg.¹⁵

13. The Islamic Republic of Iran has subjected these individuals to sham trials, which have failed to meet basic fair trial standards, and convicted them of offences on the basis of fabricated evidence or, in some cases, no evidence at all, and has attempted to use them as diplomatic leverage.¹⁶ [...]

13 See www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24073&LangID=E.

14 See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24572&LangID=E.

15 See www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/12/dual-national-imprisoned-in-iran-kamran-ghaderi-struggling-to-access-medical-treatment/.

16 The prospect of a prisoner exchange of foreign nationals was raised in the context of the discussion held on 24 April 2019 between the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javad Zarif, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Asia Society, Josette Sheeran. (see <https://asiasociety.org/video/iran-minister-foreign-affairs-mohammad-javad-zarif-complete>). See also www.theguardian.com/news/2019/apr/25/iranian-minister-drops-offer-to-free-zaghari-ratcliffe-in-swap [...]

- ❖ [BBC News, Kameel Ahmady: British-Iranian academic 'arrested in Iran', 14 August 2019](#)
 [...] A British-Iranian dual national has been arrested in western Iran, according to his family. The wife of Kameel Ahmady, a social anthropologist, said he was taken into custody on Sunday from their home without a reason being given.
 Mr Ahmady has researched female genital mutilation and child marriage in Iran, among other subjects.
 [...] Earlier this year, the UK foreign office advised all dual nationals against all travel to Iran because of the risk of arbitrary detention.
 [...] In an interview with BBC Persian, his wife Shafaq Rahmani alleged security agents came to the couple's house and "took away documents, including his ID card".
 She said a local judicial official later confirmed a one-month temporary detention order had been issued against Mr Ahmady.
 "They have not provided any information about the reason for the arrest or the charges against Kameel," Ms Rahmani wrote on Instagram.
 Iran does not recognise dual nationality and there are no exact figures on the number of detainees who are also foreign nationals. [...]

- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran \(CHRI\), No Family Visits or Lawyer Allowed for Detained Anthropologist Kameel Ahmady Two Weeks Into Detention, 29 August 2019](#)
 [...] After more than two weeks in detention, Iranian-British social anthropologist Kameel Ahmady has not had any contact with his family except three phone calls, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has learned.
 His wife, Shafagh Rahmani, told CHRI on August 28 that she has not been given permission to visit him in Tehran's Evin Prison and that the authorities have refused to answer any questions about his health and why he is being held.
 "It has been 17 days since his arrest (on August 11) and Kameel has called our home only three times and talked to me and our small son," Rahmani said, adding that he was not able to give any information about his situation because their conversation was being monitored.
 "I haven't gotten a positive answer to my request to visit him despite many attempts to talk to the case investigator and the supervising judicial official in the prison," she added.
 Meanwhile, several lawyers chosen by Ahmady's family to represent him have been rejected by the judiciary. "The lawyers we chose to represent Kameel have all been rejected by the case investigator," Rahmani told CHRI. "They said those lawyers do not have the judiciary's trust or approval."
 In Iran, the Note to Article 48 of the country's Criminal Procedures Regulations states that prisoners accused of national security-related crimes can only choose lawyers approved by the judiciary chief. National security-related charges are typically used in politically motivated cases.
 Ahmady's wife continued: "I also asked for a medical examination by a doctor in prison to make sure Kameel is healthy but I haven't gotten a straight answer yet."
 Kameel Ahmady was an independent researcher focusing on politically sensitive issues including child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).
 [...] There are currently several Iranian-British citizens and residents imprisoned in Iran, all after prosecutions lacking due process. [...]

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)
 [...] The IRGC's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] Intelligence Organization continues to arrest Iranian dual and foreign nationals on vague charges such as "cooperating with a hostile state." At least a dozen of these individuals remain behind bars, deprived of due process, and are routinely subjected to pro-government media smear campaigns. [...]

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)
 [...] Arbitrary detention of dual and foreign nationals
 14. There are persistent concerns about the situation of dual and foreign nationals who remain imprisoned in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as at 12 November, including Kamran Ghaderi, Robert Levinson, Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, Xiyue Wang and Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Iranian-Swedish citizen Ahmadreza Djalali, sentenced to death in October 2017 on espionage charges, was reportedly transferred

on 29 July 2019 to an unknown location for approximately 10 days before being returned to Evin Prison. During that time, he was reportedly pressured to confess to further allegations. Mr. Djalali, along with other dual and foreign nationals, including Mr. Ghaderi, have been denied medical treatment, notably for life-threatening conditions.¹⁹ In its comments on the present report, the Government indicated that all these individuals have been provided access to appropriate medical treatment in prison and, when necessary, outside of prison. It also noted that it had initiated an investigation into the disappearance of Mr. Levinson. [...]

19 See www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24813&LangID=E; and www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24572&LangID=E [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] 27. The Special Rapporteur remains seriously concerned about the situation of dual and foreign nationals in detention in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Ahmadreza Djalali, Kamran Ghaderi, Robert Levinson, Siamak Namazi and Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. A number of new cases have been reported in 2019, including the cases of an Australian national,⁵⁰ a French national and an Iranian-French national.⁵¹ He welcomes the news that two Australian nationals arrested in July 2019 were released in October 2019.

28. The Special Rapporteur also notes the release of United States citizen Xiyue Wang on 7 December 2019. However, the issue of prisoner exchanges, which is what happened in this case and has been raised by the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs as an option for the release of dual and foreign nationals, raises concerns about the veracity of the Government's allegations against the individuals detained. He also notes the November 2019 release on bail of Kameel Ahmady, a dual Iranian-British national who was arrested in the Islamic Republic of Iran in August 2019 and whose case is reportedly at the stage of preliminary investigation. He is also concerned about the arrest and detention of Massud Mossaheb, an Austrian-Iranian dual national who has been detained since January 2019 and who, according to the Government, has been charged with "corruption on earth through acting against national security" and "illegally acquiring US\$ 429,000", and whose case is currently under investigation.

[...] 49. The Special Rapporteur heard evidence that security and intelligence officials, including from the Ministry of Intelligence and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, have in many cases prevented access to medical care for detainees and prisoners, or made medical attention or transfers to hospital conditional upon confession.⁸⁶ The cases of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe,⁸⁷ Ahmadreza Djalali⁸⁸ and former detainee Homa Hoodfar⁸⁹ are emblematic of denials or delays in providing medical attention associated with attempts to extract confessions or inflict punishment. Attempts to obtain a confession as a condition for medical treatment violates the provisions of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,⁹⁰ the Nelson Mandela Rules and the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in international law. The Government rejects the allegations and states that all three individuals have or had access to medical care, as guaranteed by articles 102 and 103 of the Executive Regulations of the Iranian Organization of State Prisons (Prison Regulations).⁹¹ [...]

50 www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/sep/14/kylie-moore-gilbert-named-as-australian-british-academic-jailed-in-iran-since-2018.

51 www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/iran/news/article/iran-situation-of-roland-marchal-q-a-from-the-press-briefing-16-oct-19; www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-iran-france/france-demands-iran-release-two-of-its-citizens-held-since-june-idUSKBN1WU2XZ.

[...] 85 Islamic Penal Code, arts. 168–169.

86 www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4196/2016/en/.

87 www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jul/17/nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffes-husband-fears-she-will-be-forced-to-confess.

89 www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1303592019ENGLISH.pdf.

90 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, art. 39.

91 <http://prisons.ir/%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%A2%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7/%D8%A2%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A7>.

Pardoning of sentences of convicts in 2017

- ❖ [Tasnim News Agency, Leader Pardons Over 1,000 Iranian Prisoners on Eid, 25 June 2017](#)
 [...] Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on the occasion of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Fitr pardoned or commuted prison terms of 1,049 convicts found guilty by various Iranian courts [...]
 The clemency, however, does not apply to all types of convicts, including those who have been sentenced for their role in armed struggle against the country, armed or organized drug trafficking, rape, armed robbery, arms smuggling, abduction, bribery and embezzlement [...]
- ❖ [FARS News Agency, Ayatollah Khamenei Pardons Hundreds of Iranian Prisoners, 25 June 2017](#)
 [...] Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei pardoned or commuted prison terms of hundreds of convicts sentenced by various Iranian courts on the eve of Eid al-Fitr. Ayatollah Khamenei agreed with granting clemency to a sum of 1,049 convicts of different Iranian courts. The pardon was made at the request of the country's Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani [...]
- ❖ [Tasnim News Agency, Leader Pardons Over 1,000 Iranian Prisoners, 5 December 2017](#)
 [...] Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei pardoned or commuted prison terms of 1,007 Iranian convicts sentenced by various courts in the Islamic Republic.
 The pardon was granted at the request of the country's Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani on the occasion of the birth anniversaries of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Imam Jafar Sadiq (AS), the sixth Imam of Shiite Muslims [...]

Pardoning of sentences of convicts in 2018

- ❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), Two Executed, One Pardoned in Shahr-e Kord, 15 October 2018](#)
 [...] On the morning of October 14th, Saleh Dehkordi, 38, and Yarali Noori, 40, were executed in Shahr-e Kord Prison. In the eleventh hour, Davoud Shokri, 26, was pardoned by family members of the plaintiff on his case.
 All three were transferred to solitary confinement on October 13th, the protocol for prisoners whose execution is imminent.
 Dehkordi, who had reportedly been detained in Shahr-e-Kord since 2011, was slated for execution in 2014 but returned to prison when his victim's family members agreed to absolve him. He was among Shahr-e Kord prisoners injured in a 2014 fire. [...]

Pardoning of sentences of convicts in 2019

- ❖ [Arab News, Iranian woman who removed headscarf 'pardoned' after jail sentence, 15 April 2019](#)
 [...] An Iranian woman who removed her obligatory headscarf in a public protest has been sentenced to one year in prison but pardoned by the supreme leader, her lawyer said Sunday.
 A court sentenced Vida Movahed in March after finding her guilty of encouraging public "corruption," her lawyer, Payam Derefshan, told The Associated Press. Movahed was arrested in November. Derefshan, who first revealed the verdict to local media on Sunday, said she is on a pardon list but the release procedures are still underway.
 There was no official comment. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei occasionally issues pardons, usually tied to public holidays. [...]
- ❖ [New Straits Times, Iran leader pardons 691 on Eid, 9 June 2019](#)
 [...] Iran's supreme leader pardoned hundreds of prisoners on the occasion of the end of Ramadan, but a Lebanese national who Beirut expected to be released was not among them, authorities said Sunday.
 In total, the sentences of 691 prisoners were either commuted or deferred as decided by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as a gesture for the Eid al-Fitr holidays, said the judiciary's Mizan Online news website.
 Last week, Lebanon said one of its nationals condemned in 2016 to 10 years' jail in Iran after being found guilty of spying for the United States would be on the pardon list.
 The Lebanese foreign ministry, quoted by the country's official NNA news agency, said Nizar Zakka would be pardoned at the request of Beirut as a gesture for Eid.
 But Zakka's name was not on the list, said Iran's judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Secretary-General, 2 August 2019](#)

[...] 32. Lawyer Mohammad Najafi has faced repeated judicial harassment owing to comments⁶³ alleging that the authorities were covering up the death in custody of a former client.⁶⁴ In October 2018, he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment and 74 lashes.⁶⁵ On 28 March 2019, he was released under an amnesty but was arrested again on 1 April. [...]

63 Centre for Human Rights in Iran, "Iran should launch independent investigation of deaths of two protesters in prison", 11 January 2019.

64 International Federation for Human Rights, "Iran: ongoing judicial harassment against human rights lawyers Mr. Amir Salar Davoodi and Mr. Mohammad Najafi", 19 April 2019.

65 Centre for Human Rights in Iran, "Lawyer who sought justice for death of detainee in Iranian custody sentenced to three years, 74 lashes", 29 October 2018 [...]

❖ [Iran Press, Iran's Leader pardons more than 3 thousand eligible inmates, 14 November 2019](#)

[...] Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Thursday accepted an appeal by Iran's Judiciary Chief Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi to pardon or commute the sentences of 3552 eligible inmates convicted by courts of common pleas, the Islamic Revolution tribunals, the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces and the State Discretionary Punishment Organization, Iran Press reported.

The pardon comes on the occasion of The Auspicious Birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the 6th Shia Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad as-Sadiq (PBUH) which is on Friday, November 15, 2019.

Ayatollah Khamenei on Aug 19, 2019, on the occasion of two Muslim celebrations, namely the Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadeer pardoned and commuted the sentences of 1,070 eligible inmates.

Also on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr on Jun 09, 2019 Iran's leader pardoned or lessened prison terms of 691 convicts sentenced by various Iranian courts. [...]

❖ [Asia News, Khamenei pardons thousands of prisoners, including 32 activists and political prisoners, 15 November 2019](#)

[...] The provision in conjunction with the Islamic festival celebrating the birth of the prophet Muhammad. In total, over 3,500 people were freed. The activists in prison were mostly journalists and university students. In February for the 40 years of the Islamic Republic 50 thousand prisoners pardoned.

[...] On the occasion of Mawlid, the Islamic festival celebrating the birth of the prophet Muhammad, the Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has granted the pardon to thousands of prisoners locked up in the country's prisons. Among these there would also be 32 prisoners for political or opinion crimes held for crimes related to "security".

According to reports from the site mizanonline.com, in the report released yesterday by the judicial organs it emerges that the 32 prisoners previously arrested for their activism, are mostly journalists and university students. However, the document does not indicate their names.

The total number of detainees released on the occasion of the festival would be greater than 3500. The provision of grace does not concern persons convicted of armed opposition to the Islamic Republic.

According to the report, the pardon has come following the request made by the Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, one of the most influential religious leaders in the country and now head of the Iranian judiciary.

At the end of October, the Iranian authorities released seven political prisoners on bail, including a Christian convert arrested on faith grounds. Last February, in conjunction with the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Khamenei had pardoned over 50,000 people. This was the most extensive and significant measure in the history of the country. [...]

[Determined verdicts in advance and limits to defendant's right to have access to "government-held evidence" in 2017](#)

❖ [UK Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Christians and Christian converts, March 2018](#)

[...] Article 18 [...] stated that legally a person must be summonsed first and then arrested (if a person has not responded to the summons). But this usually doesn't happen. Often when a person is arrested, no one shows an arrest warrant, which legally should have their name, basic details and the reason for arrest. The

person should then know his/her charges immediately and before interrogations. The person could then refuse to answer questions not connected to his/her under law. But this rarely happens. The arrest, detention and charge are therefore illegal all the way through. It's also highly likely that by the time a person gets to court, the charges which are raised are not the ones mentioned (if at all) earlier in proceedings. People who are arrested are threatened with apostasy. But this doesn't appear on the charge sheet or court verdicts.⁵⁸ [...]

58 UK Home Office, 'Interview with Article 18, 12 July 2017. Copy available on request.

Determined verdicts in advance and limits to defendant's right to have access to "government-held evidence" in 2018

❖ [Amnesty International, Iran: Sufi bus driver executed at dawn after grossly unfair trial, 18 June 2018](#)

[...] Mohammad Salas' trial was grossly unfair. He said he was forced under torture to make a 'confession' against himself. This 'confession', taken from his hospital bed, was broadcast on state television weeks before his trial and used as the only piece of evidence to convict him. He was not allowed access to his chosen lawyer at any point before or during his trial, and his independent lawyer's repeated demands to the authorities to allow critical evidence indicating his innocence were dismissed outright. [...]

Determined verdicts in advance and limits to defendant's right to have access to "government-held evidence" in 2019

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Jailed Environmentalists on Hunger Strike, 5 August 2019](#)

[...] At least two environmental experts detained in Iran since January 2018 have likely embarked on a hunger strike to protest their continued detention after many months in legal limbo, Human Rights Watch said today. Authorities should ensure their adequate access to medical treatment.

They are among eight environmentalist experts detained for over 18 months without being provided with the evidence concerning their alleged crimes and with serious due process violations. Given those circumstances, the authorities should immediately release all eight.

[...] Authorities from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization detained the two, along with Hooman Jokar, Sam Rajabi, Taher Ghadirian, Morad Tahbaz, Amirhossein Khaleghi, and Abdolreza Kouhpayeh on accusations of espionage. All are members of a local environmental group, the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF). The authorities have provided no evidence to them or their lawyers concerning their alleged crimes. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Secretary-General, 2 August 2019](#)

[...] Defence lawyers have been obstructed from providing an adequate defence of their clients through denial of access to files, limited time to prepare a defence and being denied the ability to respond to or present evidence in support of their clients. [...]

❖ [The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders \(OBS\), Iran - Indefensible: Iran's Systematic Criminalisation Of Human Rights Defenders: Report, August 2019](#)

[...] Human rights defenders, including lawyers, targeted during the 2018-2019 crackdown faced numerous violations of their right to a fair trial, which is guaranteed by Articles 9 and 14 of the ICCPR. In many cases, Iranian authorities failed to provide the reasons for the arrest and/or to disclose the charges under which they were being prosecuted. Such were the circumstances involving the cases of Ms. Hoda Amid, Najmeh Vahedi, Maryam Zzad, and Rezvaneh Mohammadi, and Messrs. Mostafa Daneshju, Payam Derafshan, Farrokh Forouzam-Kermani, and Farhad Mohammadi. It is common that defendants only learn the nature of charges against them when they appear for trial.

[...] On February 17, 2019, during the first hearing of her trial, Ms. Rezvaneh Mohammadi's lawyer was not allowed to defend her and was denied access to the court files.

[...] Finally, in politically sensitive cases, Iranian courts often deny defendants written copies of their verdicts. Instead, they are only allowed to see the verdict and take handwritten notes of it in the presence

of a court official.³⁰ For example, Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh was only allowed to see the February 19, 2019 verdict against her and take handwritten notes of its content on March 16, 2019. [...]

30 This is done in accordance with Note 2 to Article 380 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which applies to alleged crimes against internal and external security [...]

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)
[...] OHCHR has received multiple reports of lack of access to lawyers and of lack of access to information about charges for both defendants and their lawyers, arrest and detention without charge and convictions based on confessions extracted under torture. [...] [p. 3]
- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)
[...] The Special Rapporteur has received reports of violations, including lack of access to a lawyer of the accused's choice and to information regarding charges and evidence, arrest without warrant and the use of forced confessions extracted by torture and ill-treatment as evidence. [...]

1.3.2. New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017), most omitted in 2019

Drug offenders continued to be executed without due process in 2018

- ❖ [Iran Human Rights, Implementation of the New Anti-Narcotics Law in Iran: 1700 Death Row Cases Reviewed, 6 July 2018](#)
[...] Iran Human Rights had previously mentioned the use of bribery and arbitrary prioritization in different cities in an earlier report addressing the situation six months after the implementation of the new anti-Narcotics Law.
Of note, the new amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law doesn't address the issue of unfair trials and inaccessibility of many defendants to the lawyers during the investigation phase. This phenomenon may lead to the reapproval of some of the death sentences which were issued based on forced confessions [...]
- ❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 27 September 2018](#)
[...] 3. Amendment to the drug trafficking law
18. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the amendment to the drug trafficking law that entered into force on 14 November 2017. According to the amended law, punishments for certain drug offences that previously carried the death penalty or life imprisonment are now subject to a maximum prison term of 30 years. In addition, the quantity of drugs required to impose a death sentence was increased. The Special Rapporteur further notes encouraging reports of a significant reduction in the number of executions relating to drug offences, with only two such cases of the death penalty reported thus far in 2018, compared with 213 in 2017 (see A/HRC/37/24, para. 6).
19. The Special Rapporteur notes, however, that the amended drug trafficking law retains mandatory death sentences for a wide range of drug-related offences. The Special Rapporteur further notes that the death penalty is applied in such circumstances in the context of concerns raised by his predecessor and by the Secretary-General on the lack of adherence to due process and the right to a fair trial (see A/HRC/37/68, paras. 58–61, and A/HRC/37/24, paras. 7–8). In the light of the irreversible nature of capital punishment and those concerns, the Special Rapporteur calls upon the Government to ensure full compliance with the safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty [...]
- ❖ [Iran Human Rights and ECPM \(Ensemble Contre La Peine de Mort\), Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran: 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] All the death row prisoners IHR has been in contact with have testified that they were subjected to torture in order to confess to the crime with which they were charged. This is not limited to those with political or security-related charges alone. Almost all prisoners who are arrested for drug offences have been kept in solitary confinement and subjected to physical torture in the investigation phase following their detention, while being denied access to a lawyer. In many cases, confessions provided during detention have been the only evidence available for the judge to base his verdict upon [...]

Regarding the process, IHR has identified the following challenges:

- Corruption in the judiciary: there have been reports of bribery where the judge has asked the family of inmates for bribes in order to review the cases.
- Insufficient resources provided for this process by the judiciary: this is especially true in large cities and areas where the number of drug prisoners is high. Eyewitnesses have said that in some of the judge's rooms there were "case folders from floor to ceiling."
- Disproportionality between crime and punishment: most prisoners whose death sentences were commuted have been sentenced to 30 years in prison and a fine of 200 million Tomans regardless of the type and degree of the crime.

As mentioned in previous reports, the issue of due process has not been mentioned in the new amendments. All drug offences are processed by the Revolutionary Courts. Reports collected by IHR show that those arrested for drug offences are systematically subjected to torture during the weeks after their arrest. Often they have no access to a lawyer while in detention and by the time the lawyer enters the case they have already "confessed" to the crime.⁷³ Trials at the Revolutionary Courts are often very short and there is little the lawyer can do. The issue of due process and fair trials has not been addressed in the new amendments to the Anti- Narcotics Law. For more details, please see IHR's report: "Execution trends six months after the Anti-Narcotics Law" published in May 2018.⁷⁴ [...]

70 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/3378/>

71 ISNA, 3 July 2018: <https://goo.gl/T2RL1E>

72 <http://www.iribnews.ir/fa/print/2156809>

73 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/16/iran-bid-end-drug-offense-executions>

74 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/3325/> [...]

Drug offenders continued to be executed without due process in 2019

❖ [Abdorrahan Boroumand Center \(ABC\) and Harm International \(HI\), ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Joint stakeholder submission to the Working Group for The Universal Periodic Review Third cycle, 34th Session –November 2019, 28 March 2019](#)

[...] Right to appeal

The 2015 Code of Criminal Procedure significantly improved the right to appeal for those sentenced to death for drug-related offences. The Code revoked Article 32 of the Anti-Narcotics Law which in contravention of international law denied individuals sentenced to death for drug-related offences the right to appeal as their sentences could be carried out upon the approval of the Head of the Supreme Court or the Prosecutor General. Nonetheless, the appeal process for those sentenced to death in Iran remains an area of concern. Following the issuance of the sentence by a lower court, the convicted individual can appeal to the Supreme Court, the sole level of appeal. Moreover, appeals to the Supreme Court are done in writing, meaning that the convicted individual or their lawyers do not enjoy the right to be present during the Supreme Court session.²⁴

[...] Cases of persons accused of capital drug offenses, like those of other defendants, have continued to be marked by serious deficits of due process, including lack of access to legal counsel, torture and other ill treatment in detention, and denials of the right to appeal and retrial. [...]

24 Amnesty International, Flawed reforms: Iran's new code of criminal procedure (Index: MDE 13/2708/2016), available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2708/2016/en/> [...]

❖ [International Harm Reduction Association \(IHRA\), Written statement to United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Forty-third session: 24 February–20 March 2020: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention, 3 February 2020](#)

[...] Harm Reduction international has been tracking the use of the death penalty for drug offences in Iran since 2007. In 2018, we welcomed a significant decrease in drug-related executions, as a result of the

2017 reform to the Anti-Narcotics Law. Specifically, known drug-related executions fell from 221 in 2017 to 23 in 2018. This translated in a 50% drop in total executions in the country, and contributed to a substantial decrease globally. Regrettably, this trend appears to have reversed last year. While 2019 has not seen a return to 2017 figures, the number of persons known to have been executed for drug offences has risen to 36.¹ This raises concerns about the willingness of Iran to progressively reduce the use of the death penalty, in line with its international obligations; and a potential return to a systematic resort to executions as a tool of drug control.

[...] We also echo preoccupation expressed by local and international civil society – such as Iran Human Rights and the Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre on Human Rights in Iran – regarding the death sentences review and commutation process that has followed the 2017 amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law. Rights groups have criticised such process as opaque and tainted by insufficient resources, as well as by allegations of corruption.² Also concerning are the alternative punishments imposed as a result of this process, with many death sentences commuted to prison sentences as long as 30 years, and hefty financial penalties which weigh not only on those convicted but also on their families.³

In light of this intensification in the use of capital punishment for drugs, we echo the concerns expressed in 2019 by this Rapporteur, regarding systemic fair trial violations in capital cases in general, and capital drug cases specifically.

Among others, we highlight:

- A systemic lack of transparency and fair trial guarantees characterising processes at the Islamic Revolutionary Courts, which jurisdiction extends to drug crimes;⁴

- A failure to ensure that capital drug defendants have effective legal counsel at all stages of the proceedings. Many defendants accused of drug-related offences have reported not having access to a lawyer throughout their detention and trials, or only meeting their court-appointed lawyer during trial.⁵

Article 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides for the right to legal counsel from the start of detention, but stipulates that defendants accused of certain capital crimes may be denied access to an independent lawyer of their own choosing during the investigation phase – a period which may last for months.⁶ Moreover, several defendants that have been able to hire their own lawyers report that this was prohibited from defending them during the trial and only given permission to submit a written defence.⁷ Finally, the Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre for Human Rights in Iran denounced that experienced lawyers sometimes avoid criminal cases because of the physical and mental stress these entail, in turn caused by the fact that “authorities conducting pre-trial investigations have a negative perception of defense lawyers and, despite the recent amendments to criminal procedure, continue to disregard the defendant’s right to legal representation.”⁸

- Widespread torture and ill-treatment, and reliance on forced confessions as evidence. Rights groups report that almost all prisoners who are arrested for drug offences are kept in solitary confinement and are subjected to torture during the investigation phase, while they are being denied access to a lawyer.⁹ According to testimonies received by Iran Human Rights, people facing the death penalty for drug offences are routinely “tortured in various ways and beaten with wooden sticks, hoses and cables, hung by their hands from the ceiling for hours while being beaten, [or have] spent weeks in solitary confinement with handcuffs and shackles.”¹⁰ In many cases, the ‘confessions’ elicited during detention have been the only evidence submitted to judges to base their verdicts upon.¹¹ Iran’s laws on investigating allegations of torture remain deeply flawed, with no procedures envisaged for the automatic investigation into allegations of torture and ill-treatment when they are brought to the attention of authorities.¹²

- Denial of the right to appeal. Individuals sentenced to death for drug offences have only been granted the right to appeal in Iran in 2015. Despite this welcome reform, several people convicted prior to November 2015 have since been executed without having been able to exercise their right to appeal.¹³ Further, appeals can only be done in writing – meaning that the defendant and their lawyers cannot be present at the appeal.¹⁴ [...]

1 Based on a Harm Reduction International dataset on death sentences and executions for drug offences. On file with authors and available upon request.

2 Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort and Iran Human Rights (2019), Annual report on the death penalty in Iran 2018.

3 Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre and Harm Reduction International (28 March 2019), Joint stakeholder submission to the Working Group for The Universal Periodic Review, Third cycle, pp 6-7.

4 Javid-Tehrani, Behrouz (February 2017), “Fair trials for the accused in drug-related offences”, in Iran Human Rights Review: Due Process, Tahiri Danesh and Mahmood Amiri-Moghaddam (eds), The Foreign Policy Centre: London, p.45.

5 Ibid., p.44.

6 Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre and Harm Reduction International, Joint stakeholder submission to the Working Group for The Universal Periodic Review, Third cycle, 28 March 2019, p 4.

7 Javid-Tehrani, Behrouz (February 2017), "Fair trials for the accused in drug-related offences", in Iran Human Rights Review: Due Process, Tahirih Danesh and Mahmood Amiri-Moghaddam (eds), The Foreign Policy Centre: London, p. 45 [...]

Executions were carried out in public in 2018

- ❖ [Iran Human Rights, Iran Execution: Another Prisoner Hanged in Public, 4 May 2018](#)
[...] According to Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA), on the morning of Sunday, May 13, a prisoner was executed in public in the Southern city of Bandar Abbas. The prisoner was sentenced to execution in public on the charge of murdering two park rangers. [...]
- ❖ [Iran Human Rights, WARNING GRAPHIC PICTURES: Two More Public Executions in Iran, 15 May 2018](#)
[...] According to an IRIB News Agency's report, on the morning of Tuesday, May 15, two prisoners were hanged in public in Mashhad.
The prisoners were sentenced to death on rape charges. [...]
- ❖ [Iran Human Rights, Iran Executions: Two Men Hanged in Public, 24 July 2018](#)
[...] According to Tasnim news agency, on the morning of Sunday, July 22, two prisoners were executed in public in Mashhad. The prisoners were sentenced to death on the charge of rape and murder of two children in separate cases.
According to Mizan Online news agency, one of the prisoners is identified as Ali Asghar Ashrafi, son of Mohammad, born in 1976. He was convicted of raping and murdering an eight-year-old Afghan girl on March 27, 2018. The other prisoner was identified as Sajjad Rashidi, son of Asad, born in 1991. He was convicted of raping and murdering a 10-year-old boy on April 25, 2018. [...]
- ❖ [Iran Human Rights, Iran Executions: Man Hanged in Public, 14 September 2018](#)
[...] According to the state-run news agency, Mizan, on the morning of Thursday, September 13, a prisoner was hanged in public in Marvdasht. The prisoner was arrested and sentenced to death on the charge of kidnapping, injuring, harassing, and murdering a 13-year-old teenager.
[...] It should be noted that public executions have repeatedly been criticized by the United Nations. Both the UN Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran have expressed concern about the continued practice of public executions in Iran. [...]
- ❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), World Day Against the Death Penalty: Iran Annual Report Oct '17 – Oct '18, 10 October 2018](#)
[...] Between October 10, 2017, and October 9, 2018, the death penalty and executions have been the focus of 287 HRANA reports.
[...] Public hangings and executions of women have gone down 54% and 50%, respectively. [...]
- ❖ [Iran Human Rights and ECPM \(Ensemble Contre La Peine de Mort\), Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran: 2018, 26 February 2019](#)
[...] 13 executions were conducted in public spaces
[...] When carried out in public spaces, executions are usually carried out using cranes. The prisoners are either pulled up or the object they are standing on is removed from underneath them. In this case, the prisoners die of suffocation and strangulation and it often takes several minutes until death occurs.
[...] Some facts about those executed for Moharebeh and Corruption on Earth charges: [...]
5 were hanged in public
[...] Some facts about those executed on the basis of rape charges: [...]
2 were hanged in public
[...] Murder charges were the most common charge and qisas executions represented the most common execution category in 2018. Some facts about qisas executions in 2018:
[...] 6 were hanged in public
[...] PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

[...] Despite continuous international criticism, Iran is among the few countries where public executions have been organised by the authorities.

Public executions have repeatedly been criticized by the UN. Both the UN Secretary General and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran have expressed concern about the continued practice of public executions in Iran.⁸³ During Iran's second UPR⁸⁴, the Government did not accept recommendations to put an end to public executions.⁸⁵ This has also been emphasised in the recent report of the current Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, Javaid Rehman.⁸⁶

In 2008, a judicial moratorium on public executions was adopted by the Iranian authorities. As a consequence, the number of public executions in 2008-2010 was relatively lower than in previous years. However, after 2010 the number of public executions increased dramatically, reaching an average of 50 to 60 public executions between 2011 and 2015. In 2018, the Iranian authorities executed 13 people in public spaces. This is the lowest number of public executions since 2009 (the year after the moratorium, nine public executions). Whether there is a political reason for this reduction remains to be seen.

[...] The number of public executions in 2018 was significantly lower than the number in the previous seven years. Whether it is a permanent change or not remains to be seen. In the first half of January 2019, five public executions were implemented in three different Iranian cities.⁸⁷

Public executions were conducted in six different provinces in 2018, compared to 15 provinces in 2017. Fars province (Southern Iran), which had topped public executions between 2010 and 2016, registered one public execution in 2017. In 2018, this province was once again one of the two provinces with the highest number of public executions.

The majority of those executed in public were convicted of murder and were sentenced to qisas (retribution in kind), followed by Moharebeh (waging war against God) and rape or sexual assault. [...] [pp. 36-37]

83 EU strategy towards Iran after the nuclear agreement-EU Parliament text adopted 25 October 2016

84 Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review: Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/DEC/28/108, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/107/16/PDF/G1510716.pdf?OpenElement>

85 UPR-info: Hungary, Norway and Germany called on a moratorium or immediate end on public executions

86 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran A/73/398 <http://undocs.org/A/73/398>

87 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/3615/>

Executions were carried out in public in 2019

❖ [Iran Human Rights Monitor, Annual report on the death penalty in Iran, October 2019, 9 October 2019](#)

[...] From October 2018 to October 2019, Iran Human Rights Monitor has recorded the execution of more than 273 individuals in Iran.

At least 10 juvenile offenders and 13 women were executed, and 17 executions were carried out publicly. [...]

❖ [Iran News Update, Iran – Summary of Repression in 2019, 7 January 2020](#)

[...] According to statistics compiled from various sources, the number of executions in Iran in 2019 was 291.

[...] 12 Men in public

[...] Public executions have taken place in the cities of Kazeroon, Yasuj, Falavarjan, Jahrom, Hamedan, Khandab, Babol, Rasht and Khomein.

[...] On 28 August 2019, Hamid Reza Derakhshandh, who was sentenced for killing the Friday prayer's Imam of Kazerun who committed many crimes, was hanged in public. Hamid Reza Derakhshandeh killed the Imam of Kazeroon on 29 May in front of his house. He was hastily executed within three months. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] Information received by OHCHR indicates that at least 211 executions were carried out between 1 January and 10 October 2019, including 12 publicly. [...]

Alternative punishments to the death penalty were applied in 2018

❖ [Iran Human Rights, Iran Executions: A Qisas and a Forgiveness on the Same Day, 1 July 2018](#)

[...]–Hossein Esmailpour, charged with murdering a prominent clergyman in Rasht, was scheduled for execution on the same day. However, just some seconds before the execution, the plaintiffs asked for one month time to think more whether they really want the Qisas (retaliation in kind) to be carried out or they will select forgiveness. [...]

Hossein Esmailpour was a student at a religious school. He is convicted of murdering Fakhri Langaroudi with the complicity of two of his friends in September 2014.

One of Hossein Esmailpour's relatives told IHR, "We are very grateful to the Fakhris, especially Haj Ne'mat Fakhri, who gave Hossein another chance. Haj Ne'mat Fakhri was able to convince his family to give Hossein another chance at the last moment. We hope for the day when the Fakhris forgive Hossein." [...]

❖ [Abdorrahman Boroumand Center Blog, Iranian Blogger Soheil Arabi Sentenced to 7.5 Years' Imprisonment, Mandatory Religious Studies, 16 July 2018](#)

[...] Iranian Blogger Soheil Arabi has been sentenced to a 7.5 year prison term and mandatory religious studies in a case which originally saw him condemned to death for the crime of "insulting the Prophet," according to reporting from the Human Rights Activists News Agency.

Arabi had initially been sentenced to death by Branch 76 Criminal Court in Tehran. When Arabi's lawyer appealed the verdict, Branch 36 of the country's Supreme Court took the extraordinary step of adding a "corruption on earth" conviction to his case (evidence mentioned in the court decision includes "a number of Facebook pages") and confirmed his death sentence. Following a retrial petition submitted by Arabi's lawyer and family, Branch 34 of the Supreme Court struck down the death sentence and referred the case back to one of the original courts for a new hearing. This court then overturned Arabi's conviction for "insulting the Prophet," sentencing him to seven and a half years of prison, two years of religious studies (in order to prove remorse), and two years' prohibition on leaving the country after serving his jail term. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] 12. In 2018 to date, the majority of executions were carried out following conviction for murder, referred to as qisas. All juvenile offenders executed in 2018 were sentenced to death pursuant to qisas. In such cases, the family of the victim can choose the punishment imposed, forgive the defendant or request a payment (diya) as compensation. The Government stated that it generally sought to "encourage reconciliation by helping the convict to pay diya".⁸ However, qisas often violates the right of defendants to due process in sentencing procedures, especially in the light of mitigating circumstances, such as the age of the alleged offender, as well as the alleged offender's right to seek pardon or commutation,⁹ because the pardon does not rest with the State, but with the victim's family. Notwithstanding the efforts undertaken by the authorities, the Secretary-General stresses that the State should not delegate such responsibility. [...]

8 See Islamic Republic of Iran, High Council for Human Rights, UPR midterm report (2015–2016) (Center for the Judiciary), p. 110. Available at <https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session20/IR/Iran2ndCycle.pdf>.

9 See International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6 (4).

❖ [Iran Human Rights and ECPM \(Ensemble Contre La Peine de Mort\), Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran: 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] • At least 272 death row prisoners were forgiven by the families of murder victims

[...] THE FORGIVENESS MOVEMENT

According to the Iranian Penal Code, murder is punished by qisas (retribution) when the family of the victim can demand a retribution death sentence. But they can also demand blood money (Diyya) instead of a death sentence or can simply grant forgiveness.

IHR has collected forgiveness reports since 2015. Altogether, the reports gathered in the past four years show that the families of murder victims who chose forgiveness or blood money for those convicted of murder outnumber those who chose the death penalty.⁸⁰

For the sake of simplicity, we will use the term forgiveness in the following section, regardless of whether there has been a demand for blood money or not.

As for execution numbers, not all forgiveness cases are announced by the Iranian media. Based on reports by the Iranian media and, to a lesser extent, through its own network inside Iran, IHR identified 272 forgiveness cases in 2018, compared to 221 cases in 2017, 232 cases in 2016 and 262 cases in 2015. Thus, forgiveness trends are increasing. In 2018, forgiveness cases outnumbered those of implemented qisas executions. The actual numbers for both forgiveness and qisas death sentences are believed to be higher. Reports indicate that the number of forgiveness cases might be several times higher than the numbers presented in this report. For instance, on 7 September 2018, the Iranian State Broadcasting in Kerman, IRIB, announced that “500 qisas prisoners were saved from execution due to forgiveness during the last year in Iran (21 March 2017 to 20 March 2018)”.⁸¹ IHR reported 50 forgiveness cases in Kerman Province in 2017 and 2018. We are not certain about how accurate the report from IRIB is but it indicates that actual forgiveness numbers are much higher than reported here.

[...] In 2018, IHR recorded forgiveness cases in 26 of the 31 provinces in Iran. In comparison, qisas death sentences were reported from 29 of the provinces. In most provinces the number of forgiveness cases was higher than qisas executions. [...]

80 <https://iranwire.com/en/features/4581>

81 <http://www.iribnews.ir/fa/print/2221044> [...]

❖ [Harm Reduction International \(HRI\), The Death Penalty for Drug Offences: Global Overview 2018, January 2019](#)

[...] The 2017 Iranian Bill also fails to address credible and systematic reports of torture and ill-treatment suffered by those arrested for drug offences with the aim of forcing confessions, and grave violations of fair trial rights, such as denial of legal representation in the early stages of investigations.³² Finally, although official information on the review process is not available, civil society reports excessive and disproportionate punishments being imposed as an alternative to death sentences, in the form of excessive prison terms, corporal punishment and/or fines.

[...] For reference, the average annual income of urban families in Iran has been reported at around 37 million tomans (US\$8,800), with an average living cost of nearly 33 million tomans. For rural families, the average annual income registered is just over 20 million tomans (US\$4,770).³⁴ Failure to pay can lead to expropriation of assets, as well as additional prison time. Such a provision is highly problematic, in that it “intensifies negative consequences faced by those sentenced, many of whom are driven to drug activity out of poverty and unemployment, and their families”.³⁵ [...]

32 ECPM, IHR (2018) Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2017, 20. Montreuil and Oslo: Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort and Iran Human Rights. Available from: <http://files.server.idpc.net/library/ECPM-IHR-%20Iran%20report%202017.pdf>.

[...] 34. Data from the Strategic Information and Statistics Centre (Iran): <http://amarkar.ir/Main/> Products. Conversion current as of 24 January 2019.

35. ABC (2018) Iran’s Drug Policy Reform Briefing Paper, 2. [...]

Alternative punishments to the death penalty were applied in 2019

❖ [Atlantic Council, Blood money decision advances women’s rights in Iran, 5 August 2019](#)

[...] In early June, Iran’s Supreme Court upheld a law deciding that blood money—compensation paid to relatives for the death or injury of a family member—would be equal between men and women and no longer would a woman’s compensation be worth half of a man’s. According to this law, a fund for physical damages will make up the difference in all incidents, not just those involving car accidents.

[...] The law did not address other deaths—through murder for example—or injury from other causes. The reasoning was that, “Since a person’s agreement with an insurance company has contractual basis and both sexes pay equal premiums, the compensation should also be equal and the law is not in contravention of the Sharia.” Thus, prior to this, the Fund for the Provision of Physical Damages—which is a government-affiliated but a legally independent insurance company—made up the difference for women only in car accidents.

However, public pressure has been building for equality of compensation in all incidents. Rights advocates have pointed to cases such as fires and to a spate of crimes in which women have had acid thrown in their faces. [...]

- ❖ [International Harm Reduction Association \(IHRA\), Written statement to United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Forty-third session: 24 February–20 March 2020: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention, 3 February 2020](#)

[...] We also echo preoccupation expressed by local and international civil society – such as Iran Human Rights and the Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre on Human Rights in Iran – regarding the death sentences review and commutation process that has followed the 2017 amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law. Rights groups have criticised such process as opaque and tainted by insufficient resources, as well as by allegations of corruption.² Also concerning are the alternative punishments imposed as a result of this process, with many death sentences commuted to prison sentences as long as 30 years, and hefty financial penalties which weigh not only on those convicted but also on their families.³ [...]

2 Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort and Iran Human Rights (2019), Annual report on the death penalty in Iran 2018.

3 Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre and Harm Reduction International (28 March 2019), Joint stakeholder submission to the Working Group for The Universal Periodic Review, Third cycle, pp 6-7. [...]

Holding political prisoners in separate prisons or wards for long periods in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Authorities reportedly often hold political prisoners in solitary confinement for long periods. Former prisoners have reported that authorities often threaten political prisoners with transfer to criminal wards, where attacks from non-political prisoners were likely. [...]

Iran provided arms, financing and training to Syrian militias in 2018

- ❖ [Mohseni P. & Ahmadian H. \(Foreign Policy\), What Iran Really Wants in Syria, 10 May 2018](#)

[...] Rather than provoking military confrontation with Israel, Iran's actions in Syria are first and foremost about preserving the Syrian government as part of the "axis of resistance" — a longstanding alliance between Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, among others [...]

Iran's entrance in the war was therefore meant to shore up support for its struggling partner and attempt to cut its losses by strengthening local allied militias within Syria with an eye to post-Assad territorial fragmentation — a rational and limited contingency plan in case Assad fell that has been incorrectly interpreted as Iranian expansionism [...]

Iran has decided that the best way to preserve Syria's continued prominence in the axis of resistance is to make sure that the Syrian state achieves full control over its territory, especially given the very serious challenges Syria faces from rival armed groups after the demise of the Islamic State. It is true that Iran and its allied militias, the Syrian government, and Russia have the upper hand on the ground, but there seems to be no guarantee that the Syrian government can achieve full victory and unify the country given the military presence of Turkey and the United States there [...]

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2019: Iran – Events of 2018, 17 January 2019](#)

[...] Key International Actors

Iran continues to provide the Syrian government with military assistance and plays an influential role alongside Russia and Turkey in the Syria negotiations currently taking place in Astana, Kazakhstan. [...]

- ❖ [Deutsche Welle, Syria conflict: What do the US, Russia, Turkey and Iran want?, 23 January 2019](#)

[...] Iran

— Who it supports: Tehran has supported the Assad government since at least 2012, giving the regime extensive military aid in the form of training, weapons and intelligence sharing. It has also deployed Iran's elite military force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and Shiite militias from across the region. Its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon is also a major backer of the Assad regime [...]

Iran provided arms, financing and training to Syrian militias in 2019

❖ [Center for Strategic & International Studies, 16 July 2019](#)

[...] This brief analyzes satellite imagery of Tiyas Airbase (or T-4) in Syria, which is used by Iran and Russia. It highlights what we assess to be the Iranian movement of weapons, other material, and personnel to Syria with the awareness and support of Moscow. This cooperation, which has allowed Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) to increase their capabilities and influence in Syria, should be concerning for the United States as tensions increase between Washington and Tehran [...]

Iran has its own interests in Syria. [...]

In addition to providing light and heavy weapons to the Syrian regime and militias, up to 3,000 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF) helped plan and execute campaigns such as the 2016 Battle of Aleppo (or Operation Dawn of Victory).⁷ The IRGC-QF worked closely with the Assad regime and the Russian military, which conducted strikes from Russian combat aircraft and naval vessels in the Mediterranean Sea.⁸ Syrian forces and militias supported by the IRGC-QF shelled rebel positions in Aleppo as Russian close air support and Kalibr cruise missile strikes reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble. By December 2016, ground forces routed rebel forces, who departed under an agreement brokered by Russia, Turkey, and Iran.⁹ Iranian support continues today [...]

Today, the IRGC-QF works with thousands of trained fighters in Syria operating in local militias. Many of these groups like Lebanese Hezbollah possess advanced stand-off weapons, improved cyber capabilities, more recruits, and more expansive forces in Syria capable of striking Israeli targets [...]

With Russian support, Iran has used these types of activities to expand its presence in Syria. Today, the IRGC-QF works with thousands of trained fighters in Syria who are operating in local militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah [...]

⁷On the number of IRGC-QF in Syria see, for example, the data from Gadi Eisenkot, former chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, in Bret Stephens, "The Man Who Humbled Qassim Suleimani," *New York Times*, January 11, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/11/opinion/gadi-eisenkot-israel-iran-syria.html>.

⁸On IRGC-QF activity, see Seth Jones, "War by Proxy: Iran's Growing Footprint in the Middle East," CSIS, March 2019, <https://www.csis.org/war-by-proxy>.

⁹On Iranian support to combat operations in Syria see Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "What Kind of Victory for Russia in Syria?" *Military Review* (March-April 2018): 6-23; Sanu Kainikara, *In the Bear's Shadow: Russian Intervention in Syria* (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2018); John W. Parker, *Putin's Syrian Gambit: Sharper Elbows, Bigger Footprint, Sticker Wicket* (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2017); Nader Uskowi, *Temperature Rising: Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Wars in the Middle East* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 77-96; Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 204-229 [...]

❖ [Foreign Affairs, Syria Changed the Iranian Way of War, 16 August 2019](#)

[...] To date, Tehran has spent an estimated \$15 billion propping up Assad—even as the Iranian economy has crumbled under sanctions for the better part of the war. Additionally, the Islamic Republic is thought to have sent some 10,000 operatives, including combat troops, to Syria between 2011 and 2014. This number omits non-Iranian forces backed by Tehran, which *The Wall Street Journal* put at 130,000 in 2014. And by Tehran's own admission, at least 2,100 Iranians had died in the conflict by 2017, including a number of high-ranking military commanders. Today, even as the war winds down, Iranian body bags continue to return home [...]

Iran's costly intervention has been crucial to Assad's survival. It has also profoundly affected Iran itself: the experience of fighting in Syria has changed the Iranian way of war, shifting Iranian tactics and forcing the country's military to gain new capabilities, especially when it comes to cooperating with foreign militaries and training non-Iranian proxy forces [...]

❖ [The Institute for National Security Studies, Iranian Stakes in Syria, 12 November 2019](#)

Against the backdrop of its military involvement in Syria, Iran has taken a series of steps since 2014 to reinforce its standing in Syria and Lebanon and enhance its military preparedness there, as well as that of its proxies – first and foremost Hezbollah [...]

In August 2018 and March 2019, Iran and Syria signed another set of agreements relating to increased military cooperation and the reconstruction of Syria's military forces and infrastructures. These agreements confirmed the continued presence of "Iranian military advisers" in Syria – a formulation apparently meant for the Revolutionary Guards, the Quds Force, and assorted Shiite militias. In 2018 and 2019, the two also signed a series of economic agreements on Iranian investments in Syria, construction and reconstruction in areas destroyed in the fighting, Iranian oil provision to Syria, transportation (particularly trains), and the access to quarries. Both sides are greatly interested in expanding their military and economic ties. From Syria's perspective, Iran provides it with the largest amount of economic assistance it has seen in years and is unmatched by others. Iran's economic support has been especially important to Syria in recent years as it begins to tackle the destruction resulting from the civil war. It is therefore unlikely that the Assad regime will imperil its relations with Iran despite the pressure exerted on it. As for the Iranian regime, the economic aid it extends is a major way to bind itself to Syria and entrench its influence from Iran to the Mediterranean. Moreover, given the economic sanctions on Iran and its own difficult economy, as well as the domestic criticism in Iran over the aid given to Syria, it is important to the Islamic Republic to be able to demonstrate that its ties with Syria net actual economic value, partly by means of Iran's investments there [...]

1.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

Courts sentenced dual Iranian nationals to 10 years or more in prison in 2019

❖ [The Telegraph, UK accused of failing British-Iranian nationals after another is convicted on spy charges, 27 August 2019](#)

[...] Iran on Tuesday convicted another British-Iranian on espionage charges, prompting the husband of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe to accuse the UK government of shirking its responsibility towards detained dual nationals.

Iran's judiciary said it had sentenced London businessman Anousheh Ashouri, 65, to 12 years for allegedly passing information to Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, which the Telegraph understands brings to seven the number held by Tehran with links to Britain.

They include Mr Ashouri, charity worker Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe, British Council worker Aras Amiri, whose 10 year sentence for spying was upheld today, academic Kameel Ahmady, and three others who have not made their cases public.

Mr Ashouri has been detained since August 2017 but was sentenced this week by a court in Tehran, which accused him of "being connected to Mossad and receiving money from them as an informer." The judiciary did not make public the evidence against him. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran \(CHRI\), No Family Visits or Lawyer Allowed for Detained Anthropologist Kameel Ahmady Two Weeks Into Detention, 29 August 2019](#)

[...] There are currently several Iranian-British citizens and residents imprisoned in Iran, all after prosecutions lacking due process.

On August 27, 2019, Judiciary Spokesman Gholam-Hossein Esmaili said that Iranian-British citizen Anousheh Ashouri, a businessman who has been imprisoned since 2017, had been sentenced to 12 years in prison allegedly for spying for Israel's Mossad intelligence agency and receiving 33,000 euros (\$36,600 USD) in illicit funds.

[...] On August 18, 2019, Iran's Appeals Court upheld a 10-year prison sentence against British Council employee Aras Amiri for "forming and organizing a network for the purpose of overthrowing the Islamic Republic." [...]

The government made few attempts to investigate allegations of deaths that occurred after or during torture or other physical abuse, after denying detainees medical treatment in 2019

❖ [Arab News, Deaths in Iran's notorious prisons on the rise, 16 June 2019](#)

[...] Iranian President Hassan Rouhani continues to project himself as a defender of human and women's rights, while evidence on the ground points to the opposite being true.

The number of political prisoners being found dead in suspicious circumstances in Iran's prisons is on the rise. The latest incident was the case of political prisoner Alireza Shirmohammadali, who was reportedly stabbed to death in the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary last week. A source told the Center for Human Rights in Iran that "prisoners in the ward said he had been stabbed so many times that he died before the prison guards got to the scene."

[...] The Islamic Republic is obliged to keep prisoners in different sections based on the severity of their crimes and their prior records. Article 69 of the prisons organization's regulations states that: "All convicts, upon being admitted to walled prisons or rehabilitation centers, will be separated based on the type and duration of their sentence, prior record, character, morals and behavior, in accordance with decisions made by the Prisoners Classification Council." But Shirmohammadali was with inmates who had been convicted of severe violent crimes, such as murder.

[...] The regime generally brushes off the deaths of detainees and prisoners as suicides without providing any credible evidence. Such deaths in police custody or prison appear to have become the norm in Iran.

[...] It should be noted that these are only the cases of deaths and suicides that have been reported by the Iranian authorities. The actual number of people dying in Iranian prisons is most likely much higher.

The regime claims that its prisons are kept in good condition in order to protect the prisoners' human rights. The authorities also often give prison tours to foreign politicians and diplomats, but these are mainly PR stunts because the locations shown off on the tours are cherry-picked. According to Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, Iran's prisons are overcrowded, unhygienic and violent.

Prisoners generally do not have access to safe drinking water, medical care, food or fresh air, and they are exposed to infectious disease. Denying access to lawyers, being forced to confess, and being subjected to systematic torture are among the other methods practiced across Iran's prisons.

In a nutshell, more and more people are being killed in Iran's prisons. This should cause alarm in the international community and particularly the UN Human Rights Council, whose duty it is to prevent such atrocities and promote human rights. Instead of appeasing the Iranian regime, the EU must also hold Tehran accountable. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Secretary-General, 2 August 2019](#)

[...] The prosecution of the environmentalists occurred after Kavous Seyed-Emami, the founder of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, died in custody in January 2018. There is no indication that an investigation has been conducted into his death.

[...] 76. The Secretary-General urges the Government to repeal laws authorizing the use of torture and ill-treatment as a form of punishment and to ensure that prompt, thorough and effective investigations are undertaken by independent and impartial bodies into all deaths in custody and reports of torture or other ill-treatment, and that those responsible are held accountable. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Iran: World turning blind eye to crisis of mass enforced disappearance, 28 August 2019](#)

[...] The Iranian authorities' continued failure to disclose the fate and whereabouts of thousands of political dissidents who were forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in secret during Iran's 1988 prison massacres has sparked a crisis that for decades has been largely overlooked by the international community, said Amnesty International in the lead-up to the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on 30 August.

[...] The Iranian authorities have an obligation under international law to investigate these ongoing crimes and to provide victims with truth, justice and reparations. They should involve independent experts in exhuming and identifying the remains, including through DNA analysis, return the remains of deceased victims to their families and allow the families to conduct commemorations and dispose of those remains according to their own beliefs, religion or culture.

In any case of a death, the authorities have a duty to issue a death certificate, setting out accurately the date, location and cause of death. However, for victims of the secret extrajudicial killings of 1988 this has not happened in thousands of cases. [...]

- ❖ [Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies \(CIHRS\), Joint CSO letter calling on UN member states to support the resolution on human rights in Iran at the UN General Assembly, 11 December 2019](#)

[...] In 2019 alone, torture may have caused or contributed to the death in custody of at least two people in detention. [...]

- ❖ [Prison Insider, Iran: family of murdered Iranian prisoner demands prison officials be put on trial, 25 August 2019](#)

[...] The family of Alireza Shir Mohammad Ali, a 21-year-old Iranian political activist serving an eight-year sentence who was murdered by a death-row inmate being housed in the same wing - despite his protests that he was being kept next to dangerous criminals charged with murder, rape and burglary - is insisting that Iranian officials should also be brought to justice regarding his death.

Ali was stabbed over thirty times on June 10 allegedly by two inmates. The main assailant has been identified as death-row inmate Hamidreza Shoja'ei Zavareh, who is now continuing to serve out his sentence in the the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary (GTCP), according to a Radio Farda report.

The Iranian courts have sentence Zavareh to the punishment of qisas or an "eye for an eye" according to ancient Sharia Law, as well as the Code of Hammurabi. Authorities may be using the verdict to turn attention away from the Islamic Republic's alleged complicity with the altercation, as well as human rights violation within the prison itself. According to Iranian State Prison Article 69, officials are supposed to divide prisoners according to the severity of their convictions.

"We demanded the director-general of the prisons, the GTCP warden, and the officer in charge of the prison at the time of the crime" to be prosecuted, Ali's legal counsel Mohammad Hadi Erfanian told state-run IRNA news.

"I don't understand why he was transferred to GTCP, as the law stipulates separation of prisoners (based on the severity of the charges)" the attorney said. * "The GTCP warden, the chief guard at the time of the crime, and other officials of the detention center must be held accountable." *

Most political dissidents are housed in Evin Prison, as opposed to the infamously dangerous GTCP.

The unnamed accomplice has been sentenced to 25 years for "paying blood money," Judiciary's spokesman Gholam Hossein Esmaeili said on July 23. Activists maintain that this was an execution ordered by Iranian intelligence, which recruited the two alleged murderers to kill the Iranian dissident.

Erfanian told ILNA, citing Ali's mother, that the judiciary head can not "ignore her son's spilled blood," or the suspicious circumstances surrounding his death.

"Authorities should not keep a political prisoner in a ward where thieves, murderers and smugglers are kept, to prevent such accidents," Ali Motahari said to local news outlets, according to Radio Farda. The murder prompted protests and calls on social media for judicial reform, citing the department's incompetence. [...]

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)

[...] Another environmentalist arrested at the time, Kavous Seyed Emami, a Canadian-Iranian professor and environmentalist, died in detention in February 2018.

While Iranian authorities claimed that he committed suicide, they have not conducted an impartial investigation into his death and placed a travel ban on his wife, Maryam Mombeini, until October. [...]

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] 66. On the basis of the present report, the Secretary-General provides the recommendations set out below. The Secretary-General:

[...] (c) Urges the Government to repeal laws authorizing the use of torture and ill-treatment as a form of punishment and to ensure that prompt, thorough and effective investigations are undertaken by independent and impartial bodies into all deaths in custody and reports of torture or other ill-treatment and that those responsible are held accountable. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran \(CHRI\), Evin Prison Sees Inmate Transfers, Construction as Authorities Prep for More Protest Crackdowns, 13 February 2020](#)

[...] At least five people who were detained in connection with the state's crackdown on protests in November 2018 died under suspicious circumstances in prisons throughout the country, according to research by CHRI.

In January of that year, Iranian Canadian academic and conservationist Kavous Seyed-Emami also died suddenly while held for interrogations in Evin Prison.

To date, no Iranian official has been charged or held accountable for those deaths. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iran: Review Of 2019, 18 February 2020](#)

[...] Torture may have caused or contributed to the death in custody of several people. In September, Javad Khosravianian's family was informed he had died in custody following his arrest several days earlier in Khorrambid, a county in Fars province. He was reported to be fit and well prior to his arrest. The head of the provincial justice department ordered an investigation into his death. There were reports that several people died in custody following their arrests during the November protests. [...]

UNSR Jahangir reported in 2019 that authorities sometimes threatened prisoners after accusing them of contacting her office

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] Journalists and media workers

25. The Special Rapporteur continued to receive reports of arrests and intimidation of journalists and media workers both inside and outside the country. Staff of the BBC Persian service and their families have continued to suffer from long-standing harassment and persecution by the Iranian authorities, including personal and gendered attacks through social media, in particular against female BBC Persian staff. Besides the impact of the asset freeze, they have also more recently reportedly experienced reprisals as a result of engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms. This has allegedly involved family members of a staff member being warned by Iranian officials about participating in United Nations advocacy work; Iranian officials following BBC Persian staff after their address to the Human Rights Council and warning them that raising their case at the United Nations was considered "anti-Iranian"; and Iranian officials monitoring their movements and advocacy work, even in private meetings. [...]

Basij units in 2019 engaged in repression of civilians accused of violating the country's strict moral code, without formal guidance or supervision from superiors

❖ [Iran Human Rights Monitor \(HRM\), Iran deploys 2,000 new morality police units to counter "improper hijab", 9 June 2019](#)

[...] Iran has introduced 2,000 new morality police units in Gilan Province, northern Iran, to issue "verbal and physical" warnings to the locals to counter what the regime officials call an "increasing defiance" of the compulsory wearing of hijabs.

Mohammad Abdollahpour, the commander of the Gilan Quds Force, announced on June 4 that a new "chapter of promoting virtue and prohibiting vice" had started in the northern province.

"The Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) in Gilan Province, alongside the Basij and other forces, will be involved in measures aimed at "Promotion of virtue and prevention of vice," said Abdollahpour.

“The issue of ‘chastity and hijab’ (attire rules) are no ordinary matters. In fact, they are considered political and security dossiers for the country... The enemy is focusing on encouraging our people into a Western lifestyle.”

The commander of the IRGC branch in Gilan Province claimed “bad hijab” or mal-veiling warnings have been issued in more than 28,000 cases across the province. He also said the IRGC Basij have dispatched “around 22,000 people in Gilan’s neighborhoods” in their weekly patrols.

It would seem that this new wave of crackdown against civil liberties is linked to the “Razavion” patrols announced by Iran’s Police Chief in early May.

“An agreement has been reached between the police and the Basij Organization in the context of further engagement and cooperation on the launch of the Razavion Patrol,” Hossein Ashtari told IRNA News Agency on May 8.

Meanwhile, the commander of the State Security Force of Gilan, Mohammad Reza Es’haqi, also announced that 28,238 improperly veiled women had been dealt with since the beginning of this year. He said the patrols had guided 2,321 improperly veiled women towards moral security and obtained written commitments from them. They said legal cases had been filed against 64 women with the Justice Department. [...]

❖ [War on the Rocks, Knuckling Down Under Maximum Pressure: Iran’s Basij In Transition, 10 July 2019](#)

[...] The Basij also deployed medical practitioners to similar neighborhoods and rural areas to visit impoverished people and provide them with medication. The most visible plan, however, was the creation of morality patrolling in each neighborhood. These mobile patrols are organized by neighborhood, with volunteers patrolling all day. Before these reforms, the Basij would only have a few checkpoints in a given city. Under this plan, Basij members patrol their designated neighborhoods, impose control, and fight theft, narcotics, and hooliganism. [...]

2. Section 2. *Respect for Civil Liberties*

2.2. Improvements

2.2.1. Improvements in 2017, all repeated in 2018 and 2019

Internal movement restrictions beyond migrants and women in 2017

❖ [Radio Farda, Iran's Sunni Leader Says Discrimination Is A Big 'Problem', 12 November 2017](#)

[...] The de facto leader of Iran’s Sunnis, Zahedan’s Prayer Leader Molavi (Mawlana) Abdola-Hamid has again complained of “discrimination and inequality”.

He has reiterated that Sunnis do not get high level government jobs and he is personally under travel restrictions. He also says that there are “no written laws” on such matters.

In an interview published by state run Iranian Students News Agency, ISNA, on Saturday, November 11 [2017], the charismatic Sunni clergy has insisted that there is no oral or written order barring him from travelling around.

But when he travels, Molavi Abdol Hamid says, security and intelligence forces interfere and they even create problems for his hosts.

Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, CHRI, had recently reported that Molavi Abdol Hamid has been barred from traveling, except to the capital, Tehran.

It is also reported that Sunni leaders from different parts of Iran are barred to visit his stronghold, Zahedan. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement is restricted, particularly for women and perceived opponents of the regime [...]

Many journalists and activists have been prevented from leaving the country. In October 2017, it was reported that authorities had tightened movement restrictions on former president Khatami, banning him from attending public events and meeting with officials and students in Iran. Four members of the family of former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, including his daughter, were reportedly banned from traveling outside the country during the year. [...]

Internal movement restrictions beyond migrants and women in 2018

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Rouhani's Citizens' Rights Charter: A Harmful Distraction, May 2018](#)

[...] Freedom of movement

Maryam Mombeini, wife of Iranian-Canadian academic and environmentalist Kavous Seyed-Emami who died under highly suspicious circumstances in Evin Prison in February 2018, was prevented from leaving Iran after she tried to board a plane to Canada.⁵¹ [...]

51 "Seyed-Emami Family: Iran is Trying to Prevent Us From Rebuilding Our Lives," Center for Human Rights in Iran, March 8, 2018 <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/03/statement-seyed-emami-brothers-demand-iranian-government-allow-their-mother-to-join-them-in-canada-march/>

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Article 33 of the Constitution states that no one can be banished from their place of residence, prevented from living in the place of their choice, or compelled to reside in a given locality, except in cases provided by law. In practice, the government has placed some restrictions on internal movement. Certain groups, including registered refugees and individuals subject to security monitoring, are prevented from travelling to certain provinces without permission.

Iranians can and do relocate for a variety of reasons, with many rural Iranians moving to major cities in search of employment. Internal relocation is generally easier for men and family groups than for single women, who are likely to face official and societal harassment for travelling alone, particularly in rural areas. Certain groups, including Kurds, religious minorities, Baha'i, and those evading military service, are less able than other Iranians to relocate internally. The nationwide capacity of the centrally-organised state security services means that an individual facing adverse official attention is unlikely to escape this by internally relocating. However, men facing adverse attention from non-state actors may be able to escape through internal relocation, depending on individual circumstance. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] G1. Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? 1 / 4

Freedom of movement is restricted, particularly for women and perceived opponents of the regime. [...] Many journalists and human rights activists have also been barred from traveling abroad. [...]

Internal movement restrictions beyond migrants and women in 2019

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)

[...] Another environmentalist arrested at the time, Kavous Seyed Emami, a Canadian-Iranian professor and environmentalist, died in detention in February 2018.

While Iranian authorities claimed that he committed suicide, they have not conducted an impartial investigation into his death and placed a travel ban on his wife, Maryam Mombeini, until October. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] Freedom of movement is restricted, particularly for women and perceived opponents of the regime. Many journalists and activists have been prevented from leaving the country. [...]

2.3. Omissions

2.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), all omitted in 2018 and some omitted in 2019

The number of journalists and netizens in prison in 2017

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Citizen-journalists increasingly spied on, hounded in Iran, 22 June 2017](#)

[...] According to RSF's tally, at least 94 Internet users, mostly Telegram users, have been arrested since the start of 2017. In most cases, journalists and citizen-journalists arrested by the regime are charged with cyber-crimes or immoral acts. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] Freedom of opinion and expression

41. According to Reporters Without Borders, in June at least 12 journalists and 14 bloggers and social media activists were reportedly either in detention or had been sentenced for their peaceful activities before the Presidential elections, while others were under surveillance and subject to other forms of harassment and intimidation by State authorities. [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2017\), 21 December 2017](#)

[...] 29.11.2017 - Pro-Ahmadinejad website editor detained

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns last week's arrest of Mohammad Hossien Hidari, the editor of Dolat e Bahar, a news website that supports former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's political faction. Arrested on 21 November after being summoned by the Tehran prosecutor's office for culture and media, Hidari is accused inter alia of covering a speech by the controversial former president that was very critical of the judicial system.

The Tehran prosecutor blocked Hidari's proposed release on 100 million toman (90,000 euros) in bail. Access to the website has meanwhile been blocked since the start of November as a power struggle intensifies between the Ahmadinejad faction and those allied with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Several former Ahmadinejad administration officials are currently the targets of judicial proceedings on corruption charges.

[...] 18.10.2017 - Journalist convicted a second time for same "crime"

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the one-year prison sentence that a Tehran revolutionary court passed on 30 September on Souroush Farhadian, a contributor to several pro-reform newspapers and editor of the bimonthly Ro Beh Ro (Opposite). His lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, said it was the second time he has been tried and convicted for the same articles. He has appealed.

[...] 13.10.2017 - Kurdish journalist returned to prison

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns Mokeryan news website journalist Bakhtyar Khoshnam's arrest on 28 September in Saghez (in Iran's Kurdistan province) to serve a three months jail term for being in contact with media based abroad, above all Radio Farda (Radio Free Europe). He was taken directly to the city's main prison to start serving the sentence. Initially arrested in June, he was freed on bail a month later. A Saghez revolutionary court imposed the sentence on 18 July after convicting him of "contact with media opposed to the Islamic Republic."

[...] 14.09.2017 - Detention of two journalists extended by another month

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns a judicial decision to extend the provisional detention of two journalists – Sasan Aghai, the deputy editor of the newspaper Etemad and Yaghma Fashkhami, a reporter for the news website Dideban e Iran – by another month in violation of both Iranian law and international standards. They are also being denied the right to see a lawyer and to be visited by their families. [...]

23.06.2017 - Ahmadinejad's former press adviser arrested

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has learned that Abdol Reza Davari, former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's onetime press adviser, who also once ran the newspaper Shahrvand and the government news agency Irna, was arrested on 31 May in order to serve a three-year jail sentence.

Davari was convicted in September 2013 of "insulting" Supreme Leader AliKhamenei in three comments posted on Facebook and was given a six-year jail sentence that was reduced to three years on appeal. He was arrested two days after posting an open letter criticizing Ebrahim Raisi and Mostafa Pour

Mohammadi, two members of a commission that passed death sentences in 1988 on thousands of political prisoners who refused to renounce their beliefs.

19.04.2017 – Narges Mohammadi begins serving second jail term

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is outraged by the continuing persecution of journalist and leading human rights defender Narges Mohammadi, who has just started serving a ten-year prison sentence on completing a six-year one. She received the ten-year sentence a year after her most recent arrest, on 5 May 2015.

Mohammadi has a long history of persecution by the judicial authorities and has been arrested several times. During her spells out of prison, she has worked closely with Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi at the Centre for Human Rights Defenders.

The six-year sentence followed her arrest at her home on the evening of 10 June 2010. She was convicted two months later on charges of “meeting and plotting against the Islamic Republic,” “anti-government publicity:” and “collaborating with the Centre for Human Rights Defenders” and was given an 11-year jail term that was reduced to six years on appeal in March 2011.

Mohammadi suffered muscular paralysis as a consequence of the heavy-handed interrogation sessions to which she was subjected after her arrest in 2010. As a result, she was paroled in July 2012.

17.03.2017 - More journalists arrested

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) yet again condemns the persecution of journalists in Iran after at least three more were arrested in the past week.

The latest victims include Morad Saghafi, the editor of the magazine *Goft o Gu* (“Dialogue” in Persian), who was arrested at his Tehran home yesterday and was taken to an unknown location. His lawyer, Hamed Zargar, said neither he nor Saghafi’s family have been told why he was arrested.

[...] 15.03.2017 – Former editor gets six-month jail term

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the six-month prison sentence that has been passed on Hossein Karoubi, the former editor of *Etamad Meli* (a newspaper closed since August 2009) for circulating the open letter that his father, Mehdi Karoubi, wrote to President Hassan Rohani.

In the April 2016 letter, published in mostly foreign-based media outlets and on social networks, Mehdi Karoubi asks to be tried before a public court “in order to present the evidence I possess about massive fraud during the 2005 and 2009 presidential elections and to show what has happened to young Iranians in the country’s legal and illegal detention centres.” [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, In crackdown on protests, Iranian regime targets freedom to inform, 3 January 2018](#)

[...] RSF condemns this latest crackdown on the freedom to inform in Iran and calls on Asma Jahangir, the UN special rapporteur for human rights in Iran, and David Kaye, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to intercede quickly to protect Iranians’ fundamental rights [...]

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been on RSF’s list of “Enemies of the Internet” for the past 15 years. The regime fears the circulation of freely and independently reported news and information, which it regards as attempted “subversion.”

As the traditional media are censored and controlled, it is citizen-journalists active on social networks who play a key role in political change in Iran. But trying to thwart the regime’s determination to maintain a blackout on news and information is not without risk. RSF is aware of at least 94 arrests of Internet users in 2017, including Telegram users. Around 20 are currently detained. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4 (+1)

[...] While the authorities continued to arrest and detain journalists during 2017, the number of journalists behind bars has steadily decreased from 45 in December 2012 to 5 in December 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2018 - Iran: Events of 2017, 18 January 2018](#)

[...] Authorities continued to restrict freedoms of expression, association and assembly and prosecuted dozens of journalists, online media activists, and trade unionists on charges of “acting against national

security,” “propaganda against the state,” and “assembly and collusion to disrupt national security,” merely for exercising their legitimate rights.

On August 29, Ali Mojtahedzadeh, the lawyer of six administrators of channels on the social media application Telegram who were close to reformists arrested before the May presidential elections, told Ilna news agency that Branch 15 of Tehran’s revolutionary court had sentenced his clients to three to five years in prison.

In March, the Intelligence Ministry arrested journalists Hengameh Shahidi and Zeinab Karmianian and detained them for nearly five months. They were released on August 29.

Authorities from the Judiciary Intelligence Agency arrested Sasan Aghaei, 34, deputy editor of the reformist daily Etemad, and Yaghma Fashkhami, a journalist for the Didban Iran website, at their offices in Tehran on August 13 and 22, respectively. As of November, authorities have not charged either individual with a recognizable crime. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] 2. Freedom of opinion, expression and the press

33. The Special Rapporteur has continued to receive reports of the arbitrary arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists, media workers, and their families, including during interviews conducted during missions. As at August 2017, Reporters without Borders estimated 27 journalists were imprisoned,³⁷ and that 94 Internet users, most of whom were Telegram users, had been arrested since the beginning of 2017.³⁸ The organisation further documented threats to at least 50 journalists based abroad in the year ending September 2017.³⁹ In April 2017, special procedure mandate holders raised concerns following the arrest and detention of eight journalists, members of political groups, social activists, and film producers.⁴⁰ In its reply, the Government denied the concerns raised.⁴¹

34. In the course of her missions, the Special Rapporteur also met individuals working for the Persian Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation. They described how they and their families in the Islamic Republic of Iran had been harassed by the authorities, and threatened if they continued to work for the Service. Some were arbitrarily arrested, detained, and subjected to travel bans. In August 2017, a court in Tehran issued an injunction banning 152 members of staff, former employees, and contributors from carrying out financial transactions in the country on account of “conspiracy against national security”. Until the time of writing, the injunction has not been lifted and harassment has continued. The Special Rapporteur was disturbed after hearing the accounts of the staff members, observing that many preferred to talk individually and in strict privacy. It has been also reported that some staff members have been photographed while in London to impress upon their families that their relative was being watched. The level of fear that Iranians have whether inside the country or outside of it can be illustrated by the fact that the staff members have endured such intimidation for over twelve months. In October 2017, special procedure mandate holders issued a statement calling upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to cease all legal action against the staff and their families, and to cease the use of repressive legislation against independent journalism.⁴² [...]

37 See www.rsf-persan.org/article17644.html.

38 “Citizen-journalists increasingly spied on, hounded in Iran”, Reporters Without Borders: <https://rsf.org/en/news/citizen-journalists-increasingly-spied-hounded-iran>.

39 See <https://rsf.org/en/news/how-iran-tries-control-news-coverage-foreign-based-journalists>.

40 Communication IRN 10/2017 available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=23052>.

41 Government reply dated 26 July 2017 available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=64436>.

42 www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22314&LangID=E.

The number of journalists and netizens in prison in 2018

❖ [Committee to Protect Journalists, On the table: Why now is the time to sway Rouhani to meet his promises for press freedom in Iran, 22 May 2018](#)

[...] Iran’s revolving-door policy of jailing critical journalists while temporarily releasing others on furlough continued into Rouhani’s presidency, even as the overall number of journalists in prison declined because sentences imposed in the post-2009 crackdown expired. At the time of CPJ’s last prison census, the

number behind bars in Iran was the lowest in a decade, but journalists say the figure belies the reality that those reporting critically still face harassment and intimidation. [...]

As of May 1 [2018], CPJ was aware of at least three journalists currently in jail for their work, including Iraj Jamshidi of Asia News, and Reza Entessari and Kasra Nouri, reporters with the Sufi news website Majzooban-e-Noor, who were arrested on February 19. Nouri is in poor health, according to reports.

[...] At least eight Telegram administrators were arrested or briefly detained between December 28, 2017 and late January for their channels' coverage of the protests, which authorities claimed "fomented chaos," according to reports. [...]

❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), Iran: An Overview of Human Rights Abuses September – October 2018, 29 October 2018](#)

[...] Freedoms of thought and expression were also widely restricted over the past 30 days.

Arrests: Arrestees in this category included a Shiraz city council member, Ahmad Alinejad and his wife, at least 20 residents of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, writer and Mashad resident Abbas Vahedian, Zahra Majd in Isfahan, and six individuals involved in the Freedom Movement of Iran, arrested in Nain (near Isfahan).

Convictions: Leila Mir-Ghaffari was sentenced to 2 years in prison, Ejlal Ghavami to 8 months, Hassan Abbasi to 35 months (five 7-months prison terms), an Arak resident to 1 year and 30 lashings, Hamidreza Amini to 11 years. Women who protested this past August were sentenced from 6 months to 1 year in prison, Mohammad Mahdaviifar was sentenced to 4 years and 6 months, a dual-nationality defendant faces 8 years and 6 months in prison, Soheil Arabi faces 3 years in prison, 3 years in exile, and a fine; the prison sentence of Abdolreza Ghanbari was increased to 15 years, Alireza Moeinian was sentenced to 8 months in prison; a new 6-month sentence extended the prison term of Saeed Shirzad through 2020; six Arak residents arrested amid the January protests were collectively sentenced to a total of 6 years in prison and 444 lashings, and a group of political activists in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province were sentenced to exile and prison terms ranging from 8 to 18 years.

Eleven civil activists, including Mohammad Najafi, Ali Bagheri, and Abbas Safari were sentenced to 3 years in prison and 74 lashings. Behzad Ali Bakhshi, Mohammad Yaghoubi, Yousef Shirilard, Neda Yousefi, Davoud Rahimi, Massoud Ajlou and Mohammad Torabi were sentenced to 1 year in prison and 74 lashings, suspended over five years. Kian Sadeghi faces 3 years in prison and 74 lashings, suspended over five years. Morteza Nazari was sentenced to a total of 13 years in prison, 2 years of exile, and a fine; Zahra Zare Seraji, on the same convictions, to 8 years in prison and a fine. Their co-defendants Ali Kabirmehr and Ali Bazazadeh were both sentenced to 13 years in prison and exile. [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, RSF writes to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights about journalists detained in Iran, 20 December 2018](#)

[...] Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has registered at least 40 arrests of journalists in Iran since the start of 2018. After paying exorbitant sums of money as bail, some were released conditionally pending trial, but 13 of them have been given sentences ranging from three to 26 years in prison. A total of 29 professional and non-professional journalists are currently detained. Iran is one of the world's most repressive countries as regards media freedom and is ranked 164th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2018 World Press Freedom Index.

[...] An international NGO that defends and promotes journalism, RSF [Reporters Without Borders] is very concerned about the health of journalists and citizen-journalists held without a fair trial and denied the medical care needed to treat sometimes very worrying illnesses. Five members of the Majzooban Noor website (the only independent source of news about Iran's Sufi religious minority of Gonabadi dervishes) – Reza Entesari, Kasra Nouri, Mohammad Sharifi Moghadam and the non-professional journalists Sina Entesari and Amir Nouri – were transferred to communal dormitories on 13 November 2018 after 110 days in isolation in Greater Tehran ("Fashapuyeh") prison, Tehran's biggest detention centre. During all this time, their families were denied any news of them on the intelligence ministry's orders. Prison officials had refused to tell the families where these journalists were being held.

Arrested on the night of 19 February, during clashes between police and members of this Sufi community in the north Tehran district of Pasdaran, these journalists refused to participate in an unfair trial and were sentenced in absentia to a combined total of 64 years in prison and 444 lashes.

Saleholldin Moradi, Reza Entesari and his brother, the citizen-journalist Sina Entesari, were sentenced to seven years in prison. Mohammad Sharifi Moghadam, and another member of its editorial committee,

Kasra Nouri, were given 12-year terms, while another member of the editorial staff, Mostafa Abdi, was sentenced to 26 years in prison. Three women who worked for the website, Sepideh Moradi, Avisha Jalaleddin and Shima Entesari, were previously sentenced by a Tehran revolutionary court on 10 July to five years in prison on charges of “meeting and plotting against national security.”

RSF points out that article 48 of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s code of criminal procedure gives defendants the right to request the presence of a lawyer as soon as they are detained. Exception is made for certain categories of defendants listed in article 302. They include those charged with theft, drug-related offences, organized crime-related offences or crimes against national and international security. They also include journalists. Defendants on this list “must choose a lawyer from the list confirmed by the head of the judicial system.” This is a flagrant violation of articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights and article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also constitutes a grave violation of article 35 of the Iranian constitution.

The Majzooaban Noor website journalists are not the only victims of arbitrary arrest and the Iranian justice system’s iniquities. Hengameh Shahidi, the editor of the Paineveste blog, was sentenced to 12 years and nine months in prison at the end of a trial behind closed doors on 1 December 2018. Her clearly intimidated lawyer, Mostafa Turk Hamedani, told the Iranian state news agency IRNA that, “given the confidentiality of the proceedings and the sensitive nature of the case,” he could not disclose details about the court’s verdict. Arrested on 25 June 2018, this journalist was accused of “insulting the head of the judicial system.” She has been held in isolation and denied her basic rights ever since, including the right to visits and medical care.

Mohammad Hossein Heidari, the editor of the Dolat e Bahar news website, was sentenced to three years in prison on 9 December 2018 on charges of “publishing false information designed to trouble public opinion” and anti-government “propaganda.” He has been detained ever since his arrest during a raid on his home on 22 May 2018. His lawyer said he has appealed against his conviction. A supporter of former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, he was already convicted on the same charges in September, when he was sentenced to 18 months in prison, a fine of 4 million toman and a two-year ban on practicing online journalism.

Saeed Malekpour is another victim of Iranian judicial persecution. He was a website designer living in Canada when he was arrested while visiting his family in Iran in 2008. After his arrest, he was held incommunicado in Tehran’s Evin prison for more than a year and was tortured, according to the information obtained by RSF. He was sentenced to death in November 2010 on a charge of creating “pornographic” websites and “insulting Islam’s sacred principles,” because he had designed a photo-sharing app that was used without his knowledge to transmit pornographic images. His sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. After suffering a heart attack, he was taken to Tehran’s Taleghani Hospital on 22 October 2018 but was returned to his prison cell just two days later against the advice of the hospital’s doctors. During his ten years in prison, he has never been granted a furlough, whether to visit a doctor or a relative, although Iranian law provides for this.

A journalist and spokesperson for Iran’s Centre for Human Rights Defenders, Narges Mohammadi has been held since May 2015. Sentenced to a total of 16 years in prison on several charges, she is to serve ten years under a 2015 law stipulating that those convicted serve only the sentence for the most serious charge. Now aged 46, she is being denied proper medical attention although very ill. After ten days in hospital, she was returned to prison on 28 August 2018 although still in very poor health. As well as being illegally denied the medical care she needs for the past three years, she has also been denied the right to furloughs although, under Iranian law, all detainees are supposed to get one day of leave a month.

Soheil Arabi, a recipient of RSF’s Press Freedom Prize in the citizen-journalist category in 2017, is a leading example of the regime’s inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners of conscience, including professional and non-professional journalists. After his arrest in Tehran in December 2013, he was isolated and mistreated for two months to force him to confess to involvement in creating a Facebook network that criticized the government and “blasphemed” Islam. A judicial saga ensued in which he was initially sentenced to three years in prison, 30 lashes and a heavy fine. A few months later, he was retried and sentenced to death, but the death sentence was eventually overturned and, in September 2015, he was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison instead.

His wife was detained for eight days in July 2017 and has been harassed and threatened ever since. Arabi’s health has deteriorated alarmingly after repeated hunger strikes and the inhuman and degrading treatment to which he has been subjected by the authorities in Greater Tehran prison. The aim of the judicial system’s persecution of both him and his family has been to get him to stop voicing criticism, even

from behind bars. On 18 July 2018, he was given an additional six-year jail sentence for “anti-government propaganda and “insulting Islam’s sacred symbols” in his prison writings.

More and more Iranian prisoners, including journalists, are putting their lives at risk by going on hunger strike in protest against the conditions and mistreatment to which they are being subjected, or to press their demands for decent medical treatment. [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2018\), 28 December 2018](#)

[...] 27.12.2018 - A Telegram journalist jailed for a year, another given 74 lashes

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the latest cases of persecution of journalists in Iran, this time involving the editors of news channels on the Telegram messaging service in the northwestern province of West Azerbaijan.

In Urmia, the provincial capital, Salehaldin Ranjbar was arrested on 23 December to begin serving the one-year prison sentence he received in August, which was confirmed on appeal. The editor of the Oromieh Dang (Voice of Urmia) Telegram channel, Ranjbar was originally arrested a year ago but was released on bail of 200 million toman (18 000 euros) after two weeks. He was convicted of “inciting revolt” for covering protests about a 13-year-old school student who was sexually harassed.

Mohamed Hossein Sodagar, the editor of the Sozbasnews channel, was flogged in the city of Khoy on 24 December. He was given 74 lashes, the sentence passed on him in 2017 for allegedly defaming a member of the municipal council during the 2017 election campaign, when Sozbasnews ran a story proving that the councillor’s claims to have been awarded a doctorate with distinction were false. After the councillor filed a defamation complaint, Sodagar was summoned to a hearing in May 2017, but the hearing was postponed because the plaintiff did not turn up. Sodagar learned two months later that the court had sentenced him to 74 lashes in his absence.

Regarded as a cruel and inhuman punishment, flogging is banned by international legislation, including the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, which Iran has still not ratified.

24.12.2018 - Journalist held after covering workers’ strike

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the detention of Assal Mohammadi, a citizen-journalist and defender of workers’ rights, who was arrested by intelligence ministry agents on 4 December after a search of her Tehran home. A student at the Islamic Azad University and member of the editorial board of the student newspaper Game, Mohammadi had written articles for various news websites and tweeted about strikes by workers at the Haft-Tappeh Sugarcane company, who demonstrated for 20 days outside the office of the governor of the southern district of Shush to demand more wages. The authorities have yet to say why she was arrested and where she is being held.

10.12.2018 – Second jail sentence in four months for website editor

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the three-year jail sentence that a Tehran revolutionary court has just passed on Mohammad Hossein Heidari, the editor of the Dolat e Bahar news website, bringing the combined prison sentence he has received in the past four months to four and a half years. Heidari was again convicted on charges of “publishing false information designed to trouble public opinion” and anti-government “propaganda,” his lawyer, Hamed Khaki Mojarad, reported yesterday, announcing that he plans to appeal. A supporter of the controversial former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Heidari was released after an initial arrest in December 2017. Arrested again at his home on 22 May, he has been held ever since and was sentenced in September to 18 months in prison, a fine of 4 million toman and a two-year ban on practicing online journalism on the same charges.

03.12.2018 - Hengameh Shahidi gets long jail term for criticizing judicial chief

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the extremely long sentence of 12 years and nine months in prison that Hengameh Shahidi, the editor of the Paineveste blog, received at the end of a trial behind closed doors on 1 December. She has also been banned from joining political groups, any online or media activity, and leaving the country.

[...] On 15 May, a few days after posting several tweets about her time in detention last year, Shahidi tweeted that she had been summoned by the Tehran prosecutor’s office for culture and media for “insulting the head of the judicial system.” She was arrested as she left hospital on 25 June and has been held in isolation and denied her basic rights ever since. When first arrested in March 2017, she went on several hunger strikes in protest against her detention and against the conditions in which she was held, despite being very ill. She was finally released the following August.

[...] 26.10.2018 - Journalist arrested for writing “death” instead of “martyrdom”

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the arrest of Poyan Khoshhal, a journalist with the Tehran daily Ebtekar, on 24 October for referring in a 22 October article to the “death” instead of the “martyrdom” of Husayn ibn Ali, the Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, also known as the “third Shia imam.”

[...] 25.10.2018 - Jailed citizen-journalist Saeed Malekpour denied medical care

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the Iranian judicial system’s persecution of Saeed Malekpour, a citizen-journalist who has been in prison for the past ten years. After suffering a heart attack, he was taken to Tehran’s Taleghani Hospital on 22 October but was returned to his prison cell just two days later against the advice of the hospital’s doctors. During his ten years in prison, he has never been granted a furlough, whether to visit a doctor or a relative, although Iranian law provides for this.

Malekpour was a website designer living in Canada when he was arrested in 2008 while visiting his family in Iran. After his arrest, he was held incommunicado in Tehran’s Evin prison and was tortured, according to the information obtained by RSF. He was sentenced to death in November 2010 on a charge of creating “pornographic” websites and “insulting Islam’s sacred principles,” because he had created a photo-sharing app that was used without his knowledge to transmit pornographic images. His sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.

25.10.2018 - Citizen-journalist freed after eight months in prison

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has learned that Poriya Nour, a citizen-journalist working with the Sufi Majzooban Noor website, was released on 19 October. Nour was arrested along with other journalists who work for the site on the night of 19 February, during clashes between police and members of the Sufi religious community of Gonabadi dervishes in the north Tehran district of Pasdaran.

17.10.2018 - Journalists missing in Tehran prison for past 50 days

The families of five detainees who worked for the Majzooban Noor website – journalists Reza Entesari, Kasra Nouri and Mohammad Sharifi Moghadam and citizen-journalists Sina Entesari and Amir Nouri – have had no news of them for the past 50 days. They were separated from other detainees at the start of September when riot police broke up a protest in Tehran prison about conditions, especially the degrading conditions for women.

Majzooban Noor is the only independent source of news and information about the Sufi religious community of Gonabadi dervishes in Iran.

Since the start of September, the intelligence ministry and the prison officials have refused to tell the families where they are holding the five journalists and citizen-journalists and three other members of this religious community, Mehdi Eskandari, Hessam Moieni and Morteza Kangarlou. All were arrested on the night of 19 February during clashes between police and members of this community in the north Tehran district of Pasdaran.

RSF calls on Javaid Rehman, the UN’s new special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, to intercede on behalf of these journalists, who were arrested arbitrarily and convicted without due process.

[...] 04.09.2018 - Detained human rights lawyer’s husband arrested

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the arrest of Reza Khandan, the husband of Nasrin Sotoudeh, a prominent human rights lawyer who defends journalists. Intelligence ministry agents arrested him outside their Tehran home today, 12 weeks after Sotoudeh herself was arrested on 13 June.

[...] 29.08.2018 - Narges Mohammadi back in prison after 10 days in hospital

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is very concerned about the detained journalist and human rights activist Narges Mohammadi, who has been returned to prison after ten days in hospital although still in very poor health.

[...] As well as a journalist, the 46-year-old Mohammadi was the spokesperson of Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi’s Centre for Human Rights Defenders. Sentenced to a total of 16 years in prison on several charges, she is officially supposed to spend ten years in prison under a law adopted in the summer of 2015, under which those convicted serve only the sentence for the most serious charge.

[...] 18.07.2018 - Another six years for Soheil Arabi, 18 months for his wife

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is outraged by the additional six-year jail sentence that the blogger Soheil Arabi, winner of the 2017 RSF Press Freedom Prize in the citizen-journalist category, has received from a Tehran revolutionary court, and by the 18-month jail sentence imposed on his wife, Nastaran Naimi.

The court convicted Arabi of “anti-government propaganda and “insulting Islam’s sacred symbols” in his prison writings, and convicted his wife of “assisting” in these crimes and because she circulated information about the conditions in which her husband has been held for the past four and a half years.

After his arrest in Tehran in December 2013, Arabi was mistreated and subjected to solitary confinement for two months to force him to confess to involvement in creating a Facebook network that “blasphemed” Islam and criticized the government. A long judicial saga ensued in which he was initially sentenced to three years in prison, 30 lashes and a heavy fine. A few months later, he was retried and sentenced to death, but the death sentence was eventually overturned and he was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison instead. His wife was detained for eight days July 2017 and has been harassed and threatened ever since

The health of Arabi, now held in “Great Tehran” prison, is a source of great concern because of his repeated hunger strikes and the inhuman and degrading treatment to which he has been subjected by the prison authorities. The aim of the judicial system’s persecution of both him and his family has been to get him to stop voicing criticism, even from behind bars.

16.07.2018 – Newspaper reporter arrested over tweet

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the arrest of Amir Hossein Miresmaili, a journalist with the daily newspaper Jahan Sanat (Industry World), on 12 July because of a tweet about assistance provided by the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation to Palestinians in Gaza during the month of Ramadan. This powerful foundation is one of Iran’s most important charities and handles enormous sums of money. Overseen by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, it has sections in various countries including Palestine, Somalia and Afghanistan, and operates as a state within the state.

Miresmaili’s offending tweet confirmed a report that Gazan citizens had been assisted with funds originally gathered by the foundation to help Iranians. The foundation’s activities abroad are much criticized in Iran, where, according to official data, 20 million people live under the poverty threshold. Miresmaili was previously arrested on 23 April over a tweet alleged by the authorities to constitute an “insult to the sacredness of Islam.” After being held for 24 days, he was released on bail pending trial.

12.07.2018 – Citizen-journalist sentenced to long jail term, 74 lashes

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the harsh sentence that the citizen-journalist Sadeq Qeisari received from a Tehran revolutionary court on 26 June. He was sentenced to seven years in prison, 74 lashes and a two-year ban on journalistic activity and international travel after completing his jail term. Qeisari was arrested when the authorities broke up a protest by Gonabadi dervishes in the north Tehran district of Pasdaran on 20 February. Like many other citizen-journalists, he has been given a harsh sentence although he was there just to cover the protest.

[...] 19.06.2018 - Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh’s arrest

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh, a famous women’s rights lawyer who has defended many journalists and citizen-journalists and who was awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2012. Sotoudeh was arrested at her home on 13 June by plainclothesmen from the Tehran prosecutor’s office and was taken to Evin prison.

In a brief phone call to her family two days later, she said she was being prosecuted for “defending the Avenue of the Revolution girls,” meaning the young women who have been taking to Tehran’s streets since December 2017 in protest against the obligation to wear a hijab in public. She is also accused of relaying their campaign calls to the media and on social networks.

Sotoudeh was previously arrested in September 2010 for criticizing arbitrary and illegal arrests and for calling on the regime to respect the rights of its victims, including the journalists and citizen-journalists it wanted to silence. She was sentenced to six years in prison but was freed three years later as a result of international pressure. Since then, she has continued to criticize human rights violations including, in interviews for international media, a provision in the new code of criminal procedure under which prisoners of conscience must choose a lawyer from a list compiled by the head of the judicial system.

12.06.2016 - Judicial persecution of three citizen-journalists

Without any legal grounds, the intelligence ministry has blocked the conditional release of three young citizen-journalists – Mohammad Mohajer, Alireza Tavakoli and Mohammad Mehdi Zaman Zadeh – who have been held since September 2016. Convicted in April 2017 of “insulting [Supreme Leader] Ali Khamenei and Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic’s founder,” “insulting what is most sacred in Islam” and anti-government propaganda, they were given 12-year jail sentences that were reduced to five years on appeal.

According to the information obtained by RSF, harassment of the three detainees has intensified during the past two months in Tehran’s Evin prison. The prison director has banned them from receiving medicine and clothes, and Mohajer was prevented from leaving.

11.06.2018 - Telegram channel managers facing jail terms

The Iranian judiciary's spokesman, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, announced at a press conference on 27 May that the justice system has requested sentences ranging from 91 days to five years in prison for 14 people who managed news and information channels on the messaging app Telegram. There are other cases in which the prosecution has not yet decided on the sentence it will seek, Ejei added.

They include Hamidreza Amini, who was arrested in December and could be facing a death sentence. As the manager of several Telegram channels, he has already been sentenced to a fine of 4 million tomans on a charge of "publishing false information liable to disrupt public opinion." But, according to his lawyer, he is also charged with "insulting the Prophet of Islam and the Holy Shia Imams" and "insulting government institutions and officials" although the offending comments were posted by subscribers to the channels, not by Amini himself. His trial on these charges is due to begin on 25 June.

RSF has meanwhile also learned that Said Ali Bighi, a citizen-journalist who supports the controversial former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has been sentenced to five years in prison and a two-year ban on social network activity because of his Telegram activities and for "insulting government institutions and officials" in articles and reports posted online.

29.05.2018 -Deep concern about Soheil Arabi's condition

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is extremely concerned about the state of health of Soheil Arabi, an imprisoned photographer who was awarded last year's RSF Press Freedom Prize in the citizen-journalist category. After waiting outside "Great Tehran" prison for five hours yesterday, his mother was told by prison officials that he was not allowed to receive any visits. She finally learned from other detainees that he had been taken to hospital after a suicide attempt. He is now reportedly back in his cell but his family has not yet been given any official information about his condition.

18.05.2018 - Majzooban Noor journalists complete third month in detention

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the appalling way that the Iranian authorities are treating 13 detained journalists and citizen-journalists employed by the independent Sufi news website Majzooban Noor, who will complete their third month of detention this weekend. They continue to be denied their fundamental rights, in violation of Iran's laws and regulations as well as international law.

The ten men – Reza Entesari, Kasra Nouri, Mostafa Abdi, Saleh Moradi, Sina Entesari, Amir Nouri, Mohammad Sharifi Moghadam, Mohammad Reza Darvishi, Abass Dehghan and Poriya Nouri – are being held in Tehran's Evin prison while the three women – Sepideh Moradi, Avisha Jalaedin and Shima Entesari – are now held in the notorious Gerchak women's prison. All of them are being denied the right to visits and the right to medical care.

When arrested on the night of 19 February, they were badly beaten by police and plainclothes militiamen and most of them sustained hand or head fractures. According to the information obtained by RSF, they were then badly tortured by police and intelligence officials at Shahpour police station in south Tehran (which is notorious for torturing ordinary detained suspects) and in Section 209 of Evin prison (the section run by the intelligence ministry).

The authorities have just begun to secretly try them before revolutionary courts on charges of "plotting against national security," "disobeying police orders" and "collaborating with the Majzooban Noor website." They are not being defended by their lawyers at these trials. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Human Rights Situation in Iran – Annual Report 2018, January 2019](#)

[...] In the category of freedom of thought and expression, in 2018, 438 reports have been registered by the Department of Statistics that included 5478 arrested individuals; 132 summonses to the judiciary and security authorities; 9 cases of Internet website filtering, 3 reports of publication banning; 28 cases of conviction for publications; 5 cases of intimidation and threats.

In 2018, 331 arrestees were sentenced to a total of 7442 months of imprisonment, 30 billion and 180 million Rials in financial fines, 2694 lashes, and 7 cases of deprivation from civil rights have been reported in this category.

In the field of Freedom of Expression there has been an increase of 814% in the reports of arrests compared to the previous year. Similarly, sentences issued by the judiciary have increased by 51.3% based on the number of people being tried. [...]

Whether the UN Special Rapporteur mentioned difficulties for freedom of speech and press in 2017 such as content restrictions, intimidation and prosecution of users and limitations on access through intentional slowing of service and filtering as well as mention of the most heavily blocked websites

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] The Special Rapporteur also received reports indicating that the Government continues to place restrictions on access to information by filtering websites, intimidating and prosecuting Internet users, bloggers and social media activists, and throttling Internet speeds. According to those reports, some 5 million websites remain blocked in the country; and the top 500 blocked websites are dedicated to the arts, social issues, news and other popular culture issues. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] 31. During the past three years, the Government reportedly closed seven million web addresses.³¹ These include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the websites of human rights and political opposition groups, amongst others.³² In August 2017, the Supreme Cyberspace Council introduced regulations, which would increase surveillance capabilities, and require social media and messaging platforms to either move their servers to the country or face blocking orders.³³ In October 2017, the Islamic Republic of Iran's oldest social network Cloob was shut down, and social media location sharing platforms Foursquare and Swarm were blocked. Disturbingly, in November 2017, the secretary of the Supreme Cyberspace Council suggested that users would have to "verify" their identity when logging onto the Internet.³⁴ The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to reverse the direction in which these moves point to, noting that access to information underpins the enjoyment of fundamental rights.

32. The Special Rapporteur notes some officials had recently suggested that the ban on accessing Twitter could be lifted.³⁵ In December 2017, President Rouhani stated "We need a secure communication atmosphere for people, not a suppressive one in which people's rights are violated," and that "The Minister of Information and Communications Technology won't put his hand on censorship button".³⁶ The Special Rapporteur hopes that such resolves will be sustained and allow greater freedom of expression and access to information within the country. [...]

31 See <https://persian.iranhumanrights.org/1396/03/seven-million-websites-blocked>.

32 See <https://ooni.torproject.org/post/iran-internet-censorship/>.

33 The Policies and Actions Regarding Organising Social Media Messaging Applications pursuant to SCC regulation published on 7 August 2017.

34 See www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/11/irans-requirement-for-internet-users-to-verify-their-identity-would-further-erode-privacy-rights/.

35 See www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/11/iran-telecommunications-minister-says-hes-looking-into-lifting-the-state-ban-on-twitter/.

36 See <http://president.ir/en/102083> [...]

Whether the UN Special Rapporteur mentioned difficulties for freedom of speech and press in 2018 such as content restrictions, intimidation and prosecution of users and limitations on access through intentional slowing of service and filtering as well as mention of the most heavily blocked websites

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 27 September 2018](#)

[...] E. Freedom of opinion and expression and access to information

24. The protests in early 2018 also highlighted challenges faced by those residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran in enjoying freedom of opinion and expression and access to information. In this context, special procedures mandate holders issued a statement in January expressing concern following the decision to temporarily block several social media platforms, including Instagram and the messaging application Telegram.¹¹ More broadly, a number of major social networking websites, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are currently banned in the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 30 April 2018, a judicial order was issued

stating that Telegram would also be permanently banned on the grounds that it was being used to spread “propaganda” and “pornography” and to incite “terrorist activities”.¹² The Special Rapporteur is of the view that communication applications such as Telegram and Instagram should be seen as tools that enhance the freedom of opinion and expression and access to information as enshrined in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party. In the course of his mandate, the Special Rapporteur intends to seek further information on such issues, including with a view to reviewing the Computer Crimes Law, the Penal Code and the role of the Supreme Cyberspace Council. [...]

11 OHCHR, “Iran: UN experts urge respect for protesters’ rights”.

12 Reporters without Borders for Freedom of Information, “Iranian court imposes total ban on Telegram”, 4 May 2018 [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 30 January 2019](#)

[...] D. Right to freedom of expression and opinion

24. The Special Rapporteur observes increasing limitations placed upon the rights to freedom of opinion and expression. In April 2018, popular social media website Telegram was banned for allegedly “disrupting national unity” and “allowing foreign countries to spy” on the Islamic Republic of Iran.³⁴ In November, the Government proposed a bill which introduced new offences associated with the use of banned online applications.³⁵ In its comments, the Government stated that active social networks such as Telegram “are obliged to register only with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance”.

[...] 30. The Special Rapporteur received reports of arrests and intimidation of journalists and media workers within the country. Journalists outside of the country have also been targeted, such as the staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Persian Service. A collective criminal investigation and a purportedly temporary asset-freezing injunction initiated in 2017 against over 150 staff still remains in place. In some cases, staff members’ families based in the Islamic Republic of Iran have been interrogated and harassed. Staff have also been threatened and defamatory news stories have been circulated on social media about them. The Special Rapporteur reiterates his predecessor’s concerns at such actions and calls upon the Government to cease all legal actions⁴⁴ and harassment against journalists, including the BBC Persian Service staff. In its comments, the Government stated that a number of BBC staff had been acquitted with respect to the asset-freezing injunction while other cases remained open. [...]

34 See <https://rsf.org/en/news/iranian-court-imposes-total-ban-telegram>.

35 See www.isna.ir/news/97082813960/.

[...] 44 See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22314&LangID=E [...]

Whether the UN Special Rapporteur mentioned difficulties for freedom of speech and press in 2019 such as content restrictions, intimidation and prosecution of users and limitations on access through intentional slowing of service and filtering as well as mention of the most heavily blocked websites

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] He is concerned about reports that families of individuals killed by the security forces have been threatened not to speak out. He remains highly concerned about the continuing restrictions on freedom of expression. Although access to the Internet has been restored since it was shut down at the peak of the protests, the policy of intimidation and harassment of journalists and their families has continued.

[...] There are particular concerns that journalists and their families specifically have been threatened and arrested to prevent them from reporting on protests.⁹ Journalists have been strictly ordered not to criticize the government response to the protests and the relatives of journalists working for Farsi-language news outlets based outside of the Islamic Republic of Iran are being put under pressure by the authorities, including by being summoned for interrogation in an attempt to intimidate and silence news reporting by their relatives.

[...] 9. The Supreme National Security Council voted on 16 November 2019 to restrict Internet access, resulting in connectivity rates in the country dropping to 5 per cent of their usual levels.¹³ The Security Emergency Centre of the Ministry of the Interior reportedly stated that it would legally pursue social media users who shared footage of the protests online, and accused some of spreading lies and recycling footage from previous incidents to undermine public confidence and disrupt national security.¹⁴ In some cities, Internet connectivity was reportedly restored by 19 November, but full connectivity was not restored countrywide until 5 December. [...]

9 <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/11/we-know-where-you-live-iran-goes-after-foreign-based-reporters/>; <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/11/iranian-government-dictated-to-local-media-how-to-cover-protests-new-documents-reveal/>.

[...] 13 www.france24.com/en/20191117-internet-restricted-in-protest-hit-iran-report; <https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-iran-amid-fuel-protests-in-multiple-cities-pA25L18b>.

14 www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50444429 [...]

Number of cases of censorship in 2017

❖ [ILGA \(International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association\), State Sponsored Homophobia 2017: A world survey of sexual orientation laws: criminalisation, protection and recognition, May 2017](#)

[...] There are a number of articles within the Press Law that directly impede freedom of expression to do with sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Citizen-journalists increasingly spied on, hounded in Iran, 22 June 2017](#)

[...] Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the increase in Internet censorship and harassment of citizen-journalists in Iran. According to RSF's tally, 94 Internet users, mainly users of the instant messaging service Telegram, have been arrested since the start of the year. More and more journalists are falling victim to the war between different government factions.

[...] Users of Telegram, which is very popular in Iran, are increasingly being targeted. Telegram creator Pavel Durov has said that "Telegram has not entered into any agreements with any government on this planet," and has "no plans to." But statements by Iranian officials seem to belie this claim.

Information and communications technology minister Mahmoud Vaezi told parliament on 7 June: "Rather than block Telegram, which would drive users to turn to another app, we have reached an agreement with those in charge of it to block content of a sexual or anti-religious nature and content condoning violence and terrorism."

A total of 173,000 Telegram accounts have so far been blocked. Vaezi said he had "launched an intelligent filtering that has enabled the verification of 400 million logos and images." He said his ministry did not monitor the content of posts but added that, "in the past three years, at least 7 million addresses and 121 software applications for bypassing filtering have been blocked."

The censorship and persecution, which is officially intended to protect the public from immoral content, has been extended to political and religious content and to websites dedicated to human rights and women's rights.

Abdolsamad Khoramabadi, who heads the committee in charge of identifying unauthorized websites, reported in March 2017 that "more than 18,000 volunteers monitor the Internet and report crimes committed on social networks to the prosecutor's office." [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, How Iran tries to control news coverage by foreign-based journalists, 6 September 2017](#)

[...] How do the Iranian intelligence services pressure Iranian journalists who are working abroad? BBC World Service director Francesca Unsworth shed some light on this when she reported on 15 August that the assets of more than 150 BBC Persian staff, former staff and contributors have been frozen in Iran, preventing them from conducting financial transactions there

This is one of the many methods used by the Iranian authorities since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. However, because of a more conciliatory foreign policy since Hassan Rouhani became president in 2013, the regime has limited its use of direct harassment in favour of more subtle threats.

Nowadays, the families of foreign-based journalists are “politely” summoned to interviews with intelligence officials but the message is still the same: the journalists must “stop collaborating with enemy media” without delay.

In the past year, RSF has learned of ten families of journalists who have been summoned to such interviews, usually with intelligence ministry agents. In all, at least 50 journalists based abroad have been threatened in some way in the same period. At least 16 of them have received death threats.

It is not just BBC Persian employees who are targeted. All international media outlets with Persian-language services are concerned, regardless of the country in which the media are based. Journalists with Radio Farda (Radio Free Europe’s Persian-language section), with such state-funded broadcasters as Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and Radio France Internationale, and privately-owned broadcasters such as Manoto TV and Radio Zamaneh have also been threatened by Iran’s intelligence services or judicial system.

The pressure is sufficiently intimidating that most of the journalists and media representatives contacted by RSF asked not to be identified. A few did however agree to be named.

Intimidation and death threats: Radio Farda director Arman Mostofi said four of his station’s journalists have been the targets of a total of about ten death threats, all of them anonymous.

“These threats are obviously not signed,” Mostofi said. “They sometimes take the form of a comment beneath an article. The journalist may subsequently be contacted in another way but it’s exactly the same message that will be transmitted. Sometimes the message includes information that only members of the intelligence services could know.”

The threats are often explicit. Fahimeh Khezr Heidari, the presenter of a Radio Farda programme called Taboo that has “funny stories and ethnic jokes,” often receives threats aimed at getting her to stop the programme. In mid-February, she found the following message posted in the comments section: “Ms. Khezr Heidari, Monday will be a horrible day for a member of your family because you did not take our last warning seriously. Thank you, my corrupt sister.”

Radio Zamaneh editor in chief Mohammadreza Nikfar said most of his journalists are often the targets of phishing attempts, in which people may be tricked into letting others take over their online identities. But he gave examples of other forms of harassment as well.

“The family of one of our journalists was summoned by intelligence ministry agents,” he said. “After showing articles by him that had been posted on our website, they said: ‘Tell him to stop collaborating with Radio Zamaneh.’ Another journalist, a former prisoner of conscience, has been threatened several times by telephone. They tell him his family will suffer the consequences if he does not return to Iran.”

[...] The pressure is clearly real but it is hard to gauge its effectiveness and its impact on the attitude of the journalists concerned and their reporting. But it does have an impact, according to a former journalist with an international media outlet’s Persian-language section, who asked not to be identified.

“When your father calls and an intelligence ministry agent takes the phone and says, ‘your father is here and we’re talking about you,’ and you know that your family is being harassed and is in danger of being arrested, how can you write freely?” he asked. “After members of my family had been summoned for questioning, I could no longer work as I had before.”

Radio Farda’s Mostofi insists that the station’s *raison d’être* is “not giving in to pressure and resisting self-censorship.” He said he warns journalists about the threats they face and tells them they don’t have to continue. “But 99% of the time, the journalists are determined, and decide to continue their work.”

A journalist with Manoto TV, a privately-owned station based in London that is very popular in Iran, said she gets threats all the time. She said that so far this year she has received a death threat and her family in Iran has been summoned twice for questioning.

Families: an effective pressure point: Harassment of families is a constant threat, even if it is evolving, as the editor in chief of an international media’s Persian-language section explained.

“The pressure on families has declined this year in Tehran but has increased in the provinces,” he said. “The only difference is that the interviews are now more courteous. The agents address families politely. But even if courteous, they still represent a threat.”

Even when they do not have refugee status, most journalists living abroad are exposed to the possibility of being prosecuted on a charge of “collaborating with enemy media” or espionage and of being given a long jail sentence, which prevents them from returning to Iran.

Spouses often encounter problems when visiting Iran. Many have had their passports confiscated on arrival and, to recover them, they have had to go to the intelligence ministry, where they are typically questioned about their partner’s work, their relationship and sometimes their private life.

Parents who want to visit their foreign-based offspring have similar difficulties. When they obtain permission to travel, they are subjected to extensive interrogation on their return.

“While staying with me, a member of my family was instructed to take photos of my house, my street and, if possible, my workplace and my colleagues,” a London-based Iranian journalist said. Another said: “I’ve had to stop writing under my real name ever since my wife was arrested during a trip to Iran.”

Cut off from domestic sources: The regime also harasses the sources in Iran that are used by international media, so that they are denied access to information. Such sources include Mehdi Khazali, the editor of the blog Baran, who was arrested by plainclothesmen in Tehran on 12 August.

Tehran prosecutor Abass Jafari Dolatabadi announced on 28 August: “Using a woman as an intermediary, Mehdi Khazali sent false information about the government to counter-revolutionary websites based abroad and to VOA.”

In recent months, Khazali had openly criticized the head of the judicial authority, Sadegh Amoli Larijani, in interviews for VOA and DorTV. His family said he began a hunger strike on his first day in detention. In 2011, he was given a 14-year jail sentence.

Amadnews, a website that often publishes confidential information about corruption involving government officials, has become one of the leading targets of the government’s attacks and threats in the past two years.

The website’s founder, Roholah Zam, the son of a reformist official, currently lives in France but his family in Iran has been subjected to the most appalling persecution. Two of his sisters and his brother-in-law were detained for four months last year, and his youngest brother, Mohamad Milad Zam, was arrested at home on 26 August and was taken to an unknown location.

Amad news editor Sam Mahmoudi Sarabi and some of the site’s contributors were threatened repeatedly in late August. A single tweet announcing a story about Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei recently elicited death threats against him. In the past six months, ten journalists have been arrested in Iran by the justice system’s intelligence service for allegedly collaborating with the site. [...]

❖ [Open Observatory of Network Interference \(OONI\), ASL19, ARTICLE 19, and Small Media. Internet Censorship in Iran: Findings from 2014-2017, 28 September 2017](#)

[...] Key Findings

[...] The breadth and scale of internet censorship in Iran is pervasive. Blocked domains include:

News websites: [bbc.co.uk](#), [voanews.com](#), [dw-world.de](#), [arabtimes.com](#), [cbc.ca](#), [reddit.com](#), [russia.tv](#), [aawsat.com](#), [iranshahrnewsagency.com](#), [iranpressnews.com](#), [iranntv.com](#), [tehranreview.net](#).

Opposition sites: People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran, Worker-Communist Party, Labour Party (Toufan), Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI).

Pro-democracy sites: National Democratic Institute (NDI), National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Blogs of Iranian political activists: Ali Afshari and Ahmad Batebi.

Human rights sites: Center for Human Rights in Iran, Human Rights & Democracy for Iran, Iran Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Campaign, Human Rights First.

Kurdish sites: [kurdistanpress.com](#), [kurdistanmedia.com](#), Kurdish Human Rights Project.

Baha’i sites: [bahai.org](#), [bahai.com](#), [bahai-education.org](#), [bahai-library.com](#), [bahairadio.org](#).

Women’s rights sites: [feminist.com](#), [feminist.org](#), AWID.

LGBTQI sites: [Grindr](#), [lesbian.org](#), [transsexual.org](#), ILGA.

Sites promoting freedom of expression: Free Expression Network (FEN), Free Speech TV, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, ARTICLE 19.

Digital rights groups: ASL19, The Citizen Lab, Herdict, Global Voices, Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), The Centre for Democracy and Technology (CDT).

Blogging platforms: [wordpress.com](#), [blogger.com](#), [blogspot.com](#), [persianblog.com](#).

Search engines: [google.com](#), [duckduckgo.com](#).

Communication tools: [viber.com](#), [paltalk.com](#).

Social networks: [twitter.com](#), [facebook.com](#), [pinterest.com](#), [myspace.com](#), [4chan.org](#).

Media sharing platforms: [youtube.com](#), [vimeo.com](#), [instagram.com](#), [netflix.com](#), [flickr.com](#), [metacafe.com](#).

Anonymity and censorship circumvention tool sites: [torproject.org](#), [psiphon.ca](#), [openvpn.net](#), [freenetproject.org](#), [anonymouse.org](#), [anonymizer.com](#), [megaproxy.com](#), [ultrasurf.us](#), [hotspotshield.com](#).

OONI tests revealed blocking of the Tor network in many networks across Iran. Some Tor bridges, used to circumvent the blocking of the Tor network, remained partially accessible.

Facebook Messenger was blocked using DNS manipulation. In contrast, other popular communications apps, like WhatsApp and Telegram, were accessible during the testing period.

Internet censorship in Iran is quite sophisticated. ISPs regularly block both the HTTP and HTTPS versions of sites by serving blockpages through DNS injection and through the use of HTTP transparent proxies. Most ISPs not only block the same sites, but also use a standardized set of censorship techniques, suggesting a centralized censorship apparatus.

Internet censorship in Iran is non-deterministic. Many observations flipped between blocking and unblocking sites over time, possibly in an attempt to make the censorship more subtle.

The government isn't the only source of censorship in Iran. Norton and GraphicRiver are examples of services inaccessible in the country because they block IP addresses originating from Iran, in compliance with U.S. export laws and regulations. Virus Total, which uses Google App Engine (GAE), was likewise inaccessible because Google blocks access to GAE from Iran. [...]

Our main conclusions from this study are summarized below.

1. The breadth and scale of internet censorship in Iran is pervasive. We found a wide range of different types of sites to be blocked (expanding beyond those that are illegal). Blocked domains include many news outlets and human rights sites, as well as blogging platforms, communication tools, online social networks, media sharing platforms, search engines, gaming sites, governmental sites, cultural and entertainment sites, amongst many other types of sites.
2. Iranian ISPs appear to be enforcing a type of "intranet" through censorship. By blocking access to popular international sites (such as youtube.com, facebook.com, and twitter.com), Iranian ISPs appear to be creating a sort of "intranet" since non-censored internet activity appears to largely be limited to government-approved sites and services.
3. Internet censorship in Iran is quite sophisticated. (1) Iranian ISPs were found to serve block pages through DNS injection *and* through the use of HTTP transparent proxies. (2) We found ISPs to be blocking the same sites with different techniques (Aria Shatel, for example, served block pages for bbc.com through DNS injection and HTTP transparent proxies). (3) ISPs were found to block both the HTTP and HTTPS versions of sites, making censorship circumvention harder. (4) Internet censorship is *reinforced* through the extensive blocking of popular censorship circumvention tools (which is not limited to domains, but expands to the blocking of the Tor network). (5) ISPs were found to *block online translators, possibly as an *extra step* to limit censorship circumvention.
4. Shift from "smart filters" to "blanket censorship"? A few years ago, when sites like Instagram did not support HTTPS, it was reported that Iranian ISPs only censored certain webpages, rather than blocking access to entire sites. Now, however, we are seeing that Iranian ISPs are also blocking the HTTPS version of sites, since it's not possible to limit censorship to specific webpages when a site is hosted on HTTPS. This indicates that Iranian ISPs may have shifted their practices from applying "smart filters" (only censoring specific webpages) to a form of "blanket censorship" (censoring entire sites).
5. Internet censorship in Iran appears to be centralised. This is strongly suggested by the fact that we found *consistency* in terms of how internet censorship was implemented across networks. ISPs were not only found to be blocking the same sites, but they were also found to be using the same set of censorship techniques.
6. Internet censorship in Iran is non-deterministic. ISPs in Iran do *not* appear to block sites consistently across time. Rather, they were found to flip between blocking and unblocking sites, possibly in an attempt to create uncertainty on whether a site is actually censored or to make the censorship more subtle. Interestingly enough, ISPs were found to block some of the more popular sites (such as google.com) less frequently in comparison to less popular sites. This may suggest a political and/or social cost to censorship, which might be taken into account.
7. Political relations influence how information controls are implemented in Iran. This is strongly suggested by the fact that Iranian ISPs were found to block multiple Israeli and U.S. domains. Israeli domains even appear to be blocked almost indiscriminately. U.S. export laws, on the other hand, restrict the use of services (such as Norton, Virus Total, and Google App Engine) in Iran.
8. Internet censorship in Iran appears to reinforce geopolitical dynamics of power. Over the last century, there has been an ongoing separatist dispute between the Kurdish opposition in western Iran and the Iranian government. According to Amnesty International, many Kurdish human rights defenders, community activists and journalists have faced arbitrary arrests and prosecution. The blocking of numerous Kurdish sites, including news outlets and human rights sites, appears to be a politically motivated decision. [...]

❖ [OHCHR, UN experts call on Iran to stop intimidation of BBC staff, 27 October 2017](#)

[...] “The Iranian authorities appear to regard any affiliation with the BBC as a crime,” said David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, and Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, in a joint statement.

“We are concerned at recent reports that the action has now escalated to direct targeting of family members of BBC Persian staff.

“The measures are clearly aimed at targeting the BBC and at preventing journalists from continuing their legitimate work with BBC Persian.”

BBC Persian (BBC Farsi) has been banned from Iran since 2010 on the basis of allegations that it was acting against the country’s national interest.

In August 2017, a Tehran court issued an injunction banning 152 members of staff, former employees and contributors from carrying out financial transactions in Iran. Reports say the injunction is linked to a criminal investigation into alleged conspiracy to commit crimes against national security in Iran and abroad.

“We urge the Iranian authorities to cease all legal action against BBC Persian staff and their families, and to cease the use of repressive legislation against independent journalism, whether affiliated to BBC or not,” the Special Rapporteurs said.

“In a country with severe limitations on media independence, these measures also constitute an attack on the public’s right to freedom of expression,” they added.

BBC Persian has been broadcasting for over 70 years. Its television arm was launched in 2009 and is aimed at Persian speakers in Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The service is funded by the BBC and remains editorially independent. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] Freedom of opinion and expression

[...] 44. Hundreds of websites were blocked during the presidential campaign between December 2016 and May 2017. In March, 12 administrators of some channels on the most popular messaging application Telegram were arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and their channels’ content deleted. In July, six of them started a hunger strike to protest against their detention and because it was impossible for them to access their lawyers and information on the charges against them.³⁸ In April, the Intelligence Minister, Mahmoud Alavi, publicly condemned the increased detention of journalists and online activists although many of those arrests reportedly took place at the initiative of his Ministry. Mr. Alavi was also quoted in State-run media as acknowledging that his ministry had “filtered” 7 million websites during Mr Rouhani’s first term. The restrictions imposed on the freedom of information run contrary to article 26 of the Charter on Citizens’ Rights, which enshrines the right to freely seek, receive and publish views and information. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that active social and messenger networks are required to register with the Supreme Council of Cyberspace. [...]

38 Ibid., “Detained pro-Rouhani Telegram channel admins repeatedly denied legal counsel three months after arrests”, 5 July 2017. Available from www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/07/detained-pro-rouhani-telegram-channel-admins-repeatedly-denied-legal-counsel-three-months-after-arrests/.

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2017 - Iran, 14 November 2017](#)

[...] Obstacles to Access: 18 (0 = Best, 25 = Worst)

Limits on Content: 30 (0 = Best, 35 = Worst)

Violations of User Rights: 37 (0 = Best, 40 = Worst)

[...] Social Media/ICT Apps Blocked: Yes

Political/Social Content Blocked: Yes

Bloggers/ICT Users Arrested: Yes

Press Freedom Status: Not Free [...]

- Investment in Iran’s “National Information Network” greatly improved internet access, speeds, and bandwidth, but accessing foreign websites now costs twice as much as selected domestic platforms (see Availability and Ease of Access).

- Hassan Rouhani and his reformist supporters made extensive use of Instagram and Telegram during his successful May 2017 presidential election campaign, but protocols associated with both services were subjected to blocking (see Blocking and Filtering and Digital Activism).

- Dozens of people were detained for online activities, including administrators of social media pages or chat groups who were forced to delete or deactivate them (see Prosecutions and Detentions for Online Activities and Content Removal).
- Administrators of Telegram chat groups with more than 5,000 members were asked to register with the government and grant access to a “bot” that will monitor discussions (see Surveillance, Privacy, and Anonymity).

[...] Significant restrictions on content have been in place since 2009. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter remain blocked, although newer social media and communication apps such as Telegram and Instagram are generally accessible. Censorship decisions remain highly politicized, with both conservative and reformist news sites censored for failing to adhere to strict guidelines on how to report on sensitive political, social, and international issues. Self-censorship remains pervasive and overt digital activism is generally limited, though it increased during political campaigns in 2017.

[...] Blocking and Filtering

The Iranian authorities restrict access to tens of thousands of websites, particularly those of international news sources, the opposition, ethnic and religious minorities, and human rights groups.³² Websites are also blocked if they differ from the official doctrine of the state regarding Islam, or its chosen narrative on domestic or international politics.

[...] Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Google are all blocked, in addition to major blog-hosting platforms like WordPress, Blogspot, and Blogger.³³ Domestic news sites are frequently blocked for criticizing the government.

[...] Apps and websites have been blocked over links to foreign governments, particularly the United States and Israel. For example, the navigation app Waze and messaging app Viber were blocked for being owned by Israeli citizens.³⁶ After authorities blocked Viber, Telegram became the most widely used instant messaging app in the country with an estimated 40 million monthly users, surpassing even Facebook.³⁷

[...] Conservative leaders have repeatedly exerted pressure on the CDICC to block prominent social media platforms, including Telegram and Instagram, while Rouhani has used his administration’s six seats on the committee to push back. However, after Telegram launched free encrypted voice calling in April, the feature was immediately blocked by all ISPs on an order from the Attorney General.³⁹ Other voice-over-IP services have not been blocked. Telegram messaging functions still work, but security forces have arrested reformist Telegram channel admins and claim to remove thousands of “illegal” channels every week deleted.

[...] Instagram’s live video feature was temporary blocked on April 28, 2017.⁴⁰ Pro-Rouhani and reformist figures had been using the platform to broadcast nightly debates and cover campaign rallies in support of Rouhani’s re-election.⁴¹ No government body took responsibility for the blocking order.

Iranian authorities currently employ a centralized filtering system that can effectively block a website within a few hours across the entire network in Iran. [...]

33 Maria Xynou, Arturo Filastò, Mahsa Alimardani, Sina Kouhi, Kyle Bowen, Vmon, Amin Sabeti, “Internet Censorship in Iran: Network Measurement Findings from 2014-2017,” OONI, September 28, 2017, <https://ooni.torproject.org/post/iran-internet-censorship/>.

[...] 36 “As per judiciary officials orders Waze app was removed from Café Bazar” DIGIATO, March 2 2017, <http://bit.ly/2rJyVUW>.

37 Golnaz Esfandiari, “Iranian Officials Trade Barbs in Dispute Over Internet Censorship,” Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, July 27, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-telegram-app-internet-censorship-durov/28643317.html>.

[...] 39 “Telegram Calls in Iran,” Telegram, April 17, 2017, <http://teleg.ph/Telegram-Calls-in-Iran-NEWS>.

40 See “The Department of Communications Denied Blocking Instagram Live,” Donya-e-Eqtesad, <http://bit.ly/2yHfDST>.

41 “Iran’s Judiciary Blocks Instagram’s Live Video Service Weeks Before May 2017 Elections”, Center for Human Rights in Iran, April 28, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2qPVXcO>. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

[...] On 31 December the Minister of Information and Communications Technology blocked access to Instagram and the popular messaging application Telegram, used by activists to promote and support the protests.

Earlier in the year, judicial officials had exerted persistent pressure on the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology to request that Telegram relocate its servers to Iran and close tens of thousands of Telegram channels, which according to the judiciary “threatened national security” or “insulted religious values”. Telegram said it rejected both requests. Other popular social media sites including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube remained blocked.

[...] Censorship of all forms of media and jamming of foreign satellite television channels continued. The judicial authorities intensified their harassment of journalists working with the Persian BBC service, freezing the assets of 152 former or current BBC journalists and banning them from conducting financial transactions.

The Association of Journalists remained suspended. [...] [pp. 197-198]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Guards at the Gate: The Expanding State Control Over the Internet in Iran, January 2018](#)

[...] The report reveals the steady progress the Iranian government has made in controlling its citizenry's use of the internet. During the unrest that swept through Iran on the eve of 2018, the authorities implemented major disruptions to internet access through slowdowns and the blocking of circumvention tools, blocked the Instagram social media platform and the Telegram messaging app heavily used by the protesters to mobilize the street protests, and briefly cut off Iranians' access to the global internet on December 30, 2017, demonstrating a new level of technical sophistication. These actions confirm the main contention of this report—namely, that while internet use has expanded throughout Iran with the help of upgrades to the country's telecommunications infrastructure and faster and cheaper internet service, key technological initiatives undertaken by the Iranian government, in particular development of Iran's state-controlled National Internet Network (NIN), have significantly enhanced the government's ability to restrict, block and monitor internet use in Iran.

[...] Yet while internet use has increased and its centrality to Iranian discourse has grown exponentially—and the Rouhani administration has facilitated this greater use by increasing internet speeds and lowering access costs in Iran—internet control, censorship and surveillance by the state have also expanded significantly.¹ This is largely due to the development of the NIN, which has accelerated under the Rouhani administration. The NIN's national search engines now systematically filter key words and phrases—and send users to sites that deliver only state-approved and sometimes fabricated content. NIN tools and services facilitate the state's ability to identify users and access their online communications, deeply compromising user privacy and security. The government steers Iranians toward use of the NIN and its search engines, security certificates, email services and video broadcasting services through price and internet speed incentives, violating net neutrality principles. Critically, the NIN's ability to separate domestic internet traffic in Iran from international internet traffic now allows, for the first time, the state to cut Iranians off from the global internet while maintaining access to domestic online sites and services. The capacity to restrict the people of Iran to state-approved content on a domestic internet has been a long-standing goal of hardliners in Iran—intelligence and security agencies, judicial officials, and the country's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, who fear internet freedom and view the internet as a Western ploy to undermine the Islamic Republic. With the demonstrated capacity to sever Iranians' access to the global internet while maintaining the availability of Iran's state-controlled internet, this goal has now been realized, justifying for them the huge investment the Iranian government has made in the development of the NIN.

In addition, during this period the government's blocking of major social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, as well as millions of other websites, has continued, even as Rouhani has on a few occasions thwarted the blocking of messaging applications such as WhatsApp. Moreover, intensifying state filtering is now increasingly targeting applications that provide encryption by default (which provide security automatically, without user input), that are vital to Iranians' efforts to maintain online privacy. State-sponsored hacking attacks—DDoS attacks, phishing, malware, message interception and the use of insecure fake applications—have also multiplied. With hardline state security and intelligence organizations in control of the country's telecommunications infrastructure, their ability to access private online communications, unhindered by any judicial oversight, poses grave threats to Iranian users; individuals are arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms on the basis of online content unlawfully obtained by the state in this manner. [...]

1 "The limitation of 128 kb speed for home use was lifted," Khabar Online, May 5, 2013 <http://goo.gl/ZNrqRb>

❖ [OHCHR, Iran: UN experts urge respect for protesters' rights, 5 January 2018](#)

[...] "We are also very concerned at reports that the Government has blocked the internet on mobile networks, and that social media services like Instagram and messaging services like Telegram have been

shut down in an attempt to quell the protests. In some regions, internet access has been blocked altogether.

“Communication blackouts constitute a serious violation of fundamental rights.

“The control and censorship of information through the blocking of internet and messaging services represents an unlawful restriction of the right to freedom of expression and prevents the population from accessing communication and services.” [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16 (+1)

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4 (+1)

Freedom of expression and media independence are severely limited both online and offline. The state broadcasting company is tightly controlled by hard-liners and influenced by the security apparatus. News and analysis are heavily censored, while critics and opposition members are rarely, if ever, given a platform on state-controlled television, which remains a major source of information for many Iranians. State television has a record of airing confessions extracted from political prisoners under duress, and it routinely carries reports aimed at discrediting dissidents and opposition activists.

Newspapers and magazines face censorship and warnings from authorities about which topics to cover and how. Tens of thousands of foreign-based websites are filtered, including news sites and major social media services. Satellite dishes are banned, and Persian-language broadcasts from outside the country are regularly jammed. Authorities periodically raid private homes and confiscate satellite dishes. Iranian authorities have pressured journalists working for Persian-language media outside the country by summoning and threatening their families in Iran. In August 2017, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that Iran’s judiciary had frozen the assets of its Persian-service staff.

While the authorities continued to arrest and detain journalists during 2017, the number of journalists behind bars has steadily decreased from 45 in December 2012 to 5 in December 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

[...] E1. Is there freedom of assembly? 0 / 4

[...]. In addition to hundreds of detentions, several people were killed by year’s end in the protests that erupted in late December 2017, and the authorities restricted access to social media platforms that were being used to spread information about the unrest. Rallies organized in support of the regime on December 30 received live coverage from state media. [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Revolution anniversary – 39 years of news control and censorship in Iran, 13 February 2018](#)

[...] For the past 39 years, the regime’s control of news and information has been implacable and its persecution of media independence has been unparalleled. The exact number of journalists arrested and convicted during this dark period in Iran’s history – especially during the purge years – is still not officially known.

RSF has tallied abuses since Mohammad Khatami became president in 1997. At least 350 media outlets have been closed, more than 800 journalists and citizen-journalists have been detained and interrogated and around 500 of them have been given prison sentences ranging from three months to 19 years. All have been denied their rights. Millions of Internet pages of freely and independently reported news and information have been censored.

Citizen-journalists active on social networks are nowadays at the heart of the fight for freedom of news and information and political change in Iran.

In what Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei calls “the freest country in the world,” no independent media has survived the past 39 years of police and judicial harassment. Since 2000, Khamenei has waged a merciless war against the emergent reformist press, calling it the “operational base of foreign enemies within the country.”

Despite having resisted, the pro-reform media have been losing the resources they need to cover developments freely and independently. And to tighten control and censorship even more, a newly proposed law will turn journalists into civil servants who will get their press cards directly from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

The regime’s persecution of the freedom to inform does not just target domestic media. It also targets the international media, even if the regime has always tried to keep up certain appearances.

Toeing the official line: According to a list on the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation's official website, a total of 155 media outlets from 32 countries have bureaux in Iran that are staffed by a total of 305 foreign journalists.

Officially, they include 75 radio and TV outlets but the real number is smaller because each of the different language services of media outlets such as France 24 or Al Jazeera are counted separately. Fifteen of them are Lebanese or Iraqi outlets such as Al-Manar and Al-Mayadin (Hezbollah's two TV channels) and Al-Tajah and Al-Fart (Iraq's Shiite TV channels). The latter four outlets are wholly funded by the Iranian regime.

There are 14 foreign news agencies. Aside from AP, AFP and Itar Tass, most are from pro-Iranian Muslim countries. The Islamic Radio and Television Union, created and funded by the Islamic Republic, consists of 210 Muslim media outlets from 35 countries, its website says. Most of these outlets are officially regarded as foreign media, although funded by the regime. As well as relaying propaganda, they constitute a fake news world network that helps to suppress the freedom to inform. They mainly carry the same news reports as the Iranian state media.

Other foreign news agencies in Iran are closely watched and harassed. A former Tehran-based AFP reporter said: *"The regime exercises its control by placing journalists within the agency who can tell the authorities what's going on there, or by threatening the foreign journalists who don't accept the censor's rules. There have been several cases of journalists who have even been accused of indecent behaviour and have been threatened with imprisonment."*

Since 28 March 2012, when the Iranian authorities withdrew the accreditation of the Reuters journalists in Tehran for "propaganda against the government," Reuters has had no bureau in Iran. As a result, Reuters nowadays often covers Iranian news more freely than the agencies that still have a bureau there, which have to censor themselves to avoid losing their accreditation or to avoid harassment or even prosecution in Iran. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] 31. During the past three years, the Government reportedly closed seven million web addresses.³¹ These include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the websites of human rights and political opposition groups, amongst others.³² In August 2017, the Supreme Cyberspace Council introduced regulations, which would increase surveillance capabilities, and require social media and messaging platforms to either move their servers to the country or face blocking orders.³³ In October 2017, the Islamic Republic of Iran's oldest social network Cloob was shut down, and social media location sharing platforms Foursquare and Swarm were blocked. Disturbingly, in November 2017, the secretary of the Supreme Cyberspace Council suggested that users would have to "verify" their identity when logging onto the Internet.³⁴ The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to reverse the direction in which these moves point to, noting that access to information underpins the enjoyment of fundamental rights.

32. The Special Rapporteur notes some officials had recently suggested that the ban on accessing Twitter could be lifted.³⁵ In December 2017, President Rouhani stated "We need a secure communication atmosphere for people, not a suppressive one in which people's rights are violated," and that "The Minister of Information and Communications Technology won't put his hand on censorship button".³⁶ The Special Rapporteur hopes that such resolves will be sustained and allow greater freedom of expression and access to information within the country. [...]

31 See <https://persian.iranhumanrights.org/1396/03/seven-million-websites-blocked>.

32 See <https://ooni.torproject.org/post/iran-internet-censorship/>.

33 The Policies and Actions Regarding Organising Social Media Messaging Applications pursuant to SCC regulation published on 7 August 2017.

34 See www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/11/irans-requirement-for-internet-users-to-verify-their-identity-would-further-erode-privacy-rights/.

35 See www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/11/iran-telecommunications-minister-says-hes-looking-into-lifting-the-state-ban-on-twitter/.

36 See <http://president.ir/en/102083>.

Number of cases of censorship in 2018

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Assault on Access to Information, 2 May 2018](#)

[...] The Iranian judiciary's blocking of the messaging application Telegram is an unjustifiable restriction on freedom of expression and access to information, Human Rights Watch said today. With more than 40 million users, Telegram had become the main social media platform for Iranians.

On April 30, 2018, Mizan Online News Agency, the judiciary's news agency, reported that the prosecutor of the second branch of Tehran's Culture and Media Court had ordered all internet service providers to block access to Telegram and its website, effective immediately. On the morning of May 1, the Iranian Students News Agency, ISNA, reported that the mobile operators Iran Cell and RighTel had begun blocking users' access to Telegram.

"Iran is again stifling access to information to try to make its problems go away, but censorship should never be used to protect leaders from scrutiny," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Blocking Telegram is just another stain on Iranian authorities' already dismal record on freedom of expression."

The Culture and Media Court prosecutor said that Telegram had created a "safe haven" for "international terrorist organizations," permitting the coordination of Iranian protests in late December, 2017, and early January, 2018, as well as the deadly attacks claimed by the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) at Ayatollah Khomeini's shrine and the Iranian parliament in Tehran on June 7, 2017. The attackers killed 17 people and injured dozens more.

The judiciary also said that Telegram has helped enable crimes including "disruption of national unity," "improper data collection," insulting the sacred," "acting against national security," and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran."

On December 31, during protests that led to widespread demonstrations in several parts of the country, Iranian authorities temporarily blocked Telegram and the popular social media application Instagram. President Hassan Rouhani ordered Telegram unblocked on January 4 and Instagram on January 13.

Since late March, several officials had indicated support for blocking the platform. On March 31, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, chairman of Iran's parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, announced in an interview that Telegram would be blocked soon and that the decision to ban access to Telegram had been "made at the highest levels of government." Boroujerdi said the government would issue its own messaging app later this month, citing "national security" as the reason Telegram would no longer be accessible. Following his statement, Iranian state TV and other state-affiliated platforms started advocating using domestic versions of messaging applications.

Given Iran's record of surveillance of activists, there are serious concerns over privacy protections for users on such applications, Human Rights Watch said. In an attempt to reassure the public about respect for privacy, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, said in an April meeting with the authorities that violating people's privacy in messaging applications is "against sharia," or Islamic law.

However, several activists have since reported hackers' attempts to break into their social media accounts. Iran's intelligence services have a documented history of using hackers to access activists and journalists' accounts and private information.

During the protests that took place after the 2009 disputed presidential elections, Iranian authorities blocked the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, which remain blocked, along with hundreds of other websites.

During the presidential elections in 2017, Rouhani advocated greater access to information. On December 19, during a national conference on implementation of citizens' rights, Rouhani said that his communications minister "promises that he will not press the filtering button." On April 3, the president said that his administration's approach had been to break the monopoly of messaging applications, not to block and filter cyberspace. "Do not bother people with these kind of words," Rouhani added. On May 1, the "Administration's Information Council" issued a statement reaffirming the administration's commitment to "protecting citizens' rights to choose and confronting any filtering or monopoly in the field of social networks."

The statement also emphasized that the outcome of an issue that impacts the lives of tens of millions of Iranians should not be determined by a selective judicial decision. The statement did not clarify, however, if the government is challenging the judicial order.

"Five years into office, Rouhani has done very little to protect citizens' rights," Whitson said. "He is going to disappoint many supporters if he fails to protect even a popular messaging application from hard-liners' attacks." [...]

❖ [Small Media Foundation, Breaking the Silence; Digital media and the Struggle for LGBTQ Rights in Iran, 17 May 2018](#)

[...] The community's continued exposure to threats of surveillance, harassment and entrapment online constitutes an urgent threat which should be addressed by digital rights groups and technology companies whose platforms are used by LGBTQ populations.

[...] The 2009 Computer Crimes Law (CCL), passed in the middle of the Ahmadinejad era, radically expanded state powers for surveillance and online content censorship and has had a chilling effect upon freedom of expression online.

As digital spaces are central to their experiences, this law poses particular challenges for Iran's LGBTQ community. Three articles of the CCL are particularly problematic for LGBTQ people (although the vague wording of several other articles also pose threats to LGBTQ expression online):

Article 14 criminalises "producing, sending, publishing, distributing, saving or financially engaging in obscene contact by using computer or telecommunication systems, or portable data storage devices."

Article 15 criminalises "the use of computers, telecommunication systems or portable data storage devices for inciting or aiding and abetting in the commission of crimes."

Article 18 criminalises "the use of a computer or telecommunications to disseminate lies with the intention of damaging the public, disturbing the public state of mind or disturbing the official authorities' state of mind."² [...]

2 Article 19, (2009), "Islamic Republic of Iran: Computer Crimes Law." Accessed March 14, 2018. <http://bit.ly/2jikYKq>

❖ [Committee to Protect Journalists, On the table: Why now is the time to sway Rouhani to meet his promises for press freedom in Iran, 24 May 2018](#)

[...] Journalists with whom CPJ spoke identified three main subjects that cannot be criticized: The Supreme Leader or other high-ranking member of one of Iran's unelected councils or organizations; the judiciary; and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), an elite security institution.

[...] But journalists told CPJ that they have increased latitude to report on social issues, largely thanks to the combination of smartphones, increased internet bandwidth, and apps such as Telegram that have made it easier to keep in touch with contacts and sources, and to share news and ongoing developments. "Telegram is basically the internet for Iranians," said Amir Rashidi, an internet security and digital rights researcher at the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran.

[...] Authorities have also ramped up attempts to control, monitor, and ultimately block Telegram. Iran's Supreme Cyberspace Council, the body primarily responsible for setting internet policy, ruled in December 2016 that any Iranian-owned channel with over 5,000 followers needed to register and obtain a permit, according to the Center for Human Rights in Iran.

A separate committee under the Cyberspace Council was assigned to monitor the content of these channels, according to former Minister of Culture Reza Salehi Amiri. If the Cyberspace Council disapproved of content in a Telegram channel, it had the power to shut the channel down.

[...] After the protests, many senior conservative political figures discussed implementing a ban on Telegram, similar to those in place on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which are only accessible via VPN, according to reports. In April, several senior officials, including the Supreme Leader and a vice-president, announced they were closing their Telegram accounts "to protect the national interests." Iran's judiciary on April 30 issued an order for internet service providers to block access to the platform to protect national security, and highlighted how the app had been used to mobilize protests, according to Reuters.

As of May 1, some Iranians said they were still able to access the app using measures such as VPNs to get around the block, according to The New York Times. A group of Iranian lawyers filed a petition to a Tehran court, in early May, saying the ban contravened the constitution, and calling for the ban to be overturned, the Center for Human Rights in Iran reported. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Closing of the Gates: Implications of Iran's Ban on the Telegram Messaging App, June 2018](#)

[...] On May 1, 2018, the popular messaging app Telegram was blocked in Iran by order of the Iranian Judiciary. The app has some 40 million active users in Iran, a country of 82 million people. By 2018 it had become the central platform for internet use in Iran, used in all walks of life including personal communications, news, business (state-run and private), politics, education, healthcare, art and culture, entertainment and social life, and its use cut across all socioeconomic, age and geographic divides.

Foreign-owned and with its servers based outside Iran, Telegram is not under the control of the country's state censors. The authorities' willingness to disrupt what has become the principal means of digital communication in Iran—and since the ban, to disrupt access to circumvention tools—demonstrates the primacy of their commitment to state censorship.

The ban, together with simultaneous efforts to push Iranians onto state-controlled domestic messaging apps, is the inevitable outcome of a decade-long process in which the government has been steadily developing the domestic capacity to restrict the people of Iran to state-controlled digital communication and information. While many of Telegram's users in Iran will likely continue to access the app through circumvention tools, many others will lose access due to limited financial and technological capabilities, especially given the state's demonstrated determination to disrupt circumvention tools and the Judiciary's moves toward criminalizing continued use of the app. Those who lose access and migrate to Iran's domestic apps will be communicating on censored platforms where only state-approved information is available. Moreover, these users will be vulnerable to state monitoring and surveillance of online activities, as domestic apps enable state access to personal accounts. The Telegram ban, and the authorities' broader efforts to confine Iranians to a digital world that they control, represents a profound violation of Iranians' fundamental rights to access information, privacy and freedom of speech.

The ban will disrupt the most important, uncensored platform for information and communication in Iran, one that is used extensively by activists, independent and citizen journalists, dissidents and international media. It will also impact electoral politics in Iran, as centrist, reformist and other relatively moderate political groups that are allowed to participate in Iran's elections have been heavily and successfully using Telegram to promote their candidates and electoral lists during elections. State-controlled domestic apps and media will not provide these groups with such a platform, even as they continue to do so for conservative and hardline political forces in the country, significantly aiding the latter.

In addition, the ban's order by the Judiciary, and not cross-governmental state bodies that normally handle internet censorship decisions, indicates the growing centralization of power over internet policy in Iran's most hardline bodies, and the political irrelevance of President Hassan Rouhani, who spoke out against the ban but took no public or effective action to oppose it. Indeed, since the ban, his Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has sought to disrupt access to the circumvention tools necessary for Iranians to continue using Telegram. These developments will likely further diminish Rouhani's credibility in the eyes of his supporters and call into question the meaningfulness of any statements by the president in support of internet freedom.

The ban will also erode people's economic and social rights. Telegram has become deeply integrated into daily business in Iran and is central to many people's livelihoods. Its channels are especially important to small and mid-size companies, family-based operations, entrepreneurs and startups, for transactions ranging from marketing and advertising to communications and sales, and the ban will impact the incomes and employment of significant numbers of Iranians.

At a time when the Iranian economy is already under strain due to decades of economic mismanagement, years of debilitating sanctions, disappointing foreign investment after the nuclear deal, and now the withdrawal of the US from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the economic costs of the ban on Telegram will be keenly felt. If this precipitates further unrest, the diminishing space for public dissent in Iran would suggest that a severe crackdown and further erosion of civil and political liberties is likely.

In sum, the ban on Telegram shows the Iranian leaders' deep fear of the free flow of information and their reckless prioritization of censorship at any cost. The ban demonstrates the state's growing technological capability and its willingness to use it to restrict Iranians to a digital world controlled by the state. It signals the growing urgency of defending Iranians' digital rights. [...]

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Iranians from across the social and political spectrum are active and enthusiastic users of social media – according to Internet World Stats, as of June 2017, 56.7 million Iranians (70 per cent of the population) were internet users. Authorities routinely block or filter websites they consider objectionable, including major international social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr (although several senior officials are active users of them). Iranians can generally use virtual private networks (VPNs) and other methods to circumnavigate these blocks and to anonymise their online activities. Iranians are avid users of social messaging services, although these are also frequently blocked.

[...] All television and radio broadcasting from Iran is state-controlled and reflects official ideology – Article 175 of the Constitution prohibits private broadcasting. Diversity of opinion does exist within the Iranian

domestic media landscape, but comes in the form of political debate between particular factions of the ruling establishment. While such debate can be robust at times, it occurs within relatively narrow margins, does not cross 'red line topics' (such as those mentioned previously), and occurs strictly within a framework of support for the Islamic Republic. The Press Law requires journalists and publishers to obtain a press license from the Press Supervisory Board (PSB), which sits within the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. These licences are difficult to obtain and the PSB has often rescinded them in retaliation for reporting deemed critical of the ruling establishment. While such actions are more likely to target media outlets carrying pro-reformist content, they have also occurred against outlets promoting a conservative line.

[...] Authorities also engage in systematic (but not comprehensive) jamming of foreign satellite signals for viewers in Tehran and other cities, targeting in particular BBC Persian. Channels such as BBC Persian can also be accessed via the Internet, using VPNs. International media advocacy groups have reported that the Iranian judicial and intelligence services have sought to influence the Farsi-language sections of international media outlets by putting pressure on Iranian journalists based abroad. This pressure can manifest in intimidating message or death threats; in freezing of the journalists' financial assets within Iran, thus preventing them from conducting business there; or in harassment and intimidation of family members in Iran, often through summoning them to meetings with security officials.

[...] In April 2018, the government announced it would permanently block Telegram over national security concerns and would replace it with its own messaging service. Nonetheless, users with access to VPNs are able to skirt around these restrictions. Domestic media outlets' coverage of the protests was highly slanted and dismissive, reportedly at the instruction of the government. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] On 31 December 2017, the Supreme National Security Council temporarily blocked several platforms, including Telegram, in contravention of the country's Computer Crimes Law, which requires a decision by the multi-stakeholder Supreme Council of Cyberspace. In response, the Chief Executive Officer of Telegram posted on social media: "Iranian authorities are blocking access to Telegram ... after our public refusal to shut down ... other peacefully protesting channels."³⁷ On 9 January, eight Telegram administrators were arrested in the city of Kerman for the reports on demonstrations on their channels.

33. On 30 April, the judiciary ruled that Telegram would be permanently banned for "disrupting national unity, allowing foreign countries to spy on Iran".³⁸ According to multiple reports, Telegram continued to oppose the storing of the data of Internet users on servers inside the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to resisting the shutting down of thousands of channels.

34. On 6 May, a group of Iranian lawyers filed a petition at a court in Tehran to overturn the order blocking Telegram, arguing that it was in contravention of article 570 of the Islamic Penal Code. The same day, in a post on social media, the President indicated that the "failure to follow legal procedures and the use of force and judicial means is the opposite of democracy",³⁹ and that "the filtering and blocking of Telegram was not carried out by the Government, which does not approve of it."⁴⁰

35. In the course of 2018, the State has sought to encourage greater use of local platforms amid concerns that it may interfere with online privacy in ways that deter the exercise of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression. For example, it has been reported that Soroush, a messaging service established by companies linked to the national radio and television broadcaster, includes features enabling access by the authorities to personal details of channel administrators, such as their telephone numbers. Soroush accounts can only be accessed by holders of SIM cards that have been registered in association with a national identity document. The personal information of Internet users associated with their identity documents, including private addresses, was available on Soroush despite users not directly registering on the network.

36. Article 21 of the Computer Crimes Law, adopted in 2010, includes the requirement for Internet service providers to maintain records of Internet traffic data and personal information of Internet users, while under article 48, Internet service providers are required to record data from telephone conversations over the Internet, in violation of the right to privacy. In August 2017, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, accountable to the office of the Supreme Leader, introduced new regulations,⁴¹ which increased the authorities' surveillance capabilities, including through the consolidation of centralized management of the national Internet and related technology infrastructure. By creating significant obstacles for foreign and local companies to circumvent State control and censorship, these regulations affect all Internet

operations in the country, further limiting the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and to access information.

37. According to information received by OHCHR, international journalists were provided with greater access to the country and increased freedom to cover issues such as social and military affairs. According to the Government, in 2017, 887 foreign correspondents from 316 media outlets travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and 156 foreign media outlets and 310 foreign journalists are currently working in the country.⁴² [...]

37 See <https://twitter.com/durov/status/947441456238735360>

38 Reporters without Borders for Freedom of Information, "Iranian court imposes total ban on Telegram", 4 May 2018

39 Al Jazeera, "Iran's Rouhani condemns court order to block Telegram app", 5 May 2018.

40 See <https://www.instagram.com/p/BiXSzOEFQMF/?hl=de&taken-by=hrouhani>.

41 See <http://bit.ly/2wCsbct>.

42 See <https://foreignmedia.farhang.gov.ir/fa/pressoffices>.

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 27 September 2018](#)

[...] E. Freedom of opinion and expression and access to information

24. The protests in early 2018 also highlighted challenges faced by those residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran in enjoying freedom of opinion and expression and access to information. In this context, special procedures mandate holders issued a statement in January expressing concern following the decision to temporarily block several social media platforms, including Instagram and the messaging application Telegram.¹¹ More broadly, a number of major social networking websites, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are currently banned in the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 30 April 2018, a judicial order was issued stating that Telegram would also be permanently banned on the grounds that it was being used to spread "propaganda" and "pornography" and to incite "terrorist activities".¹² The Special Rapporteur is of the view that communication applications such as Telegram and Instagram should be seen as tools that enhance the freedom of opinion and expression and access to information as enshrined in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a party. In the course of his mandate, the Special Rapporteur intends to seek further information on such issues, including with a view to reviewing the Computer Crimes Law, the Penal Code and the role of the Supreme Cyberspace Council. [...]

11 OHCHR, "Iran: UN experts urge respect for protesters' rights".

12 Reporters without Borders for Freedom of Information, "Iranian court imposes total ban on Telegram", 4 May 2018.

❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), Iran: An Overview of Human Rights Abuses September – October 2018, 29 October 2018](#)

[...] Censorship: The weekly magazines "Nabze Bazaar" and "Paytakht Kohan," as well as the website "EntekhabKhabar," were convicted in press court. Courts also issued indictments for the Chief Executive Officers of "Shargh" and "Shahrvand" newspapers for their reporting on sexual tourism. The National Front of Iran was prevented from holding its Central Council meeting in Tehran, a journalist was beaten by Qazvin municipal agents, and a Kurdish student was barred from education, presumably for his political affiliations. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 30 January 2019](#)

[...] D. Right to freedom of expression and opinion

24. The Special Rapporteur observes increasing limitations placed upon the rights to freedom of opinion and expression. In April 2018, popular social media website Telegram was banned for allegedly "disrupting national unity" and "allowing foreign countries to spy" on the Islamic Republic of Iran.³⁴ In November, the Government proposed a bill which introduced new offences associated with the use of banned online applications.³⁵ In its comments, the Government stated that active social networks such as Telegram "are obliged to register only with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance".

[...] 30. The Special Rapporteur received reports of arrests and intimidation of journalists and media workers within the country. Journalists outside of the country have also been targeted, such as the staff of

the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Persian Service. A collective criminal investigation and a purportedly temporary asset-freezing injunction initiated in 2017 against over 150 staff still remains in place. In some cases, staff members' families based in the Islamic Republic of Iran have been interrogated and harassed. Staff have also been threatened and defamatory news stories have been circulated on social media about them. The Special Rapporteur reiterates his predecessor's concerns at such actions and calls upon the Government to cease all legal actions⁴⁴ and harassment against journalists, including the BBC Persian Service staff. In its comments, the Government stated that a number of BBC staff had been acquitted with respect to the asset-freezing injunction while other cases remained open. [...] [pp. 6-7]

34 See <https://rsf.org/en/news/iranian-court-imposes-total-ban-telegram>.

35 See www.isna.ir/news/97082813960/.

[...] 44 See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22314&LangID=E.

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] D. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF: 3 / 16

D1. Are there free and independent media? 1 / 4

Freedom of expression and media independence are severely limited both online and offline. The state broadcasting company is tightly controlled by hard-liners and influenced by the security apparatus. News and analysis are heavily censored, while critics and opposition members are rarely, if ever, given a platform on state-controlled television, which remains a major source of information for many Iranians. State television has a record of airing confessions extracted from political prisoners under duress, and it routinely carries reports aimed at discrediting dissidents and opposition activists.

Newspapers and magazines face censorship and warnings from authorities about which topics to cover and how. Tens of thousands of foreign-based websites are filtered, including news sites and major social media services. Satellite dishes are banned, and Persian-language broadcasts from outside the country are regularly jammed. Authorities periodically raid private homes and confiscate satellite dishes. Iranian authorities have pressured journalists working for Persian-language media outside the country by summoning and threatening their families in Iran.

Independent journalists face potential arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment. In July and August 2018, at least six journalists from the news site Majzooban-e-Noor were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 7 to 26 years for their coverage of February protests by members of the Sufi Muslim order Nematollahi Gonabadi.

[...] D4. Are individuals free to express their personal D4 views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution? 1 / 4

Iran's vaguely defined restrictions on speech, harsh criminal penalties, and state monitoring of online communications are among several factors that deter citizens from engaging in open and free private discussion. Despite the risks and limitations, many do express dissent on social media, in some cases circumventing official blocks on certain platforms. In April 2018, the government banned Telegram, which was used by 40 million Iranians. Authorities claimed that the app spreads antigovernment propaganda and encourages unrest. However, many users were able to continue using the app by employing virtual private networks (VPNs).

[...] Approximately 4,900 people were reportedly detained in the nationwide protests that erupted in late December 2017 and early January 2018 over the worsening economy and corruption, and at least 21 people were killed in clashes with security forces surrounding the demonstrations. The authorities restricted access to social media platforms that were being used to spread information about the protests.

[...]

Number of cases of censorship in 2019

❖ [Readwrite, Which Countries Have the Strictest Internet Censorship?, 1 July 2019](#)

[...] The Iranian Government tightly controls its citizens' internet access. It blocks many western platforms, such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, with others banned on occasion as well. On top of this, pornography and gambling sites are also forbidden. Users who try to access this content over the regular internet will first receive a warning. Subsequent attempts may lead to prosecution.

The authorities restrict access to many foreign media channels, as well as sites that express criticism of the government. Several sites that are considered anti-Islamic or taboo within the culture, such as those that discuss LGBT issues, are also forbidden.

Citizens are heavily monitored, and the authorities also restrict access during times of unrest, such as when Instagram and Telegram were temporarily blocked in 2017. Iran also throttles its internet during times of protest to limit communication. Many privacy tools are also banned.

The future of Iranian internet censorship is not looking positive, with a new government department that seems to be tasked with exerting even more control over the internet. On top of this, the Iranian government is almost ready to unveil its national intranet, which could restrict content even further and make it easier for the authorities to throttle access to international media. [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, 2019 World Press Freedom Index, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] 170 out of 180 countries in the world rankings in 2019
Score: 64.41 [...]

❖ [The Washington Post, Journalism in Iran nears extinction, 7 August 2019](#)

[...] Authorities in Iran are preemptively tightening the reins on media outlets working inside the country. The regime has, of course, always tried to control the flow of information to the rest of the world. But now, as it faces mounting internal and external pressures, the Iranian political establishment is going to new lengths to silence journalistic voices in attempts to present a unified message of resistance to the world.

[...] According to sources in Tehran, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance — the Orwellian-named entity that handles press credentials — has suddenly stopped granting permits to journalists working for foreign media. No one has explained why.

Traditionally, such credentials are issued for a year at a time and then extended in late July, on the first day of the second quarter of the Iranian calendar year. This year, though, most correspondents received only three-month conditional extensions, while several others working for major news outlets — including U.S.-based ones — have not received a permission at all.

[...] This is a familiar strategy employed by authoritarian regimes like Iran's, to intimidate and encourage self-censorship among foreign correspondents. News organizations are well aware of these strong-arm tactics, but they have generally chosen to maintain their presence in the country, preferring a limited ability to report from the ground over having no presence at all. Iran, though, is making it difficult to keep up that compromise.

But the targets in this latest media squeeze extend beyond the foreign press. Domestic critics of the Rouhani government are getting caught up in it as well.

The surprising closure this week of Vata'an Emrooz (Homeland Today), a newspaper aligned with the intelligence unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), offered a clue to the government's actions. In public, the shutdown was blamed on a lack of funds to pay for the soaring cost of paper, but no one is buying that excuse. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2019: The Crisis of Social Media, 4 November 2019](#)

[...] Authorities in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and a growing list of other countries have expanded their efforts to manipulate the online environment and influence foreign political outcomes over the past year.

[...] Authorities in Iran have boasted of a 42,000-strong army of volunteers who monitor online speech. Any citizen can report for duty on the Cyber Police (FATA) website.

[...] Freedom on the Net 2019 Score: 15 (0-100) [FREE (70–100 points), PARTLY FREE (40–69 points), or NOT FREE (0–39 points)] [...]

❖ [IFMAT \(Iranian, Frauds, Manipulations, Atrocities Human Rights Violations\), Internet censorship in Iran, 5 November 2019](#)

[...] The Iranian Government has developed a centralised system for internet filtering, created institutions tasked with monitoring Internet use and censorship of content, engaged the Revolutionary Guard Corps in enforcing Internet content standards, and entrenched many of these practices through legislation in the Computer Crimes Law. While certain rights to freedom of expression are held within the Iranian constitution, a number of provisions within both the constitution, the penal code, and the press laws aim to restrict these values based on vague and often arbitrary principles meant to shield 'Islam' or 'national security', with very little regard to proportionality.

[...] **Internet service providers**

Every ISP must be approved by both the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI) and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and must implement content-control software for websites and e-mail. ISPs face heavy penalties if they do not comply with the government filter lists. At least twelve ISPs have been shut down for failing to install adequate filters. The state blacklist consists of about 15,000 websites forbidden by the Iranian government. [...]

Blocked domains in Iran

Thousands of ooniprobe network measurements collected from 60 local networks across Iran over the last three years have confirmed the blocking of 886 domains (and 1,019 URLs in total). The breadth and scale of internet censorship in Iran is pervasive. [...] Internet censorship in Iran is non-deterministic. Many observations flipped between blocking and unblocking sites over time, possibly in an attempt to make the censorship more subtle.

[...] Blocked domains and tools

The levels of internet censorship in Iran are pervasive since a variety of different types of sites were found to be blocked, expanding beyond those that host illegal content. Most of the blocked domains include news outlets and human rights sites, though the limited amount of sites tested and the bias in their selection may have influenced this finding. In any case, a wide range of sites, beyond those that are illegal, were found to be blocked in the country.

[...] News websites

As part of this study, we found 121 news outlets to be blocked across Iran over the last three years. These include internationally popular media sites, as well as Iranian news outlets [...]

Political criticism

Opposition sites, pro-democracy sites and blogs expressing political criticism were found to be blocked in Iran over the last three years [...]

Human rights issues

Numerous sites that discuss human rights violations and defend human rights were found to be blocked in Iran. These include sites specific to Iran, as well as international human rights sites. [...]

Religious and ethnic minorities [...]

As part of this study, we found numerous Kurdish websites to be blocked. These include Kurdish news outlets, such as kurdistanpress.com and kurdistanmedia.com, as well as Kurdish human rights sites, such as the Kurdish Human Rights Project. We also found the site of the Unrepresented Nations & People's Organization to be blocked as well. Given the ongoing tension with the Kurdish separatist movement and the fact that such sites report on human rights violations against the Kurds, these censorship events may attempt to reinforce geopolitical dynamics of power. [...]

Women's rights [...]

Our testing showed the blocking of various sites that defend and promote women's rights. These include feminist sites (such as feminist.com and feminist.org), as well as AWID, an international feminist organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's rights. We also found womeniniran.com to be blocked, even though the domain is currently squatted.

LGBTQI rights [...]

Iranian ISPs were found to be censoring sites connecting LGBTQI communities, as well as sites promoting LGBTQI rights. Grindr, an internationally popular social networking site geared towards gay and bisexual men, was amongst those found to be blocked. One of the first major sites for lesbians was also blocked. We found sites like ILGA, a worldwide federation campaigning for LGBTI rights since 1978, to be blocked as well.

While transsexuality can be legal in Iran if accompanied by a gender confirmation surgery, transsexuals still experience social intolerance, similarly to many other countries around the world. This is also suggested by our findings, which show that sites on transsexuality were amongst those blocked in Iran.

Freedom of expression

Multiple sites promoting freedom of expression were found to be blocked in Iran. [...]

Communication Tools

Facebook Messenger was found to be blocked in Iran by means of DNS tampering. [...]

Viber is another popular communications tool that we found to be blocked. [...]

Social Networks

Multiple social networking sites were found to be blocked in Iran over the last three years. Some of the most popular social networks internationally found to be blocked include:

twitter.com

facebook.com

plus.google.com
pinterest.com
myspace.com
4chan.org

But internet censorship in Iran is not limited to international social networking sites. We also found an Iranian social forum to be blocked as well. The censorship of this site, along with many others, cannot be disputed since the providers served blockpages.

Telegram

The Telegram instant messaging service has more than 50 million users in Iran and 60% of the country's Internet's bandwidth is spent on using this app.

Following the Iranian government policy to censor every social network and instant messaging service in Iran, they have continued to disrupt access to Telegram. [...]

Media sharing platforms

Internet censorship in Iran also targets online platforms that share videos and images, amongst other forms of media. Some internationally popular media sharing platforms that were found to be blocked in Iran over the last three years include the following: youtube.com | vimeo.com | instagram.com | netflix.com | flickr.com | metacafe.com [...]

❖ [Iran Focus, Iran Internet Censorship – Update, 6 November 2019](#)

[...] Key Developments

Unlike previous years, no internet shutdowns were reported during the coverage period. However, the state maintains significant control over the internet backbone, allowing the government to throttle foreign connection speeds at politically sensitive times

Several harsh prison sentences were handed down during the reporting period in retaliation for online activities.

State-sponsored malware attacks have targeted a range of minority groups and activists located within and outside Iran, according to a May 2019 report from the Center for Human Rights in Iran

[...] Limits on Content

Significant restrictions on content have been in place since 2009. Major international platforms like Facebook and Twitter remained blocked during the coverage period, as was Telegram. Censorship decisions remained highly politicized, with both conservative and reformist news sites facing censorship for failure to adhere to strict guidelines on coverage of sensitive political, social, and international issues. Self-censorship is pervasive, and overt digital activism is fairly limited.

Authorities restrict access to tens of thousands of websites, particularly those of international news services, the political opposition, ethnic and religious minority groups, and human rights organizations.

Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are all blocked, in addition to major blog-hosting platforms like WordPress, Blogspot, and Blogger.

Violations of User Rights

There have been no changes to legal restrictions on internet freedom, and several harsh prison sentences were handed down during the coverage period in retaliation for online activities, including a 26-year sentence. State-sponsored malware attacks have targeted a range of minority groups and activists located within and outside Iran.

❖ [OHCHR, Iran: Experts raise alarm at arrests and reported killings, internet shutdown, 22 November 2019](#)

[...] The experts also raised concerns about the nation-wide internet shutdown, saying that international human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, have condemned such disproportionate actions. Although reports indicated a marginal increase in connectivity on 21 November, this was very limited.

“A country-wide network shutdown of this kind clearly has a political purpose: to suppress the right of Iranians to access information and to communicate at a time of rising protest,” the experts said. “Such an illegitimate step deprives Iranians not only of a fundamental freedom but also basic access to essential services.

“We strongly urge the Government to restore full internet access and commit to keeping the internet up and running at all times, especially during times of public protest.” [...]

- ❖ [HyperAllergic, Art and Creative Acts That Were Censored in 2019, 7 January 2020](#)
 [...] In November, a massive and near-total shutdown of internet services in Iran was initiated after protests sparked by the announcement of hikes to petrol prices began across the country, resulting in the arrest and detainment of thousands. The popular Iranian-Kurdish singer, Mohsen Lorestani, was charged with “corruption on Earth” and of being a homosexual this past October, the latter charge which is punishable by death in Iran. In a country where women are still not allowed to sing solo, nor play in a symphony orchestra, government censorship continues to limit and in some cases threatens the lives of artists in Iran. [...]

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)
 [...] Freedom of expression online and the right to privacy
 29. The Government continued to tightly control access to information online, including by blocking access to social media and messaging platforms. The suspension of foreign- based online services may push people to use local platforms promoted by the Government under the National Information Network, a domestic-only network using Internet protocols and infrastructure hosted in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This raises privacy concerns, given that local platforms facilitate the monitoring of online activity and the blocking of websites. It is also feared that the increased use of the Network could make it easier for the Government to cut off access to the global Internet.⁴⁰ Internet access disruptions were reported in June and August 2019. The Government indicated that blocking access to social media platforms is aimed at preventing terrorist and immoral activity in cyberspace.
 30. Sanctions are also having an impact on access to online information and technology. In August 2019, three major cloud services companies suspended services in the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure compliance with applicable sanctions.⁴¹ The suspension of the services of the largest such provider, which hosts the majority of alternative tools such as virtual private networks,⁴² could further restrict online privacy and safety.
 31. The personal data protection and safeguarding bill currently under review in the parliament requires significant changes to comply with international standards for data protection, including basic principles such as ensuring that data is processed lawfully, for specific purposes and is handled based on informed consent or another legitimate legal basis.⁴³ [...]

- 40 See www.article19.org/data/files/The_National_Internet_AR_KA_final.pdf; and www.irna.ir/news/83485967/ (in Farsi).
- 41 See <https://thenextweb.com/dd/2019/10/24/the-iranian-developer-deadlock-stuck-between-censorship-and-sanctions/>.
- 42 See A/74/273.
- 43 See General Assembly resolution 45/95; and E/CN.4/1990/72 [...]

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)
 [...] There are particular concerns that journalists and their families specifically have been threatened and arrested to prevent them from reporting on protests.⁹ Journalists have been strictly ordered not to criticize the government response to the protests and the relatives of journalists working for Farsi-language news outlets based outside of the Islamic Republic of Iran are being put under pressure by the authorities, including by being summoned for interrogation in an attempt to intimidate and silence news reporting by their relatives.
 [...] 9. The Supreme National Security Council voted on 16 November 2019 to restrict Internet access, resulting in connectivity rates in the country dropping to 5 per cent of their usual levels.¹³ The Security Emergency Centre of the Ministry of the Interior reportedly stated that it would legally pursue social media users who shared footage of the protests online, and accused some of spreading lies and recycling footage from previous incidents to undermine public confidence and disrupt national security.¹⁴ In some cities, Internet connectivity was reportedly restored by 19 November, but full connectivity was not restored countrywide until 5 December. [...]

9 <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/11/we-know-where-you-live-iran-goes-after-foreign-based-reporters/>;
<https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/11/iranian-government-dictated-to-local-media-how-to-cover-protests-new-documents-reveal/>.
[...] 13 www.france24.com/en/20191117-internet-restricted-in-protest-hit-iran-report;
<https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-iran-amid-fuel-protests-in-multiple-cities-pA25L18b>.
14 www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50444429 [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran \(CHRI\), Iran Moves to Silence Journalists, Activists Ahead of Parliamentary Elections, 11 February 2020](#)

[...] The intelligence arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is summoning journalists, raiding their homes and confiscating their electronic devices in a renewed campaign to silence criticism of state policies ahead of Iran's parliamentary elections later this month.

"Muzzling journalists, detaining activists, and disqualifying parliamentary candidates will not silence dissent in Iran, as the recent protests have shown," said the executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) Hadi Ghaemi.

"Engaging in independent journalism and peaceful activism should not be a life-endangering act," he added.

According to first-hand testimonies provided to CHRI, the recent crackdown is aimed at journalists and activists who maintain active social media accounts.

Those targeted include human rights defender and former prisoner of conscience Bahareh Hedayat, who was detained on February 10 after appearing at the University of Tehran's "security" office in response to a summons.

At least 10 journalists have also been targeted by the IRGC's Intelligence Organization in the past two weeks including Yasaman Khaleghian, a freelance social affairs reporter; Maziar Khosravi, a former political reporter and editor at the reformist Shargh newspaper; Moloud Hajizadeh, a women's affairs reporter at Taadol Newspaper; Yaghma Fashkhami, a former reporter at the Didban Iran news website; Ehsan Bodaghi, a parliamentary reporter for the state-funded Iran newspaper and his journalist wife Shabnam Nezami (affiliation unknown), as well as Mona Mafi (affiliation unknown).

[...] Freedom of speech and the press are severely restricted in Iran, with journalists arrested and prosecuted each year for doing their jobs. At least seven members of the press were prosecuted for doing their jobs in 2019, according to investigations by CHRI.

On February 3, freelance labor affairs reporter Khosrow Sadeghi Boroujeni tweeted that he had been sentenced to eight years in prison for "assembly and collusion against national security," "propaganda against the state" and "insulting Imam Khomeini," the founder of the Islamic Republic.

Amir Babaei, the former editor of the Gharb weekly magazine in western Iran was fined 100 million tomans (\$21,664) for allegedly "offending" the deputy governor of Kermanshah Province, the Association of Iranian Journalists in Tehran Province reported on February 5.

In addition, Shargh newspaper reporter Marzieh Amiri is expected to report to prison to serve a five-year term for "assembly and collusion against national security," "propaganda against the state" and "disturbing public order," her lawyer Amir Raeisian told reporters in Tehran on January 28. [...]

❖ [Reporters Without Borders, Iranians denied independent reporting ahead of parliamentary election, 19 February 2020](#)

[...] As Iran prepares to elect its 290-member parliament on 21 February, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) deplores the fact that censorship and persecution are preventing the media from doing their job to provide the country's 57 million voters with proper coverage of the election, which is clearly not going to be free or fair.

The governmental media are openly orchestrating the regime's propaganda while the authorities continue to censor and regulate all media outlets. The goals are clear – to promote the biggest possible turnout and a comeback for conservatives who support Supreme Guide Ali Khamenei.

In response to the side-lining of moderates and critics, many leading figures who support the reformists or opposition are calling for a boycott of the elections.

Journalists who have posted information about corrupt candidates on online social media have been summoned for questioning by the various intelligence agencies or have been threatened by the candidates' supporters. At least 21 journalists have been interrogated in different parts of the country in

the past six weeks, while Revolutionary Guards have searched the homes or offices of six of these journalists.

The regime also continues to threaten and pressure Iranian and dual-national journalists who work for independent media outlets based abroad. The Islamic Republic is making every effort to deprive Iranians of access to independently reported news and information ahead of this election.

“The already extensive and ubiquitous censorship of Iran’s media has been stepped up even more in the run-up to the parliamentary election on 21 February,” said Reza Moini, the head of RSF’s Iran-Afghanistan desk. “Without a free press providing the population with access to independent information, an election is neither free, fair nor democratic.”

A total of 24 journalists and citizen-journalists are currently imprisoned in Iran, making it the world’s seventh biggest jailer of news and information providers. It is ranked 170th out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2019 World Press Freedom Index. [...]

❖ [Article 19, Iran: Coronavirus crisis highlights need for the free flow of information, 27 February 2020](#)

[...] The coronavirus outbreak in Iran is an international cause for concern. The Government’s mismanagement and lack of transparency, coupled with international sanctions that affect the free flow of information, is creating a massive health crisis for both Iranians and the international community. At its core, the crisis has highlighted how the Government’s ongoing suppression of freedom of expression and access to information is failing the Iranian people at a time of crisis.

Controlling information

The Government appears more concerned with controlling rather than sharing information. In the midst of much needed government intervention to distribute resources, quarantines and awareness about the virus, Tehran’s police force has created a “coronavirus defense base” to monitor “misinformation and the spread of fear” about the virus, which has already led to three arrests in Tehran on 25 February. Iran’s Cyber Police, known as FATA, declared they have also set up a national taskforce to “combat” rumours about the spread of the virus. They announced the arrest of 24 people for spreading “misinformation” about the outbreak on social media, while another 118 have received warnings. These vague charges are a huge concern for freedom of the press and expression online, particularly given the suspected government mismanagement of the crisis and the suppression of crucial information

Government cover up over spread of virus

Given the massive leap in those infected over the past few days, and the quick spread of those infected to outside of Iran (with origins inside of the country) it is highly plausible that government authorities have been withholding information about the virus. Iran’s Ministry of Health estimates 338 people have been infected and 34 have died as of 28 February (the highest number outside of mainland China, and the largest number of deaths in proportion to number of infected), with approximately 40 people outside of Iran, infected after recent visits. However, conflicting reports from a lawmaker in the province of Qom, alleging 50 deaths, and hospitals overrun with coronavirus patients in his province, as well as medical statistics have led to suspicion about a government cover-up over the true numbers of those infected and dead.

Lack of transparency

Both health information and transparency about the outbreak are vital for tackling the crisis. However, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has a bad track record for transparency. Under Iran’s access to information law and policies, public bodies such as the MOH must publish and provide information requested by citizens. However, ARTICLE 19’s research has shown that the MOH is the least responsive institution on Iran’s access to information portal. We have found questions about charities under the MOH and their financial reports have been left unanswered.

There are exemptions listed in the law that can be used to deny requests but they do not apply if the information requested would reveal the existence or emergence of environmental hazards or public health threats. Coronavirus would firmly fall under this definition. During an international health crisis like this, the MOH and its subsidiaries should be actively providing information not just responding to requests. The law itself requires proactive publication about “Procedures and levels of services provided directly to the public” under Article 10. However, Article 10 also dictates that bodies under the control of the Supreme Leader can block an information request if it “is [in] opposition by the Supreme Leader.” These bodies could include institutions such as military hospitals, which could undermine effective transparency about the crisis and allow the suppression of public information.

The Iranian government must proactively publish comprehensive information about how they are combating the coronavirus outbreak, including more details about the procedures they have in place and services being provided.

Internet restrictions

Restrictions on the free flow of information across the internet are another barrier to countering the spread of infection. Many doctors and medical staff, exasperated by the lack of proper government oversight and organisation, have resorted to posting their own social media clips, offering instructions on how to sanitize and prevent further infection. In the face of such massive infection and death rates (proportionally, higher than China, the source of the virus), the Iranian authorities must place emergency measures to lift barriers to access information online. The social media and messaging platform, Telegram, remains one of the most widely used platforms for news inside of Iran, with millions of public channels delivering news to Iranians. Telegram was filtered in April 2018, a decision that must be reversed in light of this ongoing crisis. The bodies responsible for Internet policy (the Ministry of ICT, the Supreme Council for Cyberspace, and members of the Committee Charged with Determining Offensive Content), Iran's National Security Council and the Ministry of Health must encourage the government to lift these censors, and allow the free flow of information that is necessary to raise awareness of this deadly virus among Iranians from all walks of life.

The impact of US sanctions

The United States Government and US companies can also help by resolving issues of overcompliance with US sanctions, which have meant many services on the internet, such as websites and platforms run on Google Cloud Platforms and the Apple App store are blocked inside Iran. One of the most reliable maps tracking this pandemic, run by Johns Hopkins University, has been blocked in Iran, due to invalid interpretations of US sanctions by the technology company, Esri, who host the map.

In the face of a serious health crisis, information can save lives. Transparency and access to information from the Iranian Government, a freely accessible internet, and the support of the international community has never been more important for Iran. [...]

Cancellation of concerts deemed 'inappropriate' in 2017

- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Rouhani: Delivering Human Rights After the Election: Iranian President's Pathway to Fulfill His Promises, June 2017](#)

[...] Nevertheless, during Rouhani's first term concerts were canceled around the country after being attacked by extremists for being "un-Islamic" or for featuring female musicians. [...]

- ❖ [Zamaneh Media, Frequent Concert Cancellations in Iran draws Fire from the Music Community, 5 August 2017](#)

[...] A year after 600 Iranian musicians wrote a letter to Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, objecting to increasing mistreatment of the music community and the illegal cancelation of concerts, nearly 100 of them gathered to voice their concerns.

This gathering was held on 2 Aug 2017 in Tehran's house of music, an unofficial union site for Iran's music community who have been experiences increased pressure as of a year ago when conservatives in various cities in Iran have decided to arbitrary cancel concerts that have legal permits [...]

In the most recent instance on Friday July 28, the concert of veteran singer Shahram Nazeri and his son Hafez Nazeri in Quchan was shut down by order of the city's prosecutor. Last week in Yazd and Karaj Hamed Homayoon's and Fereydoon Asayi's concerts were cancelled at the last minute in the respective cities by the order of their prosecutors [...]

Cancellation of concerts deemed 'inappropriate' in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)
[...] Security forces occasionally shut down music performances, particularly those involving solo female singers and performers, who are not permitted to perform in front of mixed-sex audiences. [...]
- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Concert Cancellations Continue in Mashhad Due to Intolerance by Religious Conservatives, 22 February 2019](#)

[...] A concert by the popular Persian pop band Hoorosh was cancelled by judicial order an hour before show time on February 20, 2019, in the city of Firouzeh, northeastern Iran, after a powerful local ayatollah pressured the authorities.

In Semnan, 110 miles east of Tehran, some journalists were also prevented from covering a concert by another band, Rastak, because a state official believes their music is too “happy.”

Abolfazl Hakimpour, the acting governor of Firouzeh, told the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on February 20 that Hoorosh’s concert was cancelled even though “all necessary permits had been obtained and there was no problem for the performance.” [...]

The forcible recruitment of unregistered Afghan refugees by the Iranian military and subsequent threats of deportation or barring from registering as refugees if they did not join in 2017

❖ [Voice of America \(VOA\) News, Iran Continues Deporting Undocumented Afghan Refugees, 21 May 2017](#)

[...] Iran has sent thousands of Shi'ite Afghan refugees to Syria to fight alongside forces of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guard forces in support of the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Iran’s army recruits them with promises of Iranian citizenship and improved living standards for their families. [...]

❖ [New York Times, How Iran Recruited Afghan Refugees to Fight Assad’s War, 30 June 2017](#)

[...] Mr. Amin managed to earn a meager wage, about \$200 a month, as a bricklayer in Isfahan. Last year, he used his modest savings and went to Iraq with a group of fellow Afghan refugees for a pilgrimage to Karbala, the city where Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was killed in A.D. 680.

Elated after his pilgrimage, Mr. Amin returned to Iran but couldn’t find any work for three months. As often happens with Afghan refugees in Iran, Mr. Amin was humiliated and discriminated against. He lived with the constant fear of being deported. [...]

Last winter Iranian authorities presented Mr. Amin with a proposition. He could gain legal status in Iran and be free of the fear of deportation. The Iranians offered him a 10-year residency permit and \$800 a month if he would go to Syria to “fight to protect” the shrine of Sayyida Zainab, a granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

[...] The Fatemiyoun Division (formerly Brigade), a militia of Shiite Afghan refugees, was formed around early 2014 and trained by both the Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah veterans. Its strength has been estimated at 8,000 to and 14,000 men. The Iranian authorities maintain the fighters are volunteers.

The initial recruits to the Fatemiyoun Division were initially Shiite Hazara Afghans, who settled in Iran after the Soviet occupation, after the civil war in the early 1990s and the subsequent Taliban rule. Their recruitment had echoes of how Pakistan — the other major host of the Afghan refugee population — recruited the Sunni Pashtun Afghan refugees and their children to form the Taliban in the mid-1990s.

In the past few years, Iranians have expanded recruitment to undocumented Afghans, like Mr. Amin, recently arrived from Afghanistan in search of economic opportunity. Apart from the refugees’ economic anxiety and precarious legal status, the Iranians exploit the Shia faith of Afghan refugees to recruit them to fight for the Assad regime in Syria.

[...] Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah fighters trained Mr. Amin and the Afghan recruits of the Fatemiyoun Division in using weapons and tactical movement for a month. Some were trained as snipers; some were trained in tank warfare. After the training they were flown to Syria and sent to the front lines in Damascus and Aleppo.

Iranians and Mr. Assad’s forces used the Afghan recruits as the first-wave shock troops. “We would be the first in any operation,” Mr. Amin recalled. [...]

Some estimates put the number of Afghans killed in Syria around 600. Mr. Amin said 15 of his friends were killed in Syria. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Afghan Children Recruited to Fight in Syria, 1 October 2017](#)

[...] Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has recruited Afghan immigrant children living in Iran to fight in Syria, Human Rights Watch said today. Afghan children as young as 14 have fought in the Fatemiyoun division, an exclusively Afghan armed group supported by Iran that fights alongside

government forces in the Syrian conflict. Under international law, recruiting children under the age of 15 to participate actively in hostilities is a war crime.

Human Rights Watch researchers reviewed photographs of tombstones in Iranian cemeteries where the authorities buried combatants killed in Syria, and identified eight Afghan children who apparently fought and died in Syria. Iranian media reports also corroborated some of these cases and reported at least six more instances of Afghan child soldiers who died in Syria. For two of the reported cases, researchers reviewed photographs of tombstones that indicated the individual was over the age of 18, but family members of these deceased fighters told Iranian media that they were children who had misrepresented their age in order to join the Fatemiyoun division. This indicates that instances of Iran recruiting children to fight in Syria are likely more prevalent. [...]

In 2015, the Interior Ministry estimated that there were 2.5 million Afghans in Iran, many of them without residency papers. Human Rights Watch previously documented cases of Afghan refugees in Iran who “volunteered” to fight in Syria in the hopes of gaining legal status for their families.

Since 2013, Iran has supported and trained thousands of Afghans, at least some of them undocumented immigrants, as part of the Fatemiyoun division, a group that an Iranian newspaper close to the government describes as volunteer Afghan forces, to fight in Syria. In May 2015, Defa Press, a news agency close to Iran’s armed forces, reported that the Fatemiyoun had been elevated from a brigade to a division. There are no official public statistics on its size, but according to an interview published in the Revolutionary Guards-affiliated Tasnim News, it has about 14,000 fighters. [...]

❖ [The Times, Hundreds of Afghan men volunteer to die for Assad, 8 January 2018](#)

[...] More than 2,000 Afghans recruited by Iran to fight in Syria have been killed in the defence of President Assad's regime, according to an Iranian reformist newspaper. The fighters are members of the Fatemiyoun Brigade, believed to be the largest single contingent of foreign fighters on the regime side. They are mostly members of Afghanistan's Shia minority, many of whom have fled to Iran to escape persecution by the Taliban. Previous reports have claimed that young Afghan men are threatened with being sent back if they do not ‘volunteer’. In return they and their families are given residency papers. Those who are ‘martyred’ win citizenship for relatives. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] The IRGC has allegedly used coercive tactics to recruit thousands of Afghan migrants living in Iran to fight in Syria. In October 2017, Human Rights Watch reported that children as young as 14 are among those recruited. [...]

❖ [National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), More Iran Regime's Militants Die in Syria, 15 March 2018](#)

[...] The Fatimioun brigades, which are loyal to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are mostly made up of Afghan refugees who fled to Iran for sanctuary. The Iranian Regime promised that the refugees who joined this Iran-backed militia would be granted citizenship for them and their families upon their return, which is a violation of the rights of refugees. [...]

The forcible recruitment of unregistered Afghan refugees by the Iranian military and subsequent threats of deportation or barring from registering as refugees if they did not join in 2018

❖ [Swedish Migration Agency, Iran's recruitment of Afghans to the war in Syria, 23 May 2018](#)

[...] Ever since the first years of conflict in Syria, Shiite Afghans (primarily Hazara) have been recruited by the Revolutionary Guard in Iran and sent to Syria in order to fight for the Assad regime. Many of them have signed up voluntarily when offered strong incitements like permanent residence permits in Iran and considerable salaries. Several Afghans who have been subjected to recruitment do, however, claim that Iran is using coercion when recruiting. When scrutinizing these claims that have been published they seem to refer to a situation when Afghans without legal residence in Iran have been found by Iranian authorities and forced to choose between fighting in Syria or being deported to Afghanistan. [...]

- ❖ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: Innovating In Iran: Afghan Immigrant Wins Praise In Tehran, But 'Home' Still Beckons, 12 June 2018](#)

[...] They [Afghans] frequently face discrimination and resentment among other Iranians who blame them for joblessness and other social ills, and are thought to have been recruited by the hundreds for combat duty in nearby Syria, where Tehran ally President Bashar al-Assad has been waging a 7-year battle for survival. [...]

- ❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] The IRGC has allegedly used coercive tactics to recruit thousands of Afghan migrants living in Iran to fight in Syria. [...]

The forcible recruitment of unregistered Afghan refugees by the Iranian military and subsequent threats of deportation or barring from registering as refugees if they did not join in 2019

- ❖ [The Guardian, How strong is Iran's military?, 11 January 2020](#)

[...] SYRIA

Iran has been involved in Syria's civil war almost since its start; in 2012 opposition forces captured 48 Iranian "military pilgrims" claiming to visit a shrine, although they were important enough to be swapped for thousands of captives.

When Iran first admitted it had "volunteers" on the ground, it claimed they were there to protect holy sites. But as Assad's hold on his country crumbled, they became more visible. Hezbollah joined the fight, and dozens of small Shia militias were formed to fight for Assad around the country.

Some drew recruits from abroad, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Others were made up of Syrian fighters, but received funding and weapons from Tehran. Together with Russian airpower and other military support, they turned the tide of the war in Assad's favour and helped maintain control over newly recaptured areas [...]

- ❖ [Middle East Institute, Understanding the Fatemiyoun Division: Life Through the Eyes of a Militia Member, 22 May 2019](#)

[...] Approximately 10,000-20,000 Afghan men, mostly from the Hazara ethnic group, have fought in Syria in support of the government of President Bashar al-Assad. They have gathered under the banner of the so-called "Fatemiyoun" Division. Founded in the 1980s, the Fatemiyoun Division served Iran's interests in both the Afghan civil war and the Iran-Iraq War. Since 2012, the militia has been revitalized under the auspices of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Led by the IRGC and affiliated groups like Lebanese Hezbollah, the Fatemiyoun Division has been active on all fronts of the Syrian war. [...]

Reports suggest the IRGC has regularly sent unprepared Fatemiyoun fighters into the most dangerous situations and treated them as cannon fodder.² Marginalized and without a powerful lobby or vocal supporters back in Iran, the massive Hazara casualties appear not to have provoked significant public anger.

The precarious living conditions of the Hazara in Iran are well documented.³ Only a small share of the population is officially registered as refugees, while the majority are illegal migrants and most of them are exposed to reprisals.⁴

Nonetheless, Iranian leadership puts significant effort into shaping the image of the Fatemiyoun Division as a respected force that defends Shi'a shrines in Syria, protecting Islam regardless of borders. Iranian authorities have renamed streets to honor fighters who were killed in battle and glorify their so-called martyrdom in the media.⁵ [...]

2. Tobias Schneider, "The Fatemiyoun Division: Afghan fighters in the Syrian civil war," The Middle East Institute, October 15, 2018, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/fatemiyoun-division-afghan-fighters-syrian-civil-war>.

3. "Human Rights Violations in Iran," The Geneva International Center for Justice, <http://www.gicj.org/gicj-reports/1145-gicj-report-human-rights-violations-in-iran>.

4. Alistair Scrutton and Himanshu Ojha, "Who are the Hazaras and what are they escaping?" Reuters, September 22, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-hazaras/who-are-the-hazaras-and-what-are-they-escaping-idUSKCN11SOWG>.

5. Frud Bezhan, "Iran Aims to Boost Prestige of Beleaguered Afghan Proxy Force," Radio Free Europe, July 16, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-syria-afghan-proxy-force-boost-image-fatemiyoun/28619046.html>; "Iran orchestrates another sham celebration of Fatemiyoun 'martyrs'," Salaam Times, September 20, 2018, http://afghanistan.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_st/features/2018/09/20/feature-01. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] The government provides no protection to women and children forced into sex trafficking, and both Iranians and migrant workers from countries like Afghanistan are subject to forced labor and debt bondage. The IRGC has allegedly used coercive tactics to recruit thousands of Afghan migrants living in Iran to fight in Syria. Human Rights Watch has reported that children as young as 14 are among those recruited. [...]

2.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

The percentage of the Iranian population using the Internet in 2019

❖ [Tehran Times, Some 64% of Iranians are internet users: report, 11 January 2019](#)

[...] According to a report released by the Measuring Information Society of Iran at the Information Technology Organization, 64 percent of Iranians above six years are internet users.

A survey was conducted at urban and rural areas during winter season of the Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended March 20, 2018) by the Statistical Center of Iran.

According to the survey, the internet user is defined as someone who has used internet during the past three months and by this definition 46,315,545 people are internet users in Iran.

According to the report, 72.8 percent of Iranian families have access to the internet, which means that 17,936,000 families benefit from internet nationwide.

A total of 17,216,000 families have access to computer, which is 69.7 percent of the population.

Another survey, which was conducted two years ago, reported that 61.39 percent of Iranian families have access to internet until the yearend of Iranian calendar year 1395 (ended on March 21, 2017).

Hence, there is a 10 percent development during a year, according to the report.

The survey is done according to 19 indicators and factors provided by International Telecommunication Union (ITU). [...]

❖ [Associated Press, Iranians manage to surf the web despite tide of censorship, 26 July 2019](#)

[...] The government has taken steps to expand access and widen bandwidths, with Rouhani claiming earlier this month that all towns and 78% of villages have access to high-speed internet. But many Iranians say surfing the web remains a disappointing experience.

"The number of users has grown at a much faster rate than the speed of the country's internet," said Danial Behzadi, an information technology expert. "In general, the internet in Iran is relatively slow, expensive and has poor neutrality." [...]

❖ [Internet World Stats \(IWS\), MIDDLE EAST: Internet usage and population statistics, last updated December 2019](#)

[...] 67,602,731 Internet users in Dec, 2019, 80.5% penetration, per IWS.

40,000,000 Facebook est. subscribers in Dec, 2019, 47.6% penetration [...]

❖ [Central Intelligence Agency \(CIA\), The World Factbook: Iran, last updated December 2019](#)

[...] Internet users field listing total: 67.6 million

percent of population: 82% (Dec 2019 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 9

Broadband - fixed subscriptions field listing total: 9,806,123

Subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 12 (2018 est.)

Country comparison to the world: 18 [...]

❖ [DataReportal, Digital 2020: Iran, 18 February 2020](#)

[...] Internet users in Iran

There were 58.42 million internet users in Iran in January 2020.

The number of internet users in Iran increased by 5.7 million (+11%) between 2019 and 2020.

Internet penetration in Iran stood at 70% in January 2020.

Social media users in Iran

There were 33.40 million social media users in Iran in January 2020.

The number of social media users in Iran increased by 9.4 million (+39%) between April 2019 and January 2020.

Social media penetration in Iran stood at 40% in January 2020.

Mobile connections in Iran

There were 127.0 million mobile connections in Iran in January 2020.

The number of mobile connections in Iran increased by 3.0 million (+2.4%) between January 2019 and January 2020.

The number of mobile connections in Iran in January 2020 was equivalent to 152% of the total population.

[...]

Government barring teachers from commemorating International Labor Day and Teachers' Day in 2019

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Volume 6, April-May 2019, May 2019](#)

[...] It was in such a dire situation that workers greeted May 1st, the international Labor Day. While senior government officials, both the Supreme Leader and the President, praised the workers and encouraged them to "produce more" to counter the sanctions, the police attacked the assembly of workers and students in front of the Majlis, the Islamic parliament, and arrested many of the participants in the protests including workers, labor rights activists and journalists.

Two days earlier, several workers and labor activists were arrested in Karaj. In various cities, the security forces attacked the teachers' rallies on May 2, which is the teacher day in Iran, and arrested several members of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association.

[...] Suppression of Workers and Teachers' Gatherings

On the eve of the International Labor Day, Iran's Deputy Minister of Political Affairs and Security, during a meeting with provincial security deputies, warned against workers' protests and called for "resolving" the issues before "workers come to the streets." Earlier, on April 26, security forces arrested at least 12 labor activists in the Jahan-nama Park in Karaj and sent them to jail. Alireza Saghafi, Haleh Safarzadeh, Parvin Mohammadi, Valeh Zamani, Saeed Torabian, Fouad Fathi, Mostafa Shaokat, Amir Abbasi, Safyar Ghorbani and Bilal Ghaziani were among those arrested.

At the same time in Kurdistan, Ghaleb Hosseini and Mozaffar Salehnia were summoned to the IRGC. Ahmed Taghizadeh, a labor activist living in Orumiyeh, was summoned to the security office of the city on April 25.

On the International Labor Day, the state-owned House of Labor, as in previous years, turned the ceremony into a platform to support the Islamic Republic and endorsement of government policies against workers. At the same time, the police raided the gathering of workers in front of the parliament building, arresting and sending to jail more than 40 labor activists, members of the Tehran Bus Company's Syndicate, the Free Trade Union of Workers and Students, and a number of writers and journalists. [...]

Teachers and union activists in prison or awaiting new sentences in 2019

❖ [Radio Farda, Dozens Of Teachers Arrested In Iran During Protests, 3 May 2019](#)

[...] The Teachers' Coordinating Council Of Iran (TCCI) says dozens of teachers have been arrested for participating in widespread protests on Thursday, May 2, across the country.

Thousands of educators, celebrating National Teachers Day, had rallied on Thursday in front of the Education Department offices in at least thirteen large provinces to protest lack of government attention to their demands.

TCCI, which had called for the rallies, says that the security forces detained prominent teachers' rights activists and board members of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA), Rasoul Bodaghi and Mohammad Fallahi.

Meanwhile, a teachers' rights activist told Radio Farda that several others were also detained during the protest rally in Tehran.

The same source, who spoke on condition of anonymity for security concerns, added that three detained female teachers were released later.

[...] In the meantime the resolution has bitterly criticized the security forces of hindering teachers attempt to launch an independent and united trade union, while keeping several teachers' rights activists, including a board member of ITTA, Esmail Abdi, behind bars. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights In Iran, Several Detained Without Access to Counsel One Week After Labor Day Protests, 7 May 2019](#)

[...] Several workers' rights activists including teachers who were arrested at rallies in Tehran on May 1 (International Labor Day) and May 2 (Iran's Teachers' Day) remain in detention without access to legal counsel, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has learned. [...]

Several people were also arrested at the May 2 Teachers' Day rally in front of the Ministry of Education, including formerly imprisoned teachers' rights activist Rassoul Bodaghi and two members of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA), Mohammad Fallahi and Mojtaba Ghoreishian. Bodaghi was released on bail May 5 but there is no information on the fate of his colleagues. [...]

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Volume 6, April-May 2019, May 2019](#)

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Neda Naji, Atefeh Rangriz, Hasan Saeedi, Farhad Sheikhi, Nasrin Javadi, Nahid Khodajoo, Marzieh Amiri and Keyvan Samimi are still being held in detention. Reza Shahabi, secretary of the trade union of workers of the Tehran Bus Company, who was arrested at the gathering, was later released on bail. According to a report by the Free Trade Union of Workers, an independent labor organization, JafarAzimzadeh, Nahid Khodajoo, Azam KhezriJavadi (Nasrin Javadi) and Farhad Sheikhi are four of the senior members of the union who are in prison, and court orders have been issued for Parvin Mohammadi, Hadi Soleimani and Mehdi Fakhri. Other members of the union are also threatened by telephone.

One day after the workers' rally, teachers also gathered in different cities in front of the Education Ministry buildings. Police in several cities arrested several teachers. Rasoul Bodaghi and Mohammad Falahi, two members of the board of directors of the Teachers' Association, were among those arrested. The two were released on bail. Yasser Amini Azar was arrested in Marivan city.

Based on a report by Teachers for Justice, rallies were held in Saqez, Marivan, Sanandaj, Divandareh, Javanrood, Islamabad, Kermanshah, Aligudarz, Hamedan, Malayer, Tabriz, Urmia, Ardabil, Tehran,

Malard, Isfahan, Khomeini Shahr, Yazd, Shiraz, Sari Rasht, Mashhad, Torbat Heydarieh, Ahvaz, Arak, Qazvin, Karaj and several other cities. In Tehran, police officers arrested at least eight people. Some detainees were released a few hours later.

Mohammad Ali Zahmatkeshan, a teacher in Fars province, was imprisoned. In Ahvaz, the Revolutionary Guards arrested three teachers, Naji Rari, Maher Dassumi and Ali Abidwayi. They were arrested for participating in "Flood Assistance People's Committees." [...]

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Annual Report Volume 1, May 2018-May 2019, May 2019](#)

[...] Mohammad Habibi and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi and Esmail Abdi, members of the Teachers' Association, and Abdolreza Ghanbari, Mohammad Sanayi, Rouhollah Mardani, Bakhtiyar Alami and Mokhtar Asadi are among those teachers who are currently in prison or exile or waiting for a prison sentence [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] Human rights defenders, members of minority communities, lawyers, journalists, including journalists with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Persian service, labour and trade union activists and women protesting the compulsory veiling law have continued to be intimidated, harassed, arrested and detained.

[...] Organized protests

19. The past year has seen the stepping up of pressure by Iranian authorities against trade unionists and other workers protesting for their labour rights. Truck drivers, teachers and factory workers have been intimidated, arrested and charged with offences ranging from "spreading propaganda against the state" to "disrupting public order and peace by participating in illegal gatherings", resulting in sentences of prison terms and flogging.²⁵ [...]

The Special Rapporteur is also concerned about the reported persecution of Kurdish language teachers, including one young female teacher, Zara Mohammadi, who was arrested and detained by the Iranian authorities on 23 May 2019 for organizing private tuition without a permit in Sanandaj.⁹¹ [...]

25 See www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1302592019ENGLISH.PDF. [...]

91 See https://twitter.com/hashtag/Freedom_for_ZaraMohammadi?src=hash. [...]

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Volume 8, August-September 2019, 4 October 2019](#)

[...] In other news, a teacher in Mahabad, Yasser Amini Azar, was sentenced to 15 months in prison. Mahboubeh Farahzadi, a retired teacher in Mashhad, has also been summoned to the city's revolutionary court. Eskandar Lotfi, a member of the Marivan Teachers' Association, who had been arrested earlier, has been summoned to the Revolutionary Court again. Arrested after the teachers' rally, he has been charged with propaganda against the system, disturbing public opinion, and spreading lies.

In addition, Houshang Koushki, another teachers' union activist who was arrested on July 15 this year, is released on bail and on a temporary basis.

Mohammad Taghi Fallahi, secretary general of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Union, who was arrested in April this year during a teachers' gathering, was sentenced to eight months in prison and 10 lashes. The sentence has been suspended for three years. [...]

❖ [National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), 'Teacher's Place Is Not in Prison' – the New Academic Year Has Begun in Iran, 6 October 2019](#)

[...] The new academic year has begun in Iran, but in the mullahs' regime the main pillars of education, the Court Of Appeals Upheld Upholds Prison Sentence For Jailed Teacher Mohammad Habibi.

Court of Appeals upheld 10-and-a-half-year prison sentence for jailed teacher Mohammad Habibi.

During their coordinated nationwide protest against their low salaries and the low quality of education at schools, teachers further demanded the release of prominent trade unionist Ismail Abdi. [...] Teachers are students' role models and guides. The Iranian student movement played a pivotal role in overthrowing the Shah's regime. It can and should play a role in overthrowing the religious fascism ruling Iran. By imprisoning teachers, the Iranian regime plants the seeds of protest in Iranian schools, which, will form a storm that will sweep the Iranian regime from power. [...]

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Volume 10, December 2019-January 2020, 4 February 2020](#)

[...] Jafar Ebrahimi, a teacher and a member of the Tehran's Teachers' Association, was arrested in the city of Shahriar on 27 December 2019 and transferred to prison. Judicial authorities prevented Ebrahimi from being released on bail.¹³ [...]

13 Telegram Channel of Teachers' Association of Iran, 9 January 2020; <https://t.me/kasenfi/7773> [...]

4. Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

4.3. Omissions

4.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), all omitted in 2018 and 2019

Existence of government agencies fighting against corruption in 2017

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Rouhani's Citizens' Rights Charter: A Harmful Distraction, May 2018](#)

[...] Pervasive human rights violations in Iran have rarely been an issue of law. Rather, it has been individuals and institutions that routinely act above the law, with impunity.

[...] In addition to public awareness, the charter calls for government agencies to submit reports on their implementation of citizens' rights.

"[A]ll the government bodies are therefore obliged to submit a report on their executive, administrative, and educational measures as regards the charter."- Shahindokht Molaverdi, special assistant to the president on citizens' rights, February 12, 2018¹⁸

However, this requirement applies only to those agencies under the authority of the executive branch. It does not apply to the judicial (where there are serious issues of rights abuses and lack of accountability) and legislative branches of state over which the president has no authority.

[...] Apart from the fact that no such mechanisms have been developed, the charter's vague references to creating procedures to report violations again skates past the fact that creating new, parallel structures that have no enforcement capability—while ignoring the dysfunction of existing mechanisms—is not a pathway to impact. The charter's articles are already law in Iran. If the law is being broken, it is the Judiciary that is responsible for addressing this. The refusal of the Judiciary to uphold the law is not addressed by bypassing the Judiciary.

Article 172 of Iran's Constitution explicitly refers violations by security agencies (including the Revolutionary Guards) to military or public courts, depending on the nature of the crime, which are both under the Judiciary; Article 173 states that the Court of Administrative Justice, under the supervision of the Judiciary, will "investigate the complaints, grievances, and objections of the people with respect to government officials, organs, and statutes" and Article 174 states that the Judiciary will "supervise the proper conducting of affairs and the correct implementation of laws by the administrative organs of the government" through the Judiciary's National General Inspectorate."²²

In other words, grievance mechanisms already exist in Iran. They are simply ignored.

Citizens can also bring their cases to the Iranian Parliament's Article 90 Commission, which is charged with investigating public complaints regarding Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary, yet the commission has no real enforcement capabilities.²³ Moreover, its track record is mixed; while at times it has served in an investigative capacity, its activities are dependent upon the political proclivities of its members at any given time, and the Judiciary has not proved to be responsive to the commission's questions or criticism in the past.²⁴

Rouhani often deflects criticism of his human rights record by referring to the “independence” of the Iranian Judiciary. Yet the Judiciary’s demonstrated lack of independence from the country’s security and intelligence agencies (which are major rights violators), its refusal to hold state actors accountable for rights violations, and its ability to subvert the rule of law with impunity, as it answers only to the country’s supreme leader Ali Khamenei, underpins Iran’s human right crisis. Rouhani’s Citizens’ Rights Charter does nothing to address any of this. [...]

18 Website of the High Council for Human Rights, Iran’s Judiciary, “Charter on Citizens’ Rights Ensures Iran’s Sustainable Development,” February 12, 2018 <http://en.humanrights-iran.ir/news-24687.aspx>

[...] 22 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran <http://fis-iran.org/en/resources/legaldoc/constitutionislamic>

23 For the regulations regarding the Article 90 Commission, see: <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/news/features/3558-internal-regulation-on-the-commission-of-article-90-of-the-constitution.html>

24 See for example the Human Rights Watch report, “Like the Dead in Their Coffin: Torture, Detention and the Crushing of Dissent in Iran,” June 2004 <http://pantheon.hrw.org/reports/2004/iran0604/iran0604.pdf>

❖ [The Financial Times, Iran cracks down on Revolutionary Guards business network, 14 September 2017](#)

[...] Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps is being forced to shrink its sprawling business empire and some of its senior members have been arrested as part of President Hassan Rouhani’s attempts to curb the elite force’s role in the economy.

In the past year, the guards, who have interests in sectors ranging from oil and gas to telecoms and construction, have had to restructure some holding companies and transfer ownership of others back to the state, a regime insider and a government official told the Financial Times.

At least a dozen guards members and affiliated businessmen have been detained in recent months, while others are being forced to pay back wealth accrued through suspect business deals, the officials said. [...]

Iranian analysts say corruption involving politically connected individuals and entities is hampering economic development and efforts to boost growth as the country grapples with high unemployment [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] C2. Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0 / 4

Corruption remains endemic at all levels of the bureaucracy, despite regular calls by authorities to tackle the problem. Powerful actors involved in the economy, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and bonyads (endowed foundations), are above scrutiny, and restrictions on the media and civil society activists prevent them from serving as independent watchdogs to ensure transparency and accountability.

Recent reports suggest that the government is attempting to curb the economic dominance of the IRGC, which has enabled corruption. The Financial Times reported in September that at least a dozen IRGC members and affiliated businessmen had been detained in recent months, while others were forced to pay back proceeds from suspect business deals. [...]

Existence of government agencies fighting against corruption in 2018

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

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Existence of government agencies fighting against corruption in 2019

❖ [Mehr News Agency, Regional coop., way of confronting US unilateralism, 26 April 2019](#)

[...] Head of Iran’s General Inspection Organization (GIO), Naser Seraj said on Thu. that regional cooperation is the only way to confront US unilateralism in the international level.

[...] He further noted, "Iran's General Inspection Organization is ready to cooperate and collaborate with other member states in relevant issues such as judicial cooperation and countering corruption, etc." [...]

❖ [Financial Tribunal, Iran's GIO Launches Auto Market Investigation, 11 May 2019](#)

[...] Following weeks of upheaval in Iran's auto market when prices hiked hourly, the judiciary-affiliated General Inspection Organization of Iran has started an investigation into the sector.

Nasser Seraj, the head of the organization, said a report on local carmakers' activities, market conditions and the role of dealers in the sharp rise in car prices will be prepared in a week, Mehr News Agency reported.

"The report will be handed to judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi," he added.

According to Seraj, legal action will be taken by the judiciary in due course to crack down on malpractices in the auto market.

The investigation was initiated after car prices jumped above 30% in the past few weeks. Authorities blamed online sales platforms and dealers for the high prices, while market watchers believe economic upheavals have caused volatility in Iran's auto market. [...]

❖ [Lobe Log, Iran's Goals In The Fight Against Economic Corruption, 18 October 2019](#)

[...] The Iranian government began an unprecedented fight against economic corruption over a year ago. News of trials in corruption cases is broadcast on Iranian state television and other media outlets every day and officials, particularly in the judiciary, stress the need to tackle economic corruption on all fronts.

Previously, anti-corruption efforts in Iran had been limited to a few isolated cases, such as those of Shahram Jazayeri, Mahafarid Amir-Khosravi, and Babak Zanjani. Now, it seems that Iranian authorities are fighting corruption relentlessly and comprehensively, even in the cases of President Hassan Rouhani's brother, the daughter of a former minister in Rouhani's cabinet, and even high-ranking officials working in the office of the former head of the Iranian judiciary and current chair of the Expediency Council, Sadeq Larijani. The extent of the fight against economic corruption is such that a special complex to deal with such cases has been set up in Tehran Province's justice department.

Although human rights groups such as Amnesty International have expressed concern about the special courts, how to handle crimes and especially the manner in which hanging sentences are issued for financial offenders, Iran appears to be pursuing three goals in its fight against economic corruption:

[...] Addressing Public Discontent and Neutralizing U.S. Propaganda

[...] Financing Part of Government Spending

[...] Leadership Succession [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0/4

Corruption remains endemic at all levels of the bureaucracy, despite regular calls by authorities to tackle the problem. Powerful actors involved in the economy, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and bonyads (endowed foundations), are above scrutiny, and restrictions on the media and civil society activists prevent them from serving as independent watchdogs to ensure transparency and accountability.

In 2019, the judiciary launched a crackdown on corruption amid accusations that the effort was politically motivated. [...]

Existence of Iranian law granting public access to government information in 2017

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] C3. Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1 / 4

An access to information law was passed in 2009, and implementing regulations were finally adopted in 2015. In July 2017, the Information and Communications Technology Ministry unveiled an online portal to facilitate information requests. However, the law grants broadly worded exemptions allowing the protection of information whose disclosure would conflict with state interests, cause financial loss, or harm public security, among other stipulations. In practice, the transparency of Iran's political system remains extremely limited, and powerful elements of the state and society remain unaccountable to the public. [...]

Existence of Iranian law granting public access to government information in 2018

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

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Existence of Iranian law granting public access to government information in 2019

❖ [Article 19 and Access Now, Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the Islamic Republic of Iran by ARTICLE 19 and Access Now, For consideration at the 34th session of the Working Group in November 2019, 4 April 2019](#)

[...] 4. In a positive step, access to information legislation has begun to be implemented, though there remains significant potential for further reform to fully guarantee this right.

[...] 2009's Publication and Free Access to Information Act (Access to Information Act) provides a legal basis for citizens' right to access information held by government institutions and certain private bodies.

47. While the adoption of the law was positive, and its implementation since 2015 welcome, it nevertheless requires further reforms.⁹⁹ In particular:

- Under Note 1, Article 10,¹⁰⁰ bodies under the control of the Supreme Leader (such as the Revolutionary Guard, Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and Supreme Council of Cyberspace) are only permitted to proactively publish information about their structures and activities with his permission, and enables the most opaque public bodies to evade scrutiny, despite the high public interest in their activities..
- Only citizens have the right to access information protected, as well as Iran-based companies (Article 2), excluding all migrants, in contravention of the right to equal protection under the law.¹⁰¹
- Chapter IV sets out over-broad and ill-defined exemptions, which are reported to be cited frequently to justify non-compliance with requests:¹⁰²

o Article 13 exempts the release of classified information. This is the most problematic section, referring to the 1975 Secrets Act, an archaic law from the Shah's regime which broadly defines what constitutes classified information with little guidance.¹⁰³

o Note 2, Article 17 exempts the release of information that would "cause defamation and disgrace" or that are "against public decency and/or promoting vice", against international standards.¹⁰⁴

- Chapter V creates a Commission with a Secretariat to provide oversight and act as an appeals mechanism, however the Commission is not independent: its members are all senior government officials representing powerful public bodies, many of which have little or no commitment to transparency.¹⁰⁵ The appeals mechanism itself is not clearly set out.

48. Implementation of the Act has been slow.¹⁰⁶ Since 2018, although the number of requests has increased,¹⁰⁷ responses are not always provided, and some have included false information.¹⁰⁸ There is no clear means of appeal or remedy set out in the law or its bylaws, with no defined timeline for responses to complaints. Reports to ARTICLE 19 have noted that complaints made via the portal have not elicited a response, or remedy.

Recommendations

- Review and reform the Access to Information Act to bring it in line with international human rights law, including to repeal the over-broad exemptions contained in Chapter IV, and to ensure the obligation of transparency applies to all relevant bodies including the Office of the Supreme Leader and all organs under his supervision; and to expand the right of information to all those in Iran.
- Ensure the full implementation of the Access to Information law, including through the adoption of the necessary explanatory bylaws, and through the adoption of effective appeals procedures and creation of a fully independent oversight body. [...]

99 See ARTICLE 19's full legal analysis of the Law, "Iran: Review of the Publication and Free Access to Information Act 2009", ARTICLE 19, September 2017, available at: <https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-review-of-the-publication-and-free-access-to-information-act-2009-2/>

100 "Article 10: In support of citizens' rights and public interest, Public institutions must provide at least annually, their general information, including operations and fiscal reports, while protecting their classified information, through their websites, or published as a journal, to provide to citizens for a fee upon request. The content could include: a) Objectives, responsibilities, policies, and structure; b) Procedures and levels of services provided directly to the public; c) Methods of receiving complaints from the public for the institution's consideration and action; d) Nature of information held by the institution and procedures for accessing them; e) Duties and responsibilities of its high-ranking officers; f) Methods and procedures whereby natural persons, legal entities, or non-governmental organizations could utilize to be involved or have an impact.

Note 1: Provisions of this article with respect to organs that are under the direct supervision of the Supreme Leader are subject to his Excellency's agreement."

"Iran: Review of the Publication and Free Access to Information Act 2009", ARTICLE 19, September 2017, available at: <https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-review-of-the-publication-and-free-access-to-information-act-2009-2/>

101 Article 2: "Any person of Iranian nationality has the right to access public information, unless otherwise indicated by law [or 'unless banned by law']. Use of public information, and/or its publication is subject to relevant laws and regulations."

"Iran: Review of the Publication and Free Access to Information Act 2009", ARTICLE 19, September 2017, available at: <https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-review-of-the-publication-and-free-access-to-information-act-2009-2/>

102 Hamshahri, "Filtering Confidentiality," January 2019, Hamshahri Newspaper, <https://bit.ly/2Flrg8z>

103 Article 13: "Requests for documents or information that are considered classified (State's confidential information) should be denied. Accessing classified information is subject to specific laws and regulations".

104 Article 17: "Institutions subject to this Act are obliged to deny requests for information if harmful to: a) public peace and security;

b) prevention of crime and investigation, arrest or prosecution of offenders;

c) tax audits, government fees and their collection;

d) supervision over immigration to the country.

Note 1: Provisions of Articles 13 to 16 do not apply to information pertaining to existence or emergence of environmental hazards or threats to public health

Note 2: Provisions of Articles 15 to 17 do not apply to information that could cause defamation and disgrace, or are against public decency and/or promoting vice."

"Iran: Review of the Publication and Free Access to Information Act 2009", ARTICLE 19, September 2017, available at: <https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-review-of-the-publication-and-free-access-to-information-act-2009-2/>

105 "Iran: Review of the Publication and Free Access to Information Act 2009", ARTICLE 19, September 2017, available at: <https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-review-of-the-publication-and-free-access-to-information-act-2009-2/>

106 "How to Make an Information Request" ARTICLE 19, 23 January 2018, available at: <https://www.article19.org/resources/make-information-request-iran/>

107 "Free Access to Information from the Second!", ISNA, Available at: <https://bit.ly/2OA1gJg>

108 For example this concern reported by a journalist to Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Hossein Entezami via Twitter <https://twitter.com/kheyzaran/status/1019209072179019776>, and here where the information provided was reported as irrelevant and incorrect by a journalist <https://twitter.com/nasringhavami/status/1092530396489670656> and the Minister's response to allegations of fictitious and false responses is to call on those providing and media organisations to hold them accountable according to the law: https://twitter.com/h_entezami/status/1061344713800908800; Hamshahri, Majles Will Not Respond to All Information Requests, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/2YyJKJT> [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...]. C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 1/4

The transparency of Iran's political system remains extremely limited in practice, and powerful elements of the state and society are not accountable to the public. An access to information law was passed in 2009, and implementing regulations were finally adopted in 2015. In 2017, the Information and Communications Technology Ministry unveiled an online portal to facilitate information requests. However, the law grants broadly worded exemptions allowing the protection of information whose disclosure would conflict with state interests, cause financial loss, or harm public security, among other stipulations. [...]

6. Section 6. *Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons*

6.3. Omissions

6.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016), most omitted in 2018 and 2019

Under the law the principal of “qisas” (punishment in kind) continues not to apply to murders within the family committed by the father in 2017

❖ [Persia Educational Foundation, A Legal Study on Children’s Rights and Iran’s Laws, 2017](#)

[...] ii) Children’s Judicial Rights in Iran [...]

(b) Child Murdered by her/his Father

Article 301: “Qisas shall be delivered only if the perpetrator is not the father or a paternal grandfather of the victim, and if the perpetrator is of sane mind and of the same religion as the victim.”

Article 309: “The claim that the perpetrator is the victim’s father or a paternal grandfather must be proven in the court, and in absence of such proof, the right to retaliate will be proven by claims stated by the victim’s family, the victim or his guardian.”

(c) The New Penal Code

Based on this article, the father has the right to kill his child without having to undergo qisas punishment. He only has to pay the blood-money (Diyyeh) for his child. Giving this right to the father is a clear violation of the right to life because every human being has an inherent right to life and cannot be deprived thereof by giving the right to death to another person. No ideology or legal system in today’s world would accept such a law and it is essential to revise this law in order to prevent the wide-occurring cases of honour killing in Iran [...]

Under the law the principal of “qisas” (punishment in kind) continues not to apply to murders within the family committed by the father in 2018

❖ [Iran Human Rights and ECPM \(Ensemble Contre La Peine de Mort\), Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran: 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] MURDER AND QISAS

Qisas refers to retribution in kind. The qisas death sentence has been retained for murder in the new IPC [Iran penal Code]. As in the previous IPC, it exempts the following situations or people from qisas: father and paternal grandfather of the victim (Article 301 of the IPC); a man who kills his wife and her lover in the act of adultery (Article 302) [...]

Under the law the principal of “qisas” (punishment in kind) continues not to apply to murders within the family committed by the father in 2019

❖ [Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)

[...] There are certain crimes for which there is a difference in the punishment imposed on men and women. According to article 630 of the fifth book of the Islamic Penal Code, if a man sees his wife committing adultery with another man and kills or assaults one or both parties, he is exempted from criminal liability and qisas (retaliation in kind).²⁰ If the act is non-consensual, he has a right to kill the rapist. There are also exemptions in the Islamic Penal Code for fathers or grandfathers who kill their children.²¹ [...]

20 Islamic Republic of Iran, Ghanoun-e-mojazaat-e- eslami [Islamic Penal Code], Book 5, 1996, Article 630.

21 Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Penal Code, Article 301.

The law in 2017 recognizes the right of married couples to decide “freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of children”

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] In August 2016, the newly elected Parliament re-introduced the controversial Population and Family Excellence Plan, which aims to increase the pregnancy rate to 2.5 per cent of the quantitative population

growth up to 2025 and requires public and private sector employers to give hiring preference to men and prohibits hiring “single individuals” to faculty positions in all public and private education and research institutions. [...]

After having implemented an effective family planning education programme for many years, the Government proposed the Bill to Increase Fertility Rates and Prevent Population Decline (Bill 446). The bill outlaws surgical contraception, restricts access to contraceptives, bans the provision of information on contraceptive methods and reduces State funding for family planning programmes. [...]

The law in 2018 recognizes the right of married couples to decide “freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of children”

❖ [Open Democracy, Women’s bodies have become a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future, 29 August 2018](#)

[...] In practise, Bill 315 is an all-encompassing denial of women’s agency and their rights to decide freely whether and when to marry, divorce, or have children. It codifies women’s discrimination in the workplace. Family planning funding, which had significantly increased women’s access to modern contraception over the last two decades, was cut not long after the law came into force.

It is an all-encompassing denial of women’s rights to decide freely whether and when to marry, divorce, or have children.

The government has since halted all free family planning services. Family planning information has been removed from health centres, which are no longer allowed to distribute contraceptive pills and condoms, insert IUDs (intrauterine devices) or perform permanent contraceptive surgeries.

Doctors and nurses are obligated to encourage women to continue unwanted pregnancies and have the large families our grandmothers were forced to have. At school, classes on the need for population controls have been replaced by those encouraging marriage and bountiful reproduction.

Since the physical, mental, and emotional labour around contraception is still “women’s burden” in Iran, Bill 315 has significant impacts on women’s lives. But of course, it will not affect all Iranian women in the same way.

Wealthier women can still buy contraception and get abortions on the thriving black market that has developed under Bill 315. For those who can pay for it, surgical abortion for an early pregnancy is available for between 10,000,000 and 40,000,000 Rial (\$200-400), depending on where you go.

Wealthier women can still buy contraception and get abortions on the thriving black market that has developed under Bill 315.

With consistent conservative attacks on women’s health and reproductive rights, responses from women’s rights groups need to take into account the different experiences of different women; too often Iranian feminists ignore the dimensions of class and race in the complex matrix of power relations that shape inequality.

A social researcher and feminist working across Iran’s north, northeast and central rural areas told me that women are particularly suffering from cuts to free contraception in these areas, where “the economy of marginalised and poor villages is totally collapsed as the result of neoliberal economic policies.”

“People are facing shortage of water, famine and starvation in many areas,” she explained, asking: “In this situation, how can a woman manage her fertility with no access to affordable service as well as no power of negotiation with her husband?”

Iran’s family planning program was one to be proud of, but the political climate towards women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights has become increasingly aggressive and oppressive. The population might be improving in terms of numbers, but the lives of women responsible for this gain are being diminished even further. [...]

The law in 2019 recognizes the right of married couples to decide “freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of children”

❖ [Radio Farda, Iran Officials Call For More Babies To Prevent A Shiite Decline, 25 November 2019](#)

[...] An Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander on Saturday told the female members of the Basij paramilitary force that families of the Guards and Basij should have “at least five children”.

Commander Ali Fadavi's guidance reflects the deep concerns of Iran's religious and hardline establishment about the perceived decline in the country's young population and hence "Shiite soldiers" to fight for causes held dear for the Islamic Republic.

Addressing a gathering of female members of Basij, the paramilitary arm of the IRGC, Brigadier General Ali Fadavi said: "The country's population growth rate has become negative. This can have undesirable consequences. The women's Basij should be pioneers in this matter. We should have at least five children in the families of the IRGC and Basij members."

The Head of the Political, Ideological Organization of the Iranian army had claimed in August that "through cultural onslaught the enemies of Shiism are secretly trying to prevent the number of number of Shiites from rising" and said Iran needs "jihad makers, guards and defenders to maintain its existence, identity and investments."

The Iranian religious establishment is against population control plans for the same reason. In 2012, Ayatollah Jafar Sobhani, one of Iran's prominent religious leaders, criticized family planning and accused the Saudis and Wahabis of hatching a plot to replace the Shiite majority in all Iranian cities with Sunnis.

According to Iran's Health Minister Saeed Namaki's letter to Khamenei on November 9, the current total fertility rate (TFR) is 1.84 and "confirms the concerns of your learned highness." In his letter Namaki claimed that in 2016 the figure announced by the authorities had been manipulated and artificially increased to 2.1 to dispel the concerns about the drop in the rate of growth of the country's population.

Figures for the population growth rate offered by various Iranian authorities are not consistent and vary considerably. According to Iran's Statistical Center currently the population growth rate and the aging population growth rate stand at 1.24 and 3.62 respectively. Iran's population is 83 million now and has more than doubled in the 40 years since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

According to the same organization 24.6 percent of the population is under the age of 15 and 22 percent are between 15 and 29 years old. Only 6.4 percent of the population is above 65. However, the growth of the young population is negative at a rate of 3.24 while the aging population (over 60 years old) is growing at a rate of 3.62.

Hardliners accuse Dr. Mohammad-Jalal Abasi-Shavazi, a demography professor of Tehran University, and Dr. Meymanat Hosseini Chavoshi, a demography researcher of the National University of Australia of manipulating the statistics on the total fertility rate (TFR) to make the population growth rate higher to deceive the Iranian authorities and prevent them from taking measures to deal with the low growth.

According to the IRGC affiliated Javan Online both academics who "have connections with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)" are currently under trial on security charges and are not allowed to leave the country.

Khamenei has repeatedly said Iran's population should be at least 150 million to avoid having an aging population.

Some Iranian hardliners allege that "the enemy" is acting through family planning activists and demography experts to "infiltrate" state bodies and with manipulated statistics create the illusion that the population growth rate is not at a worrying level at all. "Enemy" is a code name for the US, other western countries, Israel, and Saudi Arabia.

Iran's population grew very fast in the 1980s when the birth rate came close to 4 percent. Free contraceptive services were offered at governmental healthcare centers. Some Iranian clerics even issued religious edicts in favor of vasectomies. In 2012, under Khamenei's direct guidelines, the administration of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad outlawed voluntary sterilization and restricted access to contraceptives. Implementation of this policy has continued since then.

Iranian authorities encourage families to have more children at a time when the country's economy is facing dire problems. According to the latest report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Iran's economy is expected to shrink by 9.5 percent in 2019 due to U.S. sanctions. Inflation has now gone up to 40 percent and the official unemployment rate is more than 15 percent. Experts believe the real unemployment rate is much higher, since Iran counts one hour of work per week as employment. [...]

Couples are entitled to reproductive healthcare, "free from discrimination, coercion, and violence" in 2017

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] After having implemented an effective family planning education programme for many years, the Government proposed the Bill to Increase Fertility Rates and Prevent Population Decline (Bill 446). The bill

outlaws surgical contraception, restricts access to contraceptives, bans the provision of information on contraceptive methods and reduces State funding for family planning programmes. [...]

Couples are entitled to reproductive healthcare, “free from discrimination, coercion, and violence” in 2018

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[...] In practise, Bill 315 is an all-encompassing denial of women’s agency and their rights to decide freely whether and when to marry, divorce, or have children. It codifies women’s discrimination in the workplace. Family planning funding, which had significantly increased women’s access to modern contraception over the last two decades, was cut not long after the law came into force.

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The government has since halted all free family planning services. Family planning information has been removed from health centres, which are no longer allowed to distribute contraceptive pills and condoms, insert IUDs (intrauterine devices) or perform permanent contraceptive surgeries.

Doctors and nurses are obligated to encourage women to continue unwanted pregnancies and have the large families our grandmothers were forced to have. At school, classes on the need for population controls have been replaced by those encouraging marriage and bountiful reproduction [...]

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Iran’s family planning program was one to be proud of, but the political climate towards women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights has become increasingly aggressive and oppressive. The population might be improving in terms of numbers, but the lives of women responsible for this gain are being diminished even further. [...]

Zero budget for contraception and family planning for married couples in 2017

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] After having implemented an effective family planning education programme for many years, the Government proposed the Bill to Increase Fertility Rates and Prevent Population Decline (Bill 446). The bill outlaws surgical contraception, restricts access to contraceptives, bans the provision of information on contraceptive methods and reduces State funding for family planning programmes. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] Women experienced reduced access to affordable modern contraception as the authorities failed to restore the budget for state family planning programmes cut in 2012. Parliament passed a law in October imposing severe restrictions on imparting information about contraception. [...]

Zero budget for contraception and family planning for married couples in 2018

❖ [Open Democracy, Women’s bodies have become a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future, 29 August 2018](#)

[...] In practise, Bill 315 is an all-encompassing denial of women’s agency and their rights to decide freely whether and when to marry, divorce, or have children. It codifies women’s discrimination in the workplace. Family planning funding, which had significantly increased women’s access to modern contraception over the last two decades, was cut not long after the law came into force. [...]

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The law restricted women's economic, social, political, academic, and cultural rights in 2017

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] In August 2016, the newly elected Parliament re-introduced the controversial Population and Family Excellence Plan, which aims to increase the pregnancy rate to 2.5 per cent of the quantitative population growth up to 2025 and requires public and private sector employers to give hiring preference to men and prohibits hiring "single individuals" to faculty positions in all public and private education and research institutions. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned about the Bill to Protect Hijab and Modesty, which, if adopted, would restrict women's right to work by limiting women's working hours to between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. and mandate gender segregation in the workplace. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, It's a Men's Club: Discrimination Against Women in Iran's Job Market, 25 May 2017](#)

[...] Domestic laws directly discriminate against women's equal access to employment, including restricting the professions women can enter and denying equal benefits to women in the workforce. Furthermore, Iranian law considers the husband the head of the household, a status that grants him control over his wife's economic choices. For instance, a husband has the right to prevent his wife from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances, and, in practice, some employers require husbands and fiancés to provide written consent for women to be allowed to work with them. Lawyers told Human Rights Watch that, during divorce court proceedings, husbands regularly accuse their wives of working without their consent or in jobs they deem unsuitable. A man also has the right to forbid his wife from obtaining a passport to travel abroad and can prevent her from travelling abroad at any time (even if she has a passport). Some employers interviewed said they were unlikely to hire women where extensive travel is involved due to the uncertainty created by these discriminatory legal codes.

[...] Instead of taking steps to address these barriers, since 2011 Iran has shifted its population policies towards increasing population growth in a manner that has placed a disproportionate burden on women in the society. As a result, several draft bills that aim to increase child bearing do so mostly by restricting women's access to reproductive healthcare and employment opportunities. If passed, these bills could further marginalize women in the economic sphere.

[...] Recommendations to the Iranian Government and Parliament

- Ratify the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservations.

- Ratify International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (1948), No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981), and No. 183 on Maternity Protection (2000), to provide a broader, more equal framework governing the labor force.

- Move towards abolishing or amending all laws and other legislation under the civil code that discriminate against women when it comes to the right to work, including but not limited to:

- o Article 1117 of the civil code, which allows a husband to prevent his wife from obtaining an occupation he deems against family values or his reputation.

- o Article 18 of the passport law, which allows a husband to refuse permission to his wife to travel. As an interim measure, judicial authorities should waive the requirement for women traveling for work until that requirement is abolished entirely.

- o Revise marriage contracts to guarantee equal rights for women, in accordance with international human rights law. As an interim measure, make all those provisions optionally available in marriage contracts at all official marriage registration offices.

- Pass a comprehensive anti-discrimination law which bans all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender in the workplace, in both the public and private sectors, and includes prohibitions against indirect

discrimination consistent with the definition of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, while providing effective mechanisms for complaints, litigation, and implementation for women who bring complaints. The proposed legislation should specifically include reforms to the Labor Code and Social Security Law to:

- o Explicitly prohibit gender specifications in job advertising.
- o Ensure that state agencies do not conduct discriminatory recruitment practices and cease the use of gender-specific job advertising.
- o Establish penalties including fines against companies and state agencies that discriminate against women, including in recruitment and promotion processes.
- o Protect women from sexual harassment, including in the workplace.
- o Grant women and men equal protection and benefits, including but not limited to “family bonuses.”
- o Provide similar family leave benefits for fathers and men related to elderly or sick relatives.
- Revise relevant bills currently before the parliament to remove all discriminatory provisions, including the Comprehensive Family Excellence Plan, the Plan to Increase Childbirth and Prevent a Decline in Population Growth, and the Plan to Protect the “Sanctum” of the Hijab.
- Respect the rights of workers to associate, organize, and form unions, and to peaceful assembly with others in accordance with international human and labor rights law.

To the Iranian Ministry of Labor

- Accept and investigate sexual harassment and other complaints of discrimination submitted to the existing complaint procedure bodies within the ministry.
- In collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, workers’ unions, and employers organizations, develop and ensure the principle of “equal remuneration for work of equal value,” in accordance with ILO regulations.
- In collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, address prevailing gender stereotypes in the workplace, including through awareness-raising campaigns.
- Progressively extend social insurance coverage to those in the informal economy and, if necessary, adapt administrative procedures, benefits and contributions, taking into account their contributory capacity.

To the International Labour Organization

- Call on Iran to ensure that the Iranian labor code fully complies with international standards regarding non-discrimination and equal treatment in employment.
- Provide trainings to inspectors at the Ministry of Labor and other government officials on gender-specific labor rights issues and investigative techniques.

To National and Foreign Companies

- Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination policies which bans all forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender in the workplace and specifically includes:
 - o Clear policies prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace, and conduct periodic trainings on those policies; and
 - o Ensuring gender equality in hiring and promotional practices as well as equal access to professional development opportunities.

[...] II. Iran’s International Legal Obligations

[...] Iran has ratified five out of eight of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) fundamental conventions, including the 1958 C111 Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation and the 1951 C100 Equal Remuneration Convention.⁵⁶ The observation made in 2013 by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), which examines the application of ILO conventions by state parties, emphasized that the Iranian Labor Code does not sufficiently meet the principle of “equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value” in the Convention and urged Iran to take the opportunity of the review of the Labor Code to give full expression to this principle.⁵⁷

[...] Several provisions in the ILO conventions concerning maternity protection seek to ensure that women have non-hazardous employment options during and after pregnancy, without denying women the choice of continuing to perform their usual work. However, those conventions are not currently in force in Iran. According to article 2 of Convention No. 111, “[a]ny distinction, exclusion or preference in respect of a particular job based on the inherent requirements thereof shall not be deemed to be discrimination.” The CEACR however, has urged that exceptions to the rule of nondiscrimination be interpreted strictly to avoid “undue limitation of the protection which the Convention [No. 111] is intended to provide.”⁵⁸

Yet in practice the Iranian legal system emphasizes women's role as mothers and spouses over other rights stipulated in the constitution, and relies on discriminatory laws codified in provisions of the civil code that defines spouses' rights and responsibilities toward each other. The Guardian Council, the body that is responsible for interpreting the constitution, is controlled by conservative forces that often act to prevent greater legislative change towards gender equality.

[...] Labor Code

While the labor code includes provisions against forced labor and discrimination against women, it falls short of granting equal benefits to women and ensuring nondiscrimination through legal penalties and active enforcement. Article six of the Iranian labor law prohibits forced labor and states that "all individuals, men and women, are entitled to equal protection of the law and can choose any profession they desire as long as it is not against Islamic values, public interest, or the rights of others."⁶⁹ Article 38 of the law also emphasizes that equal wages are to be paid to men and women performing work of equal value in a workplace under the same conditions.⁷⁰

However, the labor code prohibits employers from hiring women to "perform dangerous, arduous or harmful work or to carry, manually and without mechanical means, loads heavier than the authorized maximum." In July 1992, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution ratified the "employment policies for women in the Islamic Republic of Iran." Article five of the employment policies emphasize that the executive offices of the state should facilitate women's employment, but in part this role is to ensure that there are enough women in jobs that are either encouraged by the authorities' interpretation of Sharia as being suitable for women (specifically mentioned in the law as e.g., nurse, teacher, doctor) or jobs that are "mentally and physically suitable for women" (i.e. laboratory sciences, electrical engineering, social work, pharmaceutical sciences, and translating). Under the law, women seeking jobs for which there is no difference between being a man or a woman should be able to access them without discrimination. But Article 5 also designates certain professions, such as judges or firefighters, as not suitable for women either because of the authorities' interpretation of Sharia on the matter or because of their claims that work conditions are unsuitable for women.⁷¹

The Iranian labor code also suffers from two additional shortcomings that lead to violations. First, the nondiscrimination principles in the the labor code do not cover the hiring process, which is critical for women to enter the workforce, particularly in higher paying, technical, or more senior positions. Second, as will be shown in the section on discrimination, there is a failure to enforce these nondiscrimination protections for women in the workplace.

[...] Lack of Equal Access to Social Security Benefits

Iranian social security regulations discriminate against women for certain benefits, such as family bonuses, and instead favor payment to married men with children. In order for a woman to be eligible to receive such monetary compensation, she must prove that her husband is unemployed or has a disability or that she is the sole guardian of their children.⁸⁰ Iranian social security rules also discriminate against women's families when the woman is not the primary breadwinner. Article 148 of the labor code obliges employers to insure their workers under the Social Security Act, and the family of the insured can also receive health insurance from the social security organization.⁸¹ However, because Iranian law considers the man the head of the household, the family of a female employee can only benefit from her health insurance when she provides for him or when her husband is unemployed or disabled.⁸² This discrimination concerning benefits even extends to what families receive after female or male members die. After paying a social security tax and satisfying certain age and work experience requirements, a family member of a social security beneficiary is entitled to a portion of these pensions after they die. However, while a man's spouse and children under the age of 18 can receive a portion of his pension, when an insured female dies, her family is not entitled to the same benefits.⁸³ [...]

57 CEACR observation (adopted 2013, published 103rd ILC session (2014)) on Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID:3148214 (accessed December 7 2016).

58 International Labor Conference, Equality in Employment and Occupation, General Survey of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, 75th Session, 1988, Report III (Part 4B) (Geneva: International Labor Office, 1996), p. 138.

69 Labor law (1990), Miniters of Labor Website, <http://www.mcls.gov.ir/fa/lawlist/kar> (accessed January 7, 2017).

70 Ibid.

[...] 81 Article 1 of social security law 1975 defines the organization as below: "Article 1. For the purpose of implementing, extending and expanding various types of social insurance, and developing a consistent system appropriate to social security requirements*, as well as centralizing cashes and incomes subject to the Social Security

Law and investing and exploiting funds and resources, an independent Organization, affiliated with the Ministry of Social welfare, called the “Social Security Organization”, hereafter referred to as the “Organization”, is established,” <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/21843/64830/E90IRN01.htm> (accessed May 19, 2017).

82 Criteria for dependents’ coverage, Social Security Organizations websites, <http://www.tamin.ir/News/Item/1952/2/1952.html> (accessed January 3, 2017).

83 Article 82, Social Security Organization law

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2018 - Iran: Events of 2017, 18 January 2018](#)

[...] Iranian women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. A virgin woman needs her male guardian’s approval for marriage regardless of her age, and Iranian women cannot pass on their nationality to their foreign-born spouses or their children. A married woman may not obtain a passport or travel outside the country without the written permission of her husband. Under the civil code, a husband is accorded the right to choose the place of living and can prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.” [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Stop Prosecuting Women Over Dress Code, 24 February 2018](#)

[...] Iranian authorities should drop charges and stop prosecuting women for peacefully protesting Iran’s compulsory dress code (hijab) laws, Human Rights Watch said today. At least three women who peacefully protested the hijab law have been arrested since the end of January 2018. [...]

The most recent wave of protests against compulsory hijab began on December 27, 2017, when photos circulated on social media of a woman who had taken off and held aloft her headscarf on Enghelab (Revolution) Street in Tehran. Nasrine Sotoudeh, a prominent human rights lawyer, wrote on her Facebook page on January 21 that authorities had arrested the woman on December 27. Social media posts soon began calling her the “Girl of Revolution Street.” On January 28, Sotoudeh confirmed in a Facebook post that the woman had been released on bail.

Since then, dozens of “Girls of Revolution Street” have taken their headscarves off while standing on electric utility boxes across the country. On January 29, Hosseini, 32, stood on the same utility box while waving her headscarf in protest. Authorities immediately arrested her and transferred her to Qarchak prison in Tehran.

Sotoudeh, who is representing Hosseini, said she faces charges of “openly committing a sinful act,” “violating public prudency,” and “encouraging immorality or prostitution.” Under Article 639 of Iran’s penal code, encouraging immorality or prostitution can carry a sentence of between 1 to 10 years in prison. On February 17, authorities released Hosseini on bail. Her trial is scheduled for February 24.

On February 22, Sotoudeh told RadioFarda that authorities had detained and beaten Shajarizadeh. On the same day, a video was published on Twitter that showed a police officer violently pushing a woman who is not wearing a head scarf off a utility box where she was peacefully protesting. Jangravi has also reportedly been released and is awaiting trial.

On February 1, Ilna, the Iranian Labour News Agency, reported that, according to Tehran’s police, 29 people had been arrested in efforts to combat “Masih Alinejad’s unveiling campaign.” Alinejad is an Iranian women’s rights activist who lives outside the country and has campaigned against Iran’s compulsory hijab since 2014.

Hosseini and Jangravi, have stated in media interviews or social media posts that they independently decided to engage in peaceful protest to challenge Iran’s compulsory hijab laws. [...]

In May 2017, Human Rights Watch documented many instances in which women were discriminated against when they applied for a job or in the workplace, based on their choice of apparel. [...]

❖ [Radio Farda, Tehran Police Chief Warns Hijab Protesters Of Zero Tolerance, 28 February 2018](#)

[...] “Although the sentence for not wearing a hijab is two months in prison, anyone encouraging others to take off their hijab will be jailed for 10 years,” Iranian police announced February 24, according to Fars News Agency.

The statement is based on the police’s interpretation of article 639 of the Iranian penal code, which calls for one to 10 years imprisonment for those convicted of “opening brothels” and “encouraging people to engage in prostitution.” [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] III. Women's rights

62. The Special Rapporteur has noted some developments related to the rights and participation of women. In August 2017, President Rouhani signed an executive order on selection criteria for professional executive level staff that increased the number of women and youth in managerial positions, with a view to increasing the percentage of female managers in the executive branch to 30 per cent.⁷⁴ In 2017, the Government appointed a woman as Deputy Minister of Petroleum and appointed its first woman Ambassador. The Government further recently informed of the lifting of restrictions placed upon female teachers to be able to work when pregnant.

63. The above notwithstanding, the Special Rapporteur notes that discrimination against women in the job market continues. Civil law in the Islamic Republic of Iran codifies discrimination in the Islamic Republic of Iran, barring women from working in certain professions except those deemed "mentally and physically suitable for women".⁷⁵ It further allows husbands to prevent their spouses from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances.⁷⁶ In previously provided comments, the Government noted that women can also prevent their husbands from having a job which is contrary to their family's prestige. It noted that disregard of this constitutes among the conditions based on which a wife can apply for divorce, and that a woman's right to have a job can be added to the terms of a marriage contract, thus legally guaranteeing the right.

64. The situation does not improve when it concerns personal status. Women do not have equal rights to men in marriage, divorce, child custody, or inheritance. Husbands have an incontestable right to divorce. Married women cannot obtain a passport without permission from their husband.⁷⁷ Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran remain unable to pass on their citizenship to their children.⁷⁸ It is understood a new draft bill is pending before Parliament to address this longstanding concern after various historic legislative efforts in this regard. [...]

66. Concerns in other areas also persist. Adultery (covered by the offence of *zina*) remains criminalised, with punishments ranging from lashing to stoning to death. The Special Rapporteur joins with the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice in calling for such provisions providing for punishments such as fines, imprisonment, and death sentences to be repealed, and in noting that such provisions means in practice that women will face violation of their human rights to dignity, privacy, and equality as a result.⁸¹ The law can also penalizes a victim of rape if the court decides and the perpetrator insists that the act was a consensual one. The law can particularly operate adversely against victims of rape especially if they are not married.

67. Repressive and discriminatory rules concerning the dress code for women and girls continue to be enforced. Women who do not wear a hijab that conforms to the interpretation of modesty can be sentenced up to two months in prison or be fined. Women who have publically supported an online campaign against compulsory veiling "My Stealth Freedom" have also been harassed, taken in for questioning, and requested to sign attestations that they will not go out without a "proper" *hijab*.

68. The Special Rapporteur understands that Parliament had started debating the possibility to amend Article 18 of the Passport Law, which obliges women to obtain the authorization of their husband or "male guardian" before travelling abroad. A draft bill was submitted to Parliament in July, but after facing opposition a working group has now been established to discuss it further within the cultural committee of Parliament.⁸² The Special Rapporteur urges the Parliament to adopt the bill to address this longstanding restriction on women's right to freedom of movement and to ensure that it is compliant with international human rights standards. [...]

74 See <https://goo.gl/RrhVmW>.

75 Article 5, Employment Policies for Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 1992.

76 Article 1117 of the Civil Code.

77 See www.iranhrc.org/english/human-rights-documents/iranian-codes/3200-islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-one-and-book-two.html#5.

78 See <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/97937>.

79 See <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/iran/>.

80 See <https://goo.gl/aRzMXa>.

81 See http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43322#.WkJ_A1WnGDI.

82 See www.sharghdaily.ir/News/143031/.

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] Women who do not wear a hijab in public can be sentenced to up to two months in prison or be fined. [...] 47. On 1 February, 29 people were arrested for their involvement in the “My Stealthy Freedom” campaign. Some faced charges of “a sinful act”, “violating public decency” or “encouraging immorality or prostitution”,⁵² which can carry a sentence of 10 years of imprisonment. Most were released on bail. Some female protesters were subsequently sentenced to up to two years in prison on the charge of “encouraging moral corruption”. [...] [p. 12]

52 See <https://goo.gl/uqVfRx>.

❖ [Open Democracy, Women’s bodies have become a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future, 29 August 2018](#)

[...] And so Bill 315 was passed by Iran’s Islamic Consultative Assembly on November 2015, by 289 men and nine women. With it, a new chapter in family planning began, with women’s bodies positioned as a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future. This legislation aims to boost population growth by encouraging early marriage and repeated childbearing. It does this in a number of ways that disempower women and give them less say over their bodies and therefore their lives.

“With Bill 315 a new chapter in family planning began, with women’s bodies a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future.”

The law mandates that all private and public entities give hiring priority, in sequence, to men with children, married men without children, and married women with children. Articles 10 and 16 prevent unmarried men and women from assuming teaching positions or obtaining licenses to practice family law. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, It’s Too Early To Cheer the So-Called End of Iran’s Notorious Ban on Women in sports stadiums - There won’t be a ‘breakthrough’ until FIFA ensures women can buy tickets and safely watch sports, 30 November 2018](#)

[...] After the 1979 Iranian revolution, women lost many rights they once enjoyed. Laws segregated the sexes and literally sidelined women—who now can’t even watch sports in stadiums. That ban was extended to volleyball in 2012, a hugely popular sport in Iran. Since then, Iranian women have been fighting this ugly discrimination—even risking jail. Iran’s ban violates women’s rights, the Olympic Charter, and even the International Volleyball Federation’s (FIVB) own constitution. [...]

❖ [Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, Women Peace and Security Index 2017/18, 2018](#)

[...] SPOTLIGHT 1 Country performance on the Women, Peace, and Security Index reveals uneven achievements, with some reversals

Iran presents an interesting case of uneven achievements across dimensions. There are good accomplishments on financial inclusion, with almost 9 in 10 women having access to financial accounts, compared with a South Asian regional average of less than 2 in 5, and a similar high share of women using cellphones. Iranian women average about eight years of schooling compared with a regional average of four years. On the other hand, Iran performs considerably worse on the Women, Peace, and Security Index relative to its per capita income rank, dropping a hefty 57 places. In particular, legal discrimination is a significant barrier to gender equality in Iran and is among the factors pulling the index rank down to 116. According to the World Bank, there are 23 restrictions against married women in Iranian law, including in applying for a passport, traveling outside the home, choosing where to live, and being head of the household. Women cannot get a job or pursue a profession in the same way a man can; they cannot be ensured of equal pay for equal work, and there are no laws to restrain gender discrimination in hiring. There are no laws that penalize or prevent the dismissal of pregnant women from work, nor are there laws that provide rights for paternity or parental leave or tax deductible payments for childcare. The Iranian Civil Code confers power on a husband to prevent his wife from taking any job found to be incompatible with the family interest or the dignity of the husband or his wife. Women have no legal protection against domestic violence or sexual harassment by anyone, and the constitution has no non-discrimination clause with gender as a protected category [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Secretary-General, 8 February 2019](#)

[...] 62. The Secretary-General is concerned by the ongoing repression of women in relation to their objection to compulsory veiling and by the response of judicial authorities to peaceful protests in that regard. Women who do not wear a hijab in public can be sentenced to up to two months in prison or be fined. A number of female protestors have been arrested, notably among those involved in the “My Stealthy Freedom” campaign online¹⁴⁹ and some of those who became known as the “Girls of Revolution Street”. According to information received by OHCHR, while most were released on bail, some female protesters were sentenced to up to two years in prison on the charge of “encouraging moral corruption”. [...]

149 See www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/.

The law restricted women’s economic, social, political, academic, and cultural rights in 2019

❖ [Amnesty International, Iran: Failing On All Fronts - Amnesty International Submission For The UN Universal Periodic Review, 34th Session Of The UPR Working Group, November 2019, June 2019](#)

[...] Amnesty International’s research shows that women face entrenched discrimination in family law and criminal law. Iran’s legal system puts women in a subordinate status relative to men. Under the penal code, the testimony of a woman is accorded half the value of that of a man. The age of criminal responsibility is set at nine lunar years (eight years and eight months) for girls but at 15 lunar years (14 years and six months) for boys. Women are also discriminated against under the Civil Code, notably in matters relating to marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance. Iran has failed to criminalize gender-based violence, including domestic violence and marital rape. A bill to protect women against violence has been stalled since 2012. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] D. Right to freedom of expression and opinion
Women human rights defenders

[...] 24. The cases of Yasaman Aryani, Monireh Arabshahi and Mojgan Keshavarz are emblematic of the repression of Iranian women who peacefully advocate their rights. In April 2019, the three women were arrested after they had appeared in an online video on International Women’s Day protesting against the compulsory veiling laws. In the video, the three women are seen without their headscarves, embracing commuters and handing out flowers on the Tehran metro. Ms. Aryani, Ms. Arabshahi and Ms. Keshavarz are still in detention. Under the country’s compulsory veiling laws, women and girls are required to wear a headscarf (article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code). Punishments for women who do not wear a veil include a prison sentence, flogging or a fine.³¹ In its comments, the Government noted that the aforementioned individuals had been found guilty of charges under articles 500, 513, 610 and 639 of the Islamic Penal Code and article 265 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. [...]

31 See <http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/05/iran-abusive-forced-veiling-laws-police-womens-lives/>.

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)

[...] Iranian women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. A married woman may not obtain a passport or travel outside the country without the written permission of her husband. Under the civil code, a husband is accorded the right to choose the place of living and can prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.”

Iranian women, unlike men, cannot pass on their nationality to their foreign-born spouses or their children. However, after more than a decade of women’s rights activism, on October 2, the Guardian Council, a body of 12 Islamic jurists, finally approved an amended law that the Iranian parliament had passed on March 13, that now allows Iranian women married to men with foreign nationality to request Iranian citizenship for their children under age 18. A child who has already turned 18 could directly

request Iranian citizenship. The law, however, required the Intelligence Ministry and the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to certify that there is no “security problem” before approving citizenship.

On June 26, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous opinion that obliged the state compensation fund to pay the difference in Diya, a compensation paid to a victim’s family, between men and women in cases of death and bodily injuries.

Over the past two years, Iranian courts have handed down harsh sentences to dozens of women who protested compulsory hijab laws in Iran, as well as well-known human rights defenders, including Farhad Meysami and Reza Khandan, Sotoudeh’s husband, who supported their efforts [...]

On September 2, Sahar Khodayari, a 29-year-old woman who was arrested in March when she tried to enter a stadium to watch a football game, set herself on fire in front of the court after she was threatened with a six-month imprisonment. Khodayari was reportedly charged with “wearing improper hijab” and “confrontation with the police.” Her death sparked domestic and international outcry with activists as well as football players calling on the International Football Federation (FIFA) to pressure Iran to overturn the ban against women attending stadiums. On October 10, Iranian authorities allowed a limited number of seats for women—around 3,000 out of 85,000 in the stadium—for an international football match. Despite this important advance, the general ban on women attending Iran’s national league games remains. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] 35. Discrimination against women in law and in practice remains widespread, notably with regard to marriage, divorce, child custody, freedom of movement, employment and access to political functions. The Secretary-General notes some progress in legislation that has an impact on women’s human rights and welcomes the latest amendment to the nationality law, ratified in October 2019,⁵⁶ allowing children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers to acquire Iranian nationality. [...] [p. 9]

29 A/74/273, para. 37.

30 See www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/02/joint-letter-arrests-activists-relatives-iranian-government; www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/iran-family-of-womens-rights-activist-arrested-in-despicable-attempt-to-intimidate-her-into-silence/; and www.dw.com/en/iran-detains-family-members-of-womens-rights-activist-masih-alinejad/a-50593709.

[...] 56 See www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/03/reforms-will-grant-nationality-children-iranian-women; and <https://en.irna.ir/news/83500806/>.

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] Discriminatory policies

38. A prohibition on Iranian women attending sporting events in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while not written into law, has effectively been enforced since 1981. A few exceptions to this policy have occurred in recent years,⁶⁷ most recently in October 2019, when more than 3,000 women were allowed to attend a football match.

39. Although the match was touted as representing the end of the unofficial ban, the number of tickets available to women was restricted by the authorities⁶⁸ and the Government gave no indication of having changed its policy. The Vice President for Women and Family Affairs has reportedly said that there is no obstacle to women entering stadiums and that there is hope for progress in lifting the ban.⁶⁹ At the same time, the Prosecutor-General and high-level religious figures⁷⁰ have reportedly indicated that they do not support lifting the ban. Other high-level religious figures have similarly noted that the ban should remain in place. Practical concerns also exist, such as the lack of women’s restrooms in all stadiums other than Azadi Stadium, with the national football federation reportedly rejecting their installation in other stadiums.⁷¹

40. Women have frequently sought to challenge the restriction on their ability to enter stadiums through peaceful demonstrations or by entering disguised as men, and many have been arrested and detained. In a recent tragic incident, Sahar Khodayari, who had been arrested for dressing as a man in order to attend a football match, died in August 2019 from self-immolation when she learned she could be sentenced to prison for her actions.⁷² In March 2018, as many as 35 women were reportedly arrested for seeking to

attend a match⁷³ and in August 2019 at least four women were arrested and held for several days after attempting to enter a stadium dressed as men.⁷⁴ [...]

62 A/74/273, para. 37.

63 www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/0856/2019/en/.

64 www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/iran-sentencing-of-mses-saba-kord-afshari-yassman-aryani-monireh.

65 www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/iran-cruel-campaign-to-extract-propaganda-confessions-from-protesters-against-compulsory-veiling/.

66 www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/iran-sentencing-of-mses-saba-kord-afshari-yassman-aryani-monireh.

[...] 67 www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/10/iranian-women-attend-mens-soccer-game-standing-firm-against-state-ban-and-hardline-threats/; www.iranhumanrights.org/2018/06/iran-spain-match-aftermath-will-irans-ban-on-women-in-sports-stadiums-finally-be-lifted/; www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/06/some-female-sports-fans-allowed-to-watch-mens-volleyball-match-in-tehran-but-ban-persists/; www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fa/originals/2017/07/iranian-women-get-to-watch-volleyball.html.

68 www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/iran-limited-allocation-of-football-tickets-for-women-a-cynical-publicity-stunt/; <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/10/women-football-fans-decry-restrictions-why-didnt-they-let-us-all-in/>.

69 <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/08/iran-releases-detained-stadium-ban-protesters-as-hardliners-cheer-on-discriminatory-policy/>; <https://piroozinews.com/%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B9%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%87/>.

70 www.isna.ir/news/98051507626/.

71 www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/04/iran-stadium-seating-cap-endangers-women.

72 www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/09/woman-banned-stadiums-iran-attempts-suicide.

73 www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43243414.

74 <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/08/iran-releases-detained-stadium-ban-protesters-as-hardliners-cheer-on-discriminatory-policy/>.

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iran: Review Of 2019, 18 February 2020](#)

[...] A new law allowed Iranian women married to men with foreign nationality to pass on Iranian citizenship to their children, but women continued to face discrimination and the authorities intensified their crackdown against women's rights defenders campaigning against forced veiling laws.

[...] Women's rights

In May, the parliament approved a bill amending the civil code to allow Iranian women married to men with foreign nationality to pass on Iranian citizenship to their children. The new law came into force after the Guardian Council ratified it in October. However, while the children of Iranian men are automatically granted Iranian nationality, the new law requires women to apply for citizenship for their children and their children to undergo security screening by the ministry of intelligence before citizenship is granted.

More broadly, women continued to face entrenched discrimination in family and criminal law, including in relation to marriage, divorce, employment, inheritance and political office. Authorities failed to criminalize gender-based violence against women and girls, including domestic violence and early and forced marriage, which remained widespread. The judiciary watered down a long-standing bill aimed at protecting women against violence that it was reviewing and sent it to the government's bills committee for its review in September.

The authorities intensified their crackdown against women's rights defenders campaigning against discriminatory forced veiling laws, sentencing some to prison and flogging for charges including "inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution" through promoting "unveiling". In July, Yasaman Aryani and Monireh Arabshahi were each sentenced to 16 years in prison and Mojgan Keshavarz to 23 and a half years in prison. All three must serve 10 years. In September, authorities arrested three family members of prominent US-based Iranian journalist and activist Masih Alinejad as retribution for her activism against forced veiling. In April, police sent text messages to female drivers who had allegedly removed their hijabs while driving, summoning them to receive official warnings that their cars would be impounded if they did so again.

Authorities continued to impose a discriminatory ban on women entering football stadiums for domestic games and arrest those who defied it, charging them with criminal offences. In October, they allowed 3,500 women to watch a World Cup qualifying match in the national stadium. This followed the death of

Sahar Khodayari, who set herself on fire outside a court where she was being tried on charges related to her attempt to enter a stadium.⁴ [...]

4 Amnesty International, Iran: Shocking death of football fan who set herself on fire exposes impact of contempt for women's rights (Press Release, 10 September 2019).

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] Earlier in the year, the courts imposed a series of heavy prison sentences on labor activists, human rights lawyers, and women protesting the country's compulsory hijab rules, among others.

[...] Women do not receive equal treatment under the law and face widespread discrimination in practice. For example, a woman's testimony in court is given half the weight of a man's, and the monetary compensation awarded to a female victim's family upon her death is half that owed to the family of a male victim.

[...] Iranians have the legal right to own property and establish private businesses. However, powerful institutions like the IRGC play a dominant role in the economy, and bribery is said to be widespread in the business environment, including for registration and obtaining licenses. Women are denied equal rights in inheritance matters.

[...] Social freedoms are restricted in Iran. All residents, but particularly women, are subject to obligatory rules on dress and personal appearance, and those who are deemed to have violated the rules face state harassment, fines, and arrest. In 2019, several women were sentenced to heavy prison terms for challenging the requirement that they wear headscarves in public.

[...] Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes. In October 2019, the Guardian Council approved a legal amendment that would enable Iranian women married to foreign men to request Iranian citizenship for their children. [...]

[The law states in 2017 that a virgin woman/girl wishing to wed needs the consent of her father or grandfather or the court's permission even after she turned 18](#)

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2018 - Iran: Events of 2017, 18 January 2018](#)

[...] Iranian women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. A virgin woman needs her male guardian's approval for marriage regardless of her age, and Iranian women cannot pass on their nationality to their foreign-born spouses or their children. [...]

❖ [Danish Immigration Service, Relations outside of marriage in Iran and marriages without the accept of the family, Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service and The Danish Refugee Council based on interviews in Tehran, Iran, Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom, 9 September to 16 September 2017 and 2 October to 3 October 2017, February 2018](#)

[...] Meeting with an anonymous analyst

Tehran, 10 September 2017

[...] Requirements for religious and civil marriage for a woman marrying a man without the accept of her family

37. A woman or young girl who has reached the legal age for marriage, which is 13 years (below that age both court permission and father's approval taking into account best interests of the child will be required), can enter a legal marriage at the court without the consent of her father or family. The court will make some investigations about the groom, i.e. investigate his criminal record and ensure that he has an income. The court can also provide witnesses. However, such cases will often be solved by a compromise, as the father can ask another family member to act on behalf of himself. In this way, the father will show his disapproval, but will not obstruct the marriage. The father and other family members will in any way not be able to stop the marriage if the court accepts it.

38. Only the girl's father and in case he is absent the paternal grandfather has the legal capacity to give consent to a civil marriage, if she is a virgin regardless of her age. If she has a record of consummated marriage, no consent by father or grandfather will be required. [p. 20]

[...] Meeting with an anonymous legal source

Tehran, 13 September 2017

[...] Requirements for religious and civil marriage for a woman marrying a man without the accept of her family

55. For girls above the age of puberty, if the girl is not a virgin, but has never been married before, the guardians' permission will no longer be required for marriage. On the question whether a young virgin woman who has never been married before, can marry at civil court without the consent of her family, the source states, it would be a subject to ruling by the civil court.

56. However, it is a common practice in Iran to enter into a religious marriage as a preliminary ritual – even if the girl is underage (13 years) – and such marital tie is considered valid and honourable among Iranian families, especially for the purpose of preventing the girl to marry another man; this is more common among Iranian families where arranged marriages are a routine custom. [p. 22]

[...] Meeting with an anonymous source

Ankara, 15 September 2017

[...] Requirements for religious and civil marriage for a woman marrying a man without the accept of her family

61. According to the source's information, if a virgin woman wants to marry, she has to have the permission of her family. If she has been married before, she can marry without her family's consent. But there are other elements than if the woman has been married before or not, when she wants to marry without the family's accept, including family's influence and the potential husband's profile e.g. if the potential husband belongs to a minority. These elements matter when the woman goes to the court.

62. Marrying without family's consent is more prevalent in cities than in rural areas. [p. 23]

[...] Meeting with Dep. Director General of the High Council for Human Rights and Judicial Cooperation, Iran

Tehran, 12 September 2017

[...] Requirements for religious and civil marriage for a woman marrying a man without the accept of her family

71. As regards the possibilities for a woman to marry without her family's consent, it was explained that a marriage normally requires the consent of the woman's parents. However, if the parents oppose the marriage, it will still be possible for the woman to marry in the Court. If the parents would try to harm the woman afterwards, the judicial system would protect her. It was emphasized that there are 800 female judges in the court system. [p. 25]

[...] Meeting with Middle East Consultancy Services

London, 3 October 2017

[...] 84. [...] When it comes to the permanent marriages, MECS stated for the virgin brides the legal permission from the father or paternal grandfather is necessary; unless the father has died. The Special Civil Court might issue the permission when the family opposes a marriage. As regards a girl applying for permission from the Special Civil Court, the source informed the delegation that she may face social pressures, as the Iranian society is corrective, and because such an act may be embarrassing for the family. [...] [p. 27]

The law states in 2018 that a virgin woman/girl wishing to wed needs the consent of her father or grandfather or the court's permission even after she turned 18

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Regardless of age, a woman cannot marry without the permission of her male guardian. [...]

❖ [OECD \(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development\), SIGI \(Social Institutions & Gender Index\) 2019 - Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 March 2019](#)

[...] 1. Discrimination in the family

a) Overarching legal framework for marriage

Under Islamic Shari'a, marriage is not considered as a sacrament but defined as a civil contract between a man and his wife, patterned by the logic of a contract of sale (Nayyeri, 2013). All women are considered to be under the guardianship of their father, husband, or another designated male relative. Therefore, the marriage of a girl (who has not previously been married) depends "on the permission of her father or her paternal grandfather even if she has reached the full age of majority" (Civil Code, Article 1043). [...]

The law states in 2019 that a virgin woman/girl wishing to wed needs the consent of her father or grandfather or the court's permission even after she turned 18

- ❖ [Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)
[...] Girls and women require the permission of a male legal guardian to marry for the first time, regardless of age. [...]

The ability of a woman to seek divorce was “limited” in 2017

- ❖ [Reuters, Kinky 'Fifty shades' sex and porn linked to divorce in Iran, 18 September 2017](#)
[...] Iranian law favours the husband, who has the right to ask for a divorce. But if he is unwilling to divorce, the wife must legally prove that he is abusive, has psychological problems or is somehow unable to uphold his marriage responsibilities.
It took Sabah, whose marriage was arranged by her family, 10 years to escape the cigarette burns and violence.
"The ultra-conservative society of Khosistan considers divorce a disgrace," the 37-year-old said, referring to the southern province where she lives.
She finally succeeded by pushing for payment of her mehrieh, or dowry, which was not paid when the couple married.
Dowries in Iran have skyrocketed to tens of thousands of dollars and wives can sometimes waive outstanding payments as part of a separation settlement. [...]
- ❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)
[...] Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes. [...]
- ❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)
[...] Women remained subject to entrenched discrimination in law and practice, including in access to divorce, employment, equal inheritance and political office, and in family and criminal law. [...]
- ❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)
[...] III. Women's rights
[...] 64. The situation does not improve when it concerns personal status. Women do not have equal rights to men in marriage, divorce, child custody, or inheritance. Husbands have an incontestable right to divorce. [...]

The ability of a woman to seek divorce was “limited” in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)
[...] While Iranian women have gained greater rights to divorce in recent years, Article 1133 of the Civil Code continues to dictate that men can divorce at will but women cannot. While men are permitted to marry up to two permanent wives in polygamous marriages and an unlimited number in 'temporary' marriages, women are unable to do so. If a wife refuses to obey her husband without a 'reasonable excuse', she can lose certain rights, including the right to maintenance and spousal support. Regardless of age, a woman cannot marry without the permission of her male guardian. [...]
- ❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)
[...] 42. Civil law denies women equal rights, including in marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance and citizenship. [...]
- ❖ [Open Democracy, Women's bodies have become a battleground in the fight for Iran's future, 29 August 2018](#)

[...] With Bill 315 a new chapter in family planning began, with women's bodies a battleground in the fight for Iran's future."

[...] Articles 17 and 18 call for the "de-judicialisation" of family disputes with a view to preventing divorce with "peaceful settlements" through a specialised police unit with "married, mature and well trained officers". The law shows no regard for whether such settlements could put women at risk of re-victimisation in abusive relationships.

It also creates new barriers to divorce, described by Article 21 as "an anti-value with socially harmful consequences on spouses and children". Articles 19 and 20 incentivise lawyers and judges to favour reconciliations with special bonuses. This adds an already discriminatory civil code where women (but not men) must provide reasons for divorce, like hardships that would make continuing marriage intolerable. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Women Activists Arrested for Trying to Raise Awareness of Women's Rights in Marriage and Divorce, 5 September 2018](#)

[...] Women's rights activists Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi were arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization in Tehran on September 1, 2018 and taken to an unknown location, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has learned.

Their arrest took place at their homes three days before they were scheduled to host a workshop about Iran's marriage laws, a source close to the case said in an interview with CHRI.

[...] According to the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, women do not have rights equal to men regarding the right to initiate divorce, and they can only initiate divorce under certain circumstances such as the husband's mental incapacity or drug addiction.

However, activists have held training classes for women to teach them how they can expand their rights with legally binding prenuptial contracts. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] DISCRIMINATION – WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women faced entrenched discrimination in family and criminal law, including in relation to divorce, employment, inheritance and political office. [...]

❖ [OECD \(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development\), SIGI \(Social Institutions & Gender Index\) 2019 - Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 March 2019](#)

[...] Men enjoy a unilateral right to divorce and are not required to cite a reason for divorcing their wives. According to the Civil Code, a man can divorce his wife "whenever he wishes", although certain conditions such as paying alimony must be fulfilled (Art. 1133). Divorce rights for women are much more restrictive. [...]

The ability of a woman to seek divorce was "limited" in 2019

❖ [Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)

[...] Family law in Iran also contains stark gender differences when it comes to men's and women's right to divorce. While men have an incontestable right to divorce their wives on a wide range of grounds, women can only apply for divorce in limited cases, such as the husband's addiction, imprisonment or refusal to support the family financially.¹⁵² [...]

152 Iranian Civil Code, 1928 (amended 2006), Articles 1119, 1129, 1130 and 1133.

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)

[...] Iranian women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. [...]

- ❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)
[...] 35. Discrimination against women in law and in practice remains widespread, notably with regard to marriage, divorce, child custody, freedom of movement, employment and access to political functions. [...] [p. 9]
- ❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iran: Review Of 2019, 18 February 2020](#)
[...] More broadly, women continued to face entrenched discrimination in family and criminal law, including in relation to marriage, divorce, employment, inheritance and political office. [...]
- ❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)
[...] Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes. [...]

Social and legal constraints limited women’s professional opportunities in 2017

- ❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)
[...] In August 2016, the newly elected Parliament re-introduced the controversial Population and Family Excellence Plan, which aims to increase the pregnancy rate to 2.5 per cent of the quantitative population growth up to 2025 and requires public and private sector employers to give hiring preference to men and prohibits hiring “single individuals” to faculty positions in all public and private education and research institutions. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned about the Bill to Protect Hijab and Modesty, which, if adopted, would restrict women’s right to work by limiting women’s working hours to between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. and mandate gender segregation in the workplace. [...]
- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, It’s a Men’s Club: Discrimination Against Women in Iran’s Job Market, 25 May 2017](#)
[...] Although women comprise over 50 percent of university graduates, their participation in the labor force is only 17 percent.
[...] Moreover, these disparities exist at every rung of the economic hierarchy; women are severely underrepresented in senior public positions and as private sector managers. This significant participation gap in the Iranian labor market has occurred in a context in which Iranian authorities have extensively violated women’s economic and social rights. Specifically, the government has created and enforced numerous discriminatory laws and regulations limiting women’s participation in the job market while also failing to stop – and sometimes actively participating in – widespread discriminatory employment practices against women in the private and public sectors.
Discrimination against women in the Iranian labor market is shaped in part by the political ideology that has dominated Iran since the Islamic revolution, which pushed women to adopt perceived “ideal roles” as mothers and wives and sought to marginalize them from public life. Yet what often goes unmentioned in narratives on women’s role in Iranian society is that discriminatory laws towards women in the economic realm long predate this period. Many discriminatory laws can be found in Iran’s 1936 civil code. After the Islamic Republic of Iran came to power in 1979, the authorities rolled back the progress made by legislation enacted in 1976 promoting gender equality, particularly in family law, and returned to these earlier legal provisions while also enforcing a dress code as a prerequisite for appearing in public life. In the past three decades, authorities have punished women’s rights activists for their efforts to promote gender equality in law and practice, including with imprisonment. The government’s prosecution of prominent members of the “One Million Signatures” campaign to change these discriminatory laws also illustrates that the battle for women’s social and economic freedoms cannot be disentangled from the broader struggle for political and civic rights in Iran.
[...] Unemployment for women is twice as high as for men, with one out of every three women with a bachelor’s degree currently unemployed. The participation of women in Iran’s job market is significantly lower than the average participation in other upper-middle income countries and is lower than the average for all women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. MENA already has the lowest female participation compared to other regions at around 20 percent.
[...] Domestic laws directly discriminate against women’s equal access to employment, including restricting the professions women can enter and denying equal benefits to women in the workforce. Furthermore,

Iranian law considers the husband the head of the household, a status that grants him control over his wife's economic choices. For instance, a husband has the right to prevent his wife from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances, and, in practice, some employers require husbands and fiancés to provide written consent for women to be allowed to work with them. Lawyers told Human Rights Watch that, during divorce court proceedings, husbands regularly accuse their wives of working without their consent or in jobs they deem unsuitable. A man also has the right to forbid his wife from obtaining a passport to travel abroad and can prevent her from travelling abroad at any time (even if she has a passport). Some employers interviewed said they were unlikely to hire women where extensive travel is involved due to the uncertainty created by these discriminatory legal codes.

[...] The government also fails to enforce laws designed to stop widespread discrimination by employers against women, and Iranian law has inadequate legal protections against sexual harassment in the workplace. Moreover, while Iranian law prohibits discrimination against women in the workplace, its application is not extended to the hiring process, where it is critically needed. Publicly available data shows that government and private sector employers routinely prefer to hire men over women, in particular for technical and managerial positions. Employers in both the public and the private sectors regularly specify gender preferences when advertising position vacancies and do so based on arbitrary and discriminatory criteria. Managers and employees interviewed told Human Rights Watch that they were not aware of any anti-sexual harassment policies at their place of employment, while several women reported instances of sexual harassment. Moreover, interviewees regularly expressed frustration with arbitrary enforcement of discriminatory dress codes.

[...] Instead of taking steps to address these barriers, since 2011 Iran has shifted its population policies towards increasing population growth in a manner that has placed a disproportionate burden on women in the society. As a result, several draft bills that aim to increase child bearing do so mostly by restricting women's access to reproductive healthcare and employment opportunities. If passed, these bills could further marginalize women in the economic sphere. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] III. Women's rights

62.[...] The Government further recently informed of the lifting of restrictions placed upon female teachers to be able to work when pregnant.

63. The above notwithstanding, the Special Rapporteur notes that discrimination against women in the job market continues. Civil law in the Islamic Republic of Iran codifies discrimination in the Islamic Republic of Iran, barring women from working in certain professions except those deemed "mentally and physically suitable for women".⁷⁵ It further allows husbands to prevent their spouses from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances.⁷⁶ In previously provided comments, the Government noted that women can also prevent their husbands from having a job which is contrary to their family's prestige. It noted that disregard of this constitutes among the conditions based on which a wife can apply for divorce, and that a woman's right to have a job can be added to the terms of a marriage contract, thus legally guaranteeing the right. [...]

75 Article 5, Employment Policies for Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 1992.

76 Article 1117 of the Civil Code.

Social and legal constraints limited women's professional opportunities in 2018

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] The Comprehensive Population and Family Excellence Plan establishes a hierarchy in hiring practices, which would give rise to discrimination against women on the basis of sex and marital and family status. The Government noted in its comments that the Plan is to be developed further.

43. Figures published by the Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran in March 2018 indicated that 41 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 29 years were unemployed.⁴⁸ The highest unemployment rates were found in provinces most populated by ethnic and religious minorities, where women face intersectional discrimination. According to a report published by the Islamic Parliament

Research Centre in December 2017, the unemployment rate among female graduates in provinces such as Kordestan, Kermanshah and Kerman was 80 per cent. Commenting on the present report, the Government noted that the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs had required governors to adopt a “provincial document on the promotion of women”.

44. According to information received by OHCHR, on 8 March, protestors held a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to protest against gender-based discrimination in hiring and at the workplace. According to the Government, the demonstration was held in the absence of relevant permits. Fifty-nine women and 25 men were arrested for participating in the demonstration. [...]

48 See https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/1/releases/LFS_Year_1396.pdf

❖ [Open Democracy, Women’s bodies have become a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future, 29 August 2018](#)

[...] And so Bill 315 was passed by Iran’s Islamic Consultative Assembly on November 2015, by 289 men and nine women. With it, a new chapter in family planning began, with women’s bodies positioned as a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future. This legislation aims to boost population growth by encouraging early marriage and repeated childbearing. It does this in a number of ways that disempower women and give them less say over their bodies and therefore their lives.

“With Bill 315 a new chapter in family planning began, with women’s bodies a battleground in the fight for Iran’s future.”

The law mandates that all private and public entities give hiring priority, in sequence, to men with children, married men without children, and married women with children. Articles 10 and 16 prevent unmarried men and women from assuming teaching positions or obtaining licenses to practice family law. [...]

Social and legal constraints limited women’s professional opportunities in 2019

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] 35. Discrimination against women in law and in practice remains widespread, notably with regard to marriage, divorce, child custody, freedom of movement, employment and access to political functions. [...]

❖ [Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)

[...] Women are also discriminated against in judicial institutions themselves: for example, they cannot be appointed as judges in Iran’s courts.²⁶ While women can hold the position of ‘legal advisers,’ a role which allows them to oversee case proceedings or sit on three-person Appeals Court panels, they cannot render final verdicts, which must be signed by a judge, on their own.²⁷ Women can be appointed to positions such as deputy prosecutor and assistant judges at low courts where the initial stages of cases are handled, but not as high court judges who issue final judgements.

[...] There are multiple factors contributing to the dismal representation of women in the formal labour force, both legal and practical. While the Iranian Labour Code states that ‘all individuals, men and women, are entitled to equal protection of the law and can choose any profession they desire as long as it is not against Islamic values, public interest, or the rights of others,’ it also forbids women from being employed in ‘dangerous, arduous or harmful work.’¹¹¹

In reality, the practice of preferring men over women in certain jobs, or excluding the recruitment of women altogether, is widespread in both the public and private sector. For example, women cannot serve as judges in Iran, although some work as assistant judges.¹¹²

[...] Women have also been excluded in part from civil service jobs.

[...] Women from minority backgrounds are particularly disadvantaged when seeking public sector employment, having to grapple with both gender and religious or ethnic discrimination. [...]

26 The Islamic Republic of Iran, Ghanoun-e- Sharayet-e- Entekhab -e- Ghozat-e-Dadgostari [Law on the Qualifications for the Appointment of Judges], 1982.

27 The Islamic Republic of Iran, Ghanoun-e- Elhagh- e-Panj Tabsareh be Ghanoun-e- Sharayet-e- Entekhab -e- Ghozat-e-Dadgostari [Law on the Incorporation of Five Notes to the Law on the Qualifications for the Appointment of Judges],

1985, and Khabaronline News Agency, 'Sharayet- e-Ghazi Shodan-e-Zanan [Conditions for Women to Become Judges],' 28 September 2014, <https://bit.ly/2SQbKWL>.
[...] 111 The Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranian Labour Code, 1990, Articles 6 and 75.
112 UN, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran,' A/72/322, 14 August 2017, para. 87.

The law in 2017 required a married woman to obtain her husband's permission to work

❖ [Human Rights Watch, It's a Men's Club: Discrimination Against Women in Iran's Job Market, 25 May 2017](#)

[...] Iranian law considers the husband the head of the household, a status that grants him control over his wife's economic choices. For instance, a husband has the right to prevent his wife from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances, and, in practice, some employers require husbands and fiancés to provide written consent for women to be allowed to work with them. Lawyers told Human Rights Watch that, during divorce court proceedings, husbands regularly accuse their wives of working without their consent or in jobs they deem unsuitable.

[...] In accordance with Article 1117 of the civil code, a husband can bar his wife from occupations he "deems against family values or inimical to his or her reputation."⁷² In practice, in order to ban his wife from a certain profession, a husband must file a case in court and provide justification to a judge.

[...] The civil code provisions not only directly discriminates against women, but also facilitates discrimination by employers against married or engaged women. Iranian law does not prohibit employers from requiring a husband's permission for a woman to work.

[...] Several lawyers told Human Rights Watch that marital disputes over the profession of the wife are regularly used against women in family courts. While these disputes rarely make it to court as a separate claim, a problem with the wife's profession is often part of a husband's claim for or against divorce and can become one of most contentious issues. [...]

72 <http://rc.mails.ir/fa/law/show/97937>

❖ [Deutsche Welle \(DW\), Women's rights in the Islamic world, 27 September 2017](#)

[...] In Iran, a husband can also ban his wife from traveling internationally or working, if he believes that his wife starting a job is "incompatible with the interests of the family or with his or his wife's dignity," according to the country's civil code. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] III. Women's rights

63. [...] Civil law in the Islamic Republic of Iran codifies discrimination in the Islamic Republic of Iran, barring women from working in certain professions except those deemed "mentally and physically suitable for women".⁷⁵ It further allows husbands to prevent their spouses from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances.⁷⁶ [...]

76 Article 1117 of the Civil Code.

The law in 2018 required a married woman to obtain her husband's permission to work

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Under Article 1117 of the Civil Code, a husband may prevent his wife from working in occupations deemed incompatible with family interests, or the dignity of himself or his wife. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] In its latest comments on the country, published in 2018,⁴⁷ the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations raised its concerns about persisting legal restrictions on women's access to employment, which contravene the Convention. The Civil Code allows a husband to

prevent his wife from engaging in an occupation which, in his view, is incompatible with preserving the dignity or interests of the family. [...]

47 ILO, Normlex. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11110::NO::>

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2019: Iran – Events of 2018, 17 January 2019](#)
[...] Under the civil code, a husband is accorded the right to choose the place of living and can prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.” [...]
- ❖ [OECD \(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development\), SIGI \(Social Institutions & Gender Index\) 2019 - Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 March 2019](#)
[...] Women have little say in whether they can work outside of the home or not as they must ask for the permission of their husband to do so (Civil Code, article 1117).
[...] Women can work the same night hours as men and they do not need permission from their husband to register a business. Nevertheless, according to article 1117 of the Civil Code, the husband can prevent his wife from working in certain occupation that he deems incompatible “with the family interests or the dignity of himself or his wife”. [...]

The law in 2019 required a married woman to obtain her husband’s permission to work

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)
[...] Under the civil code, a husband is accorded the right to choose the place of living and can prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.” [...]
- ❖ [Minority Rights Group International, UPR of IRAN – 34th session – November 2019 Fact sheet on discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)
[...] Some employers require engaged or married women to provide a written statement of permission from their husbands in order to be hired. [...]

The law in 2017 does not provide that women and men must be paid equally for equal work

- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, It’s a Men’s Club: Discrimination Against Women in Iran’s Job Market, 25 May 2017](#)
[...] To the Iranian Ministry of Labor
 - Accept and investigate sexual harassment and other complaints of discrimination submitted to the existing complaint procedure bodies within the ministry.
 - In collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, workers’ unions, and employers organizations, develop and ensure the principle of “equal remuneration for work of equal value,” in accordance with ILO regulations.[...] Iranian law includes provisions on equal pay for equal work, but several reports indicate that in practice, women are paid less than men in the job market. Article 38 of the labor code stipulates that equal wages are to be paid to men and women performing work of equal value in a workplace under the same conditions, and Article 49 of the labor code requires that businesses that are bound by the labor code must define the classification category in which each job falls and report the salaries and benefits in accordance with that category.¹¹⁸ Workplaces with more than 50 employees have to follow the protocol for job categorization.¹¹⁹ [...]

118 Labor law (1990), arts. 38 & 49 Minister of Labor Website, <http://www.mcls.gov.ir/fa/lawlist/kar> (accessed January 7, 2017).

119 Labor Ministry’s Bylaws, <http://rkj.mcls.gov.ir/fa/moghararaat/dastoorolamal/dastoorco> (accessed January 9, 2017).

The law in 2018 does not provide that women and men must be paid equally for equal work

❖ [OECD \(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development\), SIGI \(Social Institutions & Gender Index\) 2019 - Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 March 2019](#)

[...] The Labour Code does not mandate non-discrimination on the basis of sex in employment. However, article 38 of the 1991 Labour law mandates equal pay for equal work and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in determining wages. [...]

The law in 2019 does not provide that women and men must be paid equally for equal work

❖ [Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)

[...] While Article 38 of the Iranian Labour Code requires employers to pay equal wages to men and women for work of equal value and under the same conditions, in reality women often earn less than men.

[...] In addition to receiving lower salaries, women can also be excluded from certain types of benefits and raises. [...]

Women may not serve in many high-level political positions or as judges in 2017

❖ [Human Rights Watch, It's a Men's Club: Discrimination Against Women in Iran's Job Market, 25 May 2017](#)

[...] Although women comprise over 50 percent of university graduates, their participation in the labor force is only 17 percent ... [and] disparities exist at every rung of the economic hierarchy; women are severely underrepresented in senior public positions and as private sector managers.

[...] Women in Senior Government Positions

[...] Despite this ambiguity on women's participation, the Guardian Council, a body of Islamic jurists responsible for vetting candidates for elections, has never approved a woman to stand in presidential elections or elections to the Assembly of Experts despite women registering for both.³⁸ Similarly, no woman has ever served on the important Guardian Council or Expediency Council. For the 2016 election, the Guardian Council invited eight female candidates to participate in a test to determine whether they were qualified to run for the Assembly of Experts, although none qualified.³⁹ The Guardian Council did not approve any of the female candidates who registered for 2017 Presidential elections, including Azam Taleghani, a former parliamentarian.⁴⁰

There are currently no female ministers in the cabinet, although President Rouhani has appointed three women as part of his cabinet administration.⁴¹ The minister of the interior, who holds the power to appoint provincial governors, has only selected men. However, the administration appointed at least three female county governors out of 430 positions across the country.⁴² The administration has also appointed women to 13 out of 1,058 district governors, mostly in small provinces across the country.⁴³ In the past three years, there has been an increasing trend of appointing women as city and country governors and mayors across the country.

[...] Women cannot serve as judges issuing rulings, but they can be appointed as assistant judges and clerks.

[...] The number of women that occupy elected seats has marginally increased over time. Women currently occupy only 5.8 percent (17 out of 290) of parliamentary seats in the new parliament, but this is still the highest percentage since the 1979 revolution. [...]

38 Monireh Gorji served in the Assembly of Experts in 1979 before the vetting process was established.

39 "Assembly of Experts Council Exam," Fars News, January 5, 2016, <http://www.farsnews.com/13941015000115> (accessed January 1, 2016).

40 "Candidates for 12th Presidential Elections Were Announced," ISNA, April 20, 2017, <http://www.isna.ir/news/96013114794/> (accessed May 11, 2017).

41 Rouhani appointed Shahindokht Molaverdy as the vice president for Women and Family Affairs, Elham Aminzadeh as legal deputy and then special advisor on citizens' rights, and Masoumeh Ebtekar as the head of the Organization to Protect the Environment.

42 "Administration's Record in Appointing Women to Senior Leadership Positions: President Rouhani Appealing to Women at Minute 90," Mehrkhaneh, November 16, 2016,

<http://mehrkhaneh.com/fa/news/29762/%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3%E2%80%8C%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%88-%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D9%81%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B2%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D9%82%DB%8C%D9%82%D9%87-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%AF> (accessed January 9, 2017).

43 Ibid.

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Rouhani: Delivering Human Rights After the Election: Iranian President's Pathway to Fulfill His Promises, June 2017](#)

[...] Women's Rights

Women's issues are increasingly taking the spotlight in Iranian elections, with candidates recognizing women as a key voting bloc. Rouhani promised to improve women's rights during his campaigns, but has yet to deliver substantial gains. Women, discriminated in law and practice and limited from full participation in the public sphere and in employment, have consistently called upon Rouhani to expand the scope of their political and social participation.

"In the eight years before my government, women lost 860,000 jobs," he said at the first press conference of his second term on May 22. "In my government, they gained 750,000 jobs. This shows we believe we have a constitutional and religious duty to support women."

Despite being banned from stadium events alongside men, women could be found in all of Rouhani's campaign events, demanding equality. On May 6, more than 180 women's rights activists signed a declaration stating their demands to end all gender discrimination and for women to fill "at least 30 percent" of ministerial positions. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Women's Rights Activist Demands Rouhani Provide Reasons for His Exclusively Male Cabinet, 14 August 2017](#)

[...] President Hassan Rouhani must explain why he didn't nominate women to serve in his new cabinet, feminist researcher Nahid Tavasoli told the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) in a recent interview.

"Dr. Rouhani should explain why and based on what expedient principle did he decide not to reinstate [Vice President for Women and Family Affairs] Shahindokht Mowlaverdi?" she said. "He made all these promises about utilizing competent women in key positions and ministries, but didn't deliver. Why?"

"We are all aware that since the early days after the [1979] revolution, women have tolerated a lot of limitations with the hope that one day their aspirations for equality and fairness based on human and Islamic principles would come true," said Tavasoli, the editor-in-chief of Nafe, an academic women's periodical based in Iran. "There is nothing stopping them now. Why should they be restricted today?"

"There are so many women in charge of managerial posts [mid-level governmental posts] that if they stop working for a couple of days, the country would grind into the ground," she added.

Civil rights activists and reformist politicians had high expectations that women, who were excluded from ministerial positions in Rouhani's first term in office (2013-17), would be nominated to his new cabinet after his re-election on May 19, 2017. However, women were completely absent when he submitted his ministerial nominations to Parliament for approval on August 8. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] C. Situation of women

32. The Secretary-General welcomes the strong stances taken by the President, Hassan Rouhani, in favour of women's empowerment during his election campaign,²⁷ as well as the recognition in article 11 of the Charter on Citizens' Rights of the right of women to active and effective participation in policymaking, legislation, management, implementation and supervision and to equal social opportunities. He strongly hopes that these commitments and principles will be translated into tangible progress for Iranian women.

[...] 33. None of the 137 women who put their name forward to run for President passed the vetting by the Guardian Council of the Constitution with the effect that there were no women candidates in the presidential elections and, by July, no women had been appointed as ministers in Mr. Rouhani's new cabinet. According to the map showing the situation of women in politics as at 1 January 2017 developed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the Inter Parliamentary Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran ranks 177 out of 193 countries.²⁸ The Government noted that the number of women members of parliament has doubled in recent elections and that in 2013, over 6,000 women were elected in city and village councils, compared with 1,375 in 1998. At the end of July, Fahimeh Farahmandpour, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs in charge of Women and Family Affairs, was quoted in State-run media as stating that "the unemployment rate of women had increased by 10 per cent in the previous year, that the rate of unemployment for women with higher education was twice as much as among men, and that 45 per cent of women did not earn a salary."²⁹ [...]

27 In May, Mr. Rouhani announced a comprehensive plan to deal with “women’s uneven progress in various areas such as education and health as well as their participation in the economy and politics”.

28 Available from www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/femmesenpolitique_2017_english_web.pdf?la=en&vs=1123.

29 Reported at <http://en.isna.ir/> (1 August 2017).

- ❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)
[...] B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4
Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. In 2017, Rouhani appointed two women among his several vice presidents but failed to name any women as cabinet ministers. No women candidates were allowed to run for president. [...]
- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2018 - Iran: Events of 2017, 18 January 2018](#)
[...] The rate of unemployment for women is 20 percent, twice that of men.
During his reelection campaign, President Rouhani criticized women’s marginalization in the economy and vowed to increase their presence in decision-making roles in his government. He did not, however, select a female minister despite expectations that he would do so by many, including members of parliament. [...]
- ❖ [Danish Immigration Service, Relations outside of marriage in Iran and marriages without the accept of the family, Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service and The Danish Refugee Council based on interviews in Tehran, Iran, Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom, 9 September to 16 September 2017 and 2 October to 3 October 2017, February 2018](#)
[...] Meeting with Dep. Director General of the High Council for Human Rights and Judicial Cooperation, Iran
Tehran, 12 September 2017
[...] Women and marriage
70. In general, the status of women in Iran has been promoted, and after the Revolution women have increased their participation in social and political affairs. It was emphasized that there are presently three female members of the Cabinet and 18 members of the Parliament in Iran and 800 female judges in the judiciary. In addition, thousands of women participate in city and village councils, and there are women in managerial positions in ministries (Ministry of Interior), female doctors, female members of scientific boards of universities etc. [...]
- ❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)
[...] Women remained subject to entrenched discrimination in law and practice, including in access to divorce, employment, equal inheritance and political office, and in family and criminal law.
[...] All 137 women who registered as presidential candidates were disqualified by the Guardian Council. President Rouhani included no woman ministers in his cabinet, despite civil society demands. [...]
- ❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)
[...] III. Women’s rights
62. The Special Rapporteur has noted some developments related to the rights and participation of women. In August 2017, President Rouhani signed an executive order on selection criteria for professional executive level staff that increased the number of women and youth in managerial positions, with a view to increasing the percentage of female managers in the executive branch to 30 per cent.⁷⁴ In 2017, the Government appointed a woman as Deputy Minister of Petroleum and appointed its first woman Ambassador. The Government further recently informed of the lifting of restrictions placed upon female teachers to be able to work when pregnant.
63. The above notwithstanding, the Special Rapporteur notes that discrimination against women in the job market continues. Civil law in the Islamic Republic of Iran codifies discrimination in the Islamic Republic of Iran, barring women from working in certain professions except those deemed “mentally and physically suitable for women”.⁷⁵ [...]

74 See <https://goo.gl/RrhVmW>.

75 Article 5, Employment Policies for Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, 1992.

❖ [Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018](#)

[...] Massoumeh Ebtekar, Rouhani's deputy in Women and Family Affairs, affirmed that "women almost disappear in senior management positions." (The state-run ISNA news agency, October 31, 2017)

[...] Political participation

137 women had registered for the 12th presidential elections sham in Iran all of whom were disqualified. The spokesman for the Council of Guardians, Abbas Ali Kad-Khodaii, declared on April 4, 2017, that the Council of Guardians would act according to its previous procedures. He said, "In light of the criteria set by the Principle 115, the Council of Guardians will continue to preserve its previous procedure."

The Minister of Interior Abdulreza Rahmani Fazli said, "The interpretation of the law so far indicates that the term <political statesmen> does not include women." (The state-run Daneshju website, April 11, 2017)

No woman was appointed as Cabinet minister. Nor were there any women among the new governors appointed by Hassan Rouhani, the mullahs' president.

Members of the Iranian parliament, Majlis, elected on May 31, a new board of directors. The vote did not bring about much change in the make-up of the board except exclusion of the only woman and the single Sunni deputy on this board, Farideh Oladghobad and Mohammad Ghasim Othmani, respectively. (The state-run ISNA news agency, May 31, 2017)

Mohammad Haghani, head of Tehran City Council's environmental committee, said, "Women's share of high-level responsibilities in the Municipality of Tehran, is zero percent... The presence of one woman among senior managers of Tehran Municipality is just a theatrical measure." (The state-run Entekhab news website, May 5, 2017)

A parliamentary report on the City Councils' elections, accounting only for the main cities, claimed 12 per cent participation of women in the city councils, only 1 per cent drop in women's participation.

Another state-run news outlet announced a 36.4 per cent drop in women's participation in city councils, setting the number of women at 42. (The state-run Iran newspaper, May 29, 2017)

The study by the NCRI Women's Committee of the election outcome in 500 cities across the country, however, found that only 64 women were elected as members of City Councils compared to 3724 male members. That amounts to a meager 1.7 per cent participation for women in the City Councils [...]

[Women may not serve in many high-level political positions or as judges in 2018](#)

❖ [Human Rights Watch, Want to Choose Your Lawyer? Good Luck in Iran, 5 June 2018](#)

[...] Iran's judiciary reportedly created a very short list of lawyers approved to represent people accused of national security crimes – commonly used to prosecute activists – in Tehran's courts during the investigative stage of the case. Of the 20,000-plus members of Tehran's Bar association, only 20 lawyers made the list, which, unsurprisingly, excluded women and human rights lawyers. [...]

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] President Rouhani has identified gender equity as a key government priority. Two of Iran's 12 vice-presidents are women, although no cabinet ministers are. In an August 2017 report, the UN Special Rapporteur welcomed the government's stance towards advancing women's empowerment. In March 2018, Tehran City Council launched a campaign to celebrate the achievements of ground-breaking Iranian women by installing large billboards around the city showcasing their pictures and stories.

Notwithstanding the government's official commitment to women's equality, hard-line sharia interpretations and conservative cultural and societal norms continue to limit the extent to which women are able to participate in Iranian society. According to the Guardian Council's interpretation, the Constitution prohibits women from serving as Supreme Leader or President, as members of the Assembly of Experts, the Guardian Council, or the Expediency Council, as well as certain types of judges [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] 41. [...] Despite some progress, the limited representation of women in institutions such as the parliament — with 6 per cent of seats — indicate that major impediments for the political participation of women persist. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] B4. Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1 / 4

Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. In 2017, Rouhani appointed two women among his several vice presidents but failed to name any women as cabinet ministers. Rouhani's advisor on citizens' rights, Shahindokht Molaverdi, a champion of women's empowerment, resigned in November 2018. No women candidates have ever been allowed to run for president. [...]

❖ [OECD \(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development\), SIGI \(Social Institutions & Gender Index\) 2019 - Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 March 2019](#)

[...] According to article 22 of the Constitution, "Members of the nation, whether man or woman, enjoy all the human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that are in compliance with the Islamic criteria." Women in Iran have equal rights to men to hold public and political office in the legislature and executive. However, the Labour Law prohibits women from being employed as judge (Moghadam, n.d.).

[...] There are currently no quotas in place to promote women's political participation, at national or sub-national level. While the Constitution guarantees equal rights for women and men, the number of women elected has generally been low [...]

Women may not serve in many high-level political positions or as judges in 2019

❖ [Amnesty International, Iran: Failing On All Fronts - Amnesty International Submission For The UN Universal Periodic Review, 34th Session Of The UPR Working Group, November 2019, June 2019](#)

[...] Iran has failed to make progress on the 25 recommendations it accepted, including to prevent and punish discrimination and violence against women, and enhance their participation in political decision-making processes.¹⁷ [...]

17 A/HRC/28/12 Recommendations 138.3 (Czech Republic), 138.4 (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), 138.5 (Indonesia), 138.6 (Sierra Leone), 138.7 (Burkina Faso), 138.8 (Peru), 138.9 (Iceland), 138.10 (Estonia), 138.11 (Uruguay, Ghana, Poland), 138.12 (Thailand), 138.17 (Latvia), 138.87 (Tajikistan), 138.92 (Greece), 138.91 (Germany), 138.93 (Lebanon), 138.95 (Uruguay), 138.97 (Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)), 138.98 (Yemen), 138.99 (Algeria), 138.100 (Austria), 138.101 (Bhutan), 138.102 (Bosnia and Herzegovina), 138.103 (Djibouti), 138.104 (Ethiopia), 138.105 (Latvia), 138.106 (New Zealand), 138.107 (Pakistan), 138.108 (Qatar), 138.109 (Senegal), 138.110 (Uzbekistan), 138.111 (Chile), 138.112 (Guatemala), 138.187 (Peru), 138.188 (Israel), 138.189 (Italy), 138.190 (Republic of Korea), 138.191 (Sierra Leone), 138.192 (Slovenia), 138.193 (Brazil), 138.194 (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), 138.195 (Finland), 138.196 (France), 138.197 (Israel), 138.198 (Mali), 138.199 (Russian Federation), 138.200 (Lithuania), 138.240 (South Africa), 138.241 (Egypt), 138.242 (Sri Lanka), 138.243 (Turkmenistan), 138.244 (Angola), 138.245 (Canada), 138.246 (Eritrea), 138.247 (Malaysia), 138.248 (Oman), 138.252 (Brunei Darussalam).

❖ [Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, September 2019](#)

[...] Women are also discriminated against in judicial institutions themselves: for example, they cannot be appointed as judges in Iran's courts.²⁶ While women can hold the position of 'legal advisers,' a role which allows them to oversee case proceedings or sit on three-person Appeals Court panels, they cannot render final verdicts, which must be signed by a judge, on their own.²⁷ Women can be appointed to positions such as deputy prosecutor and assistant judges at low courts where the initial stages of cases are handled, but not as high court judges who issue final judgements.

[...] Iran has never had a female president. Article 115 of the Constitution states that the president must be elected 'from among religious and political men' (rejal).

[...] In the absence of any clarification on the legal debate, in practice, no woman has ever been permitted to run for president. While countless women have registered to become presidential candidates, they are usually disqualified by the Guardian Council before they are able to run.

[...] The Guardian Council, which is dominated by religious conservatives, remains a major obstacle preventing women from serving in many state institutions, even when they are theoretically eligible to

hold such positions. For example, the Guardian Council also vets candidates for the Assembly of Experts, the elected body of jurists that holds the power to appoint and dismiss the Supreme Leader. The Guardian Council has never considered any female candidate to have the requisite qualifications to stand for election to the body.

Women have held cabinet positions in Iran, but such appointments have normally been the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, when women are appointed to cabinet, it is often to positions that conform with gender norms. The Minister of Health of Medical Education portfolio was held by a woman, Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, during President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's second term in office (2009-2013). Two other women were nominated for ministerial positions during the same period (Fatemeh Ajorlou and Sousan Keshavarz, for the Ministries of Welfare and Education, respectively) but were rejected by Parliament.

Following the election of President Hassan Rouhani in 2013, many expected to see at least one woman appointed to a ministerial position, given that Rouhani's election campaign included promises to include more women in government. However, neither Rouhani's first (2013-2017) nor second (2017-present) cabinet included any female ministers. Rouhani did appoint several women to vice-presidential posts, including feminist jurist Shahindokht Mowlaverdi, who served as Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs in his first term and Special Assistant to the President for Citizenship Rights until November 2018. Rouhani's presidency also saw the appointment of the first-ever female ambassadors since the Revolution: Marzieh Afkham, serving as the ambassador to Malaysia, and Homeira Rigi, appointed envoy to Brunei in January 2019.

[...] In April 2019, Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, stated that the number of female senior executives and assistant vice-presidents in government had grown by more than 17 per cent, and that at the provincial level the number of female directors, deputies and senior executives had grown by 60 per cent - still far below, however, the target quota.⁵² In June 2019, the Advisor to the Minister of the Interior on Women and Family Affairs, Fariba Nazari-pour Kiaei, stated that in the first year of Rouhani's second presidential term, appointments of women to managerial positions within the Interior Ministry had grown by 90 per cent.⁵³

[...] Despite these limited victories, the presence of women in Parliament still remains marginal – representing only 5.86 per cent of the total seats. In reality, the intense resistance that women face to running – including the high rate of rejection of their candidacies – serves to discourage many from participating in the parliamentary process at all. Even after being elected, women face many forms of gendered treatment and abuse that serve to inhibit them from effectively carrying out their responsibilities – from increased scrutiny of their personal lives to regular defamation and insults from their male counterparts.

[...] The continually low representation of women in Parliament led to calls for the introduction of a quota to guarantee a minimum number of parliamentary seats for women. In June 2018, the IRNA media outlet reported that MPs from the Women's Faction were drafting a law to implement this proposal. However, on 16 April 2019, the draft law failed to garner enough support to be passed, with only 79 out of 214 MPs present voting in favour of it.⁵⁸

[...] In contrast to the cabinet and Parliament, local-level governing councils are institutions in which women have managed to carve out a significant presence in some governorates – although their overall participation still remains low.

[...] Sistan-Baluchestan province in particular saw a significant increase in women's participation during the last elections. A total of 415 women are currently serving on local governorates in the province, compared to only 185 in the previous election.⁶⁴ [...]

26 The Islamic Republic of Iran, Ghanoun-e- Sharayat-e- Entekhab -e- Ghozat-e-Dadgostari [Law on the Qualifications for the Appointment of Judges], 1982.

27 The Islamic Republic of Iran, Ghanoun-e- Elhagh- e-Panj Tabsareh be Ghanoun-e- Sharayat-e- Entekhab -e- Ghozat-e-Dadgostari [Law on the Incorporation of Five Notes to the Law on the Qualifications for the Appointment of Judges], 1985, and Khabaronline News Agency, 'Sharayat- e-Ghazi Shodan-e-Zanan [Conditions for Women to Become Judges],' 28 September 2014, <https://bit.ly/2SQbKWL>.

[...] 52 Shafaqna International Shia News Agency, 'Masoumeh Ebtekar dar goftogoo ba Shafaqna: Hozoor-e-zanan dar post hay-e-modiriyati 17 darsad roshd dashteh [Masoumeh Ebtekar in an interview with Shafaqna: The presence of women had grown by more than 17 per cent in managerial roles],' 24 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2K2ekfY>.

53 Young Journalists Club, 'Akharin khabarha az be kargiri-e- banovan dar manaseb-e-dolati [The latest news on the appointment of women in government positions],' 6 June 2019, <https://bit.ly/2YwOog2>.

[...] 58 Iran International, 'Mokhalefat-e-majles ba ekhtesas-e-sahmiye zanan dar list haye entekhabati [Parliament's opposition over attribution of women's quota in electoral lists],' 16 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Yga8f6>.

[...] 64 Center for Human Rights in Iran, 'Rights activists urge Rouhani to nominate women to his cabinet', 11 July 2017.

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] 39. There have been some positive developments related to women's right to participate in public affairs. According to the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 67 women held senior executive posts in the Government in 2019, compared with 32 in 2017, representing 5.5 per cent of senior executives in the Government. Although some progress has been made, the limited representation of women in institutions, such as the parliament (8.8 per cent), city councils (7.17 per cent) and village councils (3 per cent),⁶⁷ indicates that major impediments to the political participation of women persist. The 31 governors-general at the provincial level are all men, and, of 1,200 cities, only 8 have women serving as mayors.⁶⁸ In April 2019, the parliament rejected two plans of the women's fraction of the parliament to increase the number of female parliamentarians through the implementation of a quota for female candidates in the upcoming election.⁶⁹ [...]

67 See www.isna.ir/news/97020905428/ (in Farsi).

68 See www.isna.ir/news/97020905428/ (in Farsi).

69 See www.irna.ir/news/83283778 (in Farsi).

❖ [Atlantic Council, Factbox: The outcome of Iran's 2020 parliamentary elections, 26 February 2020](#)

[...] How many women were elected?

Seventeen women were elected to parliament, while one woman is among the 14 candidates who failed to reach the required threshold and will go to the second round in May. The outgoing parliament has 17 female MPs, although in 2016, one of Tehran's elected MPs, Minoor Khaleghi, was kicked out by the Guardian Council after the elections were over. The current parliament will keep this abysmally low female representation of around six percent, which is still an all-time record high under the Islamic Republic. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] The electoral system in Iran does not meet international democratic standards. The Guardian Council, controlled by hard-line conservatives and ultimately by the supreme leader, vets all candidates for the parliament, the presidency, and the Assembly of Experts. The council typically rejects candidates who are not considered insiders or deemed fully loyal to the clerical establishment, as well as women seeking to run in the presidential election. As a result, Iranian voters are given a limited choice of candidates.

[...] B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1/4

Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. In 2017, Rouhani appointed two women among his several vice presidents but failed to name any women as cabinet ministers. No women candidates have ever been allowed to run for president. In June 2019, lawmaker Parvaneh Salahshouri complained that she and other women in the parliament had to contend with resistance from their male colleagues; she stated that the men often dismiss their proposals, prevent them from taking senior positions, and discourage them from speaking out. [...]

[Religious and local authorities in Marivan, Kurdistan, banned women from riding bicycles in public in 2017](#)

❖ [Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Iran: Security forces prevent women from riding bicycles, 2 August 2017](#)

[...] Plain-clothes agents confronted women who were riding their bikes in Marivan, Iranian Kurdistan, on August 1, 2017.

According to an informed source, the agents impounded bicycles of some of the women and made them sign written commitments that they would never ride their bikes in public.

On a number of occasions over the past year, the SSF has prevented bicycling women and girls in public places of Marivan.

❖ [Kurdistan Human Rights Association, Harassment of females cyclist in Marivan and confiscating their bike, 2 August 2017](#)

[...] Girls of bicycling around the Zaribar Lake face the Islamic Republic of Iran's plain clothes. According to a report from the Kurdistan Human Rights Association, today, Tuesday 1 August 2017, personal forces affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran's Information Office in the city of Marivan, around the city of Zaribar, have been stationed to prevent the cycling of women and girls continuously. They were patrolled. And all the women and girls riding a bike were warned by these forces with a written commitment to seize their bikes.

It is reported that since the day of 31 July 2017, these forces have been deployed in this region, and have prevented biker girls and women around the Zaribar Marivan lake.

IRGC agents argued against girls and women protesting the riding bike of girls. They told them the riding bike of girls are prohibited in public places.

It should be noted that during recent month, the law enforcement officers of the Islamic Republic of Iran several times it has been prevented by bikers of women and girls in public places of Marivan. [...]

❖ [Radio Farda, Khamenei Says Use Of Bicycles For Women Should Be Limited, 27 November 2017](#)

[...] Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has issued a fatwa declaring that women are forbidden to ride bicycles in public, Iran Students News Agency (ISNA) reported on November 26.

In response to a religious inquiry, Khamenei also said it is prohibited for women to ride bicycles in the presence of strangers and those who are not their immediate family. [...]

❖ [Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018](#)

[...] Look at women's sports. Women have no government or private support. Those women who wish to participate in international tournaments, have to pay for their own travel, practice, equipment, etc. But Iranian women are so motivated that they continue to be active in sports and win medals.

The mullahs' supreme leader banned them from cycling in public, but they buy their own bikes and participate in Asian games.

[...] Women bicyclists attacked

Matin Mo'azezi, Iran's speed skating champion, was attacked by an unknown motorcyclist who rode next to her and kicked her off her bike. The news on this attack was published on January 20, 2018.

On January 8, 2018, a young woman bicyclist was attacked in the city of Qom and hurt in the face and the head. According to eyewitnesses, her bike was deliberately hit in the back by an unknown motorcyclist. As a result, she lost her balance and was thrown off to the ground.

Two young women were arrested in Dezful, Khuzistan, for riding a motorbike and posting their pictures on the internet. (The state-run Aftab website – October 24, 2017)

Women banned from cycling

Ali Khamenei, the mullahs' supreme leader: "Women's bicycling in public areas and in places that could be seen by strange men is not allowed." (The state-run ILNA news agency – November 26, 2017) [...]

School enrolment figures available in 2017 since 2012

❖ [UNICEF, The State of the World's Children: 2017, December 2017](#)

[...] Iran: Primary School Education

[...] Gross enrolment ratio (%) (2011-2016): Male = 106; Female = 112

[...] Net enrolment ratio (%) (2011-2016): Male = 96; Female = 97

[...] Survival rate to last primary grade (%) (2011-2016): Male = 98; Female = 97

[...] Lower secondary school participation

[...] Net enrolment ratio (%) (2011-2016): Male = 90; Female = 92 [...]

❖ [Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018](#)

[...] Discrimination in Education

The National Center of Statistics in Iran announced that 5,569,044 of the illiterate population in the country are women.

According to this center, there are 117,867 girl children between 6 and 9 years of age who are illiterate. The number of illiterate girls between 10 and 14 years of age is 37,915. The number of young women between 15 and 19 years who are illiterate was also announced to be 58,163. (The state-run Farhangian News website, August 3,2017)

There are 1,682,000 women in Iran between 10 and 49 years of age who are absolutely illiterate, announced Ali Bagherzadeh, head of the Literacy Movement Organization.

He added, "4.2 per cent of the women's population in 10-49 age group who live in cities and 13 per cent of those who live in villages are absolutely illiterate."

Bagherzadeh further said, "63 per cent of the illiterate population are women. 44 per cent of them live in villages and 54 per cent live in cities. At the same time, there are 190,000 illiterates between 10 and 19 years of age." (The official Iranian IRNA news agency – December 25,2017)

There are at least 1.9 million girls who do not go to school.

Iran ranks 120th in the world with a total 9.5 million illiterates.

"There is a significant difference and gap between girl and boy students" in Iranian schools.

Admitting that "women have always faced injustice" in Iran, Minister of Education Mohammad Bat'haii added, "In some mixed-gender schools or girls' schools with male teachers, school girls are deprived of physical education. In deprived regions, girls play in a corner during the physical education hour."

He also revealed that "girls do not have access to secondary educational centers" and considered it another sign of "unequal treatment of girls." This is while the secondary educational centers like libraries, cultural centers, and the centers for the education of children and youths have been designed for use by both sexes, Bat'haii said. (The state-run ISNA news agency – September 17, 2017)

Rezvan Hakimzadeh, the Education Ministry's deputy for elementary schools, said, "In many border provinces, high schools cover only 50 per cent of girls in high school level. This means that between 40 to 50 per cent of girl students remain out of school."

"This is shocking," Hakimzadeh said, adding, "Possibly, the reason for some of them quitting school is early marriage." (The state-run ILNA news agency – September 9, 2017)

Khuzistan's Provincial Governor, Gholamreza Shariati, told a gathering on February 6, 2017, "We still have children in Khuzistan who are deprived of education. The largest number of those deprived of education are women." (The state-run Mehr news agency – February 6, 2017). [...]

School enrolment figures available in 2018 since 2012

❖ [Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018](#)

[...] Discrimination in Education

The National Center of Statistics in Iran announced that 5,569,044 of the illiterate population in the country are women.

According to this center, there are 117,867 girl children between 6 and 9 years of age who are illiterate. The number of illiterate girls between 10 and 14 years of age is 37,915. The number of young women between 15 and 19 years who are illiterate was also announced to be 58,163. (The state-run Farhangian News website, August 3,2017)

There are 1,682,000 women in Iran between 10 and 49 years of age who are absolutely illiterate, announced Ali Bagherzadeh, head of the Literacy Movement Organization.

He added, "4.2 per cent of the women's population in 10-49 age group who live in cities and 13 per cent of those who live in villages are absolutely illiterate."

Bagherzadeh further said, "63 per cent of the illiterate population are women. 44 per cent of them live in villages and 54 per cent live in cities. At the same time, there are 190,000 illiterates between 10 and 19 years of age." (The official Iranian IRNA news agency – December 25,2017)

There are at least 1.9 million girls who do not go to school.

Iran ranks 120th in the world with a total 9.5 million illiterates.

“There is a significant difference and gap between girl and boy students” in Iranian schools. Admitting that “women have always faced injustice” in Iran, Minister of Education Mohammad Bat’haii added, “In some mixed-gender schools or girls’ schools with male teachers, school girls are deprived of physical education. In deprived regions, girls play in a corner during the physical education hour.”

He also revealed that “girls do not have access to secondary educational centers” and considered it another sign of “unequal treatment of girls.” This is while the secondary educational centers like libraries, cultural centers, and the centers for the education of children and youths have been designed for use by both sexes, Bat’haii said. (The state-run ISNA news agency – September 17, 2017)

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Khuzistan’s Provincial Governor, Gholamreza Shariati, told a gathering on February 6, 2017, “We still have children in Khuzistan who are deprived of education. The largest number of those deprived of education are women.” (The state-run Mehr news agency – February 6, 2017). [...]

Percentage of girls who are married before the age of 15 in 2017

- ❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)
 [...] Child marriage remains legally possible for girls aged 13 years and boys aged 15 years. Even younger children can be married with the permission of the court but the marriage may not be consummated until puberty. In June 2016, a spokesperson for the Tehran-based Association to Protect the Rights of Children stated that child marriages had reached alarming levels and stressed that approximately 17 per cent of all marriages in the country involved girls married to old men. Forced marriage is, however, prohibited by law. [...]

- ❖ [Women’s Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Iran: Bleak future awaits young brides, 1 August 2017](#)
 [...] 41,000 children under 15 years of age get married every year in Iran. Social scientist and writer, Rayekeh Mozaffarian, announced these figures on the marriage of girl children in Iran and added, “37,117 girls under 15 years of age got married in 2014 with men of various ages, while 1,249 girls in this age got divorced.” Mozaffarian also revealed that the largest number of girls getting married under 10 years of age are in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan. Next in line are the provinces of Razavi Khorassan, East Azerbaijan, and Khuzistan for marriages of girl children between 10 and 14 years of age in 2014. Mozaffarian added, “Early pregnancy inflicts the greatest psychological and physical damages on married girl children... Presently, nearly 1,700 pregnant mothers less than 15 years of age are experiencing their first pregnancy.” She also said, “Based on research done, the largest number of mothers who die between 25 and 30 years of age belong to (the southern Iranian) Province of Hormuzgan. On the average, these women have given birth to three children up to this age. After the third delivery, they face the risk of death.” [...]

- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, 800 Activists Urge Iranian Parliament to End Child Marriage, 17 August 2017](#)
 [...] The most recent Interior Ministry figures show that 17 percent of all females who got married in the nine months between March and December 2015 were under the age of 18. More than five percent of them were under 15. [...]

- ❖ [Deutsche Welle \(DW\), Child marriage in Iran forces girls into a life of oppression, 11 September 2017](#)
 [...] Estimates from the United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, in 2016 indicate that 17 percent of girls in Iran were married before the age of 18. And according to statistics from the Iranian National Organization for Civil Registration quoted in 2015 by the Center for Human Rights in Iran, over 40,000 girls under the age of 15 had registered their marriages during the previous one year.

Sharia-based Iranian law states the legal age of marriage is 13 for girls and 15 for boys, but marriages can still be carried out at a younger age with the consent of fathers (or legal guardians) and the permission of a court judge.

Leyla [a woman from a village near Esfarayen in the northeast of Iran] told DW that the age of married girls from her village in North Khorasan province started at 11. "By the age of 16 or 17, most girls are married," she said.

Leyla also added that her brother, who lives in Iran's second-largest city, Mashhad, recently married off his eldest daughter at the age of 12, because he could not make ends meet for his five children.

The problem of unregistered marriage

Experts say the real number of child marriages in Iran could be much higher, as many of the marriages are not officially registered. This creates a complex problem, where the spouses in unregistered marriages have no civil rights and the children from these marriages have no birth certificates. Children born in unregistered child marriages are therefore deprived of education and social protection, and face a future beset by poverty, juvenile crime and addiction. [...]

❖ [IranWire, Iranian Girls Married off at Puberty, 13 October 2017](#)

[...] In their village, girls between the ages of 10 and 15 don wedding gowns and marry young men between 18 and 22.

But although this is common practice in this village in Ardabil, it also happens across Iran — and not only in rural communities. "Some believe that these marriages happen only in villages," the social worker Z. Mousavi told IranWire. "But we see child marriages in the outlying areas of big cities and even among traditional families in big cities."

She says that child marriages in Iran are actually on the increase, even though "the average age of marriage in the country has gone up." Families are worried that if they wait too long, their daughters won't be eligible for marriage. "Some families are afraid that their children will become more choosy the older they get and end up unmarried. For example, I know a family whose 33-year-old daughter has not married and this has worried them sick. They married off their 15-year-old youngest daughter to save her from the fate of her older sister."

[...] In Iran, girls can legally marry at 13, and boys at 15. But the law also states that if a girl's father finds that it serves his daughter's interests he can arrange for her to marry before she reaches the age of 13. As a result, Iran effectively has no minimum age for marriage. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] 35. The minimum age of marriage remains 13 years for girls and 15 years for boys, but girls less than 10 years old may be married with the consent of their father or permission from a court. The Secretary-General is concerned that recommendations by international human rights mechanisms, most recently by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2016 (CRC/C/IRN/CO/3-4, para. 28), have not led to the repeal of legal provisions authorizing child marriage. He is alarmed that the Iranian authorities continue to claim that it may be in their best interest for girls as young as nine years old to get married. Child marriage constitutes a threat to the physical and mental integrity of children and runs counter to fundamental human rights guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

36. In July, State-run media reported that 41,000 children under 15 years of age were married every year in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The article also revealed that the largest number of girls getting married under 10 years of age were from the south-eastern Province of Sistan va Baluchestan.³⁰ [...]

30 Reported at www.irna.ir/en/ (30 July 2017)

❖ [UNICEF, The State of the World's Children: 2017, December 2017](#)

[...] Child marriage (%) 2010-2016

[...] Married by 15: 3%

[...] Married by 18: 17% [...]

❖ [A. Mardi, A. Ebadi, S. Shahbazi et al, Factors influencing the use of contraceptives through the lens of teenage women: a qualitative study in Iran., Public Health 18, 202 30 January 2018](#)

[...] While the average rate of marriage for girls under the age of 15 years in most areas of Iran is 5%, this rate is higher in provinces such as Ardabil, at about 9%. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] The legal age of marriage for girls remained at 13, and fathers and grandfathers could obtain permission from courts for their daughters to be married at an even younger age. [...]

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, The Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2018](#)

[...] III. Women's rights

[...] 65. During her missions, the Special Rapporteur received further information concerning the ongoing prevalence of child marriage in the country despite the consistent recommendations to address the situation by the international human rights mechanisms, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2016. At present, girls can be married as young as nine with the permission of the court. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that approximately 40,000 children under the age of 15 years are married annually and that approximately 17 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18.⁷⁹ The number is likely to be higher, as thousands of underage marriages are not registered.⁸⁰ The Special Rapporteur reiterates that child marriage constitutes a threat to physical and mental integrity of the child in contravention of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also presumes that the child had no say on the decision of their marriage. [...]

79 See <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/iran/>.

80 See <https://goo.gl/aRzMXa>.

IRGC forces continued to control security in Sisan-va Baluchistan and Kurdistan in 2017

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] Iran's border guards continued to unlawfully shoot and kill, with full impunity, scores of unarmed Kurdish men known as Kulbars who work as cross-border porters between Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan. In September, security forces violently suppressed protests in Baneh and Sanandaj over the fatal shootings of two Kulbars, and detained more than a dozen people.

There was a heavy police presence across Kurdistan province in September when members of Iran's Kurdish minority held rallies in support of the independence referendum in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. More than a dozen people were reportedly arrested. [...]

❖ [Danish Immigration Service, Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs: Joint report from the Danish Immigration Service and The Danish Refugee Council based on interviews in Tehran, Iran and London, United Kingdom, 9 September to 16 September 2017 and 2 October to 3 October 2017, February 2018](#)

[...] 1.1 Kurds

1.1.1. Presence and activities of the Iranian authorities in the Kurdish areas in Iran

The Iranian authorities have military presence in the Kurdish areas.⁴ The military presence is not always visible. Sometimes the military does not appear as ordinary military but in plain clothes. Civil guards may also be connected to the military.⁵ The presence of the authorities is also in terms of intelligence.⁶ The surveillance conducted in the Kurdish areas is not systematic, but structured, and it is not random but targeted, an associate professor stated.⁷

The presence of the authorities in the Kurdish areas has increased lately.⁸ The expansion is caused by the presumed increased extremism among Kurds, one source explained.⁹ The Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum of 25 September 2017 was also mentioned by another source as a cause.¹⁰ [p. 5]

[...] Meeting with Amnesty International

London, 3 October 2017

Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, including Kurds and Ahwaz Arabs

Presence and activities of the Iranian authorities in the Kurdish areas in Iran

18. Regarding the presence of the Iranian authorities in the Kurdish areas, Amnesty International stated the Ministry of Intelligence is present, and to some degree the Revolutionary Guard, too. The situation is different in Tehran, where the Revolutionary Guard is more present than the Ministry of Intelligence. The

source added that the presence of police increased in Kurdistan in connection with the Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum of 25 September 2017, due to rallies and gatherings held by people supporting the voting in the neighbouring country. [...]

Prevalence of family members of former or current Kurdish activists being targeted by the authorities

22. Amnesty International highlighted a case from June 2017, where Ramin Hossein Panahi, member of the Kurdish party, Komala, was arrested after taking part in armed clashes with Iran's Revolutionary Guards in the city of Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, and was subsequently injured. His brother and three other relatives were afterwards arrested by the Revolutionary Guards. [...]

4 An associate professor: 55; Amnesty International: 18; Middle East Consultancy Services: 94; a Western embassy (4): 17

5 An associate professor: 56

6 Amnesty International: 18; an associate professor: 55; an anonymous source: 34

7 An associate professor: 60

8 Amnesty International: 18; an associate professor: 58; a Western embassy (4): 15

9 An associate professor: 58

10 Amnesty International: 18

IRGC forces continued to control security in Sisan-va Baluchistan and Kurdistan in 2018

❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), Iran: Update on Strike Arrestees in Kurdistan, 6 September 2018](#)

[...] Earlier this week, Kurdish activists and political parties rallied on social media for a general strike in response to the untimely deaths of Moradi, Moradi, and Panahi, who were hanged to death in dubious circumstances on September 8th, according to HRANA reports.

Security attentions have since zeroed in on Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan since merchants of these provinces went on strike to protest the young men's hangings, protests which are being met by civic arrests and spray-painted threats onto the merchant's shuttered shops.

The omnipresence of security forces in various Kurdish cities, particularly in the wake of the executions and IRGC's recent missile attack on Kurdish political parties, has contributed to a growing sense of insecurity for Iranian Kurds. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, 12 Conservationists Detained Without Counsel in Iran's Kurdistan Province, 18 April 2018](#)

[...] Twelve of the 20 environmental conservationists arrested in Iran's Kurdistan Province in January and February 2019 remain in detention centers run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Ministry of Intelligence in the city of Sanandaj, the provincial capital, without access to legal counsel.

[...] On April 9, 2019, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network reported that after detainees Edris Mohammadi and Avat Karimi were interrogated, they were moved from the Intelligence Ministry's detention center in Sanandaj to the IRGC's Shahramfar Detention Center. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Activists Arrested After Mass Strike in Iran's Kurdistan Province Against "Revenge" Executions, 14 September 2018](#)

[...] After a mass strike by Kurdish merchants in western Iran on September 12, 2018, Iranian security forces arrested several civil rights activists in the region, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) has learned.

The strikers closed their shops in protest against recent executions of Kurdish prisoners and Iran's missile attack on Kurdish dissidents in Northern Iraq.

"I was in Marivan [Iran's Kurdistan Province] and I saw that two-thirds of the city's shops were closed and the main streets were mostly blocked and about 20 to 30 percent of government employees did not show up to work," Dana Lenjabadi, a Kurdish activist in Marivan, told CHRI on September 13.

"The city of Sanandaj [Kurdistan Province's capital] was 90 percent shut down and two-thirds of the shops in Mahabad and Saqqez were also closed," he added.

In response to the protest that was organized by Kurdish opposition groups, at least 12 activists were arrested by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Ministry of Intelligence in Marivan and Sanandaj. Two remained in detention as of September 13: Souran Daneshvar and Aram Fathi. [...]

❖ [RFE/RL – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iran Arrests Six Over Deadly Suicide Bomb Attack On Security Forces, 18 February 2019](#)

[...] Iran says it has arrested six people suspected of involvement in last week's deadly suicide bomb attack on security forces in the southern province of Sistan-Baluchistan.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) said on February 18 that it had arrested three "terrorists" in safe houses in the cities of Saravan and Khash.

Sistan-Baluchistan Province's public prosecutor Ali Movahedi said that three other people accused of being involved in the February 13 suicide bombing that killed 27 IRGC members were arrested, according to the semiofficial Fars news agency.

The IRGC said that 150 kilograms of explosives and 600 kilograms of "explosive materials" as well as weapons and ammunition were confiscated in the raids in Saravan and Khash.

Those arrested had "produced, guided, and supported" the vehicle used in the attack, the Guards said.

[...] Sistan-Baluchistan is a volatile area near Iran's borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan where militant groups and drug smugglers frequently operate. The province is populated mainly by Sunni Muslim ethnic Baluchis. [...]

[IRGC forces continued to control security in Sistan-Baluchistan and Kurdistan in 2019](#)

❖ [Rudaw, Iranian soldier, several 'anti-revolutionaries' killed on Iraqi border: IRGC, 27 July 2019](#)

[...] An Iranian soldier was killed in Friday clashes close to the Iraqi border, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed on Saturday, along with a number of "anti-revolutionaries" - a euphemism used for Kurdish opposition party members based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

A Guard border patrol "encountered and fought with an anti-revolutionary group in Sarvabad" in Kurdistan province, the IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency reported.

[...] Hangaw Human Rights Organization reported late on Friday that Kurdish forces and the IRGC "clashed in Zhone Resort located between Dagaga and Ravar [Kurdistan province] and a member of the IRGC, Saeed Hadi Ojaq, from [the city of] Qorveh was killed and two other injured."

Parts of the Kurdistan Region bordering Iran are often bombarded by Iranian forces. The IRGC and Kurdish opposition forces have clashed in these mountainous areas, typically on the Iranian side, for decades.

[...] A spate of clashes have taken place across Iran's Kurdish areas in the last two months.

At least 10 IRGC members were killed in an attack claimed by the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) in the Kurdistan province town of Mariwan last week.

Unlike the rest of Iran, overseen by the Iranian national army, the provinces of Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, where ethnic minority Kurds and Azeris predominate, are under the control of the IRGC's Hamza Sayyid al-Shuhada command centre.

The Guard enforces strict measures to prevent armed Kurdish groups from entering the country, including constructing a network of roads and building more outposts in the mountainous Kurdish regions. [...]

❖ [The Danish Immigration Service, Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI, 7 February 2020](#)

[...] The Iranian authorities are active in KRI and work in different fields, such as monitoring of journalists and human rights activists, lecturers, researchers and teachers with Iranian Kurdish background.¹⁷¹ One source stated that they are monitored by the authorities in order to know who they are in contact with and what their activities are. It was the source's perception that a person who gets out of Iran is at risk of being monitored, even if the person is not a political activist. The purpose of doing so is to find out why the person left Iran, what s/he is doing and who s/he is in contact with, including family members who have left Iran.¹⁷²

An international relations university professor in Sanandaj was dismissed from his work, because he did not cooperate with the Iranian intelligence. Hereafter the professor had no other option than to come to KRI. The professor initially moved to Sulaimania city. He was later informed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Intelligence Service (in Kurdish: Asayish) in Sulaimania that he could not stay and had to leave as he was considered to be a target of the Iranian authorities and could be assassinated. According to the source, the Asayish asked him to leave, for the sake of his own safety.¹⁷³

Many radio and TV stations in KRI have Iranian employees who work for the Iranian authorities as well as the for KRI authorities. They provide information to both authorities about the activities of the political parties. Overall, the Iranian regime has a wide ranging network in KRI gathering information.¹⁷⁴

5.1.1 The monitoring and targeting of political activists and supporters by the Iranian intelligence authorities in KRI

Because of the influence of Iran, they pressure and threaten political activists in KRI, including members and Peshmergas of KDPI and Komala in order to halt their activities.¹⁷⁵

The Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC Intelligence Service are both active in KRI in different ways, and they spy on the activities of the Iranian Kurdish political parties, political and human rights activists and journalists. The IRGC international forces (the so-called 'Qods' forces) are also active in Iraq.¹⁷⁶

[...] The IRGC asks Iranian Kurdish residents in KRI to report on the movements and activities of the main Iranian Kurdish opposition groups and political parties based in Erbil and Sulaimanya.¹⁸⁰ IRGC closely monitors the parties and politically active individuals by using its forces or its collaborators in KRI, and whenever there is an opportunity, the IRGC will damage them.¹⁸¹

[...] Hengaw Organization for Human Rights
Erbil, 28 October 2019

[...] In the Kurdish area a separate department by the IRGC Intelligence Service (in Farsi: Sazman-e Ettelal'at-e Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e Eslami) has been established. This department is monitoring people's phones and put pressure on people who they suspect of interacting with the political parties. The pressure, in some instances, includes the authorities forcing wives to separate from their politically active husbands. [...]

171 A journalist in KRI (B): 236; A journalist in KRI (C): 318

172 A journalist in KRI (B): 242

173 A journalist in KRI (B): 237-238

174 A journalist in KRI (A): 175

175 A journalist in KRI (B): 243

176 A journalist in KRI (B): 244, 247

[...] 180 KMMK-G: 52

181 A journalist in KRI (C): 318 [...]

Information on whether the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran mentioned the "continued indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of unarmed Kurdish smugglers" in his reports in 2017

❖ [UN Special Rapporteur, Human Rights Situation in Iran, 17 March 2017](#)

[...] The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned about the alleged indiscriminate and blind use of lethal force towards Kurdish *kulbaran* (back carriers), which may be related to their ethnic affiliation. The *kulbaran* are Kurdish couriers who engage in smuggling commodities across the border. Due to the high rate of unemployment in Kurdistan provinces, this activity is generally the only way for them to provide for themselves and their family. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] 68. From January to May 2017, Iranian border security forces allegedly killed 30 Kurdish kulbars (border couriers) and injured 60 others. Iranian Kurds are reported to be overrepresented among people sentenced to death in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Kurdish political prisoners are said to represent almost half of the total number of political prisoners in the country.⁴⁷ [...]

47 Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran-Geneva, "Bi-annual summary report for the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights for Iran", June 2017. Available from <http://www.kmmk-ge.org/2017/06/07/bi-annual-summary-report-for-the-attention-of-the-un-special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-for-iran/>.

Information on whether the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran mentioned the "continued indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of unarmed Kurdish smugglers" in his reports in 2019

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] 91. The Special Rapporteur remains deeply concerned about the continuing use of excessive force against and extrajudicial killings of border couriers who often reside in the impoverished provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Sistan and Baluchistan and Western Azerbaijan. Many of them transport goods on their back, on foot, horses or mules, under difficult conditions and often not in the possession of work licences. Those working in the Kurdistan region also often take routes littered with landmines at high risk of serious injury or death. The “Sokhtbaran” or fuel couriers in Baluchistan have experienced a similar fate. It is estimated that up to 84,000 Kulbarans (Kurdish border couriers) make the crossings annually.

[...] In the first six months of 2019, at least 42 border couriers were reportedly killed and 74 injured.⁹³

93. In May 2019, two Kulbars, 23-year-old Sina Mam-Hamidi and 55-year-old Naser Olian, were injured in Marivan and Urmia and two others, Khaled Salimi and Akam Bardel, killed by patrol police in Piranshahr.⁹⁴ In all those cases, the couriers were unarmed and posed no imminent threat of death or serious injury at the time of their killing or injury, and the use of force and firearms is therefore unlawful under international law.⁹⁵ In its comments, the Government clarified that regulations in place to prosecute violators of the law did not mean that a border officer could “shoot at any lawbreaker”. The Government noted that some of the porters carry narcotic drugs or pistols, which makes it difficult to recognize an armed smuggler in the border area. [...]

93 NGO submission.

94 See www.en-hrana.org/four-kulbars-were-killed-or-injured-by-police-shot.

95 See www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/useofforceandfirearms.aspx.

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] 43. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the continuing use of excessive force against and extrajudicial killings of Kulbarans and Sokhtbaran border couriers. According to reports, an 18-year-old Sokhtbar was killed in September 2019 after the security forces shot his car, which carried fuel. Similarly worrying reports were received about Kulbarans being killed by security forces’ gunfire, including two Kulbars on 23 November 2019 in West Azerbaijan Province and one Kulbar on 2 December 2019 in Kurdistan Province. Due to the high rate of unemployment in the Provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan and Kurdistan, courier work remains one of the few ways for the population to acquire income. In its comments, the Government has said that it tries to address the issue by setting up border markets and free zones, such as in Baneh region. [...]

❖ [OHCHR, Statement By Javid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran at the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council – Item 4, 9 March 2020](#)

[...] I am also disturbed by the reported arrest and imprisonment of individuals who manifest their religious faith or promote their culture, as well as the reported deaths against border couriers from Kurdish and Balochi communities. [...]

[Authorities prohibited most schools from teaching the Kurdish language \(with the exception of the University of Kurdistan\) in 2017](#)

❖ [Amnesty International, Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran’s Human Rights Defenders Under Attack, July 2017](#)

[...] 9.2 LINGUISTIC RIGHTS FOR MINORITIES

[...] In June 2016, the government announced that optional Turkish and Kurdish language courses would be offered in schools in two provinces, Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, although implementation remained unclear. Members of the Turkmen minority publicly appealed to President Rouhani for a similar dispensation. This is, however, insufficient to address the grievances of Iran’s minority communities, who have historically complained about the use of Persian as the sole medium of instruction at all levels of primary and secondary education, a policy which is believed to have contributed to disproportionately low levels of learning and high dropout rates in provinces populated by non-Persian ethnic minorities.

Other related grievances include the suppression of educational efforts to teach and promote minority languages, the scarcity of publications in minority languages, and the lack of culturally and linguistically inclusive local programming by state radio and television.

Human rights defenders in Iran who speak out against the monolingual and monocultural vision of the state and its exclusion or marginalization of minority communities risk facing harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention. Activists who link their human rights work to their national or ethnic identity risk further violations of their rights including unfair prosecutions and lengthy prison sentences. [...]

- ❖ [Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Josef Kraus, Iran's Azerbaijan Question in Evolution: Identity, Society, and Regional Security, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, September 2017](#)

[...] Article 15 identifies Persian as the official language of Iran, so official documents, correspondence, and other texts must be in that language. Minorities are de jure permitted the use of their languages in print and in the teaching of their own literature in schools, but only as a supplement to mandatory Persian. The constitution does not, however, make any mention of the possibility of teaching the languages themselves [...]

[...] First, children from non-Persian families face a difficult situation. At home they communicate in their native tongues: Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Balochi, etc. At school, they are forced to study in Persian, although their teachers are rarely, if at all, native Persian-speakers themselves. When comparing school results between the two groups it is clear that non-Persian children are at a disadvantage. Students of non-Persian origin thus have a considerable handicap vis-à-vis ethnic Persians or native Persophones in general. [...]

- ❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] DISCRIMINATION – ETHNIC MINORITIES

[...] The Persian language remained the sole medium of instruction during primary and secondary education, contributing to higher drop-out rates in minority-populated areas. [...]

Authorities prohibited most schools from teaching the Kurdish language (with the exception of the University of Kurdistan) in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Authorities prohibited most schools from teaching the Kurdish language (although not its use in informal settings). [...].

- ❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)

[...] Restrictions placed upon the use of minority languages and cultural practices, including in primary and secondary education, continued in contravention of article 15 of the Constitution and possibly also in violation of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [...]

- ❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] The Persian language remained the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education. [...]

Government prohibition of the Azeri language in schools in 2017

- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Former MP Demands That Iran Implement Right of Ethnic Minorities to Preserve Languages, 27 February 2017](#)

[...] On International Mother Language Day, February 21, four Iranian ethnic Azerbaijanis were issued long prison sentences by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran for their peaceful activism against the official ban on teaching Azeri Turkish in state schools.

Alireza Farshi was sentenced to 15 years in prison and two years in exile while three of his colleagues—Akbar Azad, Behnam Sheikhi and Hamid Manafi—were each sentenced to 10 years in prison and two years in exile.

- ❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran, Azeri Man Facing Prison Time for Peacefully Advocating Ethnic Language Rights in Iran, 8 August 2017](#)
 [...] Between 16 to 25 percent of Iran's population is made up of Turkish-speaking (different from the language spoken in Turkey) Azeris living mostly in Iran's northeastern East and West Azerbaijan, Ardabil and Zanzan Provinces.
 Azeri ethnic rights activists are primarily focused on protesting the state ban on teaching the Azeri-Turkish language in schools, a ban they argue violates the Constitution. Iran's security establishment often suppresses their peaceful campaigns while claiming they have separatist aspirations. [...]
- ❖ [Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Josef Kraus, Iran's Azerbaijan Question in Evolution: Identity, Society, and Regional Security, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, September 2017](#)
 [...] Article 15 identifies Persian as the official language of Iran, so official documents, correspondence, and other texts must be in that language. Minorities are de jure permitted the use of their languages in print and in the teaching of their own literature in schools, but only as a supplement to mandatory Persian. The constitution does not, however, make any mention of the possibility of teaching the languages themselves [...]
 [...] First, children from non-Persian families face a difficult situation. At home they communicate in their native tongues: Azerbaijani, Kurdish, Balochi, etc. At school, they are forced to study in Persian, although their teachers are rarely, if at all, native Persian-speakers themselves. When comparing school results between the two groups it is clear that non-Persian children are at a disadvantage. Students of non-Persian origin thus have a considerable handicap vis-à-vis ethnic Persians or native Persophones in general. [...]
- ❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)
 [...] DISCRIMINATION – ETHNIC MINORITIES
 [...] The Persian language remained the sole medium of instruction during primary and secondary education, contributing to higher drop-out rates in minority-populated areas. [...]

Government prohibition of the Azeri language in schools in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)
 [...] 3.16 While Azeris are well-integrated into Iranian society, DFAT is aware of some reports of official discrimination. Reports include claims that the government has prohibited the use of the Azeri language in schools, harassed Azeri activists or organisers, and changed Azeri geographic names [...]
- ❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 6 August 2018](#)
 [...] Restrictions placed upon the use of minority languages and cultural practices, including in primary and secondary education, continued in contravention of article 15 of the Constitution and possibly also in violation of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. [...]
- ❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019](#)
 [...] The Persian language remained the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education. [...]

Government prohibition of the Azeri language in schools in 2019

- ❖ [Global Voices, Iran faces backlash from its Azeri citizens over Armenia and the Karabakh question, 11 April 2019](#)
 [...] Inside Iran, millions of Azeris are not allowed to receive education in their own language. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] 43. Article 19 of the Constitution contains a guarantee of equality for all the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, regardless of ethnic group or tribe, and states that “colour, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege”. Article 15 of the Constitution identifies Persian as the official language but permits the use of “regional and ethnic languages in the press, the mass media, and the teaching of their literature at schools, alongside the Persian language ...”. The narrow scope of recognized uses of non-Persian languages in the Constitution effectively means the right of children from linguistic minorities to be educated in their mother tongue is not fully protected. In its comments, the Government noted that the University of Kurdistan had begun its enrolment of students of the Kurdish language and literature from October 2015 and the University of Tabriz enrolled students, at the Bachelor level, of the Azeri language from October 2016. The Government also stated that Arabic language majors had also been prevalent for years at Iranian universities. [...]

❖ [Turan News Agency, Iranian schools will teach Azerbaijani language, 24 August 2019](#)

[...] In September, the teaching of the Azerbaijani language will begin in schools in the Iranian province of East Azerbaijan. According to the Azerbaijani Voice of America service, the head of the education department of the province of East Azerbaijan Jafar Pashai said this.

According to him, classes in the Azerbaijani-Turkic language will be held twice a week - only 60 hours per academic year. Teaching of the Turkic language is introduced by the Minister of Education Mohammed Bothani.

According to the document, the mother tongue will be taught in the 4th grade of elementary school and the 9th grade of high school.

The content of the program and the number of hours are determined by the schools of each province.

Introduction mother tongue teaching was part of the election program of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. [...]

❖ [Baku Press Klub, Some schools in Iran starts teaching Azerbaijani language, 23 September 2019](#)

[...] Some schools in Eastern Azerbaijan province of Iran has started teaching the Azerbaijani language since today, the head of the education department of the province of East Azerbaijan Jafar Pashai said APA’s Tehran bureau reports.

“The decision has been made in Educational council of Eastern Azerbaijan province. The Azerbaijani language will be taught twice a week, totally 60 hours per academic year within the framework of the pilot project,” J. Pashai stressed.

He noted that the Azerbaijani language will be taught in IV and IX classes.

Stressing the importance of teaching the Azerbaijani language in secondary schools of East Azerbaijan Province, J. Pashai said that 15th article of the Iranian Constitution allows teaching local languages.

Content of lessons and academic hours will be defined by schools.

According to the information, schools and numbers of teachers have already been determined. [...]

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 17 January 2020](#)

[...] 43. The Azerbaijani-Turk community continued to voice concerns about the lack of mother-tongue education,⁷² which also affected other minorities, including the Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs. The Government rejected the allegations, indicating that, under article 15 of the Constitution, the use and teaching of local languages was authorized. OHCHR received reports of the arbitrary arrest of Zahra Mohammadi on 23 May 2019. She is reportedly being held in Sanandaj Prison. Although some reports indicate that her arrest was linked to her teaching of the Kurdish language, the Government rejected the allegations and indicated that she was accused of cooperating with illegal opposition parties. [...] [p. 11]

72 www.irna.ir/news/83404283/ (in Farsi).

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 January 2020](#)

[...] 44. The Special Rapporteur continues to receive worrying reports of violations of the economic, social and cultural rights of minorities. For example, the Kurdish, Ahwazi Arab and Azerbaijani-Turk communities are concerned about the limited access they have to education in their mother tongues. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in Iran: Review Of 2019, 18 February 2020](#)

[...] Persian remained the sole language of instruction in primary and secondary education. [...]

Young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders and community elders in 2017

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] Members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face harassment and discrimination, though the problem is underreported due to the criminalized and hidden nature of these groups in Iran. [...]

Young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders and community elders in 2018

❖ [Small Media Foundation, Breaking the Silence; Digital media and the Struggle for LGBTQ Rights in Iran, 17 May 2018](#)

[...] Although no progress has been made over the past decade with regard to the legal recognition of LGBTQ citizens' rights, our research suggests that social attitudes are slowly shifting in a positive direction, thanks to increased coverage of LGBTQ issues in satellite and online media.

The high-profile support offered to LGBTQ people by high-profile Iranian superstars such as the pop diva extraordinaire Googoosh and the TV and film actress Behnoush Bakhtiari have gradually helped to push discussions around LGBTQ rights into the mainstream.

At the same time, similar processes have been taking place on social media platforms such as Instagram, where high-profile 'influencers' have sparked lively discussions about LGBTQ rights among their followers. Altogether, the social climate is shifting to the extent that more and more LGBTQ Iranians feel comfortable coming out to their friends and loved ones, and there is a general sense that social progress—while slow—is being made.

[...] This report shows that a majority of LGBTQ people surveyed did not have access to sexual health resources, and did not know where they could access appropriate services and resources in the event that they needed them. These findings also hold true for mental health support services, with many psychotherapists hostile to notions of minority sexual and gender identities. [p. 7]

[...] with this increased visibility come a number of dangers. Same-sex sexual relations are still outlawed, public sentiment remains largely hostile to LGBTQ people, and community members continue to face risks of forced outing, blackmail, and rejection by their families and friends. [p. 11]

[...] 1.4 LGBTQphobia in Public Discourse

The Iranian state's hostility to LGBTQ people is not only enshrined in law, but also permeates the length and breadth of the country's politics in the form of anti-LGBTQ fearmongering and widespread demonisation of the country's LGBTQ community.

The transformation of LGBTQphobia into state orthodoxy is part of a drive to expel so-called 'Western' influences from Iranian society. In casting LGBTQ Iranians as the 'other', and Western states as the community's champions, the state is attempting to cast emerging LGBTQ identities as the result of an insidious foreign invasion, and roll back the trend of social liberalisation that has been ongoing since the presidency of Mohammad Khatami.¹⁵ [p.28]

[...] Given the existence of such stringent and unforgiving anti-LGB laws in Iran, and the widespread entrenchment of intolerance against all members of the LGBTQ community, the pressure on people to suppress their desires and conceal their identities is immense. [p. 36]

[...] "[A] majority of our survey respondents (55%) agreed that public opinion has become more accepting of LGBTQ people since the end of the Ahmadinejad presidency in 2013. Only a small minority (12.7%) disagree with this statement, with just under a quarter of respondents (22.5%) perceiving little change. In light of this general sense of optimism about the gradual evolution of public opinion, it's striking how poorly the LGBTQ community perceives the Rouhani administration. Only 12% of survey respondents

agree that his government has brought about positive changes for LGBTQ people. We can infer that governmental policies have not been perceived as a driver of changes in social attitudes. [...] [pp. 39-40]

15 For more on this phenomenon, see Katarzyna Korycki and Abouzar Nasirzadeh, (2013), 'Homophobia as a Tool of Statecraft: Iran and Its Queers', in Meredith L. Weiss and Michael J. Bosia (eds.) *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression*, (pp. 174-195), University of Illinois Press: Champaign, IL.

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] 3.95 There is a strong societal taboo against homosexuality. International LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) NGOs report that many young gay men face harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders, and community leaders. Authorities have reportedly expelled individuals from university for alleged same-sex relations. While official rhetoric against homosexual individuals and practices has reduced since the Ayatollah Khomeini era, high level officials (including Ayatollah Khamenei), have continued to issue derogatory statements about homosexuality. LGBTI individuals are unlikely to obtain protection from state officials, and may face harassment, abuse or arrest should they come to the attention of security forces. As noted in Military Objectors, men whose homosexuality or transgenderism has been established (through an intrusive medical examination) are exempted from military service and given the designation 'mentally ill' on their military cards, which can lead to later difficulties when seeking employment. Both gay men and lesbians face considerable societal pressure to enter into a heterosexual marriage and produce children. The government censors all materials related to LGBTI issues, including blocking websites or content within sites that discusses such issues. NGOs are unable to work openly on LGBTI issues.

3.96 International observers report that homosexual and bisexual persons who do not openly reveal their sexual orientation and keep a low profile are able to move freely within society, particularly in larger cities that offer greater anonymity. It is not uncommon in Iran for people of the same sex to live together, and this is not necessarily associated with homosexuality. The rise of social media over the past decade means activities such as dating now largely take place online in chat rooms and dating sites rather than in established 'beats' (an area frequented by gay men, where sexual acts may occur), although these continue to exist. While intelligence services have the capacity to monitor the behaviour of individuals, human rights observers report that security agencies do not usually seek to identify or punish individuals solely for engaging in same-sex relations. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] Members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community face harassment and discrimination, though the problem is underreported due to the criminalized and hidden nature of these groups in Iran. [...]

[Young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders and community elders in 2019](#)

❖ [Mohammadrasool Yadegarfar, "How are Iranian Gay Men Coping with Systematic Suppression Under Islamic Law? A Qualitative Study", *Sexuality and Culture*, 23, pp. 1250–1273, 20 May 2019](#)

[...] The existence of gay men is undeniable in Iran; however, Iran's Islamic law considers same sex relationships a crime punishable by the death penalty. The aim of this study is to use a qualitative approach to gain a more in-depth understanding of the coping strategies adopted by gay men living in Iran under systematic suppression based on each individual's subjective experiences, feelings, intention and beliefs. A semi-structured interview in Farsi (Persian) language was used to gather the qualitative data. Twenty-three men who identified themselves as gay and who currently live in Iran were interviewed for this study. Transcripts of the interviews were subjected to analysis using thematic analysis. The key themes that emerged as coping strategies were: risk taking; internalized oppression; travelling/leaving the country; social networks and family of choice; mental health and psychological therapy and medication; social class; and developing a new identity. The implications of these findings are discussed. [...] In addition, participant 4, who was 41 years old, in a relationship, and self-employed, mentioned that he was from a working-class family living in the south of Tehran and that the situation for gay men there was more difficult than for people in the north of Tehran, as people in the south were more traditional and

conservative than people from the north. He stated that because of this, not many gay men from north Tehran hung around with gay men from the city's south. [...]

❖ [Center for Human Rights in Iran \(CHRI\), Children in Iran Should Be Protected from Numerous Rights Violations, 20 November 2019](#)

[...] Iran's LGBTQ youth face severe legal and social discrimination (and because of the criminalization of same-sex relations, the inability to seek protection from violence), and children with disabilities face inaccessible schools and services and inadequate protections from violence and abuse. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] Members of the LGBT+ community face harassment and discrimination, though the problem is underreported due to the criminalized and hidden nature of these groups in Iran. The penal code criminalizes all sexual relations outside of traditional marriage, and Iran is among the few countries where individuals can be put to death for consensual same-sex conduct. [...]

[Societal discrimination in 2017 on linguistic grounds against groups whose native language was not Persian or against non-Shia persons](#)

❖ [Amnesty International, Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran's Human Rights Defenders Under Attack, July 2017](#)

[...] 9.2 LINGUISTIC RIGHTS FOR MINORITIES

[...] In June 2016, the government announced that optional Turkish and Kurdish language courses would be offered in schools in two provinces, Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, although implementation remained unclear. Members of the Turkmen minority publicly appealed to President Rouhani for a similar dispensation. This is, however, insufficient to address the grievances of Iran's minority communities, who have historically complained about the use of Persian as the sole medium of instruction at all levels of primary and secondary education, a policy which is believed to have contributed to disproportionately low levels of learning and high dropout rates in provinces populated by non-Persian ethnic minorities.

Other related grievances include the suppression of educational efforts to teach and promote minority languages, the scarcity of publications in minority languages, and the lack of culturally and linguistically inclusive local programming by state radio and television.

Human rights defenders in Iran who speak out against the monolingual and monocultural vision of the state and its exclusion or marginalization of minority communities risk facing harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention. Activists who link their human rights work to their national or ethnic identity risk further violations of their rights including unfair prosecutions and lengthy prison sentences. [...]

❖ [Emil Aslan Souleimanov and Josef Kraus, Iran's Azerbaijan Question in Evolution: Identity, Society, and Regional Security, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, September 2017](#)

[...] Jokes, insults, and taunts that do not go beyond certain limits are a normal part of Iranian society, and the Persian population enjoys making fun of the second largest ethnic group – the Azerbaijanis. The main target of this ridicule is the Azerbaijani language, which apparently sounds comical and stupid to Persians.³⁸ In any case, it is the alleged 'stupidity' of Azerbaijanis that forms the punchline for most jokes. Azerbaijanis come off as less intelligent, naive people who are incapable of dealing with the problems of everyday life, or who solve problems of whatever kind in their own stupid manner.³⁹ The most popular insult, tork-e khar, translating to 'Turkish Donkey,' is such a reference to Azerbaijani stupidity. Persian ridicule of the Azerbaijanis generally takes the classic form of jokes or brief anecdotes. It should be added that many such jokes target Iran's other inhabitants. A good example are the inhabitants of the town of Rasht, who also tend to be depicted as stupid.⁴⁰

38 Azerbaijanis are often ridiculed by Persian-speakers for not being able to pronounce the Farsi letters "ghayn" and "jim" and for pronouncing "ts" instead of "ch" and "dz" instead of "j."

39 Other parts of the Iranian stereotype of Azerbaijanis, although less articulate in the jokes circulating in Iran, include the portrayal of Azerbaijanis as stubborn, jealous, and hot-tempered, with Azerbaijani women seen as hard-working and "high-maintenance."

40 Iranian humor is also aimed at other locations. Typical targets of jokes include the inhabitants of Esfahan for being greedy, while Qazvin has a reputation for ubiquitous homosexuality, the people of Abadan are said to be boastful, Arabs are described as sex-starved etc.

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 31 October 2017](#)

[...] Information also continues to be received on the discriminatory treatment of Sunni Muslims, members of the Yarsan community and Gonabadi dervishes. [...]

❖ [Radio Farda, Attacks On Jewish Synagogues In Shiraz Worries The Community, December 2017](#)

[...] In a joint statement Iranian American Jewish Federations in Los Angeles and New York have expressed their deep concern after two synagogues were attacked and vandalized in the city of Shiraz.

A statement released earlier this week by Susan Azizzadeh, the president of the Iranian American Jewish Federation (IAJF) in Los Angeles, and Robert Kahen, the president of the IAJF in New York, expressed a “deep concern” over the recent incidents.

The statement, a copy of which was received by Radio Farda, says, “In light of these clearly anti-Semitic incidents, we call upon the authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure the protection of all places of worship as well as all members of our community, and to bring the perpetrators of these criminal acts to justice.”

According to news reports, vandals broke into the Kenisa’eh Hadash (New Synagogue) on Sunday night, desecrated two Torah scrolls and prayer books, and destroyed furnishings. The damage was later discovered by three local Jews who came to pray. Iranian police are said to be investigating the incident. It is not clear who was behind the attack, Tablet reported.

The city’s Kashi Synagogue was attacked Sunday night, while the Hadash synagogue was attacked Monday afternoon, according to Sam Kermanian, senior adviser to the Iranian-American Jewish Federation, who has been in touch with Jews from Shiraz. The local Jewish community believes the attacks were committed by more than one person, but does not know who perpetrated them or why, Jewish News reported.

“Two sacred Torah scrolls were desecrated, torn and sacred books used for rituals were thrown into toilet”, an active member of Jewish community in Los Angeles, George Harounian told Radio Farda. [...]

❖ [Ahwaz Monitor Information Centre, From Melting Pot to Pressure Cooker: #IranProtests and the Ethnic Minorities, 16 January 2018](#)

[...] Iran is not just a political state, but a historic civilization that long has held up its ethnic diversity. However, the Persian majority dominates the country and discriminates socially and systematically against its minorities, particularly large segments such as Turks, Kurds, Baluch, and Arabs. The recent Iran protests have pushed these groups to their limits — and the breaking point may arrive soon. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2017/18, 22 February 2018](#)

[...] FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

[...] There were renewed concerns that hate crimes could be committed with impunity after two men who had admitted to killing Farang Amiri because of his Baha’i faith were released on bail in June. [...]

❖ [Asharq Al-Awsat, Iran: Protests in Ahwaz against Discrimination, 30 March 2018](#)

[...] Thousands of people took to the streets in Ahwaz Iranian province protesting what they called the Iranian authority’s marginalization of Iranians of Arab origin and its efforts to erase their Arab identity.

[...] The discontent grew after a video circulated on social media showing a number of young Arabs protesting against a play in Mashour city, after showing a man in Arab dress begging for money from another wearing a traditional costume of another national. [...]

[Societal discrimination in 2018 on linguistic grounds against groups whose native language was not Persian or against non-Shia persons](#)

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Ethnic minorities report political and socioeconomic discrimination, particularly in relation to economic aid, business licenses, university admissions, job opportunities, permission to publish books, and housing and land rights. [...]

❖ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: Innovating In Iran: Afghan Immigrant Wins Praise In Tehran, But 'Home' Still Beckons, 12 June 2018](#)

[...] They [Afghans] frequently face discrimination and resentment among other Iranians who blame them for joblessness and other social ills, and are thought to have been recruited by the hundreds for combat duty in nearby Syria, where Tehran ally President Bashar al-Assad has been waging a 7-year battle for survival. [...]

❖ [Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2018, 26 February 2019](#)

[...] Other religious minorities not recognized under the Constitution, such as Yaresan (Ahl-e Haq), were also persecuted for practising their faith and faced systematic discrimination, including in education and employment. [...]

Societal discrimination in 2019 on linguistic grounds against groups whose native language was not Persian or against non-Shia persons

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 July 2019](#)

[...] 53. Baha'i cemeteries have been desecrated and Baha'is have not been allowed to bury their dead in accordance with their religious laws. In some cases, the Special Rapporteur heard that wasteland had been designated by the authorities as Baha'i burial sites. The Special Rapporteur also received information on hateful speeches, school textbooks vilifying the Baha'i faith and statements made against the Baha'is, including by officials. In its comments, the Government attributed the closure of local cemeteries to population growth and urban development plans. Local cemeteries in Tehran and other major cities had been turned into parks and cultural buildings. The Government stated that the Baha'is had not been singled out for discrimination. [...]

❖ [OHCHR, Iran: UN expert says ethnic, religious minorities face discrimination, 22 October 2019](#)

[...] "I am concerned about the issue of incitement and hatred against minorities, and that the national legal framework does not provide adequate protections to ensure that such individuals do not face discrimination," [Javaid Rehman, the Special Rapporteur] said in his annual report to be presented on Wednesday. [...]

6.3.2. New omission in 2018 (compared to 2017), some omitted in 2019

When FGM/C occurred in 2018 it was usually performed on girls under the age of 10

❖ [State Secretariat for Migration \(formerly: Federal Office for Migration; Switzerland\), Focus Iran: Domestic Violence, 27 February 2019](#)

[...] Circumcision is usually done at a very young age: often already at the age of 40 days, in individual regions between three and six years, sometimes even later. The most common is type I, in which parts of the clitoris or the entire (visible) clitoris are removed; Type II cases are also documented in Hormozgan, in which additional parts or all of the inner labia are removed. The procedure is typically carried out by professional circumcisers, midwives, older family members and especially in the Kurdish provinces by Roma from Iraq - always by a woman.¹⁴¹ [...]

141 Stop FGM Middle East. Frankfurt a.M. Iran. S.A. [http://www.stopfgmmideast.org/countries/iran/\(27.02.2019\)/Ahmady,Kameel.S.L.The.politics.of.culture-female.genital.mutilation/cutting.in.Iran.In:Swift.Journal.of.Social.Sciences.and.Humanities.4:1.\(2018\),S.16,18](http://www.stopfgmmideast.org/countries/iran/(27.02.2019)/Ahmady,Kameel.S.L.The.politics.of.culture-female.genital.mutilation/cutting.in.Iran.In:Swift.Journal.of.Social.Sciences.and.Humanities.4:1.(2018),S.16,18). <http://www.swiftjournal.org/sjssh/pdf/2018/march/Kameel3.pdf>

(27.02.2019) / Ahmady, Kameel. London. A comprehensive re- search study on female genital mutilation / cutting (FGM/C) in Iran – 2015. S. 42.

Traditional midwives continued to perform approximately 98 percent of FGM/C in 2018

- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)
[...]FGM-C is usually practised by traditional midwives. [...] [p. 34]
- ❖ [Kameel Ahmady, The Politics of Culture-Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Iran, Swift Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Vol 4\(1\), 20 February 2018](#)
[...] Findings of the study revealed that the practice is usually performed by older women under the supervision of the mother/grandmothers of girls who believe that the procedure will increase women's attractiveness and marriageability.
[...] Another contributing factor to the perpetuation of FGM is the vested interest of the circumcisers who are available within each community and the financial rewards they receive from the practice is the only source of their livelihood. FGM in Iran is performed by three types of people: Roma groups, bibis (midwives) and family members (in practice older women). [...]

Information on "other coercive population control methods" in 2018

- ❖ [Open Democracy, Women's bodies have become a battleground in the fight for Iran's future, 29 August 2018](#)
[...] And so Bill 315 was passed by Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly on November 2015, by 289 men and nine women. With it, a new chapter in family planning began, with women's bodies positioned as a battleground in the fight for Iran's future. This legislation aims to boost population growth by encouraging early marriage and repeated childbearing. It does this in a number of ways that disempower women and give them less say over their bodies and therefore their lives [...]
The law mandates that all private and public entities give hiring priority, in sequence, to men with children, married men without children, and married women with children. Articles 10 and 16 prevent unmarried men and women from assuming teaching positions or obtaining licenses to practice family law. [...]

Information on "other coercive population control methods" in 2019

- ❖ [Radio Farda, Iran Officials Call For More Babies To Prevent A Shiite Decline, 25 November 2019](#)
[...] An Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander on Saturday told the female members of the Basij paramilitary force that families of the Guards and Basij should have "at least five children".
Commander Ali Fadavi's guidance reflects the deep concerns of Iran's religious and hardline establishment about the perceived decline in the country's young population and hence "Shiite soldiers" to fight for causes held dear for the Islamic Republic.
Addressing a gathering of female members of Basij, the paramilitary arm of the IRGC, Brigadier General Ali Fadavi said: "The country's population growth rate has become negative. This can have undesirable consequences. The women's Basij should be pioneers in this matter. We should have at least five children in the families of the IRGC and Basij members."
The Head of the Political, Ideological Organization of the Iranian army had claimed in August that "through cultural onslaught the enemies of Shiism are secretly trying to prevent the number of number of Shiites from rising" and said Iran needs "jihad makers, guards and defenders to maintain its existence, identity and investments."
The Iranian religious establishment is against population control plans for the same reason. In 2012, Ayatollah Jafar Sobhani, one of Iran's prominent religious leaders, criticized family planning and accused the Saudis and Wahabis of hatching a plot to replace the Shiite majority in all Iranian cities with Sunnis.
According to Iran's Health Minister Saeed Namaki's letter to Khamenei on November 9, the current total fertility rate (TFR) is 1.84 and "confirms the concerns of your learned highness." In his letter Namaki claimed that in 2016 the figure announced by the authorities had been manipulated and artificially increased to 2.1 to dispel the concerns about the drop in the rate of growth of the country's population.

Figures for the population growth rate offered by various Iranian authorities are not consistent and vary considerably. According to Iran's Statistical Center currently the population growth rate and the aging population growth rate stand at 1.24 and 3.62 respectively. Iran's population is 83 million now and has more than doubled in the 40 years since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

According to the same organization 24.6 percent of the population is under the age of 15 and 22 percent are between 15 and 29 years old. Only 6.4 percent of the population is above 65. However, the growth of the young population is negative at a rate of 3.24 while the aging population (over 60 years old) is growing at a rate of 3.62.

Hardliners accuse Dr. Mohammad-Jalal Abasi-Shavazi, a demography professor of Tehran University, and Dr Meymanat Hosseini Chavoshi, a demography researcher of the National University of Australia of manipulating the statistics on the total fertility rate (TFR) to make the population growth rate higher to deceive the Iranian authorities and prevent them from taking measures to deal with the low growth.

According to the IRGC affiliated Javan Online both academics who "have connections with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)" are currently under trial on security charges and are not allowed to leave the country.

Khamenei has repeatedly said Iran's population should be at least 150 million to avoid having an aging population.

Some Iranian hardliners allege that "the enemy" is acting through family planning activists and demography experts to "infiltrate" state bodies and with manipulated statistics create the illusion that the population growth rate is not at a worrying level at all. "Enemy" is a code name for the US, other western countries, Israel, and Saudi Arabia.

Iran's population grew very fast in the 1980s when the birth rate came close to 4 percent. Free contraceptive services were offered at governmental healthcare centers. Some Iranian clerics even issued religious edicts in favor of vasectomies. In 2012, under Khamenei's direct guidelines, the administration of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad outlawed voluntary sterilization and restricted access to contraceptives. Implementation of this policy has continued since then.

Iranian authorities encourage families to have more children at a time when the country's economy is facing dire problems. According to the latest report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Iran's economy is expected to shrink by 9.5 percent in 2019 due to U.S. sanctions. Inflation has now gone up to 40 percent and the official unemployment rate is more than 15 percent. Experts believe the real unemployment rate is much higher, since Iran counts one hour of work per week as employment. [...]

Estimates on maternal mortality and contraceptive prevalence in 2018

❖ [UNICEF, The State of the World's Children: 2017, December 2017](#)

[...] Maternal mortality ratio

[...] Reported (2011-2016): 25 x

[...] Lifetime risk of maternal death (2015) (1 in:) 2,000 [...]

❖ [Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018](#)

[...] "Girls under 15 and young women between 15 and 19 years of age face higher risk of death during delivery, respectively five and two folds greater than those women who deliver after 20," said Fereshteh Sarbazi, a member of the Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians. Sarbazi reiterated, "Teenage pregnancies mostly happen in rural and poor societies who are not educated. Although mothers under 19 years of age need more medical care during pregnancy, they do not have the opportunity to see a doctor since such marriages mostly take place in low income families. (The state-run ILNA news agency, August 29, 2017) [...]"

❖ [UNDP, Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018 Statistical Update, 2018](#)

[...] Table 8 Health outcomes [...]

Iran

Mortality rates – Female (Adult per 1,000 people): 2016: 61 [...]

Dashboard 3 Women's empowerment [...]

Iran

Reproductive health and family planning [...]

Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births): 2015: 25 [...]

Contraceptive prevalence, any method (% of married or in-union women of reproductive age, 15–49 years): 2007–2017: 77.4 [...]

Baluchi families reported in 2018 that those in prison were often pressured to remain silent and threatened with retaliation for speaking out about cases

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] Baluch rights activists claim that more than 70 per cent of Baluch live below the poverty line. They further claim that Baluch journalists and human rights activists are subject to arbitrary arrest, physical abuse and unfair trials; and that authorities pressure the families of detainees to remain silent, under threat of retaliation for speaking out about cases. [...]

Information on government financial assistance for individuals to undergo gender reassignment surgery; Evidence on whether health insurers cover such surgery costs; Information on government's efficiency and transparency in issuing new ID documents for those who have undergone reassignment surgery - all in 2018

❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)

[...] 3.98 Iran has recognised transgender individuals since 1987, when Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa declaring transsexuality to be in conformity with Islam. Authorities regard transsexuality as a disorder for which medical solutions are available, and permits hormone treatment and sexual reassignment surgery (SRS). The government provides financial assistance to undergo these treatments, and requires health insurers to cover the cost of SRS. Following a referral from a psychologist or psychiatrist, the Department of Forensic Psychiatry determines whether a person qualifies for such treatment. Only after SRS has been completed and their legal documents (including identity card, birth certificate and passport) adjusted is a person legally allowed to dress according to the opposite sex and to move into the spaces reserved for this sex. Authorities do not generally permit crossdressing because men or women dressing as the opposite sex reportedly represents a disruption to the social order. However, once an individual is diagnosed as suffering from gender dysphoria and agrees to undergo SRS, local authorities may issue them a permit to allow them to appear in public dressed as the opposite sex prior to the actual surgery. Post-surgery, transgender persons are advised to maintain discretion about their past due to stigma associated with being transgender.

3.99 No reliable information is available on the number of SRS operations occurring in Iran. A BBC report in 2014 quoted a doctor as claiming that he alone carried out more than 200 such operations every year. Human rights activists and NGOs have reported that authorities and families pressure many gay men and lesbians and other gender non-conforming individuals to undergo SRS to avoid the legal and social consequences of their sexual orientation or gender-identity ambiguity. Observers have also raised concerns about the quality of medical services offering SRS operations, citing reports of operations that have fallen short of international clinical standards and resulted in long-term health complications. Few legal remedies are available to those who endure botched operations. Despite the financial assistance provided by the government, the cost of SRS and hormone therapy is still beyond the means of many people. Those who do not undergo SRS are often abandoned by their families, and many resort to prostitution to survive. In addition to leaving them further vulnerable to abuse and harassment, transgender women who have not undergone SRS and are involved in prostitution including penetration are at risk of arrest and prosecution as homosexuals as they are deemed to be men. [...]

Information on government financial assistance for individuals to undergo gender reassignment surgery; Evidence on whether health insurers cover such surgery costs; Information on government's efficiency and transparency in issuing new ID documents for those who have undergone reassignment surgery - all in 2019

❖ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Secretary-General, 2 August 2019](#)

[...] 54. Legal and medical practices towards the LGBT community are also a concern. While domestic legislation does not prohibit a change of gender identity, it is viewed as a medical condition (gender identity disorder) addressed through sex reassignment surgery, supported by the State. The legal framework only provides the choice of either undertaking so-called “reparative therapy” to “cure” persons of their same-sex attraction or gender non-conformity, or undergoing sex reassignment surgery or sterilization. According to information received by OHCHR, sex reassignment surgery procedures are below international clinical standards and often result in medical complications. Information to patients of such therapies on the risks, benefits and validity of such procedures is not available. [...]

❖ [Al Bawaba, Number of Trans People Seeking Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran is on the Rise, 3 November 2019](#)

[...] Transgender people can even receive financial aid for transition surgeries in Iran. Grants range from \$1,200 up to \$7,000 or even \$12,000 for surgery. The State Welfare Organization of Iran says 3,000 people have applied for the stipend in the past several years or as many as 70 people a year. [...]

❖ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020 – Iran, 14 January 2020](#)

[...] Although Iran permits and subsidizes sex reassignment surgery for transgender people, no law prohibits discrimination against them. [...]

6.3.3. New omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

Girls committed suicide to escape early/forced marriages in 2019

❖ [The Observers, Rare video of underage marriage in Iran: the 'bride' is aged 11, 6 September 2019](#)

[...] Child brides are often victims of domestic violence. They can suffer severe psychologic problems too. Suicide rates among women – including self-immolation – are much higher in regions with a high rate of child marriage than in other parts of Iran. Many of the child brides run away from home. They suffer numerous health problems relating to sexual relations and pregnancy and miscarriage. [...]

❖ [Women Committee of Iran - National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\), 15-year-old girl commits suicide by self-immolation, 24 January 2020](#)

[...] Alireza Afroogh, Chief of the regime’s Health Network, announced the devastating news on January 11, 2020.

Under the mullahs’ misogynistic rule, the 15-year-old girl had been forced to marry. The stated cause of her self-immolation was “family problems.” She set herself ablaze in a village of Dishmuk in Kohgiluyeh and Boyerahmad Province, in southwestern Iran. (The state-run ILNA news agency – January 12, 2019)

“During the first 6 months of the Iranian year, 6 suicides occurred in the Dishmuk area,” Afroogh claimed.

However, the fact is that during the past 6 months, at least 11 women from the small city have set themselves on fire. (The state-run Rokna news agency – October 06, 2019)

A woman from Dishmuk says, “The women here are so badly beaten at home that they set themselves on fire. There are also many examples in the surrounding villages.”

Why do women and girls self-immolate?

Early marriage, domestic violence against women and girls, and poverty and deprivation appear to be the main reasons for self-immolation.

According to Mohammad Noroozi-Nia, Director of Dishmuk’s Department of Education said, “The rate of self-immolation in women in Dishmuk is high.”

He explained, “The main reason that girls in Dishmuk drop out of school is early marriage – which takes place when girls reach the age permitted by Shari’a law.” (The state-run Tabnak website – May 31, 2019)

Another shocking example of early marriage in Iran

Saeedeh, now 12, was forced to marry a 42-year-old man when she was only 10.

She had been a resident of Torbat-Heydarieh and was forced to get married because of her family’s poverty.

Saeedeh was married without a dowry, and her marriage loan was given to her father.

Because the 10-year-old girl could not tolerate the living conditions of marriage, she was forced to leave afterward. Now, at only 12 years of age, she is no longer welcome in her father's house. (The state-run ILNA website – January 21, 2020)

Early marriage is only one example of violence against women and girls. Child marriage has been institutionalized under the rules of the religious dictatorship.

It should be noted that a bill seeking to raise the age of marriage was rejected in the mullahs' parliament. [...]

7. Section 7. *Worker Rights*

7.3. Omissions

7.3.2. New omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017), all omitted in 2019

Dismissal of labor activists due to their trade union activities in 2018

- ❖ [Amnesty International, Urgent Action: Iranian Trade Unionist on Hunger Strike, 25 April 2018](#)
[...] For their legitimate trade union activities, workers' rights defenders have been sacked without justification or forced into early retirement; subjected to reprisals for peacefully protesting to claim unpaid wages; arbitrarily arrested and detained; and sentenced to long prison terms on spurious national security offences. [...]
- ❖ [Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018](#)
[...] Workers who engage in strikes (which nevertheless still occur periodically) are vulnerable to dismissal and arrest. Iranians do not have the right to collective bargaining, and workers are not protected by the right to mediation and arbitration. In June 2017, the judiciary imposed a travel ban on two prominent labour rights activists, preventing them from attending a session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva. [...]
- ❖ [HRANA \(Human Rights Activists News Agency\), Teachers' Association Sounds Call to General Strike on October 14th & 15th, 12 October 2018](#)
[...] Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA)- The Coordinating Council of Teachers Syndicates in Iran (CCTSI) has issued a statement critical of the Ministry of Education, drawing public attention to a trend of paltry compensation for teachers.
[...] The full text of their letter, translated into English by HRANA, is below:
[...] The security apparatus and judiciary, rather than pursuing those responsible for corruption and the robbery of our society, prefer to threaten, exile, fire, and imprison teachers who express their needs and pursue justice. [...]
- ❖ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Mounting Crackdown on Teachers, Labor Activists - Authorities Arrest Union Leaders, Threaten Strikers, 22 November 2018](#)
[...] Iranian authorities have increased targeting of teachers and labor activists in recent weeks for organizing and conducting peaceful protests, Human Rights Watch said today.
On November 13, 2018, the Council for Coordination among Teachers Unions organized a walkout involving dozens of teachers across Iran to protest their insufficient salaries due to high inflation and poor living conditions. It was the second teacher-organized walkout since September 21, when Iran's public school year began.
"Iranian authorities are punishing teachers and labor activists for exercising their collective bargaining rights and conducting peaceful protests that are essential freedoms for all workers," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "Authorities' recent talk of 'national unity and resistance against foreign pressure' are empty words when they throw educators and labor activists in jail for demanding a fair wage."

[...] Rasoul Bodaghi, a Teachers Union member who spent seven years in prison from 2009 to 2016 for his peaceful activism, told Human Rights Watch that authorities detained Khastar in the hospital without bringing charges.

[...] Bodaghi said that after his conviction, the Education Ministry expelled him from his teaching job. He filed an appeal after he served his sentence, and on May 30, 2018, he was told that he could only receive financial compensation for his tenure. [...]

❖ [UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Secretary-General, 8 February 2019](#)

[...] 53. Truck drivers have intermittently conducted strikes across many provinces since May 2018 protesting against low wages. While industry officials stated that the demands for higher wages were reasonable,¹¹⁹ other reports indicate that the authorities threatened drivers with revocation of their driving licences if they did not cease protesting. [...]

119 See www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1397/03/02/1733559/.

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 February 2019](#)

[...] E3. Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1 / 4
Iran does not permit the creation of labor unions; only state-sponsored labor councils are allowed. Labor rights groups have come under pressure in recent years, with key leaders and activists sentenced to prison on national security charges. Workers who engage in strikes are vulnerable to dismissal and arrest. [...]

Dismissal of labor activists due to their trade union activities in 2019

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Volume 6, April-May 2019, May 2019](#)

[...] In addition to the gathering of the Labor Day, workers in the municipality continued to protest in Khuzestan Province in the last two months. The main reason for workers' protests that took place with sit-ins was a delay in six to 18 months of wage payments. Workers of the Ahwaz Urban Railway Project also gathered in front of the project's Executor's Office in April this year. Authorities responded with the expulsion of six workers. [...]

❖ [Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights In Iran: A Zamaneh Project, Volume 7, June-July 2019, 9 August 2019](#)

[...] Esmail Bakhshi, a representative of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane workers, is still being held in prison.
[...] According to Haft Tappeh workers' report, factory directors under pressure from the security forces wanted to withhold Esmail Bakhshi's paycheck and were intending to dismiss him, canceling all his payroll and benefits. However, the factory directors faced yet another protest from the workers' side and decided not to execute the plan they had for Bakhshi.

[...] Preventing the Return to Work of Members of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company Union
Three workers who have been members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (SWTSBC) are facing obstacles caused by the Ministry of Labor authorities as well as Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company's authorities to return back to work.

Hassan Saeedi, Nasser Moharmazadeh, Hossein Karimi Sabzevar, Reza Shahabi and Farhanaz Shiri are five bus drivers and members of SWTSBC who have been dismissed and are not allowed to come back to work. Nasser Moharramzadeh, Hossein Karimi Sabzevar, and Farahnaz Shiri staged a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare on July 8th.

The director of Tehran's Labor Office had promised in May that conditions will be created for the return of Farahnaz Shiri to work. Ms. Shiri also has a back to work order from the Administrative Justice Court. However, the directors of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company still do not comply by such orders and continued to prevent fired workers from returning to work.

[...] On 22 June, the Sana Andisheh Company which was a contracting company working for Abadan Refinery and taking care of its hydro maintenance, dismissed 100 workers after the workers protested past due wage and benefit payments as well as work conditions. [...]

❖ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2019: Iran, 4 March 2020](#)

[...] Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1/4

Iran does not permit the creation of labor unions; only state-sponsored labor councils are allowed. Labor rights groups have come under pressure in recent years, with key leaders and activists sentenced to prison on national security charges. Workers who engage in strikes are vulnerable to dismissal and arrest. [...]