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Please direct any questions to: info@asylumresearchcentre.org

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• Producing country of origin information reports for UNHCR since 2012;
• Undertaking reviews of country reports for the UK Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration;
• Reviewing the content of UK Home Office Country Policy and Information Notes for the past eleven years;
• Reviewing country reports published by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) for the past seven years;
• Producing a series of five reports with our project partner Asylos, to fill gaps in information by combining desk-based research and interviews with a wide range of interlocutors;
• Developing and delivering COI training.

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Summary of Findings

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, 2019 and 2020. 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. This was increased to 56, 57 and 66 pages covering events in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively. Most significantly, the section most notably reduced in 2017, which continued in subsequent editions, was 6. *Women* in particular the subsection on *Reproductive Rights*.

Section headings

All the changes in section headings are presented in detail in *Table 1* below.

Numerous changes were made to section headings, with the majority being made from 2016 to 2017 and then replicated in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions. The most significant changes were:

- Replacing the whole subsection on *Reproductive Rights* in the 2016 report with a new subsection on *Coercion in Population Control* in the 2017 and subsequent editions, dramatically changing the range of issues addressed in the respective reports (see *D. Omissions* below for further details);

- Omitting the following subsections and related content from the 2017 and subsequent reports despite publicly available sources continuing to document the issues originally contained in these sections:
  - *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 thereby omitted from subsequent editions.
In addition, the 2019 report omitted the subsection on *Exile* previously found under section 2.d. *Freedom of Movement*, omitting contextual information. This was continued in the 2020 report.

Furthermore, the 2019 and 2020 reports 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 and 2020 editions, but moved to the *Executive Summary* and repeated elsewhere within section 2.d.

The 2020 report omitted further the subsections *g. Abuses in Internal Conflicts, Syria, Iraq and Child Soldiers* previously included in section 1. in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and *Yemen* previously included in 2018 and 2019. However, the content was kept in the 2020 edition but moved to section 1.a. and section 6.

In one section a heading title was condensed, potentially altering its perceived meaning. The 2016 edition contained the section 2. d. *Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons*. In all subsequent reports this was revised to *Freedom of Movement*. Given that this section continued to document issues including access to legal protections and services for refugees, it is considered that the heading no longer fully encompasses all the issues addressed. In 2019 and 2020 new numerical subsections *E. Internally Displaced Persons* and *F. Protection of Refugees* were added, which made this distinction clearer.

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, 2019 and 2020. However, there were also a number of notable changes to language observed in the 2020 report compared to previous editions. 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, 2019 and 2020 reports, followed by section 1. *Respect for the Integrity of the Person*.

Examples of softening of language, which may imply an improvement in the situation, included [emphasis added]:

- 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 and this was repeated in the 2020 report. Interestingly, all these descriptive changes occurred despite the content on prison conditions not having changed substantially in that section across all five 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: “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”. This sentence was removed from the 2020 edition;
- In 2018 it was noted that “Media and human rights groups also documented numerous suspicious deaths while in custody”. Interestingly in the 2019 and 2020 reports “numerous” was removed, possibly implying an improvement in 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 [emphasis added]:

- In the 2019 report a previously included specific statement was replaced with a more general one, compared to the 2016, 2017 and 2018 editions. This was repeated in the 2020 report. 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 and 2020 reports 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 “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” was omitted from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports. However in the 2020 report, this was replaced with statistics of the number of unreported rape cases noting “There were reports that approximately 80 percent of rape cases went unreported”

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 [emphasis added]:

- 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, 2019 and 2020 reports to “Little current data was available […] although older data and media reports suggested”;  
- In 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 “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 further noted that “Several teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentences”. Interestingly in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports 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 and 2020 reports, 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, 2019 and 2020 reports compared to the 2016 report. More contextual information, such as specific laws, that had been included in previous reports, were further omitted in the 2020 report.
For additional examples on the above findings see the respective Use of language sections presented below under the sections of the U.S. Department of State’s report.

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”;
- “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 and 2020 the categorisation was slightly amended again to “significant human rights issues”.

This is discussed further in section 8. Executive Summary.

Table 2 in the Appendix presents the changes in how the Executive Summary categorises human rights issues in Sudan in the 2016 report compared to the subsequent editions.

C. Improvements

One improvement in the human rights situation was observed in the 2017 report and repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020, which was found to be inconsistent 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.

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 and 2020 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 five reports being almost identical.

D. Omissions

The majority of omitted issues were observed comparing the 2017 report to the 2016 edition. Thirty nine 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, a further five omissions were observed in the 2019 report, and an additional eight omissions were observed in the 2020 report. In all but one of these instances, publicly available information continued to document the persistent existence of these issues.

Almost half of the omissions observed across the four 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 third 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, 2019 and 2020 reports. For further details see 1.3.1.

- 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 and 2020 reports). For further details see 1.3.1.

- 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 and 6.3.2. In March 2021 the U.S. Department of State noted that it “will release an addendum to each 2020 country report that expands the subsection on women in Section 6, entitled “Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons,” to include a broader range of issues related to reproductive rights”.\(^1\) At the time of finalising the review of the 2020 U.S. Department of State country reports, these addendum had not been published yet. As a result, the 2020 reviews did not include research or analysis on the subsection Coercion in Population Control.

- 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, 2019 and 2020 reports, thereby omitting any information on societal harassment and violence targeting LGBTI persons from those reports. For further information see 6.3.1.

- 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.

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:

\(^1\) U.S. Department of State, 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 30 March 2021, Preface, Announcement, Upcoming Addendum
• 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’s ability 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, 
2019 and 2020 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 and 2020 editions, 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, all of which continued to be 
omitted from the 2020 edition:

• 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 violating Iran’s strict moral code.

In the 2020 report, the following notable issues were omitted:

• The recruitment by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) of undocumented Afghans living 
in Iran to fight in Syria;
• The increased pressure against protesters demanding wage increases and payment of back wages 
through intimidation, wrongful arrests, and arbitrary charges;
• The continuation of new morality police units to manage what officials called “increasing 
defiance” of the compulsory hijab law;
• Reports of torture of Ahwazi detainees in the Intelligence Ministry detention center in Ahwaz.

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

For additional examples on the above findings see the respective Omissions sections presented below under 
the sections of the U.S. Department of State’s report.

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

Seventeen such omissions were observed in 2017, most of which continued to be omitted in 2018, 2019 and 2020 [words in bold indicate 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 and 2020 editions 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*. However, an additional issue was omitted from the 2020 *Executive Summary*, despite being reported on in the main body of the report:

- Overly restrictive nongovernmental organization laws.

This is discussed further in section 8, *Executive Summary*.

*Table 2* in the Appendix presents the changes in how the *Executive Summary* categorises human rights issues in Sudan in the 2016 report compared to the subsequent editions.
Findings by section of the report

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

1. Use of language

1.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018, most repeated in 2019 and 2020

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some prison facilities, including Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, <strong>were notorious</strong> 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</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, which was repeated in the 2020 report. Interestingly, all these description changes occurred despite section 1.c.’s content not having changed substantially with regards to prison and detention center conditions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prison conditions reportedly were <strong>often</strong> harsh and life threatening</td>
<td>Prison conditions were harsh and <strong>potentially</strong> life threatening</td>
<td>Prison conditions were harsh and life threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Note that the 2019 and 2020 reports implied a worsening of the situation]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, 2019 and 2020 editions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to the Constitution, the Supreme Leader may pardon or reduce the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from the head of the judiciary</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.1.2. Observations in 2018, all repeated in 2019, and some repeated in 2020

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

A source attribution is introduced for the following point in 2017, repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020 which may be read to undermine the veracity of information. Interestingly, the source attribution is changed in the 2020 report and the language is strengthened through the use of the word “consistently”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prison and Detention Center Conditions [...]</td>
<td>Prison and Detention Center Conditions [...]</td>
<td>Prison and Detention Center Conditions [...]</td>
<td>The United Nations and NGOs have consistently reported other unsafe and unsanitary detention conditions in prisons, including contaminated food, water shortages, intolerable heat, unsanitary living spaces, and overcrowding, and prisoners being forced to sleep on the floor with little bedding in intolerable heat, and poor ventilation in prisons throughout the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Conditions [...]</td>
<td>Physical Conditions [...]</td>
<td>Physical Conditions [...]</td>
<td>community and international media reported on frequent water shortages, intolerable heat, unsanitary living spaces, and poor ventilation in prisons throughout the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent water shortages, intolerable heat, unsanitary living spaces, and poor ventilation were regularly reported</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflict

A softening in language was also introduced in 2018, repeated in 2019, which may be read to undermine the veracity of information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This language was removed in the 2020 report – see 1.3.4.

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, 2019 and 2020 editions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under this method judges may find a person guilty based on their own “divine knowledge;” or they may issue more lenient sentences</td>
<td>Under this method judges may find a person guilty based on their own “divine knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.1.3. Observations in 2019, all repeated in 2020

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 the following two examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media and human rights groups also documented <strong>numerous</strong> suspicious deaths while in custody or following beatings of protesters by security forces throughout the year</td>
<td>Media and human rights groups also documented suspicious deaths while in custody or following beatings of protesters by security forces throughout the year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, which was repeated in the 2020 report. 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 and 2020 reports 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016, 2017 and 2018 reports [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2019 and 2020 reports [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The government made <strong>few attempts</strong> to investigate allegations of deaths that occurred after or during <strong>torture or other physical abuse</strong>, after denying detainees medical treatment</td>
<td>Administration [...] Authorities did not initiate credible investigations into allegations of inhuman or <strong>suspicious deaths</strong> in custody</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.4. Observations in 2020

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

It was observed that the following contextual information found in the 2019 (and 2017 and 2018) report was no longer included in the 2020 edition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 reports</th>
<th>2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to the previous law, capital punishment applied to similar offenses involving slightly more than 11 pounds of natural drugs or two-thirds of a pound of manufactured drugs</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflicts

A previous statement included in the 2019 edition was introduced in the 2020 report with “There continued to be reports of”, which may be read to undermine the veracity of the information:
The government directly supported the Assad regime in Syria

There continued to be reports the government directly supported the Assad regime in Syria

1.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person across the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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), most repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020

Ten issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. Nine of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2018 report and information was found documenting the existence of all of these. Eight of the original issues continued to be omitted from the 2019 and 2020 reports with information found documenting the existence of all of these in 2019 and five of these in 2020.

Green indicates issue reinserted. Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State 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: The respective 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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  2020

2. Example of family members being arrested for demanding justice for those who died in custody

2017  2018  2019  2020

1. b. Disappearance

3. “The government made no effort to prevent or investigate such acts [disappearances] and punish those responsible"
[Note: In the 2019 and 2020 reports this sentence was re-inserted]

2017 2018 2019 2020

[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 2020

[The sources identified relating to 2019 and 2020 did not specifically mention ‘sexual humiliation’ as a reported method of torture]

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

[Note: In the 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports the number of offences punishable by flogging were re-inserted]

2017 2018 2019 2020

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

6. “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 2020

[No publicly available information was found in 2020 amongst the sources consulted]

1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention / Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

7. “Corruption [...] remained problems within police forces”

[Note: The 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 2020
8. “[…]) 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 2020

[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; No publicly available information was found in 2020 amongst the sources consulted]

1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention / Amnesty

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

2017 2018 2019 2020

[Note: The 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions removed Amnesty as a subsection and any information in relation to current or past amnesty provisions as previously included in the 2016 report]

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 2020

[Limited information was found amongst the sources consulted in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 on determined verdicts in advance]

1.3.2. Omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016), most repeated in 2019 and 2020

Six issues documented in the 2017 report were omitted from the 2018 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence in five instances. Five issues continued to be omitted from the 2019 and 2020 reports, despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence in all instances in 2019 and in four instances in 2020.

Green indicates issue reinserted. Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State 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 2020
2. “Authorities carried out many executions in public”

2018  2019  2020

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  2020

[The sources located covering the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports 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]

1. a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings / Prison and Detention Center Conditions

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

[Note: In the 2019 and 2020 reports this sentence was re-inserted]

2018  2019  2020

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

5. “In some cases courts sentenced such individuals [dual Iranian nationals] to 10 years or more in prison”

2018  2019  2020

1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflicts

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

2018  2019  2020

[No publicly available information was found in 2020 amongst the sources consulted]

1.3.3. Omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016), all repeated in 2020
Three issues documented in the 2018 report were omitted from the 2019 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. All three issues continued to be omitted from the 2020 report 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 to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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

7. “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: This sentence was omitted in the 2019 and 2020 reports 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 2020

[Whilst the sources located in 2019 and 2020 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

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

2019 2020

[No publicly available information was found in 2020 amongst the sources consulted]

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

9. “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 2020

[The sources located do not specify whether these Basij units engaged in acts of repression ‘without formal guidance or supervision’]
1.3.4. Omissions in 2020

Two issues documented in the 2019 report were omitted from the 2020 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence.

Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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

1. “In a 2018 local media report, Asghar Jahangir, the country’s chief prison warden, estimated the total number of prisoners at a quarter of a million, a threefold increase in 20 years.”

2020

1.g Abuses in Internal Conflict

2. “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.”

2020

[The sources located do not specify that the recruitment was of thousands but shows the continuation of recruitment]
2. Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

2.1. Use of language

2.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020

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, 2019 and 2020 reports did not include such a statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The government had a mixed record in providing support for refugees, mostly from Afghanistan and some from Iraq</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.2. Observations in 2018, all repeated in 2019 and 2020

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. This was repeated in the 2019 and 2020 editions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Several teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentences</td>
<td>Several <strong>prominent</strong> teachers and union activists either remained in prison or were awaiting new sentences</td>
<td>Several prominent teachers and union activists remained in prison or awaited new sentences</td>
<td>Several prominent teachers and union activists remained in prison <strong>untried</strong> or if convicted awaited sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.3. Observations in 2019, all repeated in 2020

It was observed that the following contextual information found in the 2018 (and 2016 and 2017) report was no longer included in the 2019 and 2020 editions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016, 2017 and 2018 reports</th>
<th>2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exile</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law does not provide for forced exile abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1.4 Observations in 2020

2.a Freedom of Speech and / Academic Freedom and Cultural Events
It was observed that the following contextual information found in the 2019 report was no longer included in the 2020 edition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 report</th>
<th>2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council’s Committee for the Islamization of Universities passed an amendment to the country’s academic disciplinary regulations, according to which university students could be punished for engaging in online activities deemed as “unethical”</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.g Stateless persons

By changing the language in the following example, an improvement in the situation may be implied:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 report</th>
<th>2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authorities prohibited stateless persons from receiving formal government support or travel documents</td>
<td>Authorities did not issue formal government support or travel documents to stateless persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2. Improvements

2.2.1. Improvements in 2017 (compared to 2016), all repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020

The following improvement in the situation in 2017, and repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020, compared to 2016 was observed that was inconsistent with the situation as reported by other publicly available 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”

   [Note: The 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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”]

   2017  2018  2019  2020

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

2.2.2. Improvements in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable additional improvements observed in section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties across the 2018 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.
2.2.3. Improvements in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

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

2.2.4. Improvements in 2020 (compared to 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable additional improvements observed in section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties across the 2020 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, all repeated in 2018, most repeated in 2019 and 2020

Five issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence in all instances. All of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2018 report and information was found documenting the existence of all of these. Four of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2019 and 2020 reports and information was found documenting the existence of three of these in 2019 and two of these in 2020.

Green indicates issue reinserted. Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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

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

[Note: 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 and 2020 were re-inserted in the 2019 and 2020 reports]

   2017  2018  2019  2020

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

2. “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  2020
3. “RWB [Reporters Without Borders] reported there were more than 800 cases of censorship since the start of the year”

2017  2018  2019  2020

[Sources beyond the ‘Reporters Without Borders’ were located]

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

4. “Authorities in several provinces cancelled concerts they deemed “inappropriate” throughout the year”

2017  2018  2019  2020

[No such information was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2019 and 2020]

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  2020

[No such information was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2020]

2.3.2. Omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable additional omissions 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.

2.3.3. Omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016), all repeated in 2020

One issue documented in the previous three reports was omitted from the 2019 and 2020 editions despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. 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:

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  2020
[No specific information relating to the percentage of youth using the internet was found amongst the sources consulted in 2020]

2.3.4. Omissions in 2020 (compared to 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable additional omissions observed in section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties of the 2020 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.
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, 2019 and 2020

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

An example of softening of language was observed in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 editions that only “in certain instances” were winning candidates “arbitrarily” removed whilst the 2016 report included more of a bold statement as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The country’s electoral system continued to fall short of international standards for free, fair elections because of the Guardian Council’s <strong>preeminent</strong> roles in the political process, including determining which individuals could run for office, and removing elected candidates.</td>
<td>The country’s electoral system continued to fall short of international standards for free and fair elections because of the Guardian Council’s <strong>controlling</strong> role in the political process, including determining which individuals could run for office, and <strong>in certain instances, arbitrarily</strong> removing winning candidates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.2. Observations in 2018, all repeated in 2019 and 2020

An example of softening of language was observed in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports: 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 report</th>
<th>2018, 2019 and 2020 reports [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members of political parties and persons with any political affiliation that the regime deemed unacceptable faced harassment, violence, and sometimes imprisonment</td>
<td>Members of political parties and persons with any political affiliation that the regime deemed unacceptable faced harassment <strong>and sometimes</strong> violence and imprisonment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.3. Observations in 2019

There were no notable additional language observations made in section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process across the 2019 report.

3.1.4. Observations in 2020

3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

It was observed that distressing language was introduced in the 2020 report, in addition to a removal of an example, which may weaken the veracity of the information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 report</th>
<th>2020 report [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The supreme leader exerted significant influence over the activities of elected officials. For example, on November 17, according to press reports, the supreme leader’s office sent a letter to parliament urging members of parliament to end debate on fuel rationing and pricing, which spurred major countrywide protests two days earlier. Observers noted that the supreme leader’s public commentary on state policy exerted significant influence over the actions of elected officials.

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

It was observed that language describing the general electoral system in the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports was changed in the 2020 edition to specify this only applied to the parliamentary elections in 2020, rather than the system as a whole:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The country’s electoral system continued to fall short of international standards for free and fair elections</td>
<td><strong>Parliamentary elections held in February</strong> continued to fall short of international standards for free and fair elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process of the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports that were not reflective of the situation as reported by other sources.

3.3. Omissions

There were no notable omissions observed in section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process of the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

4.1. Use of language

4.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020

The 2016 report noted that “corruption was a serious and ubiquitous problem”. This was omitted in section 4. of the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions. Instead the 2017 Executive Summary described government corruption as “pervasive”, whilst it was described as “widespread” in the 2018, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summary. For further information about this observation see 8. Executive Summary.

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, 2019 and 2020 editions to “arbitrarily”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law <strong>effectively</strong></td>
<td>The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government implemented the law <strong>arbitrarily</strong>, sometimes pursuing apparently legitimate corruption cases against officials while bringing politically motivated charges against regime critics or political opponents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions no longer mentioned the regularity with which officials “engaged in corrupt practices” compared to the 2016 edition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officials in all branches of government frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity</strong></td>
<td>Most officials continued to engage in corrupt practices with impunity</td>
<td>Officials continued to engage in corrupt practices with impunity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2. 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. Observations in 2019

There were no notable additional language observations made in section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government across the 2019 report.

4.1.4. Observations in 2020

There were no notable additional language observations made in section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government across the 2018 report.
4.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government across the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports that were not reflective of the situation as reported by other publicly available sources.

4.3. Omissions

4.3.1. Omissions in 2017, all repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020

Two issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence.

Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State 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  2020

   [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: This subtitle and all of its content was removed from the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions. Therefore 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]

   2017  2018  2019  2020

4.3.2. Omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016)
There were no notable additional omissions observed in section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government of the 2018 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

4.3.3. Omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable additional omissions observed in section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government of the 2019 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

4.3.4. Omissions in 2020 (compared to 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable additional omissions observed in section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government of the 2020 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.
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, most repated in 2019 and 2020

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 and 2020 reports 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. This omission was repeated in the 2020 edition. Relevant documentation in relation to this UPR is available here.

5.1.2. Observations in 2018

There were no notable additional language changes observed in section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights across the 2018 report.

5.1.3. Observations in 2019

There were no notable additional language changes observed in section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights across the 2019 report.

5.1.4 Observations in 2020

There were no notable additional language changes observed in section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights across the 2020 report.

5.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in in section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights across the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.
5.3. Omissions

5.3.1. Omissions in 2017 (compared to 2016)

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 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

5.3.2. Omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016)

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

5.3.3. Omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

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

5.3.2. Omissions in 2020 (compared to 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016)

One issue documented in the 2019 report was omitted from the 2020 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document its existence.

Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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

1. “[...] He [UN Special Rapporteur] noted acts of intimidation and reprisals in detention, including torture and mistreatment, as well as reports of reprisals against human rights defenders and journalists for engaging the UNSR and cooperating with other UN mechanisms.”

2020

[Sources consulted were not restricted to the UN Special Rapporteur’s statement and applied to all UN statements]

6.1. Use of language


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. This was changed in the 2020 edition whereby it added the percentage of rape cases that went unreported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018 and 2019 reports</th>
<th>2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cases of rape were difficult to document due to nonreporting.</strong> 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. They also feared societal reprisal or ostracism.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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 in which conviction carries the death penalty. Rape victims also feared societal reprisal or ostracism. There were reports that approximately 80 percent of rape cases went unreported.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017 report</th>
<th>2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>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.</strong></td>
<td><strong>FGM was reportedly most common in Hormozgan Province and also practiced in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan province.</strong></td>
<td><strong>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.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. This was omitted entirely from the 2019 and 2020 reports. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[emphasis added]</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following contextual information was omitted from the 2017 report, re-inserted in 2018 and 2019 and removed again in the 2020 report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[emphasis added]</td>
<td>In 2016, 2017, 2018 [year relative to report year] UNICEF reported that 17 percent of girls in the country were married before reaching age 18</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Specific forms of discrimination against the Baluchi minority described in the 2016 report were removed in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 editions, as was the emphasis on the severity of such discriminatory practices suggesting an improvement in the situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[emphasis added]</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
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.


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The law limited Sunni Baluchis’ employment opportunities and political participation</td>
<td>According to activist reports, the law limited Sunni Baluchis’ employment opportunities and political participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, 2019 and 2020 editions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rape and Domestic Violence […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Census Bureau, the government agency responsible for data collection, does not permit international organizations to study domestic violence in the country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Exploitation of Children […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law prohibits all forms of pornography, including child pornography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early and Forced Marriage […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early and Forced Marriage […]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The law requires court approval for the marriage of boys younger than 15 years old

Early and Forced Marriage [...] Iran's 2011 national census recorded 11,289 married girls under the age of 18 had at least one child before their 15th birthdays

Persons with Disabilities [...] 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

6.1.2. Observations in 2018, most repeated in 2019 and 2020

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 and 2020 editions. By omitting such information, no specific attention is being raised to the efficacy of the respective legal provisions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017 report</th>
<th>2018 report</th>
<th>2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children [...]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse [...]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law does not directly address sexual molestation nor provide punishment for it</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children [...]</td>
<td>The law does not directly address sexual molestation nor provide punishment for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons with Disabilities [...]</td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The law generally prohibits discrimination by government actors against persons with disabilities but does not apply to private actors</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Removed]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.3. Observations in 2019, all repeated in 2020

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. This was repeated in the 2020 report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018 report</th>
<th>2019 and 2020 reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There were thousands of Afghan refugee children in the country, many of whom were born in Iran but could not obtain identity documents</td>
<td>[emphasis added]</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 and 2020 editions. By omitting such information, no specific attention is being raised to the severity of "corrective treatment" of LGBTI persons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2019 and 2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to a May report by 6Rang, the number of private and semigovernmental psychological and psychiatric clinics allegedly engaging in &quot;corrective treatment&quot; of LGBTI persons continued to grow during the 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.</td>
<td>According to a July report by the NGO 6Rang, the number of private and semigovernmental psychological and psychiatric clinics allegedly engaging in &quot;corrective treatment&quot; 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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1.4. Observations in 2020

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

It was observed that a language change from “can” to “may” constitute torture in the 2020 report may be read to undermine the veracity that forced anal or sodomy examinations constitute torture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 report [emphasis added]</th>
<th>2020 report [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Iranian LGBTI activist group 6Rang noted that individuals arrested under such conditions were traditionally subjected to forced anal or sodomy examinations—which the United Nations and World Health Organization stated can constitute torture—and other degrading treatment and sexual insults.</td>
<td>The Iranian LGBTI activist group 6Rang noted that individuals arrested under such conditions were traditionally subjected to forced anal or sodomy examinations—which the United Nations and World Health Organization stated may constitute torture—and other degrading treatment and sexual insults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons across the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

6.3. Omissions
6.3.1. Omissions in 2017, all repeated in 2018, most repeated in 2019 and 2020

Twenty two issues documented in the 2016 report were omitted from the 2017 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence in twenty instances. All of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2018 report and information was found documenting the existence of eighteen of these. Twenty one of the original issues continued to be omitted from the 2019 report and information was found documenting the existence of fifteen of these. In March 2021 the U.S. Department of State noted that it “will release an addendum to each 2020 country report that expands the subsection on women in Section 6, entitled “Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons,” to include a broader range of issues related to reproductive rights”. At the time of finalising the review of the 2020 U.S. Department of State country reports, these addendum had not been published yet. As a result, the 2020 reviews did not include research or analysis on the subsection Coercion in Population Control. Notwithstanding the above, out of the remaining nineteen issues which were not related to reproductive rights and omitted from the 2017 edition, all of them continued to be omitted from the 2020 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 to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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

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

2017  2018  2019  2020

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

6. Women / Other Harmful Traditional Practices

2. “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  2020

6. Women / Reproductive Rights

The whole section on ‘reproductive rights’ has been removed and replaced with ‘coercion in population control’ in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports. In March 2021 the U.S. Department of State noted that it “will release an addendum to each 2020 country report that expands the subsection on women in Section 6, entitled “Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons,” to include a broader range of issues related to reproductive rights”. The addendum is expected to cover “maternal health issues such as maternal mortality, government policy adversely affecting access to

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contraception, access to skilled healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth, access to emergency healthcare, and discrimination against women in accessing sexual and reproductive health care, including for sexually transmitted infections”. At the time of finalising the review of the 2020 U.S. Department of State country reports, these addendum had not been published yet. As a result, the 2020 reviews did not include research or analysis on the subsection Coercion in Population Control.

For the previous years (2017, 2018 and 2019), the removal means that the information on the following issues had been omitted:

3. “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]

4. “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]

5. “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]

6. **Women - Discrimination**

6. “The law […] "restricted women’s economic, social, political, academic, and cultural rights”

2017  2018  2019  2020

7. “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**”

[Note: The words in bold are those omitted in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports]

2017  2018  2019  2020

8. “and the ability of a woman to seek divorce was limited”

---

9. “Social and legal constraints limited women’s professional opportunities”

10. “The law requires a married woman to obtain her husband’s permission to work”

11. “The law does not provide that women and men must be paid equally for equal work”

12. “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”

13. “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”

[For the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, no relevant information could be located amongst the sources consulted]

6. Children / Education

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

[Statistics from 2019 and 2020 were not found amongst the list of sources consulted for both years]

Children - Early and Forced Marriage

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

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

[Statistics from 2018, 2019 and 2020 could not be found amongst the list of sources consulted]
National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

17. “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 2020

18. “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 2020

[For the year 2018 no relevant information could be located amongst the sources consulted]

19. “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”

[Note: The words in bold are those omitted in the 2017, 2018 and 2020 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 2020

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

2017 2018 2019 2020

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

21. “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 2020

[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’]

6. Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

22. “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”
6.3.2. Omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016), all repeated in 2019 and 2020

Five issues documented in the 2017 report were omitted from the 2018 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence. All of these issues continued to be omitted from the 2019 report and information was found documenting the existence of two of these. Whilst all five issues were also omitted from the 2020 report, no further research was undertaken for two of them as at the time of finalising the review of the 2020 U.S. Department of State country report, the planned addendum to each 2020 country report to “include a broader range of issues related to reproductive rights” had not been published yet.5 Notwithstanding the above, out of the remaining three issues which were not related to reproductive rights and omitted from the 2018 edition, all continued to be omitted from the 2020 report, but no information could be located for two of these amongst the sources consulted to verify or not its continued existence.

Green indicates issue reinserted. Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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

1. “Traditional midwives were said to perform approximately 98 percent of the mutilations”

   2018  2019  2020

   [The information found in 2018 did not specify the percentage of FGM/Cs performed by traditional midwives. No information was located covering 2019 and 2020]

6. Women / Coercion in Population Control

2. “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 respectively]


   2018  2019

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


4. "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 2020

[No information was found amongst the sources consulted for 2019 and 2020. Only one source was located amongst the list of sources consulted for 2018]

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

5. "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 2020

[No information was found amongst the sources consulted for 2018, 2019 and 2020 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. Omissions in 2019, all repeated in 2020

Two issues documented in the 2018, 2017 and 2016 reports were omitted from the 2019 and 2020 editions despite publicly available information continuing to document the existence of one of these issues in 2019 and both of these issues in 2020.

Years marked in red indicates where little or no information was found. Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

1. “UNSR Jahangir reported in March receiving reports of the continued discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, punishment, and denial of rights of LGBTI persons”

2019 2020

[No information was found amongst the sources consulted for 2019]
6.3.4 Omissions in 2020 (compared to 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016)

Three issues documented in the 2019 report were omitted from the 2020 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence.

Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

6. Women

1. “According to media reports in June, the government introduced 2,000 new morality police units to manage what officials called “increasing defiance” of the compulsory hijab law”.

2020

[Sources consulted were not restricted to the introduction of 2,000 new morality police units but the continuation of these units]


2. “UNSR Rehman stated in his July report concern regarding the reported persecution of Kurdish language teachers, including Zara Mohammadi, arrested and detained by authorities on May 23 for giving private Kurdish lessons without a permit in Sanandaj.”

2020

3. “Ahwazi human rights groups also reported instances of torture of detainees in the Intelligence Ministry detention center in Ahwaz.”

2020
7. Section 7. Worker Rights

7.1. Use of language

7.1.1. Observations in 2017, all repeated in 2018, 2019 and 2020

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016 report</th>
<th>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>According to media reports, 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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.1.2. Observations in 2018

There were no notable additional language changes observed in section 7. Worker Rights across the 2018 report.

7.1.3. Observations in 2019

There were no notable additional language changes observed in section 7. Worker Rights across the 2019 report.

7.1.4. Observations in 2020

7.b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

It was observed that language introduced in the 2019 report was removed from the 2020 edition and replaced with softening language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 report</th>
<th>2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penalties were not sufficient to deter violations [of forced or compulsory labor]</td>
<td>It was unclear whether penalties were commensurate with those prescribed for other analogous crimes such as kidnapping.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

It was observed that language introduced in the 2019 report was removed from the 2020 edition and replaced with softening language:
Penalties for violations [of child labor] were not sufficient to deter violations

Penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for other analogous, serious crimes, such as kidnapping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019 report</th>
<th>2020 report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penalties were not sufficient to deter violations [of unacceptable conditions of work]</td>
<td>Penalties were not commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

It was observed that language introduced in the 2019 report was removed from the 2020 edition and replaced with softening language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low wages, nonpayment of wages, and lack of job security due to contracting practices continued to contribute to strikes and protests, which occurred throughout the year</td>
<td>On June 2, a group of nurses protested after their temporary contracts were not renewed. While the Health Ministry had complained of a shortage of up to 100,000 nurses, health-care centers and hospitals increasingly took advantage of labor laws that allowed them to hire nurses with 87-day contracts, which were not renewed [...] In June health-care workers protested in several cities after hospitals failed to pay the government approved wages. None had received overtime pay or COVID-19 health benefits [...] In August workers in oil refining, petrochemicals and drilling industries continued to strike over working conditions and unpaid wages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2. Improvements

There were no notable improvements observed in section 7. Worker Rights across the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other 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 of the 2017 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

7.3.2. Omissions in 2018 (compared to 2017 and 2016), all repeated in 2019 and 2020
The following issue documented in 2017 was omitted from the 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports despite country information on this issue being located amongst the list of sources consulted.

Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

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  2020

7.3.3. Omissions in 2019 (compared to 2018, 2017 and 2016)

There were no notable omissions observed in section 7. Worker Rights of the 2019 report that were inconsistent with the situation on the ground as reported by other publicly available sources.

7.3.4. Omissions in 2020 (compared to 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016)

Two issues documented in the 2019 report were omitted from the 2020 edition despite publicly available information continuing to document their existence.

Illustrative information is presented to document the ongoing practice of each of these issues, available at the time of publication of the respective US Department of State report, in the Appendix of this report unless otherwise stated.

1. “According to local and international media reports, thousands of teachers, truckers, and workers from a wide variety of sectors held largescale, countrywide rallies and protests demanding wage increases and payment of back wages throughout the year.”

   2020

2. “During the year authorities increased pressure against these protesters through intimidation, wrongful arrests, and arbitrary charges.”

   2020
8. Executive Summary of US Department of State 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, 2019 and 2020 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. Department of State report. In three instances human rights issues were omitted from both the Executive Summary and the relevant section of the U.S. Department of State report despite continuing to be documented as occurring by other publicly available sources. Most of the observations ‘omissions’of human rights issues were related 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” which was repeated in the 2020 edition.

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, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 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, “outlawing of independent trade unions” in 2018 and 2019 and “significant restrictions on workers’ freedom of association” in 2020.

The 2016 human rights issue “harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities” was amended in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 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”. In the 2020 edition, “slander” was added to the list. 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 and 2020 Executive Summaries 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 five 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, thirteen of which in 2019 and twelve of which in 2020.

An additional human rights issue was omitted from the 2018 Executive Summary, which continued to be omitted from the 2019 and 2020 editions. This was considered to be internally inconsistent with the respective section of the 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports. An additional human rights issue was
omitted from the 2020 Executive Summary despite it being included in the respective section of the report.

As described above under Notable language changes compared to the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 five 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.

The following issue included in the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ Executive Summary under “most significant human rights (HR) problems” was omitted in the 2020 Executive Summary:

○ “overly restrictive nongovernmental organization laws”.

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, 2019 and 2020;

○ “Disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities […] unlawfully detained” for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020;

○ “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:


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, 2019 and 2020;

○ “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, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summaries [emphasis added for those words that were removed]:

○ “Arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado”;

○ “Denial of fair public trial”;  

○ “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, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summaries were:

○ “Academic freedom”;
Lastly, the 2016 list of other issues “There was also” omitted the following human rights issues from the four subsequent Executive Summaries:

- “Violence against women”;
- “Violence against ethnic and religious minorities” in 2017 and 2018 and the words in bold 2019 and 2020.

Interestingly, almost all of these omissions in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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.

These are all described by section of the U.S Department of State reports.

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, 2019 and 2020 reports’ Executive Summary. This was despite none of the four 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, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 reports’ Executive Summary despite all four reports continuing to document its occurrence in various sections. For example section 1.b. Disappearance in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 four 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 four 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 2019 and 2020 reports’ Executive Summary remained silent on this human rights abuse although in their sections 1.c. Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment and 1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention they continued to describe its occurrence.

The 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 four reports noted that “Authorities, however, held some detainees, at times incommunicado for days, weeks, or months [“for prolonged periods” in the 2019 and 2020 reports] without charge or trial and frequently denied them contact with family or timely access to legal representation”.

The respective 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summary did not mention the “denial of fair public trial” and the 2017 and 2018 reports’ Executive Summary did not mention the “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, 2019 and 2020 reports despite such information continuing to be featured in section 1.f. Arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence of these reports.

For example, the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 and 2020 reports 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, 2019 and 2020 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 four 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, 2019 and 2020 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.

The 2017 Executive Summary was the only one to add “refoulement of refugees” under its “most significant human rights issues”, despite the 2018, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summary. This is inconsistent with information included in these four U.S. Department of State reports at section 5., which is not suggesting an improvement of the situation to warrant being omitted from their Executive Summaries. The 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports’ Executive Summary included “overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws” as a significant human rights issue, which was omitted in the 2020 Executive Summary. This is inconsistent with the information in this U.S. Department of State report at section 5 which includes such information.

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, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summary despite various subsections in sections 5. and 6. in the four 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. In the 2020 Executive Summary, this was changed to only noting the “lack of meaningful investigation of and accountability for violence against women”. The 2019 and 2020 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 four reports to report on violence affecting these particular profiles. However, the fact that the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Executive Summaries focused on ‘government restrictions’ and the 2020 Executive Summary focused on the ‘lack of meaningful investigation of and accountability’ 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.

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. Interestingly, the 2018, 2019 and 2020 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 is a non-exhaustive list. To find out more about an organisation, view the ‘About Us’ tab of a source’s website.

Sources were consulted which documented events in the particular year and which were published in advance of the publication of the respective U.S. State Department report. Thus for 2017 issues, sources were consulted that reported the situation in 2017 that were published before 20 April 2018. For 2018 issues, sources were consulted that reported the situation in 2018 that were published before 13 March 2019. For 2019 issues, sources were consulted that reported the situation in 2019 that were published before 11 March 2020, and for 2020 issues, sources were consulted that reported the situation in 2020 that were published before 30 March 2021.

Databases
Asylos’s Research Notes
EASO COI Portal
European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI)
Relief Web
UNHCR Refworld

Media
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]
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 three 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, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020; sources were instead located that reported on the continued arrest of Afghan refugees without specifying whether or not they had the Amayesh card.

2. “According to the International Organization for Migration, from the beginning of the year to August, more than 219,254 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan, with *some* claiming they were pressured to leave [...]” in 2020.

The 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions indicated that “many” claimed they were pressured to leave, whilst the 2020 edition indicates an improvement whereby “some” claimed this.

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

3. “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, 2019 and 2020 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, 2019 and 2020.

Omissions

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

1.a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings
1. “As of November, the overall number of executions remained low in comparison with previous years, reportedly as a result of a 2017 amendment to the 1997 Law to Combat Drugs raising the threshold for the death penalty for drug-related offenses” in 2020.

2. “Terrorist groups also committed killings during the year” in 2020.


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

4. “NGOs reported that predominantly Shia prison guards tortured numerous Sunni Muslim prisoners at Ardabil Prison for their religious beliefs. Guards also reportedly retaliated against prisoners for “security issues” that occurred elsewhere in the country. According to reports, torture at Ardabil included severe beatings, being tied to flag poles for prolonged durations of time, and being forced to watch executions of fellow prisoners” in 2020.

1.c. Prison and Detention Center Conditions

5. “Refugee detainees were sometimes held in separate facilities and in some cases deported” in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

6. “There was no indication that authorities investigated the December 2018 death of political prisoner Vahid Sayyadi-Nasiri, who had been on hunger strike since October 2018 to protest conditions at Langroud Prison in Qom” in 2020.


1.c. Prison and Detention Center Conditions / Administration

8. “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, 2019 and 2020.

9. “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” in 2020.

10. “According to an October 24 report from CHRI, Evin Prison Director Gholamreza Ziaei appeared to target prisoners of conscience for denial of communication with family” in 2020.

11. “UNSR Jahangir reported that authorities sometimes threatened prisoners after accusing them of contacting her office” in 2020.

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

12. “[…] dual nationals generally faced a variety of due process violations, including […] brief trials during which they were not allowed access to evidence against them” in 2020.
13. “In some cases courts sentenced such individuals [dual Iranian nationals] to 10 years or more in prison” in 2018.

1.d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention / Political Prisoners and Detainees

14. “[…]and with criminals carrying contagious diseases such as HIV or hepatitis” in 2020.

1.g. Abuses in Internal Conflicts


2.a. Freedom of Speech and Press

16. “According to the Washington Post, the ministry temporarily stopped issuing permits to any foreign correspondents during the summer” in 2020.

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

17. “International NGOs reported that authorities forced several citizen journalists into internal exile during the year” in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

2.a. Freedom of Speech and Press / Censorship or Content Restrictions

18. “In July the Huffington Post reported that the government had set conditions for the BBC not to share reporting materials it gathered inside the country with BBC Persian, its Persian language channel. According to the report, the agreement was made in exchange for the government to allow a BBC correspondent into the country” in 2020.

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

19. “According to a HRANA report in September, authorities denied university admission to at least 22 Bahai students solely based on their religious affiliation despite they passed the national admissions test” in 2020.

20. “Authorities in several provinces cancelled concerts they deemed “inappropriate” throughout the year” in 2019 and 2020.

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

21. “[…] nor were there any government investigations into the forcible dispersal of February 2018 protests by the Gonabadi Sufi dervish community, during which security forces killed numerous dervishes. […] Dozens of members of the Gonabadi Sufi community remained imprisoned at year’s end” in 2020.

2.d. Freedom of Movement


2.d. Freedom of Movement / Protection of Refugees / Refoulement
23. “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” in 2020.

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


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


6. Women

27. “The government actively suppressed efforts to build awareness among women of their rights regarding marriage and divorce” in 2020.

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

28. “When the mutilation occurred, it was usually performed on girls under the age of 10” in 2017 and 2019 and 2020.

29. “Whether there were prosecutions for FGM/C during the year is unknown” in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

30. “Traditional midwives were said to perform approximately 98 percent of the mutilations” in 2019 and 2020.

6. Women / Coercion in Population Control

31. “Couples are entitled to reproductive healthcare, free from discrimination, coercion, and violence” in 2019.

32. “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.


6. Women / Discrimination
34. “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, 2019 and 2020.

6. Women

35. “Protests, beating, and arrests continued as security forces cracked down on peaceful nationwide protests against dress restrictions” in 2020.

36. “CHRI reported that since 2018 at least 44 women had been arrested for peacefully protesting the mandatory dress code” in 2020.

6. Children

37. “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 and 2020.

[Evidence was found amongst the sources consulted in 2020 that male juvenile detainees were held in separate juvenile rehabilitation centers]

6. Children / Child Abuse

38. “The law states, “Any form of abuse of children and juveniles that causes physical, psychological, or moral harm and threatens their physical or mental health is prohibited,” and such crimes carry a maximum sentence of three months in confinement or a fine of 10 million rials ($230)” in 2020. [Words highlighted in bold omitted]

39. “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, 2019 and 2020.

6. Children / Early and Forced Marriage

40. “In March 2018 former UNSR Jahangir stated this number was likely higher, as thousands of underage marriages were not reported” in 2020.

41. “NGOs reported that many girls committed suicide to escape such marriages” in 2017 and 2018.

42. “UNICEF’s state of the child report for 2015 estimates 3 percent of girls are married before the age of 15” in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

43. “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, 2019 and 2020.

6. Children / Education
44. “According to 2012 UN statistics, the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary school is 98 percent” in 2019 and 2020.


45. “According to the same UN report, in the first six months of the year, 115 Kurdish citizens were arrested for charges related to membership in Kurdish political parties and 84 for participating in civic activities such as organizing Nowruz celebrations or managing networks on social media” in 2020.

46. "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 2019 and 2020.

47. “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.

48. “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, 2019 and 2020.

49. “UNSR Rehman stated in his July report that there were 82 Azeris arbitrarily detained on national security-related charges with sentences of up to six years” in 2020.

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

50. “According to international and domestic media reports, there was at least one case during the year in which an alleged criminal was executed for sodomy-related charges” in 2020.

51. “There were active, unregistered LGBTI NGOs and activists in the country, a number of whom were arrested or charged for LGBTI-related activities during the year” in 2020. [Words highlighted in bold omitted]


6. Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

53. “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” in 2020.

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

54. “According to reports from international media and human rights organizations, truck drivers launched nationwide strikes over low and unpaid wages and stipends throughout the year” in 2020.
### 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

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**Edition Notes:**

- The 2019 edition no longer included such a separate subsection thereby omitting some of the previously included contextual information.

- New section e. Internally Displaced Persons
- [same as 2019 edition]

- Protection of Refugees
- [Changed to F. Protection of Refugees]
- [same as 2019 edition]

- New subsection Abuses of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons
- [same as 2019 edition]

- Access to Asylum
- [swapped place with Refoulement]

- Refoulement
- [swapped place with Access to Asylum]

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

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<td>✓ [same as 2017 edition]</td>
<td>✓ [same as 2017 edition]</td>
<td>✓ [same as 2017 edition]</td>
<td>Omission of link to the FGM/C subsection in Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Exploitation of Children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displaced Children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Child Abductions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Semitism</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficking in Persons</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons with Disabilities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Members of National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV and AIDS Social Stigma</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Societal Violence or Discrimination</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Omission of section in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and 2020 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 7.1.1. and 7.1.2.]

Section 7: Worker Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Acceptable Conditions of Work</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Comparative analysis of how the Iran Executive Summary categorises human rights issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>The government’s human rights record remained extremely poor and worsened in several key areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The most significant human rights (HR) problems were**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Human rights issues included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment, including hundreds of political prisoners;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significant human rights issues included**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Human rights issues included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment [...] hundreds of political prisoners;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Refoulement of refugees;**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Addition of political “detainees” in 2020**

**Observations**

- The 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020 reports did not make such an assessment in its Executive Summary 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”
- 2016 distinguished between “most significant”, “other human rights problems” and “of additional concern”, whilst the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 reports did not have such distinguishing paragraphs.
- 2018 report further omitted to include “the most significant” but instead included the assessment made above.
- Note that 2017 does not mention “systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment” although section 1.d. is the same for all three reports.
- All reports with the exception of the 2017 report omitted “refoulement of refugees” as a human rights issue.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Severe restrictions on civil liberties</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Although all continued to include such information in section 2.d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Severely restricted on civil liberties including 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; imprisonment of reporters, and of the internet which the government disrupted and censored, as well as on academic and cultural freedom; severe restrictions on the press, including censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws; severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws; severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including threats of violence, unjustified arrests and prosecutions against journalists, censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel and slander; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; 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; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

- Note that the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 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…’

- Severe restrictions on freedom of expression, including criminalization of libel; site blocking; and criminalization of libel.

- Substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws.

- Substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

- 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, continued 2020: 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.

- 2020 language change: addition of “slander”

- Minor language change observed: 2018 and 2019 reports, repeated
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other HR problems included</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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; executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of “most serious crimes” and without fair trials of individuals, including juvenile offenders;</td>
<td>[Note: 2018 and 2019 reports, continued 2020: 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] [In 2020 report, the number stays the same as 2019.]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2019 report, repeated 2020: 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

2020: Changed “severe restrictions” to “substantial interference” with regards to assembly rights and freedom of association

Omission 2020: “overly restrictive nongovernmental organization laws”

2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Omitted to include “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or
<p>| Treatment or punishment; and disregard for the physical integrity of persons, whom authorities arbitrarily and unlawfully detained, tortured, or killed. | and 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; | numerous reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings [...] and torture by government agents [...] systematic use of arbitrary detention and imprisonment [...] hundreds of political prisoners; | punishment” although such information continued to be included in section 1.c. [Note that some of what was included here in the 2016 report has been included elsewhere in the Executive Summary in the respective 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 Executive Summary section] and in the case of 2017 ‘arbitrary killing’ was included in section 1.a. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Other reported human rights problems included | X | X | X | X |
| politically motivated violence and repression; | X | X | X | X |
| disappearances; disappearances by government agents; forced disappearance; forced disappearance | forced disappearance | forced disappearance | forced disappearance | 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Omitted this human rights issue although such information continued to be included, especially in sections 1.b., 1.d., and 4. 2018, 2019 and 2020: Language change from ‘disappearance’ to specifying ‘forced disappearance’ |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restrictions on citizens’ ability to choose their government peacefully through free and fair elections.</th>
<th>Elections where the regime pre-selected the candidates and that otherwise did not meet international standards and severely limited political participation;</th>
<th>Restrictions on political participation; restrictions on political participation through arbitrary candidate vetting; restrictions on political participation through arbitrary candidate vetting;</th>
<th>Restrictions on political participation through arbitrary candidate vetting;</th>
<th>Note 2018, 2019 and 2020 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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Of additional concern were harsh and life-threatening conditions in detention facilities, including lengthy solitary confinement, with instances of deaths in custody.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: 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 Executive Summary 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 Executive Summary section in relation to impunity of security services for past abuses. This is repeated in 2020 report though it states “numerous suspicious deaths in custody”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also of concern were arbitrary arrest and lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado;</td>
<td>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Omitted to include “lengthy pretrial detention, sometimes incommunicado” although such information continued to be included in section 1.d.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continued impunity of the security forces;</td>
<td>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Omitted to include this human rights issue from the list of human rights issues although all reports included in the Executive Summary that “Impunity remained pervasive throughout all levels of the government and security forces” but in a separate paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denial of fair public trial;</td>
<td>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: Omitted to include “denial of fair public trial” although such information continued to be included in section 1.e.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the lack of an independent judiciary;</td>
<td>2017 &amp; 2018 reports: Omitted to include “lack of an independent judiciary” although such information continued to be included in section 1.e. Language change 2020: from “significant” to “serious”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence.</td>
<td>2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020: 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.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additionally there were severe restrictions on academic freedom;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restrictions on freedom of movement;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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; widespread corruption at all levels of government;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constraints on investigations by international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) into alleged violations of human rights;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal and societal discrimination.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was also</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Note: Separate sentence]</td>
<td>Criminalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) status or conduct; Crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting LGBTI persons;</td>
<td>Crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; Criminalization of LGBTI status or conduct;</td>
<td>Crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons; Criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual conduct;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2017, 2018 and 2019: 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. 2020 report: Significant language change/omission to “lack of meaningful investigation of and accountability for violence against women”. Focusing on lack of investigation rather than level of violence against women.

2020 report: Addition of “consensual same-sex sexual”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lastly, there were significant HR problems with trafficking in persons; and severe restrictions on the exercise of labor rights.</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe restrictions on independent trade unions.</td>
<td>Severe restrictions on independent trade unions.</td>
<td>Severe restrictions on independent trade unions.</td>
<td>Significant restrictions on workers’ freedom of association.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. 2020 report: Significant language change to “significant restrictions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>unlawful recruitment of child soldiers by government actors to support the Assad regime in Syria;</th>
<th>unlawful recruitment of child soldiers by government actors to support the Assad regime in Syria;</th>
<th>unlawful recruitment of child soldiers by government actors to support the Assad regime in Syria;</th>
<th>2017 report: Omission of such human rights issue despite section 1.g. reporting on exactly same situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

1.3.1 Omissions in 2017

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://wwwiranhrdcorgenglishnews/features3558internal-regulation-on-the-commission-of-article-90-of-the-constitution.html


- 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 Baqiyatalah 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

  
  [...] 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 Intelligence.34. 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. [...]
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. [...]
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 Raeesi, 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 Amleshi Rabbani, Montazeri’s wife, told the Center for Human Rights in Iran that Raeesi, the prosecutor in Iran’s Special Court of Clergy, played a role in her husband’s trial and arrest.

Raeesi 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. Raeesi 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.

Raeesi reportedly defended the August 2009 trial of Mohammad-Reza Ali-Zamani and Arash Rahmani pouir, 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. Raeesi 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**

  
  [...] Regarding 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. […]


- **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. […]

Abdorrahman 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 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. [...]

[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-hossein-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).


[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 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.”


❖ 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.”

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[...] 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. 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. 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.

[...] 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. 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 protestors’ heads and vital body organs.

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. [...]
Impunity in 2020 for past unlawful killings

- **Human Rights Watch, Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown, 25 February 2020**
  
  [...] Iranian authorities have failed to hold security forces accountable for excessive and unlawful use of lethal force in confronting large-scale protests that began on November 15, 2019, Human Rights Watch said today.
  
  Over three months later, the government has failed to announce the total number of deaths and arrests during the protests, which spread to many parts of the country over a week. [...]

- **Amnesty International, ‘They Shot Our Children’: Killings of Minors in Iran’s 2019 November Protests, 4 March 2020**
  
  [...] 1. Executive Summary
  
  [...] Amnesty International has uncovered evidence that at least 23 children were killed by Iranian security forces in the nationwide protests that took place between 15 and 19 November 2019. The children killed include 22 boys, aged between 12 and 17, and a girl reportedly aged between eight and 12.
  
  [...] On 25 February, Amnesty International wrote to Iran’s Minister of Interior Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli to provide him with the list of the names of the 23 children recorded as killed, along with their ages and places of death, and to seek the authorities’ comments on the circumstances of their death. As of 3 March, the organization had received no response.
  
  Consistent with a long-standing pattern of systematic impunity, the Iranian authorities have failed to conduct independent and impartial investigations into the killings of protesters and bystanders, including these children, in the November protests and ensure that those suspected of ordering and carrying them out are prosecuted in fair trials. In fact, the authorities have sought to enforce impunity and silence by orchestrating a ruthless campaign of harassment to intimidate families and prevent them from speaking out. [...]

- **Human Rights Watch, Iran: Prosecutions for Protests About Plane-Downing, 8 May 2020**
  
  [...] Iranian courts since late April 2020 have sentenced at least 13 people to prison terms, apparently solely for peacefully protesting the Iranian forces’ deadly attack on a civilian airliner and the government’s initial denial of responsibility, Human Rights Watch said today. The authorities should halt all prosecutions that violate the right to peaceful assembly and protest.
  
  Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) on January 8 shot down a Ukrainian civilian airliner, killing 176 passengers and crew. After initial denials, on January 11, the Armed Forces Central Command admitted that, following Iran’s retaliatory attacks against a United States base in Iraq, the IRGC forces had “mistakenly” shot down the passenger jet. Protests then broke out across the country. On January 14, Gholamhossein Esmaili, the judiciary spokesman, told reporters that about 30 people had been arrested in connection with the protests and that an unspecified number of people had been arrested in connection with the downing of the plane.
  
  “Iranian authorities are following their usual playbook of dodging accountability,” said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “While refusing to provide details about any investigation of culpability for the deadly mistake, judicial officials are wasting no time in sentencing people who protested the loss of 176 lives.”
On January 14, Iranian authorities pledged to investigate the attack, but they have yet to share any details about their investigations. They have also not granted other affected countries access to key evidence. On March 11, the head of Iran’s delegation to the International Civil Aviation Organization told Reuters that Iran “has agreed to send black boxes from a downed Ukrainian jetliner to Kiev for analysis” but Iran still has not surrendered them.

After a member of Parliament said on April 6 that “members of the armed forces have performed their duties” and that “there won’t be any prosecution,” Shokrallah Bahrami, the head of the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces, rejected that claim and said that at the time, one person remained in detention.

On several occasions officials from Canada, whose nationals constituted the majority of the victims, and other countries whose nationals were on board, have called on Iran to cooperate with multilateral investigative initiatives. Families of the victims have said that they are worried that the Covid-19 pandemic is slowing down any momentum toward justice for their loved ones.

“Instead of prosecuting those who exercised their right to free expression and peaceful assembly, the Iranian authorities should conduct a transparent investigation and cooperate with international bodies to find out exactly what happened in this tragedy,” Page said. […]

❖ Amnesty International, Iran: Details of 304 Deaths in Crackdown on November 2019 Protests, 20 May 2020

[...] This document contains the details of 304 men, women and children documented by Amnesty International as having been killed by Iran’s security forces during their crackdown on mass protests that erupted across Iran between 15 and 19 November 2019, following the government’s announcement about the significant overnight rise in the price of fuel.

The organization has found the security forces’ use of lethal force against the vast majority of those killed to be unlawful. In almost all protests that took place between 15 and 19 November, there is no evidence that people were in possession of firearms or that they posed an imminent threat to life that would have warranted the use of lethal force, according to extensive research, including video analysis, conducted by Amnesty International. The organization is aware of two exceptions in one city on 18 November where gunfire was exchanged between a number of protesters and security forces.

[...] Six months on from the protests, the devastated families of victims continue their struggle for truth and justice while facing intense harassment and intimidation from the authorities. Meanwhile, the authorities persist in their refusal to reveal the truth about the death toll; conduct thorough, independent and impartial criminal investigations; and bring to justice those responsible for ordering and carrying out these killings, which compounds the pain of victims’ relatives. In fact, the authorities have orchestrated a ruthless campaign to intimidate families and prevent them from speaking out, further entrenching impunity.

[...] State Denials and Cover-Up

Six months after the killings, Iranian authorities have still not issued an official death toll nor have launched credible investigations into the circumstances surrounding these deaths. […]

❖ Human Rights Watch, Victims of Iran-Afghan Border Drowning Deserve Justice, 28 May 2020

[...] Almost a month after reports emerged of the alleged drowning by Iranian border authorities of Afghan migrants attempting to cross the border into Iran, efforts to uncover the truth have achieved little.

At a May 26 meeting in Kabul, Iranian and Afghan officials vowed to jointly investigate the incident, but promises to uncover the truth have so far come to nothing. The victims’ families are still waiting for justice.

An Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission investigation found that Iranian authorities arrested the Afghan migrants while they were crossing the border from Herat province, beat them, and forced them into the Hariroud river. According to the head of the Afghan government’s fact-finding delegation, 46 Afghans entered Iranian territory, out of whom 12 were killed, 17 disappeared, and 17 survived. Other reports say 34 bodies have been recovered.

Families of three victims whose bodies were found on the Afghanistan side of the border told Human Rights Watch that the men had left for Iran on April 30, hoping to find work there. Survivors and a smuggler told the family members that Iran’s border authorities arrested the group of approximately
50 men and children, held them at a guard post overnight, beat and humiliated them, and ultimately forced them into the Hariroud river.

Iran has denied any responsibility for the alleged abuses and the deaths of these migrants, and said it is willing to cooperate with investigations. Iranian police, however, have a long history of abusing Afghan immigrants and refugees with no accountability.

[...] The drownings have sparked outrage in Afghanistan, while in Iran, several politicians have called for an investigation. It is still not clear how thorough the joint investigation will be, but strong cultural ties and a lengthy shared border with numerous border crossings should push the two countries to conduct a transparent, impartial investigation and hold those who are found responsible accountable. The families of victims are entitled to the truth and justice for their loved ones. [...]
direct contravention of its duty under law by ensuring that no actual autopsy was carried out. Video footage of security forces firing at the heads and vital organs of unarmed protesters is now widely available on the internet for the whole world to see. The authenticity of the footage has not been challenged. Yet government authorities have provided no information on any investigations into the deaths of any of the other protestors. Nor have they given any official figure for the number killed, despite dismissing casualty figures reported by other sources. These include those reported as ‘at least 304’ by Amnesty International and ‘about 1,500’ reportedly provided by three unnamed Interior Ministry officials to Reuters. [...]

❖ Justice for Iran, Mockery of justice: State’s policies and laws regarding the victims of Iran’s 2019 November protests, May 2020

[...] Introduction
[...] As documented by Justice for Iran (reviewing, geo-locating, verifying and analysing over 1,200 publicly available videos and corroborating them with the accounts of eyewitnesses and local activists) the incidents of the use of unlawful lethal forces took place in 39 cities, across 15 provinces.¹

Since then, Iranian authorities have been faced with the burning question of how to handle the situation. Hundreds of people have been killed in the streets, and both the public and the families of the victims demand answers. However, it is one thing to try to shape the public narrative by distorting the facts, manipulating the discussions and distracting attention; it is quite another to deal with the victims’ families who actively pursue justice for their loved ones. ¹

[...] Through unravelling the policies, laws and measures adopted, and examining how they were implemented in practice, the report confirms that the Iranian authorities (from the highest ranking, i.e. the Supreme Leader, down to local authorities) have been denying justice to the families of victims. The authorities have provided no answers to the victims’ families’ demands for truth and justice, and refused to identify and prosecute the perpetrators. In implementing the state policy approved by the Supreme Leader, the authorities have instead engaged in a sinister and systematic campaign of deception and coercion that ensures that there will be no truth, justice and accountability. ¹

[...] State Propaganda and Narrative Manipulation
[...] The use of lethal force has, however, been justified by claiming that such a level of force was necessary as the protesters posed a threat to property and life. Similarly, in January 2020, the Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, responded to DER SPIEGEL’S question in line with other officials, implying that the state’s use of lethal force was a necessary measure for maintaining order. He further stated, “You have to differentiate between those who are exercising their right to free speech and those who are looting shops and burning down gas stations. The security forces also have a responsibility for maintaining public order.”¹⁰

It must be noted that while the authorities have insisted on the lawfulness of their killings, often referring to the threats posed by the protestors, they have done so in general terms, or have referred to the threats posed to property, such as state-owned buildings and facilities. Such justifications fall far short of the extremely high threshold that international law and standards set in different international regulations, regarding the use of lethal force and violating right to life only if there is any imminent threat to the lives of others. Killing a protester who poses no imminent threat to life and may only damage a property is always unlawful. […]
UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020

II. November 2019 protests

Excessive force

Despite the credible evidence that excessive force by security forces had caused deaths and injuries, the Minister of Interior stated in a letter to Parliament on 18 May 2020 that “relevant supervisory bodies and authorities” had found that the Ministry of Interior had not been responsible “for any faults”. The reports have not been made public.

Lack of investigation and accountability

9. The Special Rapporteur’s deep concern at the Government’s denial of responsibility is exacerbated by a lack of transparent, independent and prompt investigations into the events of November 2019. Seven months on, official death and injury figures have still not been announced, although statements by officials have given an indication of the Government’s position. On 1 June 2020, the head of the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee said that 230 people had been killed, including six State security members. On 31 May 2020, remarks in an interview by the Minister of Interior indicated he believed 200 to 225 people had been killed. In its comments, the Government stated that casualty figures had not been released as precise investigations into the circumstances of each death were required.

Harassment of victims’ families

[...]

13. Further establishing the Government’s obstruction of a proper investigation are concerning reports that the families of victims are being harassed and threatened for having publicly demanded justice for their relatives’ deaths. A report concerning 23 families who had filed formal complaints for investigations into their relatives’ deaths found that none of them had been promised an investigation or that perpetrators would be held accountable. Furthermore, 10 of the 23 families reported that the authorities, including local government, judicial, police and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officials, had asked them to accept the compensation scheme’s martyrdom status and to consider the matter closed, without further investigation or prosecution of perpetrators. Nineteen other families who had not filed formal complaints had also reportedly been approached by authorities to accept martyrdom status without further investigation or accountability. Families of victims have reported that they consider the Government’s compensation plan to be a mechanism to persuade or coerce them into not pursuing cases that would investigate their relatives’ cause of death and hold perpetrators accountable.

II. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

...
B. Right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly

November 2019 protests

16. The Governor of Quds City admitted having ordered law enforcement to shoot at protestors. In its comments, the Government asserted that the order had aimed at ending illegal occupation of the Governor’s Office. In response to a question in an interview suggesting 1,000 people were killed in the protests, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated: “It was less than a third of that”. The authorities denied responsibility for the death of protestors, attributing the use of firearms to “rioters” and “agents of foreign enemies”, or justifying the use of lethal force by law enforcement by claiming the protestors had been armed. In a letter to Parliament on 18 May, the Ministry of Interior stated that it “had not been found responsible for any faults in any of the reports” by relevant supervisory bodies. However, on 30 May, the Minister recognized that “only 40 or 45 people, around 20 per cent of those killed, were shot with weapons not issued by the Government”.32

Lack of accountability and harassment of victims

23. The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at the reported lack of investigation by the Iranian authorities of widespread reports of excessive force during the November 2019 and January 2020 protests and at a lack of accountability for those who ordered and carried out these human rights violations. While the Government had set up a programme to compensate victims of the November 2019 protests,34 the measure did not constitute an independent investigation into the events or a mechanism to hold security forces and other officials accountable for the use of excessive force causing death and other serious violations (see CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, para. 15 and 18). In its comments, the Government stated that the purpose of the investigation was to provide compensation. The Secretary-General calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to undertake an independent and impartial investigation into all violations that took place in the context of the November 2019 and January 2020 protests, including the killing of protestors and ill-treatment in custody, and to hold those responsible accountable. [...] 

29 See www.spiegel.de/international/world/it-s-a-disaster-for-europe-to-be-so-subservient-to-the-u-s-s-a-fdf6a4d6-6b5f-4a10-860e-4c41f591a74b.

Amnesty International et al., Iran: Joint Call for States to Mandate a UN-Led Inquiry into the Serious Human Rights Violations, Including Enforced Disappearances, Torture and Unlawful Killings During and in the Aftermath of the November 2019 Protests In Iran, 9 September 2020

In November 2019, nationwide anti-establishment protests in Iran, triggered by a significant rise in the price of petrol, were met with a brutal campaign of mass repression by the Iranian authorities. Security forces used unlawful force, including live ammunition, birdshot, metal pellets, tear gas and water cannons against unarmed protestors and bystanders, killing hundreds and arresting thousands, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). These gross violations of human rights took place under the cover of an unprecedented week-long Internet shutdown imposed by the Iranian authorities.

Despite the UN High Commissioner’s call for “prompt, independent and impartial investigations into all violations that have taken place” and a similar call from ten UN Special Procedures, the Iranian authorities have failed to open investigations into allegations of crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed by police, security and intelligence agents and prison officials, with the complicity of Iran’s judiciary, and to take any steps to hold those responsible to account. Instead, high level officials have made statements praising security and intelligence bodies and the authorities have embarked on a campaign of mass repression and harassment to intimidate and silence victims and families of victims seeking truth, justice and redress.

As attention has been shifting to other issues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe it is important that this issue does not slip away from the Council’s attention. The succession of
atrocities in Iran is inextricably linked to the impunity that has led the authorities to believe that they can commit crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations without repercussions either domestically or from the international community. Therefore, promoting accountability is more essential than ever, not only to support victims and their families who are anguished at the lack of justice, truth and reparation, but also to provide a vital safeguard against the recurrence of such violations in the future. […]


❖ Human Rights Watch, Iran: No Justice for Bloody 2019 Crackdown, 17 November 2020

[...] Iranian authorities have failed to provide any real measure of accountability for the violent crackdown against widespread protests that began a year ago, Human Rights Watch said today.

[...] “One year after the November crackdown, Iranian authorities have avoided any measure of accountability and continue to harass the families of those killed during the protest,” said Tara Sepehri Far, Iran researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Families of hundreds of victims, most of them from the more vulnerable segments of Iranian society, deserve to see those responsible for the serious rights violations held accountable.”

[...] Through interviews with victims and witnesses, a review of photos and videos from the protests, and satellite imagery analysis, Human Rights Watch concluded that security forces used unlawful lethal force on at least three occasions across the country. The total number of such cases is most likely higher.

[...] According to Amnesty International, at least 304 people were killed. On June 1, Mojtaba Zonoor, the head of Iran’s parliamentary national security committee, put the number at 230. He claimed that the cause of death for 26 percent of cases was still unknown. The authorities have not published any detailed investigation or held anyone accountable for the alleged abuses.

[...] “Iranian authorities are systematically repressing efforts of those seeking justice for the bloody November crackdown,” Sepehri Far said. “Principled international actors should press Iranian authorities and take actions to make sure Iran can’t get away with such brutal repression.” […]

❖ Amnesty International, Iran: UN calls for accountability on 1988 prison massacres marks turning point in three-decade struggle, 9 December 2020

[...] Decades of crimes against humanity

Between late July and early September 1988, thousands of imprisoned political dissidents across Iran were forcibly disappeared and then extrajudicially executed in secret. For more than 30 years, the Iranian authorities have systematically concealed the circumstances surrounding their deaths and the whereabouts of their remains, thereby subjecting the victims, including those killed and their surviving families, to the crime of enforced disappearance.

[...] In their 18-page communication, which was first sent privately to the Iranian government on 3 September 2020, the UN experts state that they “are seriously concerned by the alleged continued refusal to disclose the fate and whereabouts” of these individuals.

[...] In their 18-page communication, which was first sent privately to the Iranian government on 3 September 2020, the UN experts state that they “are seriously concerned by the alleged continued refusal to disclose the fate and whereabouts” of these individuals.

They write that they “are further alarmed by the authorities’ refusal to provide families with accurate and complete death certificates, the destruction of mass graves, the ongoing threats and harassment of the families, the lack of investigation and prosecution for the killings, and the statements from the Government denying or trivializing the cases and equating criticizing the killings as support for terrorism.” […]
Human Rights Watch, Iran: No Justice for Victims of Downed Plane, 7 January 2021

[…] Iranian authorities have failed to conduct a transparent and credible investigation into the shooting down of Ukraine International Airline flight 752 on January 8, 2020, which killed all 176 passengers and crew onboard, Human Rights Watch said today.

Iranian authorities should commit to a genuinely transparent investigation and cooperate with international bodies to uncover the truth and provide the victims’ families with justice and appropriate redress. Families told Human Rights Watch that they continue to demand a fully transparent investigation and that all those responsible should be held to account.

“The families of the 176 victims of the downed jetliner are entitled to know who was responsible for the deaths of their loved ones,” said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch.

“The Iranian government should promptly pay adequate compensation to the families and carry out a transparent and impartial investigation with appropriate prosecutions regardless of position or rank.”

On January 3, 2020, a US drone strike in Iraq killed Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force, a branch of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. The killing was followed on January 8 by Iranian missile attacks against a US base in Iraq and the shooting down of the jetliner. After several initial denials, the Armed Forces Central Command admitted on January 11 that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had “mistakenly” shot down the passenger jet. Iranian authorities said that “human error” led to launching two surface-to-air missiles at the plane and announced that compensation would be provided to the victims’ families.

Human Rights Watch interviewed more than a dozen of the victims’ family members, who said that the authorities had not returned any valuables from their loved ones. The family members said the authorities had intimidated and harassed families to stop them from seeking justice outside of the authorities’ own judicial investigations.

[...] In June 2020, Gholamhossein Esmaili, the judiciary spokesperson, said that six people had been arrested in connection with the investigation into the crash. [...]
In a letter dated 29 May 2020 addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and others, Mr. Bakhtiari called for an international investigation into the November 2019 crackdown. In July 2020, he was arrested and transferred to a prison in Bandar Abbas. On 12 August 2020, he went on hunger strike to protest the denial of telephone contact with his ill mother. The Government stated that Mr. Bakhtiari had been released on bail on 1 December after appearing before an investigation authority. There is also concern regarding similar reports of harassment, including death threats, of relatives seeking justice for the victims of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, shot down by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on 8 January 2020. The Government denied harassing relatives, and said it was addressing the legal aspects and the issue of compensation for damages caused by the incident. 

46 www.radiozamaneh.com/526675.


[...] Iranian authorities continued to repress their own people. The country’s security and intelligence apparatus, in partnership with Iran’s judiciary, harshly cracked down on dissent, including through excessive and lethal force against protesters and reported abuse and torture in detention. President Rouhani and his administration have shown little inclination to curb or confront these serious rights violations perpetrated by Iran’s security agencies, while Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei continues to greenlight these rampant abuses. [...] Right to Peaceful Assembly and Expression

[...] In one of the most brutal crackdowns, in November 2019, security forces used excessive and unlawful lethal force against massive protests across the country, particularly against protesters blocking roads, or in some cases throwing stones and attempting to take over public buildings. [...] On June 1, Mojtaba Zonoor, the head of Iran’s parliamentary national security committee, said that 230 people had been killed during the protests. He claimed 7 percent of those killed died in direct confrontation with law enforcement and 16 percent in attacks against military places. Authorities have not published any detailed investigations into, or held anyone accountable for, these abuses. [...]
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. [...]
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

  
  [...] 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 Rahemipour 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. [...]
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. 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.
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”.
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]

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).

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 amputations, blinding and flogging as forms of punishment, 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]

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.

❖ 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. […]


[...] 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. [...]

- **Abdorrahman 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 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. [...] 

  
  [...] 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 [...]
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. Rezavaneh Mohammadali 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 Shahre 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 Mohammadali 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. [...]
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 on 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. [...] 


 [...] 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. [...] 

[...] 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]

[...] Sharq 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]


[...] 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. [...]
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. [...]
In addition to beating her, female prison officers conducted a physical examination. During the examination, the officers forced Mary to remove all her clothing, then repeatedly sit down and stand up. The officers had threatened to strip her forcibly if she did not remove her clothes herself. [...] 

❖ Iran News Update, Harrowing Report About Torture and Ill-Treatment in Southwestern Iran Prison, 10 December 2020

[...] What you are reading is a horrific report by eyewitnesses about the torture in Ward 1 of Sheiban Prison in Ahvaz city, in Iran’s southwestern Khuzestan province. Details provided by activists have been tallied by the human rights association No to Prison — No to Execution.

According to the report, the ward contains a solitary confinement section, set up to punish, harass, and torture inmates. Based on the prison officials’ request, prisoners who must endure more torture are transferred to this ward. Interrogators and guards practice physical and sexual torture against inmates in solitary confinement. Ward 1 is known as “prisoners’ exile” among inmates.

[...] “Torturers such as Lalehzar, Abdeveis, Zare, and Zolfaghari trample prisoners’ dignity with beatings, insults, and humiliating acts,” the prisoner added. Also, another prisoner said Abdol Hossein Gholam-Nejad, then-chief of Ahvaz Central Prison Protection and current chief of Sheiban Prison Protection, had directly targeted prisoners in April and injured several inmates.

Prison officials intentionally held inmates accused of murder and rape crimes with other prisoners in these solitary confinements. Moradi is one of the prison officials. One prisoner said that Moradi had personally raped an inmate in solitary confinement. Another report states that a prisoner with the acronym “A.A.” was subjected to sexual abuse in this ward. [...] 

❖ Iran Human Rights, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020, 30 March 2021

[...] Repression of the abolitionist movement
[...] Narges Mohammadi: New trumped-up charges

[...] On 27 February 2021, she released a video on social media explaining that she had been summoned to court twice in December, for a case that had been opened against her while she was still in prison. The activist, who is also the Vice-President of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders in Iran, stated that she was refusing to appear in court and would be disobeying any judgements made. In the video, she describes the sexual abuse and ill-treatment she herself and other women are subjected to in prisons and says authorities have still not responded to the complaint she made in this regard on 24 December. [...] 

❖ Iran Human Rights, Death Row Juvenile Offender Killed by Prison Guards, 2 April 2020

[...] According to IHR [Iran Human Rights] sources, following a riot in Mahabad prison due to the prisoners’ fear of Coronavirus spread in the prison, Danial and some others were sent to solitary confinement. He was beaten there and transferred to Miandoab prison, in West Azerbaijan province. In Miandoab prison, he was beaten again. [...] 

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The Government stated a pardon must be requested for it to be considered. Jafar Azimzadeh, a leader of the Free Union of Iranian Workers, remains detained after receiving a new 13-month prison sentence, upheld by an appeals court in August 2020.66 He has since been attacked by fellow prisoners, contracted COVID-19, been denied medical treatment, transferred prisons and been put in solitary confinement.67 The Government claimed his general health was good and that he had denied the attack claim. Esmail Abdi, an Iranian Teachers’ Trade Association member, was due for release in November 2020 after serving a five-year sentence on arbitrary national security charges for advocating for teachers’ and education rights.68 However, the authorities have revived a suspended 10-year sentence against him, related to labour rights activism.69 Mr. Abdi reportedly contracted COVID-1970 and is not receiving proper treatment for other conditions. The Government claimed that a prison clinic physician had recently examined him and had reported no specific health problem. [...]

69 70 www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/ua_iran_abdi_and_azimzadeh_130820_eng_intl.pdf.

UN OHCHR, Iran: Ahmadreza Djalali nearing death in solitary confinement, torture must end now, 18 March 2021

[...] UN human rights experts* today demanded that Iranian authorities immediately release arbitrarily detained Iranian-Swedish academic Ahmadreza Djalali who is reportedly in a critical condition and near death after months of prolonged solitary confinement.

“Djalali’s situation is truly horrific. He has been held in prolonged solitary confinement for over 100 days with the constant risk of his imminent execution laying over his head,” the experts said, adding that prison officials are shining bright lights in his small cell 24 hours a day to deprive him of sleep. [...] In November 2020, experts expressed alarm over Djalali’s imminent execution when he was abruptly taken into solitary confinement. Compounding that threat is the cruel and inhuman treatment by authorities, raising fears that, even if he is not executed, he may soon die in detention.

“There is only one word to describe the severe physical and psychological ill-treatment of Djalali, and that is torture,” the experts said. “We denounce the actions of the Iranian authorities in the strongest terms, as well as their complete inaction despite our constant calls for him to be immediately released. The allegations against him are completely baseless and he should be allowed to return to his family in Sweden as soon as possible,” they said.

The experts added that Djalali’s prolonged solitary confinement is emblematic of its systematic use to punish and pressurise detainees, including to make forced confessions. On 1 March, civil society activists filed a lawsuit against the Iranian authorities concerning the unlawful use of solitary confinement, and the UN experts reminded the Government that the practice violates its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

“Mr. Djalali’s situation is not an isolated incident in the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite limitations to the use of solitary confinement under domestic law. We urge the Iranian Government, parliament and judiciary to halt the use of solitary confinement as a form of punishment and to impose a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition,” the experts said [...]

[...]
Iran Human Rights, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020, 30 March 2021

[...] Torture during detention

[...] All death row prisoners IHR has been in contact with have testified that they were subjected to torture in order to confess to the crime they were charged with. This is not limited only to those with political or security-related charges. Almost all prisoners who were arrested for drug-related 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 extracted in detention have been the only evidence available for the judge to base his verdict upon [...] 

[...] Danial Zeinolabadini: Juvenile offender killed in custody

[...] Following a riot in Mahabad prison on 29 March, Danial Zeinolabadini, a juvenile offender on death row for a murder he allegedly committed when he was 17 years old, was sent to solitary confinement with others. There, he told his family when he called them on 31 March, he was beaten and transferred to Miandoab Prison where again, he was beaten. He could barely speak as he said he was dying and asked them for help. Two days later, his father received a call from prison authorities informing him that his son was dead.

While authorities claimed he had committed suicide, his bruised and injured body told its own story. Photos of Danial’s body were published by IHR [Iran Human Rights] as evidence (viewer discretion is advised).161 The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement the next day, calling on Iranian authorities to “Immediately conduct an independent and impartial investigation into Zeinolabadini’s death and hold those responsible to account.”162 According to his family, Danial did not commit the murder and had always maintained his innocence. There have been no investigations despite clear evidence of torture and, to date, nobody has been held accountable for Danial’s death. [...] 

161 https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4178/

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. [...] 

Abdorrahman 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 punish 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 Rahnavard, 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**
  [...] 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).

[...] 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


[...] 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. In 2011, Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh was also banned from practising law [...] 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. 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 Rahnavard 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 [...]

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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 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, penalties 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. [...] Outside 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. [...] The 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 [...] 

Police corruption in 2020

- **Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and trade (DFAT), DFAT Country Information Report Iran, 14 April 2020**
  
  [...] Corruption [...] 
  2.21 Despite Iran’s strong legal framework and some high-profile arrests and prosecutions (including a former prosecutor-general of Tehran), international observers report that corruption remains endemic. [...] 
  Local sources told DFAT that some law enforcement officials accept bribes, including in instances where an individual has breached moral codes of behaviour like consuming alcohol or attending mixed-gender parties. The GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal claims that a powerful system of political patronage, nepotism and cronyism pervades all sectors of the economy; irregular payments, bribes and the trading of favours are often required to obtain services, permits or public contracts; authorities do not effectively enforce anti-corruption laws in practice; and impunity is pervasive [...] 

- **GAN, Risk & Compliance Portal, Iran Corruption Report, Last updated: August 2020**
  
  [...] The Iranian police force carries a high risk of corruption, with systems of patronage and cronyism pervasive in overall law enforcement. [...] 

- **Article 19, Iran: Right to Know Day must mark commitment to transparency, 28 September 2020**
  
  [...] On International Day for Universal Access to Information, ARTICLE 19 renews its call on the Iranian authorities to review and revise the 2009 Publication and Free Access to Information Act (the Act) to bring it in line with international human rights standards. While we welcome the positive steps taken in clarifying the law’s provisions through ratification of directives, in its current form the Act fails to
promote genuine transparency. Much more must be done to ensure that the right to information for all, as an integral part of the right to freedom of expression, is fully guaranteed in Iran. “In recent years, pervasive corruption and a near total lack of transparency and accountability – among other things – has resulted in widespread discontent triggering nationwide protests. The people’s demand for transparency and an end to corruption is clear. It is high time for the Iranian authorities to improve the Free Information Act and to use it as a tool to ensure that people’s demands for transparency and accountability are fulfilled,” said Saloua Ghazouani, Director of ARTICLE19 Middle East and North Africa Programme.

- Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021
  [...] Key Developments in 2020
  [...] Political Rights
  [...] C Functioning of Government
  [...] C2 0-4 pts
  Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective? 0/4
  [...] Powerful actors involved in the economy, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and bonyads (endowed foundations), are above scrutiny in practice, and restrictions on the media and civil society activists prevent them from serving as independent watchdogs to ensure transparency and accountability.

Due process violations for dual nationals including brief trials and not being allowed access to evidence against them in 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. [...]
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. The Working Group pointed to findings of
arbitrary detention with respect to several cases 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. 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. 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.

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, 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, and highlighted most recently by a number of special procedure mandate holders in October 2017, 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. 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. […]

63 See, for example, opinions No. 7/2017, No. 28/2016, No. 44/2015 and No. 18/2013.
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. Ahmadreza 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; Xiuye 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 sentence 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]

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 Esfahani, 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 Esfahani 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 Mashahd, 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. [...]
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.

お互 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 Nasseri, 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. Nasseri’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


[...] 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 Xiuye 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 [...]

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- **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. [...]
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, Xiuyue 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. 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. [...] 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 [...]
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 comments alleging that the authorities were covering up the death in custody of a former client. In October 2018, he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment and 74 lashes. 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.
  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.
  [...]
  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. [...]
Pardoning of sentences of convicts in 2020

❖ **Amnesty International, Iran: Prisoner pardons welcome, but hundreds more who should be free remain jailed, 18 March 2020**

[...] Responding to the announcement by the Iranian authorities that pardons will be granted to prisoners convicted of “security” offences who have a five-year prison sentence or less, and that those who have been granted leave in recent weeks will not be returned to prison, Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Research and Advocacy Director, said: “Amnesty International welcomes the release of anyone detained as a prisoner of conscience, although they should not have been in prison in the first place.

[...] Earlier today, the Iranian authorities announced that prisoners jailed for “security” offences who have a five-year prison sentence or less will be granted pardons, and that those who have been granted leave in recent weeks will not have to return to prison. Many prisoners defined by the authorities as jailed for “security” offences are actually prisoners held for politically motivated reasons.

The announcement said the pardons were, in part, to mark the occasion of Nowrouz (the Iranian New Year), which falls on 20 March, and two Islamic religious holidays, and, in part, in light of the “sensitive situation” of the country, in apparent reference to the spread of the coronavirus in the country. In recent weeks, Iran has been granting prison leave after payment of bail, as authorities struggle to contain the spread of coronavirus, including in the country’s prisons. [...] 

❖ **Iran Human Rights, Iran: Political Prisoner Narges Mohammadi Released from Prison, 8 October 2020**

[...] According to ISNA, and quoting Esmail Sadeghi Niaraki, the Chief Justice of Zanjan Province, human rights activist, Narges Mohammadi was released from prison in Zanjan Central Prison.

In his speech, Niaraki said that Narges Mohammadi’s sentence was reduced and she was released from prison after applying new legislation aimed at sentence reductions.

Taghi Rahmani, Narges Mohammadi’s husband tweeted that Narges Mohammadi was released from Zanjan Prison at 3am.

Narges Mohammadi had been detained since 5 May 2015 and had served out her sentence in Evin and Zanjan Prisons. [...] 

❖ **Iran Human Rights, Iran Human Rights Defenders Report 2019/20, 12 November 2020**

[...] Civil Activists

[...] SHAHNAZ AKMALI

[...] Shahnaz was arrested on 15 January 2020 after surrendering herself to Evin Prison and was transferred to the women’s ward. She was furloughed from prison on 20 February 2020 due to the spread of COVID-19; on July 25, she was informed that she had been released early and would not be returning to prison.

[...] NARGES MOHAMMADI

[...] Narges was arrested again on 5 May 2015. On 18 May 2016, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced her to ten years imprisonment on the charge of “founding an illegal group” for Legam, five years for “assembly and collusion against national security”, a year for “propaganda against the system” for her interviews with international media and her March 2014 meeting with the EU’s then High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

[...] On 21 December 2019, Narges among others staged a peaceful sit-in against the state response to the November 2019 nationwide protests. On December 25, she was violently transferred to Zanjan Prison which she described in an open letter. On 8 October 2020, her husband Taghi Rahman tweeted that she had been released from prison at 3am that morning. She had been given 3 days leave over the last five years of her detention.

[...] Teachers

[...] MOHAMMAD HABIBI

[...] In August 2018, he was sentenced to seven years and six months in prison for “conspiracy against national security”, 18 months in prison for “propaganda against the system” and 74 lashes for “disturbing public order.”
Civil society groups have tried their best to secure Mohammad’s release. In the latest of these attempts, 15 Iranian teachers’ trade unions issued a statement in April 2020, demanding his immediate release. Not only was he not granted leave, but was also fired from his job as a teacher by the Ministry of Education.

Mohammad was released from prison on 10 November 2020.

Workers rights

MARZIEH AMIRI

She was arrested again when she went to seek information about the people arrested at the 2019 International Workers’ Day rally

Marzieh was convicted at a hearing held on 13 August 2019 at Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, presided by Judge Moghiseh, who refused to release her on bail. She was sentenced to 148 lashes, 10 years and six months in prison, of which she will have to serve 6 years. She was charged with “assembly and collusion against the system and disturbing public order”. The allegations were met with protests from members of the editorial board and the editor-in-chief of Shargh newspaper.

She was released on a bail of 1 billion Tomans on 26 October 2019. On 24 May 2020, her lawyer, Amir Raeisian told Shargh new agency that while Marzieh had received a summons to serve her sentence, at the behest of the judiciary, he had been orally informed that Marzieh’s sentence had been revoked and she would not be required to return to prison.

LEILA HOSSEINZADEH

Leila Hosseinzadeh was a student at the Faculty of Social Sciences and secretary of the Student Union Council of the University of Tehran. At the time of her arrest, she was completing her Master’s degree in anthropology. She was arrested outside her house on 1 January 2018 for taking part in the December 2017 protests at the university. After spending 16 days in solitary confinement and interrogations, she was released on bail pending trial.

On 7 March 2018, she was sentenced by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided by Judge Mashallah Ahmadzadeh, to five years in prison for assembly and collusion against national security, a year for propaganda against the system and a two-year ban on leaving the country after serving her sentence.

Her sentence was upheld by Branch 36 of the Court of Appeals. According to Article 134 of the IPC, she will have to serve 30 months in prison.

On 5 August 2019, Leila’s lawyer, Amir Rasæian tweeted that she had been transferred to the prison ward to serve her sentence. On 19 May 2020, he tweeted that due to an incurable disease, Leila had been deemed unable to serve her sentence, and that due to the illness, she had been included in the Norouz pardons list and her release papers issued.

On 24 June 2020, Mr Rasæian tweeted that “on 21 June, Leila was summoned to Branch 2 of the Security Court. At the arraignment, it was explained she was being charged with “disturbing prison order” and she was released on bail. Today, we were informed that an indictment has been issued for disturbing prison order, while Ms. Hosseinzadeh was released from prison due to an incurable illness.”

On 21 August 2020, she tweeted that her trial for the aforementioned with co-defendants Atena Daemi and Maryam Akbari-Monfared was due to take place on 31 August; there have been no updates to date and she remains free on bail.

NEDA NAJI

Neda Naji is an activist who was arrested during a International Workers’ Day rally in 2019, and transferred to Ward 209 of the Ministry of Intelligence in Evin Prison. After 45 days of interrogations, she was transferred to Qarchak Prison in Varamin on 15 June 2019. She was transferred from Qarchak Prison in Varamin to the women’s ward of Evin Prison on 7 August 2019.

Her trial, presided over by Judge Moghiseh, was held on 13 November 2019 in Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran. According to the verdict issued on December 4, Neda was sentenced to five years and six months imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion, propaganda against the system, disturbing public order and disobeying the orders of government officials.”

Neda Naji was furloughed on 27 February 2020. In a Twitter post on April 12, her husband, Jamal Ameli, wrote: “Today, we went to Evin Prison for a follow-up of Neda’s case, it was determined that Neda Naji has been granted amnesty according to the March 17 judicial section and since she’s already served a third of her sentence, she won’t be required to go back to prison.”

ATEFEH RANGRIZ
On 24 May 2020, her lawyer, Amir Raeisian told Shargh new agency that while Atefeh had received a summons to serve her sentence, at the behest of the judiciary, he had been orally informed that Atefeh’s sentence had been revoked and she would not be required to return to prison.¹¹⁸

RASOUL TALEB-MOGHADDAM

[...] Rasoul Taleb-Moghaddam is a workers rights activist and a member of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company Syndicate. He was also among those detained at the May Day Rally in 2019. On May 11, he was released from Evin Prison’s Ward 209 on a bail of 280 million Tomans.

[...] On 14 August 2019, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court headed by Judge Afshari sentenced Rasoul to two years in prison, two years exile in Afriz, a village in South Khorasan Province, 74 lashes, a two-year ban on using a smartphone and joining political and social parties and groups on charges of “propaganda against the system” and “disturbing public order.” Following the sentencing, Rasoul surrendered himself to Evin Prison on 1 June 2020 and was flogged 74 times almost immediately. He was released from prison the next day.¹²¹ [..]
presented by worker representatives at the 5 August meeting had rekindled protests in June 2020, including over unpaid wages, which had increased after the company’s 2016 privatization. The reported pardoning and release of Haft Tappeh workers Esmail Bakhshi, Mohammad Khonifar and Ali Nejati, and independent teachers’ union representative Mohammad Habibi, is positive. [...] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2021: Iran – Events of 2020, 13 January 2021

[... Right to Peaceful Assembly and Expression

[... On May 23, the media center of the judiciary reported that Ayatollah Khamanei had agreed to clemency or a reduction of prison sentences against several “national security convicts.” According to lawyers and family members, those included: Ismael Bakhshi, Ali Nejati, and Mohamad Khanifar, labor rights activists who participated in the Hafttappeh Sugar cane company labor strike in 2018; Marzieh Amiri, Atefeh Rangriz, and Neda Naj, activists arrested during the 2019 May Day protests in front of parliament; and Leila Hosseinzadeh and Soheil Aghaei, student activists.

[... Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Activists

[... On October 8, authorities released prominent human rights defender Narges Mohammadi after reducing her 10-year prison sentence to eight-and-a-half years.

[... Due Process Rights, Fair Trial Standards, and Torture in Prison

[... In April, after the country’s first confirmed cases of Covid-19 in early March, Iran’s judiciary announced that it had temporarily released or pardoned up to 100,000 prisoners and implemented measures to enable social distancing within prisons. Several human rights defenders, including Shahnaz Akmali, Masoud Kazemi, Abdolreza Kouhyayeh, and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroodi, were among those released under the judicial order. In many other cases, despite the health risks, authorities have refused to grant human rights defenders temporary releases. [...] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2021: Iran – Events of 2020, 13 January 2021

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. [...] 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 Houman 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 Mses. Hoda Amid, Najmeh Vahedi, Maryam Zzad, and Rezvaneh Mohammadi, and Messrs. Mostafa Daneshju, Payam Derafsh, 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. 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 […]

  [...] 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]

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. [...] 

Evidence the government continued to limit defendants’ right to have access to "government-held evidence" in 2020

- **UN OHCHR, UN experts demand Iran quash death sentences against protesters, 16 July 2020**

  [...] UN human rights experts today strongly condemned the decision to uphold death sentences against three men for participating in protests in November 2019. The three – Amir Hossein Moradi, Saeed Tamjidi, and Mohammad Rajabi – say they were tortured to make confessions, which were later used against them during unfair trials. [...] "From the outset, their arrest and detention and subsequent trial is replete with allegations of denial of their due process rights. In initial interrogations – during which they were subject to enforced disappearance and torture – they were denied the right to a lawyer. These violations continued at trial, where court-appointed lawyers for two of the men reportedly did not provide an adequate defence in the first trial, while chosen lawyers were not allowed to represent them in the Supreme Court and were blocked from accessing their case files during the trial," the experts said. [...] 

- **Amnesty International, Trampling Humanity: Mass Arrests,Disappearances and Torture Since Iran’s November 2019 Protests, 2 September 2020**

  [...] 6. Unfair Trials
  [...] 6.1 Denial of Access to Legal Counsel and Adequate Defence
  [...] Aref Zarei
  [...] Aref Zarei took part in protests in the area of Mali Abad in Shiraz, Fars province, with his family on the evening of 16 November 2019.
  [...] On 19 January 2020, Branch 101 of Criminal Court 2 in Shiraz sentenced him to four years’ imprisonment for “disturbing public order” and “destruction of government property”, increased to six years, six months and one day on appeal. The court verdict stated that because of his young age and the fact that he had “confessed” in detention, 18 months and one day of this sentence would be suspended for two years after he has served five years of the sentence.
  Both trials consisted of one session each.
  Despite Aref Zarei’s family having retained a lawyer on his behalf, he was denied legal representation throughout his entire pre-trial detention. Both courts also denied his independently chosen lawyer access to his case files and refused to allow him to represent Aref Zarei at trial because they insisted that he choose from a list of state-approved lawyers. His lawyer was only allowed access to his case files after the verdicts had been issued, when he needed them to submit appeals against the rulings.
  [...] Hossein Reyhani
  [...] Hossein Reyhani was arrested in a violent manner by Revolutionary Guards agents at his home in Eslamshahr, Tehran province, on 8 December 2019. He had attended the protests in the city weeks earlier in November 2019.
  [...] Amnesty International understands that Hossein Reyhani’s case was first referred for trial to the Revolutionary Court in Eslamshahr in early 2020, but that the court held that it lacked the jurisdiction to hear it, considering that it should instead be brought before the Criminal Court in Eslamshahr. The Supreme Court was subsequently asked to decide which court should try the case.
  In his letter, Hossein Reyhani said that, since his arrest, he had been tortured, denied access to any lawyer and had not been allowed to read his court documents. [...] 

- **Iran Human Rights, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020, 30 March 2021**

  [...] Executions related to protests
  [...] Executions in practice
  [...] Charges
  [...] Executions in 2020 based on charges
  [...] Navid Afkari: “They’re looking for necks to fill their nooses”
Navid Afkari was a 27-year-old plasterer and wrestler who had won medals in national competitions. He was arrested along with his two brothers, Vahid and Habib, a month and a half after taking part in the August 2018 protests in Shiraz and charged for the murder of a security guard at a government building who, according to case documents, was tasked with identifying protesters. In recordings of his trial published by IHR [Iran Human Rights] Navid can be heard defending himself and demanding to see the CCTV footage used as evidence against him.85

At risk of execution
Saeed Tamjidi, Amirhossein Moradi and Mohammad Rajabi
On 10 July, Saeed and Mohammad’s lawyer Mostafa Nili tweeted that his clients’ death sentences had been upheld by the Supreme Court, but he would be requesting a retrial as he had been denied access to the case and the opportunity to represent his clients.92

1.3.2. Omissions in 2018

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 [...]


  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. 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. [...]

Drug offenders continued to be executed without due process in 2019

- Abdorrahman 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. [...]
  [...] 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. [...]

  [...] 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. 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.

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;

- 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. 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. 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. 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.”

- 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. 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.” In many cases, the ‘confessions’ elicited during detention have been the only evidence submitted to judges to base their verdicts upon. 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.

- 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. Further, appeals can only be done in writing - meaning that the defendant and their lawyers cannot be present at the appeal.

Drug offenders continue to be executed without due process in 2020
II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

A. Death penalty, right to a fair trial and arbitrary detention

5. The Special Rapporteur remains deeply concerned at the high number of death sentences and executions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including for acts that do not amount to the “most serious crimes” and following unfair trials. The Human Rights Committee has consistently interpreted the most serious crimes as those involving intentional killing. Between 1 January and 1 December 2020, at least 233 people were reportedly executed; 18 of the executions were for drug-related charges and 11 for moharebeh (taking up arms to take lives or property or to create fear in the public) or efsad-e fel-arz (“corruption on Earth”). Executions carried out in violation of international human rights law after an unfair trial constitute arbitrary deprivation of life.

1 General comment No. 36 (2018), paras. 5 and 35.

UNOHCHR, Iran: UN experts alarmed over execution of Baloch minority prisoners, 4 February 2021

[...] The experts are also concerned that Dehghan’s execution is one of several recently carried out against prisoners from the Baloch minority in Iran. According to information received, at least 21 Balochi prisoners have been executed in Zahedan, Mashhad and Isfahan prisons since mid-December 2020. Many of those executed had been convicted on drug or national security charges, following flawed legal processes. 124 prisoners are reported to be on death row in Zahedan Central Prison alone, including for crimes not involving intentional killing.


[...] From arrest to proof of guilt
[...] Access to a lawyer
[...] However, none of the people sentenced to death, regardless of charges, which IHR has acquired information about, have had access to a lawyer in the initial phase after their arrest.
[...] Torture during detention
[...] All death row prisoners IHR has been in contact with have testified that they were subjected to torture in order to confess to the crime they were charged with. This is not limited only to those with political or security-related charges. Almost all prisoners who were arrested for drug-related 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 extracted in detention have been the only evidence available for the judge to base his verdict upon.
[...] Executions for drug-related charges in 2020
[...] According to reports gathered by IHR, at least 25 people were executed for drug-related offences in 2020. The past three years’ figures represent a 90% reduction compared to 2017. This shows that the amendments to the Anti-Narcotics Law which were enforced in November 2017 have, for three years in a row, led to a significant decrease in the number of executions for drug-related offences.

Some facts about the drug-related executions in 2020
- 25 people were executed
- Only 4 of the drug-related executions were announced by official sources
- Executions took place in 12 different provinces
- Ethnic minorities, particularly the Baluch, are overrepresented

Executions for drug-related charges were carried out over 9 months of the year. In 2020, drug-related executions were carried out across 12 different provinces. Executed on drug-related charges in 2020

Along with security charges, drug-related charges fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts which, as aforementioned, systematically deny defendants their right to due process and a fair trial. At least 25 executions were carried out for drug-related charges in 2020. Of the 25 executions recorded by IHR, Baluch ethnic minorities were overrepresented with 28% (7) executed in 2020, as highlighted below.
Three years after enforcement of the new amendments to the anti-narcotics law: the impact, the shortcomings and the future

A new amendment to Iran’s Anti-Narcotics Law came into force on 14 November 2017, leading to a significant drop in the number of drug-related executions from an average yearly 360 executions to an average of 27 executions per year in the last three years. [...] Another major shortcoming of the new amendment is that it does not address the issues of due process and fair trials. All drug-related offences are processed by the Revolutionary Courts. Reports collected by IHR demonstrate that those arrested for drug-related offences are systematically subjected to torture in the weeks following their arrest. [...] Trials at the Revolutionary Courts are typically very short, leaving no time for the lawyer to be of any use. [...]

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: [...]

145
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. During Iran’s second UPR, the Government did not accept recommendations to put an end to public executions. This has also been emphasised in the recent report of the current Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, Javaid Rehman.

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.

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]

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 Kazerun on 29 May in front of his house. He was hastily executed within three months. [...] 

[...] Information received by OHCHR indicates that at least 211 executions were carried out between 1 January and 10 October 2019, including 12 publicly. [...] Executions were carried out in public in 2020

- **Iran Human Rights, Iran 2020: 84 Executions in Less than Four Months / 33 During Coronavirus Pandemics, 24 April 2020**
  
  [...] Public executions in 2020
  No public execution has been reported so far in 2020. This is the first time since 2016 that no public executions are reported in the first four months of a year. [...]  

- **Iran Human Rights, Iran: Two Prisoners Hanged for “Corruption on Earth”, 4 May 2020**
  
  [...] Two prisoners sentenced to death on “corruption on earth” charges were hanged at Mashhad prison on April 28.
  According to the Iranian Khorasan daily, on Tuesday, April 28, two prisoners were executed at Mashhad central prison (also known as Vakilabad prison). The two unnamed men were supposed to be hanged in public but according to the report, they have been hanged in prison due to the Coronavirus epidemic.
  Executions in Iran have continued to be carried out even after the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in the country. [...]  

- **Iran Human Rights, Iran: Man hanged in Public at Firuraq City, 19 June 2020**
  
  [...] A man was hanged in public in the Iranian northwestern city of Firuraq on Thursday, June 11. This is the first recorded public execution in Iran in 2020.
  According to Azarbakhish website, on the morning of Thursday, June 11, 2020, a man was executed in public in the Iranian northwestern city of Firuraq, West Azerbaijan. He was sentenced to qisas (retribution in-kind) for killing his mother-in-law and brother-in-law. [...]  

- **Iran Human Rights, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020, 30 March 2021**
  
  [...] 2020 Annual report at a glance
  [...] 1 public execution, the lowest number in the last 15 years.
  [...] Introduction
  [...] According to the 2020 report, one person was publicly hanged in Iran. This is the lowest number of public executions in the last two decades. While reports indicate that the reduction was due to the COVID-19 pandemic rather than a change in policy, IHR [Iran Human Rights] and ECPM [Together Against the Death Penalty] welcome the decline and echo the voice of Iranian people by calling for the permanent eradication of public executions.
  [...] Public executions in 2020
  On 11 June 2020, a man was publicly executed in the Iranian north-western city of Firuraq, West Azerbaijan province. He was sentenced to qisas for killing his mother-in-law and brother-in-law. While his execution was reported by domestic media, his name was withheld.  
  With one public execution, 2020 so far holds the lowest number of public executions in more than a decade. We have no indication that the decline in the number of public executions is a result of policy change. However, there is evidence that executions have not been carried out publicly due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. According to a survey commissioned by IHR and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, more than 86% of the 20,000 participants living in Iran said that they oppose public executions.
  The number of public executions in 2020 was significantly lower due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. [...]  

 148 https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4288/  
 149 https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4230/  
 150 https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4458/  

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”. 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, 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. [...]

9 See International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6 (4).


[...] • 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)”. 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
[...] 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. 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 tomanis (US$8,800), with an average living cost of nearly 33 million tomanis. For rural families, the average annual income registered is just over 20 million tomanis (US$4,770). 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”. 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://fileserver.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 acids 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. 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 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.

Alternative punishments to the death penalty were applied in 2020

- UN General Assembly, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 5 August 2020
  [...] II. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran
  A. Death penalty and right to a fair trial
  [...] Execution of child offenders
  [...] The Government noted that, over the past years, many lives have been saved through the commutation of sentences, the imposition of alternative sentences and the provision of financial grants in support of diya (blood money) payments.
  [...] The Government noted that the new multidisciplinary working group on the prevention of capital punishment, established by the judiciary, seeks to encourage reconciliation.

  [...] 2020 Annual report at a glance
  [...] At least 662 prisoners sentenced to death for murder charges were forgiven by the families of the murder victims in 2020 (374 in 2019) – a significant increase compared to previous years.
  [...] The forgiveness movement
  According to the IPC [Islamic Penal Code], murder is punished by qisas, where the family of the victim can demand a retribution death sentence. But they can also demand diya (blood money) instead of a death sentence or can simply grant forgiveness.
  [...] 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 the execution numbers, not all forgiveness cases are reported by the Iranian media. Based on reports by the Iranian media and, to a lesser extent, through its own network inside Iran, IHR has identified 662 forgiveness cases in 2020, compared to 374 cases in 2019, 272 in 2018, 221 in 2017, 232 in 2016 and 262 in 2015. Thus, there is a growing trend for forgiveness.
  [...] In 2020, the 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 folds higher than the numbers presented in this report.
  The increasing trend of forgiveness in Iran correlates with a survey conducted in September 2020 showing the majority of people prefer alternative punishments to the qisas death penalty for murder victims. Iranian authorities assert that qisas is the right of the plaintiff (the victim’s family) and that most qisas executions take place upon the plaintiff’s request.
  However, when questioned about their preferred punishment if an immediate family member was murdered, only 21.5% of respondents chose qisas, while more than 50% preferred alternative punishments such as imprisonment.
  [...] Qisas and forgiveness: geographic distribution
  In 2020, IHR recorded forgiveness cases in 29 of the 31 provinces in Iran. In comparison, qisas death sentences were reported in 24 of the provinces. In most provinces, the number of forgiveness cases were higher than qisas executions.

143 https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4458/
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. [...] 

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.” [...] 

Courts sentenced dual Iranian nationals to 10 years or more in prison in 2020

- **Human Rights Watch, Iran Court Upholds Prison Sentence for Iranian-French Academic, 2 July 2020**
  
  [...] On June 30, an Iranian appeals court in Tehran upheld a five-year prison sentence against Fariba Adelkhah, an Iranian-French anthropologist at the Sciences Po university in Paris who has been detained for over a year. [...] 

- **UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020**
  
  [...] III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

  [...] Dual and foreign nationals

  [...] On 20 May 2020, Mr. Mossaheb, an Iranian-Austrian, was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment for espionage. [...] 

- **Amnesty International, Urgent Action: Austrian-Iranian Prisoner at Risk, 5 November 2020**
  
  [...] The health of Massud Mossaheb, a 73-year-old Austrian-Iranian dual national arbitrarily detained in Tehran’s Evin prison, is declining and his life may be at risk.
[...] On 27 April 2020, he was convicted of “espionage for Germany”, “collaborating with a hostile government”, in reference to Israel, and “receiving illicit funds” from both governments. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison. [...] Under Iran’s sentencing guidelines, he will be required to serve 10 years. [...] 

❖ Hengaw Human Rights Organization, Kurdish researcher Kamil Ahmadi sentenced to 8 years in prison, 13 December 2020
[...] According to a report received by Hengaw Human Rights Organization, Kamil Ahmadi, a Kurdish writer and researcher, has recently been sentenced to 8 years in prison by 15th Branch of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran on charges of "collaborating with the Hostile government( USA) ". Amir Raeesiyani, Kamil Ahmadi’s lawyer, confirmed this news in a tweet, and Kamil Ahmadi wrote in a post on his Facebook page: ” the main judicial point of accusations against my research is about the most damaging traditions against the children in the least privileged regions but the main goal is to accuse my researches’ relation with the cultural influence of 2030 document and halting my activities and researches regarding minorities.” [...] 

[...] II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran
[...] A. Death penalty, right to a fair trial and arbitrary detention
[...] Dual and foreign nationals
[...] The 10-year prison sentence of Mr. Mossaheb, an Austrian-Iranian national, was confirmed without a hearing by an appeals’ court in July 2020. 29


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 [...] 

[...] 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). 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. 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. 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 [...] 


- **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. Omissions in 2019 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 at the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary (GTCP), according to 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. [...] 


  [...] 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 Khosravanian’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. [...] 

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 2020

- **UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020**

  […] III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

  […] Child offender executions

  […] On 2 April 2020, Danial Zeinolabedini died of injuries received from beatings by officials in both Mahabad and Miandoab Prisons on 28 March 2020 following COVID-19-related riots.83 The Government stated that autopsy results contradicted those claims. He had been on death row for a murder he allegedly committed when he was 17 years old.84 [...] 


Danial Zeinolabedini: Juvenile offender killed in custody

Following a riot in Mahabad prison on 29 March, Danial Zeinolabedini, a juvenile offender on death row for a murder he allegedly committed when he was 17 years old, was sent to solitary confinement with others. There, he told his family when he called them on 31 March, he was beaten and transferred to Miandoab Prison where again, he was beaten. He could barely speak as he said he was dying and asked them for help. Two days later, his father received a call from prison authorities informing him that his son was dead.

While authorities claimed he had committed suicide, his bruised and injured body told its own story. Photos of Danial’s body were published by IHR [Iran Human Rights] as evidence (viewer discretion is advised). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement the next day, calling on Iranian authorities to “immediately conduct an independent and impartial investigation into Zeinolabedini’s death and hold those responsible to account.”

According to his family, Danial did not commit the murder and had always maintained his innocence. There have been no investigations despite clear evidence of torture and, to date, nobody has been held accountable for Danial’s death.

UNSR Jahangir reported in 2019 that authorities sometimes threatened prisoners after accusing them of contacting her office.

Journalists and media workers

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. […]

Basij units in 2020 engaged in repression of civilians accused of violating the country’s strict moral code, without formal guidance or supervision from superiors


[...] III. Situation of women and girls
[...] Women’s rights advocates
[...] 53. The police, Basij militia and vigilante morality police enforce compulsory veiling laws, with vigilante justice reportedly resulting in violence against women, including acid attacks and deaths. [...] Some official statements encourage attacks against women. [...]

[II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

[E. Prison conditions

[As of June 2020, prisons held 211,000 prisoners, 2.5 times above official capacity. Overcrowding has made social distancing impossible, especially following the return of furloughed prisoners since May 2020. The judiciary states that 95,000 prisoners were furloughed between 8 July and 25 August 2020. The Government stated that over 200,000 individuals had benefited from various temporary or permanent release policies over the previous eight months. [...]]


Evidence the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] continued to recruit undocumented Afghans living in Iran to fight in Syria, threatening forced deportation in some cases in 2020


[...] Afghanistan: Tier 3
[...] Protection
[...] Afghans continued to both voluntarily return and be deported from Iran and Pakistan, and traffickers abroad forced some Afghans into labor prior to their return or deportation.
[...] Trafficking profile
[...] The Iranian government and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps continue to force and coerce Afghan migrants, including children as young as 12 years old, to fight in Iranian-led and -funded Shia militias deployed to Syria by threatening them with arrest and deportation to Afghanistan. [...]

[Middle East Eye, 'Phantom force': Young Afghans fighting in Syria face uncertain future, 26 September 2020

[...] In 2014, when the war in Syria was at one of its most bitter points, the front lines of Aleppo, Hama, Daraa, Homs, Deir Ezzor and Palmyra were suddenly filling with hundreds, then thousands, of young Afghan men.

The Afghans, some as young as 14, were flown in from Iran, where they had lived as refugees. In Iran, these young men were told they were being sent to carry out their Islamic duty and protect the shrine of the granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad in Damascus.

After a quick visit to the shrine of Zaynab bint Ali, the men were immediately put on patrol in the capital or sent off to the front lines, where they were told they would be fighting the Islamic State (IS) group.

In reality, these young men from Afghanistan, who came to be known as the Liwa Fatemiyoun, or the Fatemiyoun Brigade, became a paramilitary force that Tehran would use to support its ally, President Bashar al-Assad.

In the years since, the graves of fallen Afghan fighters have been found in Syria and cities across Iran. But now that Assad’s place seems secure, and despite the fact that thousands of Afghans have been promised residency in Iran in exchange for their service, the Fatemiyoun has yet to be disbanded and its future remains unclear. [...]

[Iran International, Iran Offers Militia To Afghan Government, Claiming They Were 'Volunteers' In Syria, 22 December 2020

[...] Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian foreign minister has reiterated his suggestion that the beleaguered Afghan government of President Ashraf Ghani could utilize members of the Fatemiyoun militia, recruited by Iran to fight in Syria.

[...] Liwa Fatemiyoun, or Fatemiyoun Brigade, is a militia recruited by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) since 2014 from Shia Afghans living in Iran to fight in Syria alongside government forces. The Fatemiyoun Brigade has thousands of battle-hardened militiamen. The group has said 2,000 of its fighters were killed and 8,000 wounded in Syria by the end of 2017. In the]
interview, Zarif said fewer than 2,000 remained in Syria with most returning to “normal life” in Iran or elsewhere. [...] 

❖ **Anadolu Agency, Fatemiyoun, refugees trouble Iran-Afghanistan relations, 24 December 2020**

[...] Fatemiyoun militia

Zarif, in the course of the interview, also spoke about the Iran-backed Afghan Fatemiyoun militia fighting in Syria, maintaining that they chose to fight “voluntarily”.

He said Iran helped in the formation of the "anti-Daesh front" in Syria, which included fighters from many countries, including Afghanistan.

While the claim of Fatemiyoun fighters opting to fight voluntarily in Syria has often been contested by Afghan officials and human rights activists, the suggestion of "regrouping" the militia in Afghanistan in the fight against Daesh/ISIS apparently didn’t go well in Kabul.

This suggestion has previously been made by other officials in Iran, who see the emergence of the Daesh/ISIS terror group in the neighborhood detrimental to the regional peace and security.

For Afghan officials, however, the issue of Afghan nationals being recruited to fight in a war far away from their homeland is emotional and the idea of regrouping the militia fighters in the fight against Daesh/ISIS inside Afghanistan also seems to have few takers in the country.

The issue of Fatemiyoun has figured prominently in talks between the officials of the two countries in recent years. While Iran has maintained that the militia fighters chose to “fight voluntarily”, Afghan officials have protested it.

With the war waning in Syria now, majority of these fighters have returned to normal life.

According to rough estimates, around 2,000 Fatemiyoun fighters were killed in Syria. [...] 

❖ **Diyaruna, Soleimani’s ghost still haunt s Afghan youth lured into Iranian militias, 25 December 2020**

[...] The Fatemiyoun militia, founded by the slain Iranian commander, still recruits impoverished Afghan immigrants, many of whom die fighting while others face the reality of Tehran’s broken promises.

[...]Soleimani, former head of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF), was killed in a US drone attack on January 3 in Baghdad, but the Fatemiyoun Division, a pro-Iran militia that he founded, lives on, sending ill-trained, ill-equipped Afghan recruits to combat in Syria and other proxy war frontlines.

Evidence shows that the Fatemiyoun preys on impoverished Afghans working in Iran who are desperate to support their families, and now observers say the militia has become a serious threat to Afghanistan and the region.

Although the IRGC does not release casualty figures for Fatemiyoun, thousands of Afghan migrants have presumably died fighting proxy wars for Tehran. 

[...] Many Afghan recruits join the Fatemiyoun Division in exchange for promises of Iranian citizenship, benefits and a monthly payment to their families in addition to the monthly salary they receive as militia members.

Those lavish promises, Fatemiyoun veterans and relatives of dead Fatemiyoun members have complained, seldom come true.

"Iranian authorities have continued to recruit Afghan youths to Fatemiyoun, and these young people, because of their desperation, have proven to be useful manpower for Tehran," said Abdul Qader Kamel, a political analyst in Herat.

"The Iranian government wants to keep Fatemiyoun as a combat force and use it in any countries where it needs to fight," he added. "Therefore, the recruitment and training of Fatemiyoun members have not ceased."

[...] A Fatemiyoun recruitment centre in Yazd Province, Iran, encourages young Afghans to join the militia, said Muhammad Idris, a resident of Helmand Province and a recent deportee from Iran.

"Iranian forces promise Afghan youths a residence permit and a place to live in Iran," he said. "They also promise to support their families permanently if they [the youths] go to war in Syria."

The elusive residence permit supposedly becomes available to Fatemiyoun veterans if they serve in Syria for three months, said Idris.

The IRGC promises to bury the militia members in Syria if they are killed in combat, he added. [...] 

❖ **Tolo News, Fatemiyoun: Iran’s ‘Good Taliban’, 7 February 2021**
The Fatemiyoun Division, also known as the Fatemiyoun Brigade, or Liwa-e-Fatemiyoun, is an Iran-backed Afghan shi’a militia group that has been active in Syria since 2013/14. The Fatemiyoun Division is primarily composed of second-generation Afghan refugees living in Iran. An estimated 20,000-strong force at the peak of the Syrian conflict, the Fatemiyoun had an estimated 50,000 members in total across the nine-year conflict.

The reason why Afghan refugees in Iran join the Fatemiyoun is to increase their social status. The refugees, mostly shi’a, whose presence in Iran as a sizable community goes back almost four decades, suffer from marginalization, economic and social deprivation, and systemic racism. The Fatemiyoun provides an opportunity to gain social status and financial and legal rewards. After joining the Fatemiyoun, these Afghans receive a barga taraddod (transit slip), which allows them to move around Iran freely between deployments. They also receive an iqama (residency permit), which is valid for one year and is renewable annually for up to ten years. The families of fallen fighters continue to receive monthly pay and the annually-renewable iqama. Those Fatemiyoun members killed in Syria are buried in high-profile graveyards in Qom, a holy city in shi’a Islam, and senior Iranian religious figures—including the Supreme Leader—visit their graves, receive their families and honor their ‘sacrifice.’ While the Iranian state helps the soldiers and their families in different ways, some also receive ‘hadya’ (gifts) in the form of houses, scholarships and similar rewards.

Fatemiyoun has the potential to become the new Hezbollah in the region. While Fatemiyoun members were around 20,000 during their height in 2016, after the sanctions and Covid-19 impact on the Iranian economy their number has dwindled to 12,000. Active-duty Fatemiyoun is thought to be between 7,000 to 8,000. It is estimated that, at present, the Fatemiyoun has six active brigades in Syria. Each brigade has four battalions, and each battalion consists of 200 to 250 personnel—similar to the Iranian Artash structure. In addition to these six brigades, the Fatimyoun has a reserve military base/brigade called “18,000,” led by an IRGC commander, Haji Ismail, who also manages the brigade, provides discipline and addresses any weak areas.

The Fatemiyoun members that are gradually withdrawn from Syria are replaced by the regular Syrian Army. Meanwhile, to cover their costs, Iranians also hand over Fatemiyoun members as conscripts to the Syrian Army. They are being issued Syrian passports and have been given accommodation with their families in Syria. In recent years, many thousands of Afghan Shi’a families of the Fatemiyoun have been transferred and strategically positioned in Syria, mainly with the members becoming military conscripts. There are reports that the Iranians have also sent the Fatemiyoun to Yemen and Libya as mercenaries. They were making money from their services, receiving over $1,400 USD per month per Fatemiyoun member but paying each fighter $400 to $500 per month.

2. Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

2.2.1. Improvements in 2017

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

  Maryman 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. S1 [...]


- **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. [...]
Internal movement restrictions beyond migrants and women in 2020

❖ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021

 [...] Political Rights
 [...] B Political Pluralism and Participation
 [...] B2 0-4 pts
 Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections? 1/4
 [...] Top opposition leaders face restrictions on their movement and access to the media. Mir Hossein Mousavi, Zahra Rahnavard, and Mehdi Karroubi—leaders of the reformist Green Movement, whose protests were violently suppressed following the disputed 2009 presidential election—have been under house arrest without formal charges since 2011. [...] 
 [...] Civil Liberties
 [...] G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights
 G1 0-4 pts
 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. [...] 

2.3.1. Omissions in 2017

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.
10.13.2017 - 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.”

11.04.2017 - 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 one time 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.

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.

23.03.2017 - 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 Etemad 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.”

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.

Reporters Without Borders, In crackdown on protests, Iranian regime targets freedom to inform, 3 January 2018

[...]

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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, and that 94 Internet users, most of whom were Telegram users, had been arrested since the beginning of 2017. The organisation further documented threats to at least 50 journalists based abroad in the year ending September 2017. 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. In its reply, the Government denied the concerns raised. 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.32 […]

37 See www.rsf-persan.org/article17644.html.

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 Mahdavifar 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. Mortezah 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. Saleholladin 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 Jalaledin 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 Majzooban 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 (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 Ebtkekar, 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.

[...]

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.

[...] 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.

[...] 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, Alisha Jalaladini 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 militiaen 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. [...]
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 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.
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


  [...] 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. 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. 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. 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/

Whether the UN Special Rapporteur mentioned difficulties for freedom of speech and press in 2020 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 General Assembly, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 5 August 2020**

  [...] II. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

  [...] C. Right to freedom of opinion and expression

  26. The Secretary-General notes the incompatibility of the constitutional and legal framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the exercise of the right to hold an opinion and to freedom of expression. The control of information continued to extend to the digital space, with increased State control and censorship of the Internet. The Government stated that, under the Cybercrime Law, a committee had been tasked to establish a clear definition of cybercrimes for websites that undermine security and public peace. All international Internet connectivity continued to emanate from two State entities, thus giving the Government control over the flow of information. Platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, cannot be accessed without a virtual private network. [...] The authorities shut down the Internet at least three times in 2019 and twice in 2020. [...]

63 See https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disruptions-registered-across-iran-kArradAj;

19. The Special Rapporteur remains concerned at the authorities’ repeated disruption of telecommunications. [...] During the recent Behbahan protests and those related to the commemoration of Mr. Shajarian, Internet monitors reported connectivity disruption in protest locations. Additionally, government online censorship of websites and social media platforms continues. Telegram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube are permanently blocked and inaccessible without circumvention tools. Internet shutdowns and the blanket blocking of websites and applications represent a violation of the right to freedom of expression. The Government stated that the Supreme Leader had stressed that violation of privacy online was religiously forbidden. [...] 48


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 [...] 2

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 reach 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 your 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:


Pro-democracy sites: National Democratic Institute (NDI), National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Blogs of Iranian political activists: Ali Afshari and Ahmad Batebi.


Kurdish sites: kurdistanpress.com, kurdistanmedia.com, Kurdish Human Rights Project.


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).

Anonymity and censorship circumvention tool sites: torproject.org, psiphon.ca, openvpn.net, freenetproject.org, anonymouse.org, anonymizer.com, megaproxy.com, ultrasurf.us, hotspotsshield.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. [...]


- **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
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. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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. 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. [...]
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. 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. [...]
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-Fatir (Iraq’s Shi’ite 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. [...]
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.”


- **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. [...]
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. [...]
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 messages 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. [...]
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, 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. 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.

37. [...] 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. 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”. 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

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/BiXSzOFQMF/?hl=de&taken-by=hrouhani.
41 See http://bit.ly/2wCsbcT.

UN Special Rapporteur, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 27 September 2018

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11 OHCHR, “Iran: UN experts urge respect for protesters’ rights”.


HRANA (Human Rights Activists News Agency), Iran: An Overview of Human Rights Abuses September – 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. In November, the Government proposed a bill which introduced new offences associated with the use of banned online
applications. 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 actions 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]


[...] 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-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 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. [...]
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 Vataan 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. [...]
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

- **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.” [...]

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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.

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. 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.

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. The suspension of the services of the largest such provider, which hosts the majority of alternative tools such as virtual private networks, could further restrict online privacy and safety.

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.

There are particular concerns that journalists and their families specifically have been threatened and arrested to prevent them from reporting on protests. 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.

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. 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. In some cities, Internet connectivity was reportedly restored by 19 November, but full connectivity was not restored countrywide until 5 December.
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 Sharq newspaper; Moloud Hajizadeh, a women’s affairs reporter at Taaadol 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, Sharq 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 Raeesian 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. […]

Number of cases of censorship in 2020

❖ Reporters Without Borders, Iran’s journalists – twofold victims of state lie about Ukrainian jet crash, 6 February 2020

[...] For three days, without knowing it was a lie, Iranian journalists reported the Islamic Republic’s denial of any responsibility in the Ukrainian passenger jet crash in Tehran on 8 January that killed all 176 people aboard. After the authorities finally admitted that it was shot down by an Iranian missile, 80 journalists dared to issue a joint statement expressing regret that they had helped to spread a state lie.

[...] According to the information gathered by RSF, at least 21 journalists throughout the country have been summoned and questioned by intelligence officials working for the Revolutionary Guards or the ministry of intelligence since 8 January.

None of them has so far been arrested but all of them know they could be arrested at any time. Some have been warned by the media outlets they work for of the need to “pay attention to what you say on social media.” Some of have had to close their Instagram, Twitter or Facebook accounts, or to stop posting on them.

Under pressure, newspapers are now only publishing information “confirming” the overall position taken by the regime and, in particular, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. No interviews with relatives of victims of the crash have been published.

[...] All-out censorship

Traditional censorship methods have been revived. Media have received a list of banned subjects and ultimatums from various state entities including the High Council for National Security, the prosecutor’s office, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the ministry of intelligence and the Revolutionary Guards intelligence agency. As well as the summonses, everything has been done to threaten reporters and force editors to control their reporters themselves. […]

❖ 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 sideline 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. […]

❖ Reporters Without Borders, Iran concealing coronavirus figures, blocking independent reporting, 26 February 2020

[...] According to Iranian official reports today, the coronavirus epidemic has killed 15 people and infected a total of 95 in the Islamic Republic, which seems to be concealing information about the epidemic in line with China’s example. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns Iran’s persecution of media outlets and journalists publishing independent information. The presence of the coronavirus known as Covid-19 in Iran was suddenly revealed when pro-government media reported on 20 February that two Iranians had died in the holy city of Qom after testing positive for the virus. Since then, the authorities insist they have the situation under control but they have refused to publish exact figures for deaths and infections and have obstructed journalists trying to cover the story.

Freelance journalist Mohammad Mosaed was summoned and interrogated by Revolutionary Guard intelligence officials on 23 February in connection with the messages he had posted on social media about the epidemic. He was released after questioning but his phone and computer were seized and his Twitter and Telegram accounts have been closed.

Qom parliamentary representative Ahmad Amir Abadi Frahani drew attention to an example of the government’s disinformation in a statement to the press the next day. “The epidemic began three weeks ago but the health ministry delayed announcing it,” he claimed. “In two weeks, 50 people have been killed by the virus in Qom.” The initial source of the outbreak is said to have been a Koranic school in the city that receives Muslim religious students from China. Health ministry director-general Iraj Harirchi immediately denied Frahani’s claim and, using the term employed two days earlier by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, condemned a “propaganda war.” The next day, both Frahani and Harirchi were told that they were infected with the virus. On social media, journalists have been protesting against the censorship, lies and incompetence of the officials in charge. Internet users have also reported that the online map created by the Johns Hopkins Centre for Systems Science and Engineering that tracks cases of the coronavirus Covid-19 worldwide in near real time cannot be accessed in various Iranian cities. In response to the online protests, the head of the FTA cyber-police force, Vahid Majid, announced that around 30 people have been arrested in various provinces and charged with “spreading false news online about the spread of the virus.” […]

❖ Reporters Without Borders, RSF unveils 20/2020 list of press freedom’s digital predators, 10 March 2020

[...] NAME: Iranian Cyberspace Supreme Council

Iran

METHODS USED:
Online selective access and control; blocking news websites, platforms and apps such as Telegram, Signal, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter.

KNOWN TARGETS:
Created in March 2012 and consisting of senior military and political figures, this entity is the architect of the “Halal Internet”, an Iranian national Internet cut off from the rest of the world. It is constructing a firewall using Internet filtering techniques. Internet shutdowns are increasingly used to contain and
suppress waves of street protests, and to restrict the transmission and circulation of independent information regarded as “counter-revolutionary” or “subversive” in nature. [...] 

❖ **Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (UNPO), Iranian Kurdistan: the Plight of the Kolbars, 20 April 2020**

[...] Due to Iranian censorship, the issues faced by the Kolbars are seldom reported on in national media, and often only human rights organisations bring to light the plight of these people. [...] 

❖ **Reporters Without Borders, Iran: Two journalists arrested over cartoon mocking traditional remedies for coronavirus, 28 April 2020**

[...] Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the arrests of two journalists in Tehran for publishing a cartoon making fun of Iranian clerics who recommend traditional medicine for Covid-19 while the authorities continue to systematically censor reliable coverage of the coronavirus epidemic. Masoud Heydari, the news director of the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA), and Hamid Haghjoo, the manager of its Telegram channel, were arrested on 24 April for allegedly insulting “Islam’s sacred principles” and religious leaders in a cartoon that was posted on ILNA’s Telegram channel for a few minutes on the evening 23 April and was then quickly deleted. The cartoon showed a patient between two traditional healers. One wants to administer violet oil to him rectally. The other wants him to drink camel’s urine. In a photo on the wall in the centre, there is a mullah dressed as a nurse who resembles Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. He is signalling to the patient to say nothing. It was clearly mocking Iranian clerics who recently recommended traditional “Islamic medicine” to treat the coronavirus, including a mysterious liquid called the “prophet’s perfume” and violet oil that is administered rectally on cotton wool. ILNA later issued a statement denying that it ever published the cartoon on its Telegram channel. Heydari and Haghjoo were arrested on the behest of the Tehran prosecutor’s office on a charge of “insulting the Islamic Republic’s Supreme Leader.” Heydari was later released on bail but Haghjoo is still being held. [...] 

❖ **UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020**

[...] III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [...] C. Right to freedom of opinion and expression [...] Outside of the protests, advocates for freedom of expression online continued to be targeted. Payam Derafshan, a lawyer, was reportedly sentenced to prison and banned from practising law for two years after being convicted of “insulting the Supreme Leader” in January 2020.98 The conviction was reportedly a reprisal for his campaigning against the ban of messaging application Telegram.99 [...] 37. The authorities continued to target journalists for critical and independent reporting, with a detrimental effect on access to information, including in the context of the November 2019 protests, COVID-19 and parliamentary elections. [...] In the run-up to the elections, between 5 and 21 journalists were reportedly targeted by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps agents, including through house raids, confiscation of equipment, questioning, social media monitoring, accusations of spreading “fake news” or threatening national security.111 Journalists also received convictions112 and threats of legal action.113 [...] 


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**UN General Assembly, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General, 5 August 2020**

[...] II. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

[...] C. Right to freedom of opinion and expression

26. The Secretary-General notes the incompatibility of the constitutional and legal framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the exercise of the right to hold an opinion and to freedom of expression. The control of information continued to extend to the digital space, with increased State control and censorship of the Internet. The Government stated that, under the Cybercrime Law, a committee had been tasked to establish a clear definition of cybercrimes for websites that undermine security and public peace. All international Internet connectivity continued to emanate from two State entities, thus giving the Government control over the flow of information. Platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, cannot be accessed without a virtual private network. [...] The authorities shut down the Internet at least three times in 2019 and twice in 2020.

[...] 28. In the context of COVID-19, Tehran’s Prosecutor-General stated that the judiciary would summon anyone who spreads “false news”. Over 3,600 individuals were subsequently arrested and 1,136 lawsuits were filed against them. In March 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a taskforce to combat so-called “fake news” from foreign-based Farsi-language news services and issued a decree on 30 March suspending all newspaper printing and distribution as a measure against COVID-19. Journalists and cartoonists have reportedly been summoned, detained and prosecuted for their reporting of the February 2020 parliamentary election and COVID-19. With 5 to 21 journalists reportedly targeted in early February 2020 through house raids, confiscation of equipment, questioning, monitoring of social media accounts and accusations of threatening national security. The judicial harassment of staff of foreign-based Farsi language news organizations, including BBC Persian Service, and their families in the Islamic Republic of Iran remains of concern. The Secretary-General notes that the Government accepted only 4 of 25 recommendations on freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly during its universal periodic review. [...]
Reporters Without Borders, IRAN: UN special rapporteur urged to visit Iranian prisons holding journalists, 21 August 2020

[...] Ever since March, RSF has been condemning the cover-up about the spread of Covid-19 and the crackdown on independent reporting in Iran, but media outlets and journalists continue to pay the price of the government’s lies. The daily Jahan Sanat (Industry World) was suspended on 10 August by the Committee for Press Authorization and Surveillance, the censorship wing of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The newspaper’s editor said it was sanctioned for publishing an interview with a public health specialist under the headline, “The government’s coronavirus case figures cannot be trusted.” [...]

Reporters Without Borders, Iranian bill aims to reinforce “digital wall” and online censorship, 24 September 2020

[...] Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the Iranian authorities to withdraw a draconian bill that would place social media under military control. Iran must respect its international obligations, RSF says. Entitled “Organization of social media messaging services” and designed to consolidate the “digital wall” that already exists in Iran, the bill was submitted on 16 August to the Iranian parliament, which is expected to examine it soon. According to the bill, “Internet entry and exit points and social media platform bandwidth going out of the country will be placed under the control of the headquarters of the armed forces and will be subject to the approval of the Islamic Republic’s Supreme Leader.” The bill also provides for the creation of a board of governors consisting of representatives of the justice system, government and Revolutionary Guards to supervise platforms. Article 20 says that “all international and national messaging services must coordinate their activities according to Iranian laws, and the board must approve their operation.” Failure to comply with the proposed law “will be punished by 90 days to six months in prison.” Those who produce or distribute virtual private networks (VPNs) – which are widely used to access banned websites although their sale is already banned – would risk up to two years in prison and heavy fines. “This bill, which would place social media under total control, amounts to blocking access to information and denying the Iranian people the fundamental right to be informed, by offering them just a limited vision of reality via the previously established Halal Internet,” said Iris de Villars, the head of RSF’s Tech Desk. “Iran’s Islamic Republic is a signatory to several international conventions and, as such, must adhere to its obligations, including the obligation to allow unrestricted access to the Internet. We call on the Iranian authorities to withdraw this bill, which poses a particular threat to freedom of expression.” Although the Islamic Republic has been one of the most active countries at the World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS), and although it is a member of the International Telecommunication Union, UNESCO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, it is on RSF’s list of the world’s leading digital predators. Despite being banned, social media and apps such as Facebook, Twitter and Telegram play a major role in disseminating news and information in Iran. As well as blocking websites and messaging services, the authorities resort increasingly to Internet cuts to contain and suppress protests and block the flow of independent information regarded as “counter-revolutionary,” “subversive,” “anti-government propaganda,” “violations of national security” or “insulting to what is sacred.” Access is not however restricted for senior state officials, who can have an Internet account and post freely – a situation regarded by RSF as flagrant “digital discrimination.” [...]

Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2020: Iran, 14 October 2020

[...] B Limits on Content
[...] B1 0-6 pts
Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content? 0/6
[...] Similarly, in early March 2020, as the country was battling one of the largest outbreaks of COVID-19 outside of China, reports confirmed that access to Persian Wikipedia had been blocked using the same method used for blocking Telegram and Facebook, though officials did not comment on the incident.62 The head of Persian Wikipedia, Mohsen Salak, in an interview with an Iran-based news
website said he did not know what was causing the disruption. It was unblocked after around 24 hours.44

[... B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content? 0/4

[... In January 2020, in the aftermath of General Qasem Soleimani’s assassination in a US drone strike, many Iranians, including journalists, took to Instagram—one of the few remaining foreign social media platforms not filtered by the government—to post about the event. Shortly after, Instagram began removing posts related to Soleimani’s death citing “compliance with US sanctions.”74 At least 15 Iranian journalists and news agencies, such as the IRGC affiliated Tasnim News agency alongside others such as the Iran Newspaper and Jamaran News, had their accounts removed or were suspended. Furthermore, some foreign-based Bitcoin trading platforms have restricted access for Iranian users; reports suggest the decision is likely to be due to US sanctions.75

[... C Violations of User Rights

[... C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities? 0/4

[... Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, in February, 2020, a spokesperson for the judicial and legal affairs committee of parliament, Hassan Norouzi, announced that those who “spread fake news or rumors” about the coronavirus will “be sentenced to between one [and] up to three years in jail as well as flogging.”133

[... C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities? 0/6

[... In April 2020, Masoud Heydari and Hamid Haghjoo, the managing director and the Telegram channel administrator at the semiofficial Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA) were arrested following the alleged posting of a cartoon mocking COVID-19 remedies prescribed by Iran’s religious leaders.143 ILNA denied ever publishing the cartoon and said they were falsely accused. Heydari was released on bail while Haghjoo was detained pending investigation into the case.

Citizens and journalists have been arrested for reporting and social media posts about the coronavirus pandemic that either included statistics other than government figures, or for spreading “false rumors.”144 In March 2020, Mehdi Hajati, a former member of Shiraz City Council, was arrested for criticising the government’s response to the outbreak of COVID-19 on Twitter. His Twitter page was inaccessible following his arrest.145 Hajati was previously arrested in 2019 for supporting two Baha’i citizens, a religious minority group not recognised by the state. In June 2019, after the coverage period, he began a one-year prison sentence, to be followed by two years in exile, because of that charge.146 Mohammad Mokhtari, the football captain of a local team in Gilan Province, one of the provinces most affected by COVID-19, was also arrested for publishing critical comments towards authorities about the handling of the crisis online.147

In early 2020, as the outbreak of COVID-19 escalated into a crisis across the country the head of FATA, Commander Vahid Majid, announced that a new working group for “combating online rumors” relating to the spread of the virus had been set up.148 According to FATA, by April 2020, 3,600 people had been arrested for spreading “rumors” online, but no information has ever been provided as to what is defined as a “rumor.”149 Due to the lack of transparency it is likely that such charges are used to arbitrarily arrest citizens, including those critical of the government’s response to the crisis. [...]
Reporters Without Borders, Press freedom violations recounted in real time (January - December 2020), 17 November 2020

[...] 29.06.2020 - One-year jail term for editor of cultural weekly Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemns the one-year prison sentence that a court in the northeastern province of Razavi Khorasan has passed on Ali Razaghi Bahar, the editor of the cultural weekly Barssava. As a result of a complaint by the Press Licensing and Surveillance Commission, the censorship arm of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, he was convicted of failing in his “supervisory responsibility” by publishing an article “promoting sexual freedom and alcohol consumption.” According to Bahar, who also edits magazines published by the Hamshahri group (owned by Tehran city hall), the commission never summoned him to hear his explanation. [...]
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 Asayl’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**

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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

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.
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 Fatemiyyoun 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. 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. 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.

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. [...] 


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. Omissions in 2019

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. [...] 

The percentage of the Iranian population using the Internet in 2020

- **Data Reportal, 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. [...] 

- **Data Reportal, Digital 2021: Iran, 11 February 2021**
There were 59.16 million internet users in Iran in January 2021. The number of internet users in Iran increased by 739 thousand (+1.3%) between 2020 and 2021. Internet penetration in Iran stood at 70.0% in January 2021. [...] 

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 Saghafei, Haleh Saffarzadeh, Parvin Mohammadi, Vahed 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, Esmaeil 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

[...] 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, Ghealeb 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.

Neda Naji, Atefeh Rangriz, Hasan Saeedi, Farhad Sheikh, 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, Jafar Azimzadeh, Nahid Khodajoo, Azam Khewrilavadi (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 Sazeq, Marivan, Sanandaj, Divandareh, Javanrood, Islamabad, Kermanshah, Aligudarz, Hamedan, Malayer, Tabriz, Urmia, Ardal, 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." [...]
Mokhtar Asadi are among those teachers who are currently in prison or exile or waiting for a prison sentence [...]


[...] 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. [...] 13 Telegram Channel of Teachers’ Association of Iran, 9 January 2020; https://t.me/kasenfi/7773. [...]

4.3.1. Omissions in 2017

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, 2018
  
  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” though the Judiciary’s National General Inspectorate.

- 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. 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.

- 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.


23 For the regulations regarding the Article 90 Commission, see: http://www.iranhrc.org/english/news/features/3558-internal-regulation-on-the-commission-of-article-90-of-the-constitution.html


- **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**
  
  [...] 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.

- **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

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 government agencies fighting against corruption in 2020

Iran Press News Agency, Iranian Parliament appoints head of Article 90 Commission, 15 July 2020

Iranian lawmakers elected Nasrollah Pejmanfar as the head of the parliament's Article 90 Commission on the Wednesday open session.

The Article 90 Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament) specifically oversees the performance of the government, the judiciary, and the parliament.

Article 90 of the Iranian constitution stipulates that anyone who has a complaint about the performance of the parliament as well as the executive and judiciary branches can file a complaint to the Article 90 Commission of the parliament.

Eurasian Ombudsman Alliance, The "Corruption Reporters System" was unveiled by The General Inspection Organization (GIO) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 24 August 2020

The "Corruption Reporters System" with the slogan of “Every Iranian Being Supervisor”, was unveiled by the General Inspection Organization (GIO) of the Islamic Republic of IRAN to make more use of public participation. According to the report of the International Affairs Department of GIO, Justice Hassan Darvishian unveiled the “Corruption Reporters System” during the official ceremony. He said that the GIO previously had a system for receiving public complaints in which information and public Complaints were reflected to the Organization, but a new system has created in terms of the importance of benefiting more from public participation. We want to show that public participation is important to the organization. The "Corruption Reporters System" is one of the ways for the people to participate in the fight against corruption. This is the first phase of the system and we will complete the other phases. The corruption reporters should also pay attention to reflect issues to the GIO that fall within the scope of the organization's duties, because some issues are related to the Judiciary, the Court of Administrative Justice, and to the Executive branch. Our request to the corruption reporters is to prioritize and reflect the important issues of the country, so that we can address and follow these
issues with priority. Justice Darvishian said: If the report leads to detect corruption, it will not be possible to make a public announcement until final investigation will be down by the judicial authorities, but the corruption reporter will be informed that this report is approved and being pursued. The identity of corruption reporter is confidential, and corruption reporters can log in anonymously to submit their reports and they will be in contact with GIO during the investigation of the cases. We support corruption reporters, especially those working in the executive branch. Emphasizing the support of the GIO for corruption reporters, Darvishian said: "Corruption reporters should be aware that, first of all, their identities will not be revealed in any way. However, if there is a problem for the corruption reporters, especially the employees of the executive administrations, the GIO will use all its legal capacity to support them. [...]"

❖ Radio Farda, Tehran City Council Sued For Granting Project To IRGC, 11 September 2020
[...] The chairman of the Islamic City Council of Tehran, Mohsen Hashemi, has shared that the bid to build the city’s line 7 metro was granted to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)-linked Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters (KCH) under pressure from Tehran’s former mayor. [...] "Qalibaf insisted, we relented and handed over the project to the KH. Now the General Inspection Organization (GIO) has filed a lawsuit against Tehran City Council for granting a project to the IRGC," Hashemi said. [...] In a ceremony inaugurating Line 10 and developing line 7 of Tehran’s underground, Hashemi told the Commander of KCH, Saeed Mohammad, "We gave you Line 7, but now we are facing trial because someday we gave it to you under stress. Consequently, the GIO has sued us. The case against us is still under investigation at the GIO’s Branch 13. They have repeatedly accused us of assigning KCH to construct Line 7 of Tehran’s metro. For our part, we have also repeatedly reminded you that KCH should look into the case. Still, no progress has been made, and we are in trouble." [...]"

❖ US Congressional Research Service, Iran: Internal Politics and U.S. Policy and Options, updated 9 December 2020
[...] Regime Structure, Stability, and Opposition
[...] Elected Institutions/Recent Elections
[...] The Presidency
[...] The presidency also runs oversight bodies such as the Anticorruption Headquarters and the General Inspection Organization, to which government officials are required to submit annual financial disclosures, and it oversees the various official pension funds and government-run social services agencies. [...]"

❖ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021
[...] Political Rights
[...] C Functioning of Government
[...] 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 in practice, and restrictions on the media and civil society activists prevent them from serving as independent watchdogs to ensure transparency and accountability. [...]"

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**

  [...] 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 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. [...]
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.”


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."


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/2YykJKJ […]

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. [...]

Existence of Iranian law granting public access to government information in 2020

Article 19, Iran: Right to Know Day must mark commitment to transparency, 28 September 2020

[...] On International Day for Universal Access to Information, ARTICLE 19 renews its call on the Iranian authorities to review and revise the 2009 Publication and Free Access to Information Act (the Act) to
bring it in line with international human rights standards. While we welcome the positive steps taken in clarifying the law’s provisions through ratification of directives, in its current form the Act fails to promote genuine transparency. Much more must be done to ensure that the right to information for all, as an integral part of the right to freedom of expression, is fully guaranteed in Iran.

“In recent years, pervasive corruption and a near total lack of transparency and accountability – among other things – has resulted in widespread discontent triggering nationwide protests. The people’s demand for transparency and an end to corruption is clear. It is high time for the Iranian authorities to improve the Free Information Act and to use it as a tool to ensure that people’s demands for transparency and accountability are fulfilled,” said Saloua Ghazouani, Director of ARTICLE19 Middle East and North Africa Programme.

[...] Amendments needed to comply with international standards
Under the Publication and Free Access to Information Act every Iranian citizen has a right to request information from public, private, and other institutions providing public services such as non-governmental organisations. All are obligated to provide the requested information within ten working days. However, the law imposes broad and vague exemptions to these obligations, meaning it is ineffective in key areas, and fails to meet international standards on guaranteeing this right.

Over the past two years, the Information Commission, the body mandated with the implementation of the Act, has drafted and passed nine directives, which, according to Hossein Entezami, the Secretary of the Commission, seek to clarify the content of the Act, provide guidance on points of ambiguity or where the Act is silent, and to ultimately facilitate the implementation of its provisions. These Directives, which are currently under review by ARTICLE 19 for their compliance with international law, address issues such as detection and separation of government secrets from public information, resolving disputes with regards to releasing information, and detection and separation of personal and private information from public information.1

The passage of these directives is a step in the right direction. However, major flaws in the Act remain unaddressed. Most importantly, the exemption clause that allows for refusal to release information on the grounds that it is classified remains overly broad and vague. Under Article 13 of the Act, the release of “classified” information is exempt, and under its 2014 bylaw, determination of what counts as “classified” is based on the archaic Secrets Act,2 dating back to 1975 which defines secret information in vague and broad terms, enabling this definition to cover a range of information the public should be entitled to access. While the directive on determining state secrets provides welcome guidance, it is still based on the Secrets Act, meaning it does little to address this fundamental flaw in the legislation. Moreover, the directives fail to expand the right to access information beyond the limited remits of the Act. Currently, the Act applies to Iranian Citizens only, leaving the rights of non-citizens such as refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan unprotected.

Concerns about the independence of the Information Commission, the oversight body mandated by the Act, also remain, as the Commission is housed within the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, known for its efforts to limit the right to freedom of expression.

Implementation must be improved
The implementation of the Act has also been very slow, although the past two years have seen an acceleration. Reporting by the Information Commission in particular has seen significant delays – while it finally published its first report on the implementation of the Act covering a two year period of 2017 and 2018, this was not until the end of 2019, nearly a year after the fact, and there has not yet been any reporting on the implementation of the law since.

Moreover, while an increasing number of institutions have been joining the online portal (the standard interface for requestors to demand information) and proactively publishing information in a welcome step towards proper implementation, institutions falling under the control of the Judiciary and the Supreme Leader have been notably absent.

The lack of compliance by the Judiciary, an institution whose conduct already indicates a belief that it is above the law, is particularly concerning given the escalating human rights crisis in the country.

“Reports of systematic and gross violations of human rights, including widespread and systematic unfair trials that rely on torture-tainted confessions and the use of the death penalty to instill fear, surface every day. The people in Iran have been demanding justice and transparency. Yet, the state’s own data clearly demonstrates that the Judiciary is showing almost zero transparency and accountability,” said Saloua Ghazouani. [...]

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2 A translation of the Act and its bylaws can be found in our summary.

- **Article 19, Iran: Citizens exercise their right to know, to demand a response to illegal Internet shutdowns, 12 November 2020**
  
  [...] “The Iranian authorities’ continuous refusal to show the slightest commitment to transparency and accountability has added the failure to uphold the right to access information and the right to truth to their portfolio of human rights violations. It is high time that prompt, impartial, independent and transparent investigations into the gross and multifaceted violation that took place in the context of the November 2019 protests, including the week-long Internet shutdown, are carried out and those responsible are held into account,” said Saloua Ghazouani, Director of ARTICLE 19 Middle East and North Africa Programme.

  “Treating information related to the human rights of millions of people and the obligations of the authorities to uphold these rights as state secrets runs contrary to Iran’s own laws on access to information. The decision to shutdown the Internet cannot be considered a state secret and as such should be declassified and released,” added Ghazouani, [...]

- **Article 19, Iran: People with disabilities endangered by lack of information, 3 December 2020**
  
  [...] Iran’s 2009 Publication and Free Access to Information Act, which provides for the right to request information from public institutions, lacks provisions guaranteeing the right of persons with disabilities to seek and receive information in accessible formats. [...]

- **Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021**
  
  [...] Political Rights
  
  [...] C Functioning of Government
  
  [...] C3 0-4 pts

  Does the government operate with openness and transparency? 0/4

  The transparency of Iran’s governing system is extremely limited in practice, and powerful elements of the state and society are not accountable to the public. A 2009 access to information law, for which implementing regulations were finally adopted in 2015, 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. [...]

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

5.3.4 Omissions in 2020

Evidence UNSR noted continued torture, mistreatment and intimidation in detention of human rights defenders and journalists engaging the UNSR and cooperating with other UN mechanisms in 2020

- **UN OHCHR, Iran: targeting of journalists threatens freedom of press, say UN experts, 11 March 2020**
  
  [...] A group of UN human rights experts* have once again voiced alarm at the targeting of journalists working for the BBC and other broadcasters, and their families by Iranian authorities.
“Journalists working for the BBC Persian Service and other Farsi-language news outlets outside Iran have faced threats, criminal investigations, unlawful surveillance, freezing of assets, defamation and harassment by Iranian authorities. Several journalists have also been targeted for going public about the harassment and seeking protection from the UN,” the experts said.

“Our families residing in Iran have faced harassment and intimidation by Iranian authorities. In some cases, family members were deprived of their liberty and held in degrading conditions, and ordered to tell their relatives to stop working for the BBC.”

[...]

* The UN experts: Ms Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Mr Javaid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Mr David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Mr Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. [...]


6.3.1. Omissions in 2017

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 [...]


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 [...]
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

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). 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.

Under the law the principal of “qisas” (punishment in kind) continues not to apply to murders within the family committed by the father in 2020

The Secretary-General remains concerned at the continued discrimination on the basis of gender in law and practice, including with regard to family matters, freedom of movement, employment, culture and sports, as well as access to political and judicial functions. Regrettably, the Government only fully or partially accepted 19 out of 85 recommendations on the situation of women and girls during its universal periodic review.
Under Iranian law, intentional murder is punishable by death unless the family of the victim forgives the killer. The law, however, provides that if a father or paternal grandfather kills his child or grandchild, his sentence is reduced to up to 10 years. […]


- [...] III. Situation of women and girls
- [...] Violence against women
- [...] There are exemptions from criminal liability and qisas for a man who witnesses his wife committing adultery and kills and assaults either or both parties. The Penal Code creates exemptions for men who kill their children or grandchildren. [...] Treaty bodies have stated that legislation which exonerates or mitigates criminal responsibility for so-called honour crimes must be removed, and a holistic framework to prevent their occurrence implemented. The Government stated that initiatives to update laws in this area were under consideration. […]

180 Penal Code, art. 630.

❖ **Iran Human Rights, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020, 30 March 2021**

- [...] Legislative framework
- [...] Death penalty according to Iranian law
- [...] Murder and qisas

Qisas refers to retribution-in-kind. Qisas death sentence has been retained for murder in the new IPC. As in the previous IPC [Islamic Penal Code], it exempts the following situations or people from qisas:

- Father and paternal grandfather of the victim (Article 301)
- A man who kills his wife and her lover in the act of adultery (Article 302)
- Muslims, followers of recognised religions, and “protected persons” who kill followers of unrecognised religions or “non-protected persons” (Article 310)
- Killing a person who has committed a hadd offence punishable by death (Article 302)
- Killing a rapist (Article 302) […]

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.

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. […]

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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. 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.[…]

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.[…]

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.”[…]

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

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  [... 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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  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.[…]

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.[…]
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:
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - 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:
  - Explicitly prohibit gender specifications in job advertising.
  - Ensure that state agencies do not conduct discriminatory recruitment practices and cease the use of gender-specific job advertising.
  - 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.
  - Grant women and men equal protection and benefits, including but not limited to “family bonuses.”
  - 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. 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.

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.”

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.” 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.

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 [...]

[...] 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. [...]

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).
83 Article 82, Social Security Organization law
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 prudence,” 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. 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 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. It is understood a new draft bill is pending before Parliament to address this longstanding concern after various historic legislative efforts in this regard. [...] 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. 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. 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. 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. [...]
“With Bill 215 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’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. […]


  […] 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. […]


- **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. […]

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, allowing children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers to acquire Iranian nationality. [...] [p. 9]

29 A/74/273, para. 37.
[...]


[...] 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, 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 authorities 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. At the same time, the Prosecutor-General and high-level religious figures 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.

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. In March 2018, as many as 35 women were reportedly arrested for seeking to attend a match and in August 2019 at least four women were arrested and held for several days after attempting to enter a stadium dressed as men. [...]

 [...] 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 [...] 


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. [...] Evidence of restrictions put in place by the law continued to restrict women’s economic, social, political, academic, and cultural rights in 2020

- **Outright International et al., Written contribution to the Human Rights Committee, In preparation for the List of Issues prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Discrimination and violence based on gender, religion or belief, ethnicity and language, sexual orientation and gender identity, Human Rights Committee, 129th session (Geneva) 29 June – 24 July 2020**

[... IV) Women’s and Girls’ Rights
[...] A) Women’s participation in public and political life
[...] 55. Women have a limited presence in decision-making bodies in the country:
• Women are completely prohibited from holding the position of Supreme Leader.
• Candidates for the presidency in Iran must be what the constitution refers to as Rajol-E- Siasi (“political men”). Though many argue that the phrase as a whole could be understood as “political persons,” without a specification as to gender, the Guardian Council of the Constitution, 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.
• Additionally, no woman has ever served on the Guardian Council (body mandated to bring parliamentary resolutions in line with Shari’a and the Constitution and to oversee elections and vet candidates)
• Nor on the Expediency Council (body which serves as the Supreme Leader’s advisory arm, formulating "general policies for the state" and overseeing the implementation of those policies on the behalf of the Supreme Leader).

56. There are no legal limits laws on the ability of women to vote or become a candidate for parliament or the City and Village Councils. However, the Guardian Council is known to arbitrarily disqualify women candidates from running for election. For example, in the run-up to the 2020 elections, the Guardian Council disqualified 60 percent of female candidates.

57. Despite the existence of several mechanisms that ostensibly accept complaints regarding violations of citizens’ rights, such as the Article 90 Commission of the parliament (established based on Article 90 of the Constitution, offering a mechanism to citizens to file complaint against any of three brunch of power) and the Oversight Bodies for the exercise of Citizenship Rights in the country’s provincial courts, there is no evidence to suggest that complaints to these bodies are independently reviewed and investigated. Regarding complaints related to election process or candidate vetting, election law designates the Guardian Council as the arbitrator, which itself is the body responsible for the impugned decisions.

58. There are currently no female ministers in the government’s cabinet. No provincial governors are women. The government recently appointed three women as “county governor” out of 430 positions across the country. The administration appointed women to 13 out of 1,058 district governors, mostly in small provinces across the country. [...] 59. Women currently occupy only 5.8 percent (16 out of 290) of parliamentary seats in the new parliament elected in February 2020.

60. The percentage of female candidates who registered to run in the February 2020 election increased.
[...] B) Women in the judiciary

61. Under Iranian law, women cannot be appointed as judges. This rule is based on an interpretation of Shari’a according to which judging is done only by men, and women cannot issue rulings. 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.

[... ] D) Gender-based discrimination in the Civil Code

64. In 2011, the Committee recommended that Iran amend the Civil Code and the draft Family Protection Law to:
(a) abolish the requirement for a father’s or paternal grandfather’s approval to legalize a marriage;
(b) grant women equal rights to divorce;
(c) award equal custody rights to the mother, including after a child reaches the age of seven or if she remarries;
(d) award guardianship of a child to the mother in the case of the father’s death;
(e) grant women the same inheritance rights as men;
(f) remove the legal obligation for a woman to be obedient to her husband;
(g) remove the requirement for a husband’s approval when a woman intends to leave the country;
(h) prohibit polygamy;
(i) remove the power of a man to prohibit his wife from entering employment.
(f) give Iranian women the right to transmit their nationality to their children.

65. As of today, the only reform to the Civil Code and the Family law that has occurred since the Human Rights Committee made this recommendation is that the Civil Code has been amended in 2019 to give Iranian women who are married to a non-Iranian man the right to transmit their nationality to their children. While children born to Iranian women and non-Iranian men are now allowed to acquire Iranian nationality, Iranian women and men are still not on equal footing with respect to their ability to confer nationality, as nationality is granted upon application and not automatically, and as it is conditional to a security check from the Ministry of Intelligence. […]

45 Art 115, Constitution of Iran.
46 The council that should choose the Supreme Leader and its mandate is to monitor him.
47 In addition, the Guardian Council is responsible for overseeing elections and vetting candidates.
48 The body, whose members are all appointed by the Supreme Leader, was initially established as an arbitration body between parliament and the Guardian Council.
49 Executive rankings at the provincial level: 1) Governor, 2) County Governor, 3) District Governor, 4) Village President.
[…] 53 The law of conditions for the election of judges of the judiciary: https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/90547
54 The law of conditions for the election of judges of the judiciary: https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/90547
[…] 58 Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations: Islamic Republic of Iran, 29 November 2011, CCPR/C/IRN/CO/3, para. 9

❖ UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020
[...] III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran
[...] E. Situation of women and girls
46. The Special Rapporteur regrets the slow pace of change concerning the protection of women and girls against discrimination and inequality. Discrimination on the basis of gender permeates several areas of public and private life in law and practice, including employment, political and judicial positions and family life.131 The Special Rapporteur is disappointed that the Islamic Republic of Iran rejected all 26 recommendations made as part of its recent universal periodic review regarding the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. […]

131 Babak Dehghanpisheh and Davide Barbuscia, "Disillusionment among women, youth seen dampening Iran election turnout", Reuters, 20 February 2020.

❖ United States Institute of Peace: The Iran Primer, Part 3: Iranian Laws on Women, 8 December 2020
[...] Discriminatory Laws
Marriage: The Islamic Republic initially lowered the age of marriage to nine for girls. In 2002, parliament raised the age to 13. The judiciary has blocked subsequent efforts to raise the age of marriage higher.
Divorce: A woman could only get a divorce in court with a judge’s order, while a man could get divorce by declaring it verbally. In 2002, the parliament amended the law to allow a woman to divorce her husband if he were imprisoned, mentally ill, physically abusive or an addict.
Dress Code: All females are required to cover their hair and dress modestly from the age of puberty. The law vaguely defined what constitutes acts against morality, and authorities have long prosecuted hundreds of people for such acts, as well as for consensual extramarital sex.
Child Custody: A divorced woman forfeited child custody if she remarries, even if her husband died.
Nationality: For 40 years, women could not pass their nationality to foreign-born spouses or their children. In 2019, parliament passed a law allowing women married to foreign men to request Iranian citizenship for children under age 18.

Travel: A married woman could not obtain a passport or travel outside Iran without her husband’s written permission. A husband could choose where the couple lives and prevent his wife from taking certain jobs that he deemed against “family values.”

Inheritance: A widow only inherits one-eighth of her husband’s estate, but a widower inherits his wife’s entire estate. A son inherits twice as much as a daughter. In 2009, parliament voted to let women inherit land.

[...] Marriage

In the law: The rules on marriage are the most discriminatory. A man can marry up to four women at one time; women can only marry one husband. A woman needs a male guardian’s consent — either from her father or paternal grandfather—to marry. Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men, while Muslim men can marry Jews, Christians or Zoroastrians. The revolutionary government lowered the age of marriage for women from 18 to 13 (in 1979) then to nine (in 1982). In 2002, the Majles raised the age of marriage back to 13 for girls (and to 15 for boys). In a marriage contract, women are required to be obedient to receive funds for housing, clothes, food and furniture.

In practice: Polygamy is not common among men. Most women also do not marry until their twenties.

[...] Text of the laws:

Article 1041 of the Civil Code: “Marriage before the age of puberty is prohibited. (Marriage before puberty by the permission of the Guardian and on condition of taking into consideration the ward’s interest is proper).”

Article 1041 of the Civil Code (amended in 2002): “Marriage of girls before reaching the age of 13 full solar years and boys before reaching the age of 15 full solar years is subject to the permission of the Guardian and on condition of taking the child’s best interest into consideration and approval of the relevant court.”

Article 1043 of the Civil Code: “The marriage of a girl who has not married previously is dependent on the permission of her father or her paternal grandfather even if she has reached the full age of puberty. If, however, the father or the paternal grandfather withhold the permission without justifiable reason, the girl can refer to the Special Civil Court giving full particulars of the man whom she wants to marry and also the terms of the marriage and the dowry money agreed upon and notify her father or her paternal grandfather through that Court.”

Article 1059 of the Civil Code: “Marriage of a female Muslim with a non-Muslim is not allowed.”

Article 1061 of the Civil Code: “The Government can make the marriage of certain Government servants and officials and students supported by the Government with a female foreign national dependent upon special permission.”

Articles 1106 to 1108 of the Civil Code: “The cost of maintenance of the wife is at the charge of the husband in permanent marriages. Cost of maintenance includes dwelling, clothing, food, furniture in proportion to the situation of the wife, on a reasonable basis, and provision of a servant if the wife is accustomed to have servants or if she needs one because of illness or defects of limbs. If the wife refuses to fulfill duties of a wife without legitimate excuse, she will not be entitled to the cost of maintenance.”

Divorce

In the law: Women also face discrimination in divorce. Females can only get a divorce in a court, while a man can get a divorce simply by declaring it verbally—and not even necessarily in her presence. In 1982, judges were empowered to grant a divorce to a woman facing “difficult and undesirable conditions.” The Majles amended the law in 2002 to allow a woman to divorce her husband if he was imprisoned for five or more years, mentally ill, physically abusive or an addict.

In practice: Divorce cases often end in mutual agreement between husband and wife in court. Women must prove that their husband is physically abusive or psychologically unstable, if the man is unwilling to divorce. In 1992, President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani approved a bill allowing women to claim alimony payments, if husbands initiated a divorce.

[...] Text of the laws:

Article 1130 of the Civil Code (amended in December 1982): “In the following circumstances, the wife can refer to the Islamic judge and request for a divorce. When it is proved to the Court that the continuation of the marriage causes difficult and undesirable conditions, the judge can for the sake of
avoiding harm and difficulty compel the husband to divorce his wife. If this cannot be done, then the divorce will be made on the permission of the Islamic judge.”

Article 1130 of the Civil Code (amended in 2002): “The osr-va-haraj (difficult and undesirable conditions) mentioned in this article refers to the conditions that make the continuation of [marital] life intolerable and difficult for the wife; the following circumstances, if proved in the relevant court, shall be considered as a case of osr-va-haraj:
1: The husband’s leaving of marital life for, at least, six consecutive months, or, nine alternative months in a one year period, without any acceptable reason.
2: The husband’s addiction to any kind of drugs or alcohol that, damages the marital life, and his refusal, or impossibility of compelling him, to quit the addiction in a period prescribed by the doctor. If the husband does not fulfill his promise [to quit], or, again begins his abuse, the divorce shall be granted by the request of the wife.
3: Final conviction of the husband to five years, or more, imprisonment.
4: Wife battery or any kind of mistreatment of the wife that is intolerable in the wife’s condition.
5: Husband’s affliction to incurable mental illnesses or contagious disease or any kind of incurable diseases that disrupts the marital life.

The circumstances mentioned in this article are not exhaustive and the court may grant the divorce in other cases that osr-va-haraj is proved in the court.”

Article 1133 of the Civil Code: “A man can divorce his wife whenever he wishes to do so.”

Child Custody

In the law: Women have preferential custody over children under seven. Courts determined whether a mother or father gets custody of children older than seven. A divorced woman forfeits child custody if she remarries, even if her husband is dead.

In practice: Divorced women are likely to lose custody of their children, especially if they are financially dependent on alimony.

Text of the laws:

Article 21 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran: “The government must ensure the rights of women in all respects, in conformity with Islamic criteria, and accomplish the following goals... the awarding of guardianship of children to worthy mothers, in order to protect the interests of the children, in the absence of a legal guardian.”

Article 1168 to 1170 of the Civil Code: “Custody of children is both the right and duty of the parents. A mother has preference over others for two years from the birth of her child for the custody of the child and after the lapse of this period custody will devolve on the father expect in the case of a daughter who will remain under the custody of the mother till 7 years. If the mother becomes insane or marries another man during her period of custody, the custody will devolve on the father.”

Article 1169 of the Civil Code (amended in 2002): “For the custody of children whose parents are separated, the mother has priority until the age of seven; and then, custody will devolve upon the father. After reaching seven years of age, in the case of dispute, considering the best interest of the child, the court will decide who receives custody of the child.”

Dress Code

In the law: Women face restrictions on dress and severe punishment for violations. The Islamic Republic mandated wearing head covering, or hijab, in public. Violators face punishments that include up to two months in prison, fines of up to 500,000 rials and up to 74 lashes.

In practice: Fewer women in major cities wear the all-enveloping black chadors, while many young women wear scarves that barely cover their hair.

Text of the laws:

Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code: “Anyone in public places and roads who openly commits a harām (sinful) act, in addition to the punishment provided for the act, shall be sentenced to two months’ imprisonment or up to 74 lashes; and if they commit an act that is not punishable but violates public prudence, they shall only be sentenced to ten days to two months’ imprisonment or up to 74 lashes.”

“Women, who appear in public places and roads without wearing an Islamic hijab [veil], shall be sentenced to ten days to two months’ imprisonment or a fine of fifty thousand to five hundred Rials.

Nationality

In the law: Women can’t automatically transfer citizenship to children or spouses.

In practice: Women have gradually gained rights on citizenship issues involving family members. In 2019, parliament passed a law allowing the children of women married to foreigners to apply for Iranian citizenship. In the past, many have effectively been stateless. The law went into effect in 2020.
Text of the law:
Article 976 of the civil code: “The following persons are considered to be Iranian subjects... Persons born in Iran of a father of foreign nationality who have resided at least one more year in Iran immediately after reaching the full age of 18.”
Article 1 of law amending citizenship of children (2019): “Children born to legal marriage of Iranian women to non-Iranian men who were born or will be born before or after the adoption of this law before reaching the age of eighteen ... [can] become citizens of Iran at the request of the Iranian mother. The above-mentioned children can apply for Iranian citizenship after reaching the age of 18, if the Iranian mother does not apply.”

Travel
In the law: Women face restrictions on travel abroad. A woman requires a husband’s permission to obtain a passport or travel outside the country.
In practice: Husbands could choose to provide blanket permission for his wife’s travel or require her to ask for permission for each trip abroad. Single women over the age of 18 could obtain a passport without permission but still required their guardian’s approval to leave the country. Women arriving at airports would sometimes find their permission to travel abroad had been revoked by their husband or male guardian and were prevented from boarding flights. In rare circumstances, authorities would intervene to allow female athletes to compete abroad over a husband’s objections.

Text of the law:
Article 18 of the Passport Law of 1973: “A passport shall be issued for the following persons according to this article...Married women, even if under 18 years old, with the written agreement of their husbands.”

Inheritance
In the law: Under Islamic inheritance law, a man is granted his deceased wife’s entire estate, while a widow receives only one-eighth of her husband’s estate. A son inherits twice as much as a daughter.
Until 2009, widows could not inherit land. Parliament then voted to let women inherit land.
In practice: Affluent families have circumvented the law by transferring the property titles before death. In some cases, men have also bought property in the names of their wives or children in case they die first to avoid civil code requirements.

Text of the laws:
Article 949 of the Civil Code: “If the deceased has left no living children, and no living children’s children of whatever degree, either of the parents, if alone, takes the whole estate; and if the father and mother of the deceased are both alive, the mother takes one - third and the father two - thirds. But if the mother comes after someone else, one-sixth of the estate belongs to the mother and the rest to the father.”
Article 907 of the Civil Code: “If the deceased leaves no parents, but has one or more children, the estate will be divided as follows:
“If the offspring consists of only one, whether son or daughter, the whole of the estate belongs to that child. If there are several children, but all are sons or all daughters, the estate will be divided equally among them.
“If there are several children, some being sons and some daughters each son takes twice as much as each daughter.”
Article 908 of the Civil Code: “If the father or the mother of the deceased, or both parents, are alive, together with one daughter, the share of each one of the father and the mother will be one-sixth of the estate.; and the share of the daughter will be one - half there of. The remainder must be divided among all the rest of the heirs in proportion to the share of each; unless the mother comes after someone else, in which case the mother takes no portion of the remainder.”
Article 909 of the Civil Code: “If the father or the mother, or both the parents of the deceased are alive, together with several daughters, the share of the whole of the daughters will be two-thirds of the estate ,which is to be divided equally among them; and the ‘share’ of each one of the father and the mother will be one - sixth . And if there be a remainder it will be divided among all the heirs in proportion to their shares unless the mother comes after someone else, in which case the mother will not take any portion of the remainder.”
Article 911 of the Civil Code: “If the deceased leaves no sons or daughters, his grandchildren are the legal representatives of his sons or daughters, and in this way are reckoned as belong in to the first degree of descendants, and take inheritance with each one of the parents who are alive.
“The division of the inheritance among the grandchildren will take place in accordance with their sex, that is to say, each individual will take the portion the person through whom he claims descent from the deceased; hence, the children of a son take twice as much as the children of a daughter.

“In the division among individuals of each sex, a boy takes twice as much as a girl.”

Article 913 of the Civil Code: “In all the conditions mentioned in this subsection, whichever of the married pair is the survivor takes his or her, share and this share means one half of the estate for the surviving husband and one quarter for the surviving wife, provided that the deceased left no children or grandchildren; and it means one quarter of the estate for the husband and one eighth for the wife if the deceased left children or children’s children. And the remainder of the estate is to be divided among the other heirs in accordance with the preceding Articles.”

Article 914 of the Civil Code: “If, owing to the existence of several persons entitled to shares, the estate of the deceased be not sufficient to satisfy of them, the deficiency falls on the daughter or the two daughters; and if, after deduction of the portion of those entitled to shares there still remains something, and there be no heirs entitled to take the remainder by way of relationship, this remainder will be divided among the persons entitled to shares in accordance with the provisions of the preceding Articles; but the husband and the wife in all case, and the mother if she comes after someone else, take no part of the remainder.”

Article 945 of the Civil Code (amended in 2009): “If a man marries a woman when he is ill, and dies of that disease before consummation of the marriage, the wife does not take inheritance from him; but if he dies after consummation, or after recovery from that disease, the wife takes inheritance from him.”

Article 946 of the Civil Code: “The husband takes inheritance from the whole of the estate of the deceased wife; and the wife inherits one-eighth of the actual movable property and one-eighth of the price of immovable property including site and buildings, if the deceased husband has children. If the husband has children, the share of the wife will be one-fourth of the property stipulated as follows.

Article 949 of the Civil Code: “If there is no other heir except for the husband or wife, the husband takes the whole of the estate of his late wife; but the wife takes only her portion, and the rest of the estate of the husband is considered as the estate of a man without any heir, and will be dealt with in accordance with Article 866.”


[...] I. Introduction

[...] 2. The Special Rapporteur details the current human rights situation in the country, with a focus on the situation of women and girls. While some steps have been taken towards gender equality, he expresses concern that gender-based discrimination persists in law, practice and societal attitudes. He outlines where the Government can reform and promote gender-equal policies, including by repealing discriminatory family, criminal and employment laws, protecting women from violence, promoting female leadership and full participation in cultural life, and ending the targeting of women’s rights advocates.

[...] III. Situation of women and girls

[...] 39. The Special Rapporteur notes that the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken some positive steps in the realization of women’s rights. These include the nationality law amendment, which provides for Iranian women married to non-Iranian men a right to apply for Iranian nationality for their children aged under 18 years. In November 2020, the first national identity card under this amendment was issued. The Government’s efforts to draft legislation on domestic violence and the 2019 legislation imposing tougher sentences for acid attacks is also welcomed.

[...] 40. Notwithstanding these improvements, the Special Rapporteur remains deeply concerned at the persistent discrimination against women and girls in public and private life, enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and within law and practice. Articles 20 and 21 of the Constitution guarantee equal protection of men and women before the law and the State’s undertaking to secure women’s rights. However, the provision of these rights is subject to “the Islamic criteria”, which have been implemented by the authorities in a manner that violates and undermines women’s dignity and fundamental human rights, including the right to equality and non-discrimination, as established in the State’s international human rights obligations. The Government stated that the Islamic criteria were defined and could be updated according to societal needs.
International legal framework

41. The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasize non-discrimination and gender equality. The State has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is regrettable that the Government did not support 14 recommendations, made during its third universal periodic review, regarding the ratification of that Convention, although it partially supported or noted 4 related recommendations. The Government stated its authorities were examining the issue of accession to international treaties. The State’s other international human rights obligations require it to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination.

Discrimination in family law

42. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that substantial discrimination exists against women and girls within family law, including laws vis-a-vis marriage, divorce, custody and guardianship. Iranian law requires a woman to receive permission from her father or paternal grandfather for marriage if she has not married previously, although if permission is withheld unreasonably, she can apply to a court to allow the marriage.\(^1\) The marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man is unlawful\(^2\) and a marriage between an Iranian woman and a non-Iranian man requires government permission.\(^3\) These provisions are inconsistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.\(^4\) Legal provisions also maintain gender inequality between spouses. The husband has authority over his wife, including the right to prevent her from taking up employment that he considers incompatible with family interests or his dignity.\(^5\) The wife requires the husband’s consent to obtain a passport and travel abroad.\(^6\) Iranian law allows polygamy, including an unrestricted number of temporary marriages for a fixed period.\(^7\) The Human Rights Committee has said that polygamy and the need for a husband’s consent to obtain a passport and travel are discriminatory.\(^8\) The Government stated that polygamy was uncommon and that a wife must consent to a polygamous marriage. While the wife is entitled to maintenance, this is contingent upon her fulfilling her “duties”,\(^9\) including responding to the husband’s sexual needs. Husbands have an incontestable right to divorce,\(^10\) whereas wives can only apply to court seeking divorce on limited grounds, including the husband’s addiction, imprisonment or refusal to provide financially.\(^11\) Wives must prove an intolerable level of spousal abuse to successfully rely on domestic violence as a ground of divorce.\(^12\) Women seeking divorce usually have to forgo their monetary claims, such as payment of maintenance, to secure their husband’s agreement.\(^13\)

43. The father is the default sole legal guardian retaining primary authority over all major decisions and financial affairs in his child’s life. In his absence, legal guardianship is transferred to the paternal grandfather.\(^14\) The Government stated that relatives could apply to court for the dismissal of a father as guardian if he was not fulfilling his responsibilities. Following divorce, the mother has physical custody of the child until age 7, at which time custody is transferred to the father.\(^15\) The Government stated that the father’s right was not absolute; if there was a disagreement, the Family Court would decide in the best interests of the child. Custody is automatically lost by the mother if she remarries, but the same does not apply to the father.\(^16\) Discrimination in criminal law

44. As mentioned above, age of criminal responsibility in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is based on the age of maturity, applies to girls at 9 lunar years, whereas it is 15 lunar years for boys for qisas or hudud crimes.\(^17\) Gender discrimination in age adds to the serious violation of applying the death penalty to child offenders. It is alarming that girls who committed offences as child offenders have been executed in recent years, including some who had been forcibly married as children and who had suffered domestic violence.

45. The criminal justice system discriminates between men and women regarding payment of diya (blood money). The Penal Code states that the amount of diya paid as compensation for a female victim is half that of a male (art. 550). Notwithstanding legislative changes and a July 2019 Supreme Court ruling instructing that the difference in diya would be paid by a government fund, the discriminatory provision remains. By making the perpetrator liable for only half of the diya, the State effectively devalues the worth of a woman’s life to half that of a man, and consequently makes women more vulnerable to crime.\(^18\) Similarly, in many legal proceedings, a woman’s testimony is usually required,\(^19\) while in most civil cases the required evidence is that of two men, or one man and two women.\(^20\)
discriminating on the grounds of gender in the legal system are a clear violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.\textsuperscript{167} [...]49. It is noted that the bill for the protection, dignity and security of women against violence, first introduced to Parliament in 2015 and currently before the Bill Committee, would criminalize some types of violence against women. There are several deficiencies in the current draft, including a requirement for a victim to go through a “reconciliation period” before a dispute settlement council prior to filing a claim in court. This provision, if enforced, exposes the victim to the risk of further violence and removes judicial scrutiny of the perpetrator’s actions and accountability. The Government claimed that the conciliation process would not be forced. Other problematic draft provisions include the need for three separate convictions of violence before a wife can seek divorce and a lesser punishment for murder through domestic violence than in other murder cases.\textsuperscript{173} [...] Sexual assault is not criminalized as a distinct crime under the Penal Code. Rape is prosecutable as zina (illicit sexual relations), a capital offence, but the limited definition of zina in the Penal Code excludes several coercive sexual acts that also constitute rape. The excluded acts can only be prosecuted under article 637 of the Penal Code, which carries a punishment of 99 lashes.\textsuperscript{175} The Special Rapporteur opposes the death penalty and flogging, but also recommends in reforming these sentences that the definition of zina be expanded to include other coercive sexual acts. The current draft bill on protection of women against violence also categorizes sexual assault under the two limited categories of zina and non-zina. Victims face obstacles in proving the crime due to high evidentiary requirements for proving sexual assault. Since extramarital sexual relations are considered criminal acts, reporting sexual assault may expose victims to prosecution if they cannot prove the act was coercive. Accounts of victims indicate the authorities usually fail to investigate such claims.\textsuperscript{176} Additionally, during a #MeToo social media movement in the country in August 2020, which led to one arrest,\textsuperscript{177} many victims expressed reluctance to press charges as they disagreed with the perpetrator being punished by the death penalty.\textsuperscript{178} The Government stated that its legal system was one of the most serious in addressing sexual crimes. [...] It is estimated that between 375 to 450 honour killings occur annually.\textsuperscript{179} The Special Rapporteur expresses alarm at laws that exonerate perpetrators or reduce punishment for such crimes. There are exemptions from criminal liability and qisas for a man who witnesses his wife committing adultery and kills and assaults either or both parties.\textsuperscript{180} The Penal Code creates exemptions for men who kill their children or grandchildren. [...] Treaty bodies have stated that legislation which exonerates or mitigates criminal responsibility for so-called honour crimes must be removed, and a holistic framework to prevent their occurrence implemented.\textsuperscript{181} The Government stated that initiatives to update laws in this area were under consideration. [...] Women’s rights advocates

52. Iranian women play a prominent role in defending human rights. The Special Rapporteur remains alarmed at the continuing harassment, arrest and imprisonment of women’s rights advocates, both women and men, including those campaigning against compulsory veiling laws. Under the Penal Code (art. 638), women who do not wear a hijab may be imprisoned for up to two months or fined up to 500,000 rials ($12). [...] The Human Rights Committee has stressed that laws regulating what women can wear in public can violate several rights guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including the rights to non-discrimination, to freedom of expression, and to liberty and freedom of movement, where breaching such laws results in arrest or detention.\textsuperscript{183} The right to freedom of religion cannot be relied upon to justify discrimination against women.\textsuperscript{184} 53. The police, Basij militia and vigilante morality police enforce compulsory veiling laws, with vigilante justice reportedly resulting in violence against women, including acid attacks and deaths. [...] Some official statements encourage attacks against women. In October 2020, two Friday prayers leaders, including an Assembly of Experts member, called on society to make the surroundings unsafe for women who did not observe veiling laws.\textsuperscript{186} [...] Discrimination in political and judicial position

55. Gender discrimination is pervasive in political and judicial appointments, with the Islamic Republic of Iran ranking 181 of 193 countries in 2020 for women’s representation.\textsuperscript{190} Almost no women are represented in senior decision-making positions, with the positions of Supreme Leader, President, Head of the Judiciary, the Attorney General and the Head of the Supreme Court never being held by a woman, and no woman has been named to the 12-member Guardian Council. While there are no legal limits on the right to vote or to stand as municipal or parliamentary candidates, female representation is poor. The Guardian Council disqualified 60 per cent of all female candidates for the February 2020
parliamentary elections, with only 16 of the 290 seats in Parliament being won by women, as confirmed by the Government.

56. The Government has taken steps to increase female representation in executive positions. In 2017, it adopted a decision to allocate 30 per cent of public sector managerial positions to young people and women, increasing by 36 per cent the appointment of women between 2017 to 2019. Despite these advances, the decision was annulled by the Court of Administrative Justice in October 2020. The Government stated that the decision had been reversed as the measure had been found to be unfair and discriminatory. In addition, it is regrettable that women are ineligible to become judges. While women can be appointed as legal advisers, oversee proceedings and sit on three-member appeal panels, Iranian law prohibits them from rendering a final judgment.

Discrimination in employment

57. Women’s access to formal employment is restricted, with 29.7 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 35 being unemployed in 2019. Despite major advances in education, female labour force participation in the country is 17 per cent.

58. The Labour Code grants equal protection and free choice of profession to men and women as long as it is not inconsistent with Islamic values, the public interest or the rights of others (art. 6). However, the Code forbids female employment in dangerous, arduous and harmful work (art. 75). Cultural and social norms, as well as administrative practices, point to a widespread preference for men in employment. In July 2014, the Tehran municipality announced that all women secretaries and office managers would be replaced by men; in the same year, the head of the Public Buildings Office of the Iranian police announced that women would be prohibited from working in coffee shops and traditional restaurants. Similar exclusions have been applied to the civil service, reducing the number of women working in that sector.

59. As mentioned above, the Civil Code grants husbands the right to stop wives from work they consider against family values or their reputation. Some employers require married women to provide a statement of permission from their husband in order to be hired. The requirement that women need permission to travel abroad means employers with overseas-based work are reluctant to employ them. According to a law adopted in January 2017, women are entitled to nine months’ maternity leave, but many have been dismissed upon their return to work. The Labour Code states employers are to pay equal wages to both men and women for equal work (art. 38). However, in practice, women receive lower salaries for the same level of work.

Sport and culture

60. Restrictions on the participation of women and girls in sport and cultural life remain. In January 2020, Kimia Alizadeh, the country’s first female Olympic medal winner, announced she had permanently left the Islamic Republic of Iran, citing sexism of officials as her main reason. The Government stated that there were dozens of sports federations and that over 100,000 Iranian women athletes participated in domestic and international sport competitions.

61. A prohibition on women attending sporting events, while not written into law, has effectively been enforced since 1981. Women have frequently challenged the restriction on their ability to enter stadiums, through peaceful demonstrations or by entering incognito, with many consequently having been arrested. Women are allowed to perform publicly but only as part of a choir or to an all-female audience. According to reports, artists have faced restrictions and arrest for having performances with women singers. Musician Ali Ghamsari was banned from performing after featuring a female singer in a 7 January 2020 concert performance. In August 2020, musician Mehdi Rajabian was arrested on a morality charge after featuring women dancers and singers in his work. The Government stated he had been fined 500,000 tomans. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has stated that the right to take part in cultural life requires that all legal, institutional and customary restrictions on female participation in such activities be eliminated.

133 http://irangov.ir/detail/351448.
Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021

[...] Political Rights

[...] B Political Pluralism and Participation

[...] B4 0-4 pts
Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1/4

[...] Men from the Shiite Muslim majority population dominate the political system. Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. [...] No women candidates have ever been allowed to run for president.

[...] Civil Liberties

[...] F Rule of Law

[...] F4 0-4 pts
Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1/4

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.

[...] G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts
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. Women are banned from certain public places and can generally obtain a passport to travel abroad only with the permission of their fathers or husbands.

[...] G2 0-4 pts
Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? 1/4

[...] Women are denied equal rights in inheritance matters.

G3 0-4 pts
Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? 1/4

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.

[...] Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes. [...]
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 law states in 2020 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

- **Radio Farda, Get Married Or Pay 'Singles Tax', Conservative Cleric In Iran Says, 7 June 2020**
  
  [...] Shari’a laws dictate that girls marrying for the first time should acquire the consent of their father or paternal grandfather to marry, whatever their age. [...] 

- **United States Institute of Peace: The Iran Primer, Part 3: Iranian Laws on Women, 8 December 2020**
  
  [...] Marriage
  
  In the law: The rules on marriage are the most discriminatory. A man can marry up to four women at one time; women can only marry one husband. A woman needs a male guardian’s consent — either from her father or paternal grandfather—to marry
  
  [...] Discriminatory Laws
  
  Article 1043 of the Civil Code: “The marriage of a girl who has not married previously is dependent on the permission of her father or her paternal grandfather even if she has reached the full age of puberty. If, however, the father or the paternal grandfather withhold the permission without justifiable reason, the girl can refer to the Special Civil Court giving full particulars of the man whom she wants to marry and also the terms of the marriage and the dowry money agreed upon and notify her father or her paternal grandfather through that Court.” [...] 

  
  [...] III. Situation of women and girls
  
  [...] Discrimination in family law
42. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that substantial discrimination exists against women and girls within family law, including laws vis-à-vis marriage, divorce, custody and guardianship. Iranian law requires a woman to receive permission from her father or paternal grandfather for marriage if she has not married previously, although if permission is withheld unreasonably, she can apply to a court to allow the marriage.\(^{137}\) [...]

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. [...]


[...] **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. [...]

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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]

More broadly, women continued to face entrenched discrimination in family and criminal law, including in relation to marriage, divorce, employment, inheritance and political office. [...] 

Women do not enjoy equal rights in divorce and child custody disputes. [...] 

The ability of a woman to seek divorce was “limited” in 2020

Iranian women have gained greater rights to divorce in recent years, and divorce is more common today, particularly in the major cities. Nevertheless, laws pertaining to marriage and divorce are tilted heavily in the favour of men. Article 1133 of the Civil Code stipulates that a man ‘can divorce his wife whenever he wishes to do so’. A woman can obtain a divorce from her husband only with the husband’s permission or if a court determines the husband: cannot provide for his family; has violated the terms of their marriage contract; or is a drug addict, insane or impotent. [...] 

Women can also seek a mutually agreed divorce in the courts. However, when Iran established “family courts,” in a 2013 family law, the law only reinforced existing discriminatory civil code provisions and mandated courts to refer mutually agreed divorce requests to mediation councils. The law did have some positive provisions, including mandating the presence of female clerk judges at court and providing the possibility of forgiving or delaying the court fees if the person could not afford them. This provision is particularly helpful for victims of domestic violence who may be financially dependent on their abusers. A family lawyer interviewed said that depending on type of divorce, a mutual divorce case can be concluded in two months, but if a woman is requesting the divorce it usually takes more than a year. “If proven, domestic abuse can be used as a ground for divorce but it usually does not happen,” the lawyer said.

“The reality is that in many of these cases, it would be a lot easier to end the abuse if the woman could get a divorce, but these laws trap women in a cycle of violence that can last months and years,” another lawyer said in a telephone interview. [...] 

Legal provisions also maintain gender inequality between spouses [...] 

Husbands have an incontestable right to divorce, whereas wives can only apply to court seeking divorce on limited grounds, including the husband’s addiction, imprisonment or refusal to provide financially. Wives must prove an intolerable level of spousal abuse to successfully rely on domestic violence as a ground...
of divorce.\textsuperscript{156} Women seeking divorce usually have to forgo their monetary claims, such as payment of maintenance, to secure their husband’s agreement.\textsuperscript{157} [...]

49. It is noted that the bill for the protection, dignity and security of women against violence, first introduced to Parliament in 2015 and currently before the Bill Committee, would criminalize some types of violence against women. [...] Other problematic draft provisions include the need for three separate convictions of violence before a wife can seek divorce and a lesser punishment for murder through domestic violence than in other murder cases.\textsuperscript{173} [...]

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., art. 1133.

- **Human Rights Watch, Word Report 2021: Iran, 13 January 2021**

  [...] Women’s Rights, Children’s Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity

  Iranian women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and decisions relating to children [...]

- **Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2020: Iran, 3 March 2021**

  [...] 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. [...]
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. 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. [...]
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. [...] [26][27]

Social and legal constraints limited women’s professional opportunities in 2019

  
  [...] 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. [...] [26][27]

- **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. 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. 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 dis- mal 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 de- sire 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.’ 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. 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. […]

[...] 111 The Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranian Labour Code, 1990, Articles 6 and 75.

Social and legal constraints limited women’s professional opportunities in 2020

- Outright International et al., Written contribution to the Human Rights Committee, In preparation for the List of Issues prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Discrimination and violence based on gender, religion or belief, ethnicity and language, sexual orientation and gender identity, Human Rights Committee, 129th session (Geneva) 29 June – 24 July 2020

[...] IV) Women’s and Girls’ Rights
[...] A) Women’s participation in public and political life
[...] 55. Women have a limited presence in decision-making bodies in the country:
• Women are completely prohibited from holding the position of Supreme Leader.
• Candidates for the presidency in Iran must be what the constitution refers to as Rajol-E- Siasi (“political men”). Though many argue that the phrase as a whole could be understood as “political persons,” without a specification as to gender, the Guardian Council of the Constitution, 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.
• Additionally, no woman has ever served on the Guardian Council (body mandated to bring parliamentary resolutions in line with Shari’a and the Constitution and to oversee elections and vet candidates)
• Nor on the Expediency Council (body which serves as the Supreme Leader’s advisory arm, formulating “general policies for the state” and overseeing the implementation of those policies on the behalf of the Supreme Leader).

56. There are no legal limits laws on the ability of women to vote or become a candidate for parliament or the City and Village Councils. However, the Guardian Council is known to arbitrarily disqualify women candidates from running for election. For example, in the run-up to the 2020 elections, the Guardian Council disqualified 60 percent of female candidates.
57. Despite the existence of several mechanisms that ostensibly accept complaints regarding violations of citizens’ rights, such as the Article 90 Commission of the parliament (established based on Article 90 of the Constitution, offering a mechanism to citizens to file complaint against any of three branch of power) and the Oversight Bodies for the exercise of Citizenship Rights in the country’s provincial courts, there is no evidence to suggest that complaints to these bodies are independently reviewed and investigated. Regarding complaints related to election process or candidate vetting, election law designates the Guardian Council as the arbitrator, which itself is the body responsible for the impugned decisions.
58. There are currently no female ministers in the government’s cabinet. No provincial governors are women. The government recently appointed three women as “county governor” out of 430 positions
across the country. The administration appointed women to 13 out of 1,058 district governors, mostly in small provinces across the country. […] 59. Women currently occupy only 5.8 percent (16 out of 290) of parliamentary seats in the new parliament elected in February 2020. 60. The percentage of female candidates who registered to run in the February 2020 election increased. […] B) Women in the judiciary 61. Under Iranian law, women cannot be appointed as judges. This rule is based on an interpretation of Shari’a according to which judging is done only by men, and women cannot issue rulings. 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. 54

45 Art 115, Constitution of Iran. 46 The council that should choose the Supreme Leader and its mandate is to monitor him. 47 In addition, the Guardian Council is responsible for overseeing elections and vetting candidates. 48 The body, whose members are all appointed by the Supreme Leader, was initially established as an arbitration body between parliament and the Guardian Council. 49 Executive rankings at the provincial level: 1) Governor, 2) County Governor, 3) District Governor, 4) Village President. […] 53 The law of conditions for the election of judges of the judiciary: https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/90547 54 The law of conditions for the election of judges of the judiciary: https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/90547

❖ Human Rights Watch, Iran: Adopt Draft Law to Protect Women, 4 December 2020
[...] Discriminatory Personal Status Laws as Barriers to Justice
[...] A husband can also prohibit his wife from an occupation he deems against family values or harmful to his or her reputation. […]

[...] III. Situation of women and girls
[...] 44. Legal provisions also maintain gender inequality between spouses. The husband has authority over his wife, including the right to prevent her from taking up employment that he considers incompatible with family interests or his dignity. 149
[...] Discrimination in political and judicial position
55. Gender discrimination is pervasive in political and judicial appointments, with the Islamic Republic of Iran ranking 181 of 193 countries in 2020 for women’s representation. 195 Almost no women are represented in senior decision-making positions, with the positions of Supreme Leader, President, Head of the Judiciary, the Attorney General and the Head of the Supreme Court never being held by a woman, and no woman has been named to the 12-member Guardian Council. While there are no legal limits on the right to vote or to stand as municipal or parliamentary candidates, female representation is poor. The Guardian Council disqualified 60 per cent of all female candidates for the February 2020 parliamentary elections, with only 16 of the 290 seats in Parliament being won by women, 196 as confirmed by the Government.
56. The Government has taken steps to increase female representation in executive positions. In 2017, it adopted a decision to allocate 30 per cent of public sector managerial positions to young people and women, increasing by 36 per cent the appointment of women between 2017 to 2019. Despite these advances, the decision was annulled by the Court of Administrative Justice in October 2020. 197 The Government stated that the decision had been reversed as the measure had been found to be unfair and discriminatory. In addition, it is regrettable that women are ineligible to become judges. While women can be appointed as legal advisers, oversee proceedings and sit on three-member appeal panels, Iranian law prohibits them from rendering a final judgment. 198

Discrimination in employment
57. Women’s access to formal employment is restricted, with 29.7 per cent of women between the ages of 18 and 35 being unemployed in 2019. Despite major advances in education, female labour force participation in the country is 17 per cent. 199 The majority of working women are employed in the informal sector with minimal labour law protection; 200 female university graduates make up 67.5 per
cent of all unemployed individuals. The Government stated it had initiated numerous programmes to strengthen women’s employability and entrepreneurship.

58. The Labour Code grants equal protection and free choice of profession to men and women as long as it is not inconsistent with Islamic values, the public interest or the rights of others (art. 6). However, the Code forbids female employment in dangerous, arduous and harmful work (art. 75). Cultural and social norms, as well as administrative practices, point to a widespread preference for men in employment. In July 2014, the Tehran municipality announced that all women secretaries and office managers would be replaced by men; in the same year, the head of the Public Buildings Office of the Iranian police announced that women would be prohibited from working in coffee shops and traditional restaurants. Similar exclusions have been applied to the civil service, reducing the number of women working in that sector.

59. As mentioned above, the Civil Code grants husbands the right to stop wives from work they consider against family values or their reputation. Some employers require married women to provide a statement of permission from their husband in order to be hired. The requirement that women need permission to travel abroad means employers with overseas-based work are reluctant to employ them. According to a law adopted in January 2017, women are entitled to nine months’ maternity leave, but many have been dismissed upon their return to work. The Labour Code states employers are to pay equal wages to both men and women for equal work. However, in practice, women receive lower salaries for the same level of work.

149 Civil Code, art. 1117. 

[...] Women’s Rights, Children’s Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity
[...] 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.”

❖ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021
[...] Political Rights
[...] B Political Pluralism and Participation
[...] B4 0-4 pts
Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1/4
[...] Men from the Shiite Muslim majority population dominate the political system. Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. [...] No women candidates have ever been allowed to run for president.

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." 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 discriminate 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.majlis.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”. It further allows husbands to prevent their spouses from working in particular occupations under certain circumstances. [...]

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, 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. [...]


[...] 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.” […]

  […] 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 2020 required a married woman to obtain her husband’s permission to work

- Human Rights Watch, Iran: Adopt Draft Law to Protect Women, 4 December 2020
  […] Discriminatory Personal Status Laws as Barriers to Justice
  […] A husband can also prohibit his wife from an occupation he deems against family values or harmful to his or her reputation. […]

  […] III. Situation of women and girls
  […] 44. Legal provisions also maintain gender inequality between spouses. The husband has authority over his wife, including the right to prevent her from taking up employment that he considers incompatible with family interests or his dignity.149
  […] Discrimination in employment
  59. As mentioned above, the Civil Code grants husbands the right to stop wives from work they consider against family values or their reputation. Some employers require married women to provide a statement of permission from their husband in order to be hired. […]

149 Civil Code, art. 1117.

  […] Women’s Rights, Children’s Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity
  […] 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.” […]

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


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. [...]

The law in 2020 does not provide that women and men must be paid equally for equal work


[...] III. Situation of women and girls
[...] Discrimination in employment
[...] The Labour Code states employers are to pay equal wages to both men and women for equal work (art. 38). However, in practice, women receive lower salaries for the same level of work. [...]

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.
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 Recond in Appoiting Women to Senior Leadership Positions: President Rouhani Appealing to Women at Minute 90,” Mehrkhaneh, November 16, 2016, http://mehrkhane.com/fa/news/29762/%D8%B1%D8%A6%D8%B8%D8%B3%E2%80%8C%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%88-%D8%A9%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%8C%DA%AA-%D9%81%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B2%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A9%D8%B8%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%AA/ (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**
  [...]
  32. The Secretary-General welcomes the strong stances taken by the President, Hassan Rouhani, in favour of women’s empowerment during his election campaign, 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. 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.”

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. [...] 

  [...] 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.75 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.

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 positons.” (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 [...]

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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 [..]
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.31 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.32 In June 2019, the Advisor to the Minister of Interior on Women and Family Affairs, Fariba Nazaripour 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.33

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

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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. 68

[…] 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 […]


 […] 64 Center for Human Rights in Iran, ‘Rights activists urge Rouhani to nominate women to his cabinet’, 11 July 2017.


 […] 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 […]


- 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, Minoo 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?  

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. […]

Women may not serve in many high-level political positions or as judges in 2020

- Outright International et al., Written contribution to the Human Rights Committee, In preparation for the List of Issues prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Discrimination and violence based on gender, religion or belief, ethnicity and language, sexual orientation and gender identity, Human Rights Committee, 129th session (Geneva) 29 June – 24 July 2020

[...] IV) Women's and Girls’ Rights
[...] A) Women's participation in public and political life

55. Women have a limited presence in decision-making bodies in the country:
• Women are completely prohibited from holding the position of Supreme Leader.
• Candidates for the presidency in Iran must be what the constitution refers to as Rajol-E-Siasi (“political men”). Though many argue that the phrase as a whole could be understood as “political persons,” without a specification as to gender, the Guardian Council of the Constitution, 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.
• Additionally, no woman has ever served on the Guardian Council (body mandated to bring parliamentary resolutions in line with Shari’a and the Constitution and to oversee elections and vet candidates)
• Nor on the Expediency Council (body which serves as the Supreme Leader’s advisory arm, formulating "general policies for the state" and overseeing the implementation of those policies on the behalf of the Supreme Leader).

56. There are no legal limits laws on the ability of women to vote or become a candidate for parliament or the City and Village Councils. However, the Guardian Council is known to arbitrarily disqualify women candidates from running for election. For example, in the run-up to the 2020 elections, the Guardian Council disqualified 60 percent of female candidates.

57. Despite the existence of several mechanisms that ostensibly accept complaints regarding violations of citizens’ rights, such as the Article 90 Commission of the parliament (established based on Article 90 of the Constitution, offering a mechanism to citizens to file complaint against any of three brunch of power) and the Oversight Bodies for the exercise of Citizenship Rights in the country’s provincial courts, there is no evidence to suggest that complaints to these bodies are independently reviewed and investigated. Regarding complaints related to election process or candidate vetting, election law designates the Guardian Council as the arbitrator, which itself is the body responsible for the impugned decisions.

58. There are currently no female ministers in the government’s cabinet. No provincial governors are women. The government recently appointed three women as “county governor” out of 430 positions across the country. The administration appointed women to 13 out of 1,058 district governors, mostly in small provinces across the country. […]  

59. Women currently occupy only 5.8 percent (16 out of 290) of parliamentary seats in the new parliament elected in February 2020.

60. The percentage of female candidates who registered to run in the February 2020 election increased. […]  

B) Women in the judiciary

61. Under Iranian law, women cannot be appointed as judges. This rule is based on an interpretation of Shari’a according to which judging is done only by men, and women cannot issue rulings. 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.
The council that should choose the Supreme Leader and its mandate is to monitor him. In addition, the Guardian Council is responsible for overseeing elections and vetting candidates. The body, whose members are all appointed by the Supreme Leader, was initially established as an arbitration body between parliament and the Guardian Council.

Executive rankings at the provincial level: 1) Governor, 2) County Governor, 3) District Governor, 4) Village President.

The law of conditions for the election of judges of the judiciary: https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/90547


III. Situation of women and girls

Discrimination in political and judicial position

Gender discrimination is pervasive in political and judicial appointments, with the Islamic Republic of Iran ranking 181 of 193 countries in 2020 for women’s representation. Almost no women are represented in senior decision-making positions, with the positions of Supreme Leader, President, Head of the Judiciary, the Attorney General and the Head of the Supreme Court never being held by a woman, and no woman has been named to the 12-member Guardian Council. While there are no legal limits on the right to vote or to stand as municipal or parliamentary candidates, female representation is poor. The Guardian Council disqualified 60 per cent of all female candidates for the February 2020 parliamentary elections, with only 16 of the 290 seats in Parliament being won by women, as confirmed by the Government.

The Government has taken steps to increase female representation in executive positions. In 2017, it adopted a decision to allocate 30 per cent of public sector managerial positions to young people and women, increasing by 36 per cent the appointment of women between 2017 to 2019. Despite these advances, the decision was annulled by the Court of Administrative Justice in October 2020. The Government stated that the decision had been reversed as the measure had been found to be unfair and discriminatory. In addition, it is regrettable that women are ineligible to become judges. While women can be appointed as legal advisers, oversee proceedings and sit on three-member appeal panels, Iranian law prohibits them from rendering a final judgment.

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities? 1/4

Men from the Shiite Muslim majority population dominate the political system. Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics and government. No women candidates have ever been allowed to run for president.
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 female 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 Kurdish Human Rights Association, today, Tuesday 1 Auguste 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. All the women and girls riding a bike were warned by these forces with a written commitment to seize their bikes.

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


[...] Iran: Primary School Education

[...] Gross enrolment ratio (%) (2011-2016): Male = 106; Female = 112
Women’s Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018

[...]

Women’s Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), Women Annual Report 2018, 20 March 2018

[...]

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

[...]

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)

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Iran ranks 120th in the world with a total 9.5 million illiterates.

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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).

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. 

Girls committed suicide to escape early/forced marriages in 2020

  
  [...] A 15-year-old girl from Dishmuk village set herself ablaze. She was the mother of a one-year old. Alireza Afroogh, Chief of the regime’s Health Network, announced the devastating news on January 11, 2020.

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  It should be noted that a bill seeking to raise the age of marriage was rejected in the mullahs’ parliament. [...]

- **Iran News Wire, Iranian Child bride commits suicide after second pregnancy in NE Iran, 1 July 2020**

  [...] An Iranian child bride in Mashhad, northeastern Iran, committed suicide by taking drugs after her second pregnancy.

  According to the state-run Aftab website, the girl, identified as “Banafsheh” by her mother, was married off at the age of 11 and took her own life due to “postpartum depression” at the age of 18.

  Her 47-year-old mother told a social worker at the Sepad Police Station that her daughter’s husband, “Mahyar” proposed to her 11-year-old daughter seven years ago. Her mother approved of the marriage due to their traditions and because she was also married as a child. She said she convinced Banafsheh’s father to agree to the marriage.

  “I did not know I was destroying my daughter’s life,” the mother of the Iranian child bride said in comments carried by Iranian websites.

  “When she was still a child and should have been playing with dolls, she became pregnant and was cradling her first baby instead of a doll,” her mother added.

  The woman said that Banafsheh and Mahyar lived in Mashhad because Mahyar did not have a sufficient income to provide for the family in Sarakhs, a city on the northeastern border of Iran.

  After Banafsheh’s second pregnancy at the age of 18, her mother travelled to Mashhad to help her daughter with her second baby.
“I had to go back to Sarakhs to help with the farm, but three days later I heard my daughter took drugs from depression and committed suicide.” [...] 

❖ National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) Women’s Committee, The Lives of Women in Dishmok Village of Iran End in Flaming Suicides, 3 August 2020

[...] The lives of women in Dishmok suffering from domestic violence end in flaming suicides. Dishmok is a small and remote village in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province in southeastern Iran. This village has become well-known due to the rise in suicides among women tired of the domestic violence to which they are subjected. They feel they have no choice but to set their bodies on fire.

Forced and early marriages lead to suicide

Forced and child marriages are among the leading causes of women’s suicide and self-immolation in these areas, especially in Dishmok. Girls in Dishmok rarely make it to the sixth grade. Despite their high academic talent, most girls get engaged in the fourth grade of elementary school, get married in the fifth or sixth grade, and become pregnant immediately. Frequent pregnancies and multiple children are common among women in Dishmok. The city of Dehdasht is about an hour and a half away from Dishmok, but most of the girls from Dishmok have never been there. [...] 

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, Rayehe 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 makes ends meet for his five children.

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 [...]


  [...] 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 under age 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 Aretees 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. […]
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 semi-official 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-va Baluchistan and Kurdistan in 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.

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 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. 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. An international relations university professor in Sanandej 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. 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.
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 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 [...] 

IRGC forces continued to control security in Sisan-va Baluchistan and Kurdistan in 2020

❖ Rudaw, Deadly attack on IRGC could spark yet another conflict with Kurdish groups, 5 May 2020

[...] A group of gunmen ambushed a senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in western Iran on Tuesday, killing him and two of his guards. The brazen attack was carried out in broad daylight in Divandareh, in the heart of Kurdistan province – one of the most heavily militarized areas in the country.

In recent years the IRGC has taken increasingly proactive measures to smother clandestine Kurdish opposition groups by making thousands of kilometers of new dirt roads atop mountain peaks overlooking Kurdish areas, installing thousands of additional troops to seal off its porous western border with Iraq.

“Following a clash between the forces of Bayt al-Muqaddas Corps with the anti-revolutionary grouplet of PJAK in the Divandareh area, the Corps’ colonel Shakiba Salimi ... and two of his soldiers of Islam were martyred,” an outlet affiliated with the guards said on Tuesday.

The Kurdish armed group most active in the Divandareh area is the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), guerrillas affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which has been fighting the Turkish security forces since the early 1980s.

PJAK has not claimed responsibility – however, media outlets close to PJAK have published reports lauding the attack. IRGC-affiliated outlets such as Tasnim News Agency reported raids targeting what they called “separatist terrorist groups” in its western provinces, but refrained from naming their target.

Now, statements coming from senior security and political officials in Kurdistan province appear to suggest Iran may be preparing to strike back at PJAK.

The Supreme Leader’s representative in Kurdistan province, Mohammad Hosseini Shahroudi, said on Wednesday that the “anti-revolutionaries’ actions were an unforgivable treason.” The same day, General Alireza Marzabini — head of the border force in Kurdistan province, where the IRGC allegations foreign infiltrators entered Iran to carry out attacks — warned that enemies should expect “a hard and decisive response” from Iranian security forces.
PJAK and a number of other Kurdish armed groups, including the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I), operate underground cells roaming Iran’s Kurdish areas. Frequent clashes have occurred in recent years between Kurdish militants and Iranian security forces. Since the last major rumble in the Qandil mountains between PJAK and IRGC special forces in 2011, the parties have tried to avoid each other inside the Kurdish areas in Iran.

Now, cyclical tensions built up by insurgent attacks and grievances based in the Iranian security forces’ deployed to the area threaten to spill over once again.

In a statement published Sunday, senior PJAK member Amed Shaho launched a searing reproval on Tehran, portending that an escalation between PJAK and the IRGC may be forthcoming. “Iran is a state which has developed a fondness for massacres, arrests, torture, and violence,” Shaho said.

❖ Hengaw Human Rights Organization, At least 4 Kolbars injured after Iran’s Revolutionary guards ‘open fire on Kolbars’ at the Nowsoud borders, 22 May 2020

[...] At least four Kolbars have been wounded by the Iranian Revolutionary guard in the past few days on the borders of Nowsoud.

On Tuesday, May 19, Iran’s Revolutionary guard opened fire on a group of Kolbars in Nowsoud, Kermanshah province, as a result at least four Kolbars injured.

Hengaw reporter in Nowsoud announced the identities of the four Kolbars as "Salar" and "Keyhan" from Javanrood and "Mohammad Amini" from Sarvabad and "Zakaria" from the Shaho district of Ravansar.

"Revolutionary forces fired at them with hunting rifles and wounded several others, whose identities are still unknown.” Informed sources told Hengaw.

According to Hengaw statistics, in one month, nineteen Kolbars have been victimised on the Kurdistan borders, that seven of them have died.

From all these cases, sixteen (more than 84%) have been victimised in a direct fire by Iran’s Revolutionary guards and Turkish guards and also three have been victimised due to natural disasters. [...]”

❖ Tasnim News, IRGC General Dismisses Turkish Claim of PKK Presence in Iran, 13 June 2020

[...] Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a visit to military bases in northwestern Iran on Saturday, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour denied as “irresponsible and baseless” the allegations made by a Turkish official that the PKK elements are on Iranian soil.

[...] The commander also said that the IRGC Ground Force is in charge of security in Iran’s northwestern areas, is vigorously present along the border with full preparedness, and is closely and constantly monitoring the situation across the border regions. [...]”

❖ ACLED, Regional Overview: Middle East: 11-17 October 2020, October 2020

[...] Meanwhile, clashes between the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and the Kurdish rebel group Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) were reported in Iran’s western province of Kurdistan. At least two PJAK fighters were reportedly killed in Marivan county, and one female foreign militant was arrested (ISNA, 12 October 2020). The IRGC forces shelled the area for the next two days. Over a dozen armed clashes with PJAK and unidentified Kurdish armed groups have been reported in Iran’s western provinces in recent weeks. PJAK agreed to fully withdraw from Iran’s soil in 2011, following major Iran-Iraq cross-border raids by the IRGC. However, the armed group is believed to operate underground cells that roam Iran’s Kurdish areas, and its fighters sporadically clash with Iranian government forces (Rudaw, 5 May 2020). [...]”

❖ Hengaw Human Rights Organization, Militarization of the Targawar region of Urmia and artillery shelling by the Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Border Guards, 14 November 2020

[...] After yesterday’s armed clash near the borders of Urmia and the killing of 3 Iranian Border Guards, today the Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Guards forces shelled the location of the clash. Reports that military helicopters are patrolling the area.

According to a report received by Hengaw Human Rights Organization, around noon on Saturday, November 14, 2020, Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Guards forces militarized the Targawar border heights, especially the mountains of Bardarash, and shelled these heights.
Hengaw’s correspondent in Urmia reported that several military helicopters were also patrolling the area.

The move comes after clashes broke out yesterday between Iranian-Islamic Revolutionary Border Guards Regiment and a Kurdish opposition party. As a result of the clash, 2 officers and 1 Border Regiment soldier were killed and 4 others were wounded. [...] 

❖ Hengaw Human Rights Organization, Kurdish tradesman killed in Sistan-Baluchestan of Iran by the Iranian armed forces, 4 December 2020

[...] A kurdish tradesman from Baneh district of Kurdistan province in Iranian Kurdistan was killed by direct shooting from the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards in Sistan-Baluchestan province.

According to a report received by Hengaw Human Rights Organization, on Thursday, December 3, 2020, Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards forces on the border of Sistan-Baluchestan province opened fire on a car belonging to a kurdish tradesman from Baneh, identified as Behzad Muhammadi, and killed him.

According to informed sources, Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards forces on borders of Kafeh Baluchi in Sarbaz district of that province targeted Behzad Muhammadi from the head.

Also on Friday, November 27, another kurdish tradesman from Saqez of Kurdistan province, identified as Siamak Karimi, 30-year-old, was killed by Iranian police on the Fooman-Sabzevar road in Khorasan Razavi province of Eastern Iran. [...]

❖ Hengaw Human Rights Organization, Kurdish activists, Dariush Moradi and Anisa Jafari-Mehr are still being held in the IRGC’s intelligence detention center, 6 December 2020

[...] Two Kurdish civil and cultural activists from Islamabad-Gharb (Shabad) district of Kermanshah province in Iranian Kurdistan are still in detention after two weeks of detention without having the right to access a lawyer.

According to a report received by Hengaw Human Rights Organization, two weeks after the arrest of Dariush Moradi, a member of the editorial board of the Hesareh (Star) cultural and literary site, and Anisa Jafari Mehr, a member of the Writers Council of “J” Quarterly and a Kurdish language teacher, they are still being held in the Nabi Akram IRGC intelligence detention center in Kermanshah.

[...] On Monday, November 23, 2020, IRGC intelligence forces in Kermanshah raided the homes of Dariush Moradi and Anisa Jafari-Mehr and detained them.

[...] These two Kurdish activists were also detained in December 2020, along with several other Kurdish activists from Islamabad-Gharb, by intelligence forces of the Nabi Akram IRGC Corps in Kermanshah.

[...] On Monday, November 23, 2020, IRGC intelligence forces in Kermanshah raided the homes of Dariush Moradi and Anisa Jafari-Mehr and detained them.

[ [...] These two Kurdish activists were also detained in December 2020, along with several other Kurdish activists from Islamabad-Gharb, by intelligence forces of the Nabi Akram IRGC Corps in Kermanshah.

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 [...] 

Information on whether the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran mentioned the “continued indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of unarmed Kurdish smugglers” in his reports in 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.


  [...] 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. [...] 43 NGO submission.

- **OHCHR, Statement By Javaid 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. [...] 93 NGO submission.

Evidence of whether the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran mentioned the “continued indiscriminate, extrajudicial killing of unarmed Kurdish smugglers” in his reports in 2020

- **UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020**

  [...] III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran
[...] F. Situation of minorities
[...] In the border areas of Kurdistan, Ilam, West Azerbaijan and Kermanshah Provinces, Kurdish couriers (kolbars) continue to face excessive and lethal force by border officials. [...]

[...] II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran
[...] C. Minorities
Ethnic and religious minorities
[...] Concerns remain over the use of excessive force by border security forces against Kurdish border couriers (kulbaran). Shootings by security forces reportedly resulted in 44 kulbaran deaths between 1 January and 28 September 2020. The Government claimed that shootings by border guards only targeted dangerous smugglers and kulbaran who were working illegally. [...] 73


Authorities prohibited most schools from teaching the Kurdish language (with the exception of the University of Kurdistan) in 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. [...] 9.2 LINGUISTIC RIGHTS FOR MINORITIES

❖ 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. [...] 9.2 LINGUISTIC RIGHTS FOR MINORITIES

❖ 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. […]

  […] The Persian language remained the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education. […]

Evidence the authorities prohibited most schools from teaching the Kurdish language in 2020

- Outright International et al., Written contribution to the Human Rights Committee, In preparation for the List of Issues prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Discrimination and violence based on gender, religion or belief, ethnicity and language, sexual orientation and gender identity, Human Rights Committee, 129th session (Geneva) 29 June – 24 July 2020
  […] II) Human Rights of Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities
  A) Education in mother tongue
  […] 23. Under Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution, Persian is the only official language in the country. However, the same article stipulates that “the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian.” The phrasing of this article effectively restricts the domains in which languages other than Persian can be used, including in schools where teaching in minority language is permitted only for literature classes. This provision does not involve guarantees that children belonging to linguistic minorities will have access to education in their mother tongue.
  24. However, in practice, there has been no elementary, middle, or high schools in the public system that teach the foremost minority languages, such as Azeri-Turkish, Balochi or Kurdish. […] 25. Following a lawsuit against the Ministry of Education initiated in March 2018, the Court of Administrative Justice ruled in March 2020 that the state is required to produce and prepare textbooks for teaching ethnic language literature until the end of secondary school in the country’s schools. It is not clear whether the Ministry of Education has decided to appeal the ruling or whether it will be implemented.
  26. Education in some minority languages like Kurdish has been available only through private classes, reducing the accessibility and affordability of Kurdish education. Furthermore, private teachers are required to obtain a license from the state to teach Kurdish, which places an additional barrier to private practice. […]

- Rudaw, Iran sentences Kurdish language teacher to 10 years in jail, 17 July 2020
  […] In the Kurdish-majority city of Sanandaj, like the rest of Iran, Persian is the only language of instruction in primary and secondary schools. Kurdish-language instruction is authorized under the Iranian constitution. […]

- UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020
III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

F. Situation of minorities

It was also reported that mother-tongue education for the Azerbaijani-Turk, Kurdish and Ahwazi Arab communities continued to be threatened by Government policies. [...] 

- **Open Democracy, Iran: how to kill a language, 6 August 2020**
  - [...] Criminalizing the Kurdish language
  - In Iran, where people of non-Persian ethnicities constitute more than half of the population, Persian remains the sole legal language of instruction in K-12 and college education. Ethnic minorities, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen, face entrenched discrimination. Although Iran signed the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and despite the fact that Article 15 of The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran enshrines the right to use non-Persian languages of Iran “for teaching of their literature in schools,” teaching and learning Kurdish language and literature has been historically met with harsh reprisal. Even the constitution describes non-Persian languages of Iran with colonizing terms such as “regional and tribal languages.” [...] 

- **Arab News, No country for minorities: The agony of Iran’s ethnic Arabs, Kurds, Balochis and Azeris, 8 March 2021**
  - [...] Like other minorities in Iran, Kurds are not permitted to learn their native tongue on the national curriculum. [...] 

**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 Zanjan 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. [...] 


[...] 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. [...] 


[...] 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. [...] 


  [...] 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]


  [...] 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. [...] 

**Evidence of government prohibition of the Azeri language in schools in 2020**

- **Outright International et al., Written contribution to the Human Rights Committee, In preparation for the List of Issues prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN: Discrimination and violence based on gender, religion or belief, ethnicity and language, sexual orientation and gender identity, Human Rights Committee, 129th session (Geneva) 29 June – 24 July 2020**

  [...] II) Human Rights of Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities

  A) Education in mother tongue

  [...] 23. Under Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution, Persian is the only official language in the country. However, the same article stipulates that “the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian.” The phrasing of this article effectively restricts the domains in which languages other than Persian can be used, including in schools where teaching in minority language is permitted only for literature classes. This provision does not involve guarantees that children belonging to linguistic minorities will have access to education in their mother tongue.

  24. However, in practice, there has been no elementary, middle, or high schools in the public system that teach the foremost minority languages, such as Azeri-Turkish, Balochi or Kurdish.
Following a lawsuit against the Ministry of Education initiated in March 2018, the Court of Administrative Justice ruled in March 2020 that the state is required to produce and prepare textbooks for teaching ethnic language literature until the end of secondary school in the country’s schools. It is not clear whether the Ministry of Education has decided to appeal the ruling or whether it will be implemented. […]

UN General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General, 21 July 2020
[...] III. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran
[...] F. Situation of minorities
[...] It was also reported that mother-tongue education for the Azerbaijani-Turk, Kurdish and Ahwazi Arab communities continued to be threatened by Government policies. […]

Iran Human Rights, Human Right Organizations Call for the Release of Abbas Lisani, 28 July 2020
[...] Similar to other ethnic groups in Iran, the Azerbaijani Turk people in Iran face discrimination and barriers in access to education, as well as in access to other economic, social, cultural, and linguistic rights. One of the most important issues that Mr. Lisani had strongly and consistently challenged is the lack of opportunities to learn and promote Azerbaijani Turks’ mother tongue, and the state interferences and discrimination that prevent people from using it freely in the private and public spheres. […]

Open Democracy, Iran: how to kill a language, 6 August 2020
[...] Criminalizing the Kurdish language
In Iran, where people of non-Persian ethnicities constitute more than half of the population, Persian remains the sole legal language of instruction in K-12 and college education. Ethnic minorities, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen, face entrenched discrimination. […]

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. […]

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]


[...] 3.95 There is a strong societal taboo against homosexuality. International LGBTQ (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. LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ issues, including blocking websites or content within sites that discuss such issues. NGOs are unable to work openly on LGBTQ 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


[...] 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. [...] Young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders and community elders in 2020

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. [...] Young gay men faced harassment and abuse from family members, religious figures, school leaders and community elders in 2020

76 Crimes, Iran official charged for cartoon of loving same-sex parents, 18 July 2020

[...] A top Iranian aide has been charged with “spreading moral corruption” for sharing a cartoon online that showed loving lesbian and gay parents. [...] Earlier [on May 15], on the occasion of World Family Day, Molaverdi posted a photo on her Telegram channel, in which there were two illustrations of same-sex couples. Subsequently, Mashregh News published screenshots of this post from Molaverdi’s Telegram and wrote: “on the occasion of World Family Day, Molaverdi has published a post on her Telegram that depicts the deviant and reprehensible homosexual families made up of two women and a child and two men and a child.” In response to this report and waves of attacks on social media, Molaverdi said she had accidentally posted the image on her Telegram channel and quickly deleted it afterwards. Following the news of the indictment against Molaverdi, some influential social media profiles in Iran threatened her with the same disastrous fate as the one Lot’s wife meets in the Bible for promoting homosexuality. [...]
6Rang, Written contribution to the Human Rights Committee From 6Rang (Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network) In preparation for the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for the Islamic Republic of Iran: Non-discrimination, right to life, freedom from torture, right to liberty and security of persons and right to fair trial, Human Rights Committee, 130 Session (12 Oct 2020 - 06 Nov 2020), 12 October 2020

[...] I - Right to non-discrimination (Article 2, 26)

[...] 2. Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has continuously failed to protect members of the LGBT community from harassment, persecution, violence, and discrimination. IRI is extremely hostile towards the LGBT community and any form of same-sex sexual conduct or non-binary gender expression as well as any form of civil activism and defense of human rights that is concerned with sexual orientation and gender identity.

[...] The lives of LGBT people in Iran is defined by exclusion from family homes, denial of employment, prevention from attending school, forced marriage, jail and detention, flogging and execution, “street” violence, and other physical and verbal attacks in public and private settings. [...] UN 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, Javaid Rehman, 11 January 2021

[...] II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

[...] C. Minorities

[...] Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons

27. The Special Rapporteur regrets that individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender experience human rights violations and widespread discrimination.

[...] Other forms of violence and discrimination include sustained domestic abuse and bullying in educational institutions and workplaces. These acts remain largely underreported due to the victims’ fear of persecution. The Government highlighted its recognition of transgender persons and claimed it had engaged in raising public awareness about their rights.

29. Substantial barriers are placed on lesbians and gays in accessing the health-care system. [...] The Government claimed that there were no restrictions on medical services and that any treatment was administered with consent. [...] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021

[...] Civil Liberties

[...] F Rule of Law

[...] F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? 1/4

[...] 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. [...] Societal discrimination in 2017 on linguistic grounds against groups whose native language was not Persian or against non-Shia persons


[...] 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 Kahan, 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 a 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 it 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. […]


[...] 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


[...] 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. Omission in 2018

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 childbirth. 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

  - 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)
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. [...]

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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. [...] 

Information on government financial assistance for individuals to undergo gender reassignment surgery in 2020

  [...] Women’s Rights, Children’s Rights, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity
  [...] Although Iran permits and subsidizes sex reassignment surgery for transgender people, no law prohibits discrimination against them. [...] 

6.3.3. Omissions in 2019

Evidence UNSR reports mentioned discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, punishment, and denial of rights of LGBTI persons in 2020

  [...] II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran
  [...] C. Minorities
  [...] Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons
  27. The Special Rapporteur regrets that individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender experience human rights violations and widespread discrimination.
  [...] 28. The death penalty can be imposed for consensual sexual activity between members of the same sex in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with its applicability dependent on the religion and marital status of the persons involved and the nature of the acts (passive or active) while “kissing and touching out of lust” between persons of the same sex is punishable by flogging. The criminalization of same-sex consensual acts legitimizes violence by State actors and private individuals, including the use of torture, beatings and rape by law enforcement and vigilantes. [...] Other forms of violence and discrimination
include sustained domestic abuse and bullying in educational institutions and workplaces. These acts remain largely underreported due to the victims’ fear of persecution. The Government highlighted its recognition of transgender persons and claimed it had engaged in raising public awareness about their rights.

29. Substantial barriers are placed on lesbians and gays in accessing the health-care system.[…] The Government claimed that there were no restrictions on medical services and that any treatment was administered with consent. […]

81 Islamic Penal Code, arts. 233–240.


❖ UN OHCHR, Statement by Javaid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council - Item 4, 9 March 2021

[…] I also outline in this report the wide-spread discrimination against sexual minorities in Iran, including hate speech from public officials and most disturbingly the application of the death penalty for consensual same-sex relations. I am troubled that so-called “reparative” therapies are imposed on members of the LGBT community, especially reports of administration of electric shocks, hormones and strong psychoactive medications for children experiencing gender nonconformity and same-sex attraction. I urge the authorities to eliminate all forms of discrimination against all minorities and to ensure the equal rights, respect and dignity of all individuals. […]

6.3.4 Omissions in 2020

Evidence of the continued existence morality policy units to manage defiance of the hijab law in 2020

❖ Middle East Eye, 'Enough is enough': Iranians frustrated over police drive to enforce hijab-wearing in cars, 25 October 2020

[…] Iranian motorists are increasingly being summoned to the offices of the morality police, known as the Hijab Watch, for violating the law that requires women to wear a veil in public. The growing trend is also targeting Iranian men who have been seen driving with female passengers not wearing the hijab, or who had their cars used by unveiled female relatives, as the men of the family are also expected to help enforce the law.

The initiative has seen mounting frustration among Iranians already under pressure from a crippling economic crisis and the coronavirus pandemic. It has also been criticised for making mistakes and wasting people’s time.

After receiving a text message, the driver or owner of the vehicle has 10 days in which to report to the morality police, and sign a letter committing not to violate hijab rules again. If the driver ignores the text, his or her car can be impounded. Similarly, if those who sign the letter are spotted breaking their commitment, their cars can also be impounded.

Hijab Watch is operated by Iran’s police force, whose chief is appointed by Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. […]


[…] III. Situation of women and girls
[…] […] Women’s rights advocates
[…] 53. The police, Basij militia and vigilante morality police enforce compulsory veiling laws, with vigilante justice reportedly resulting in violence against women, including acid attacks and deaths. […]
In yet another measure to ramp up pressure on Iranian women, the clerical regime has set up a garrison in Qom to organize and coordinate all members of the Bassij force who are involved in “promoting virtue and forbidding evil.” (The state-run Young Journalists’ Club – November 17, 2020).

In a related development, Vahid Amirian, social deputy for the IRGC in Tehran, told a gathering of Bassij paramilitary forces on January 27, 2021, that they had set up 300 groups for promoting good and evil. In return for incentives, they will give verbal warnings to at least 12 people every day.

Representatives of the mullah’s Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, prioritized a new wave of suppression against Iranian women, justifying them by citing “social security” concerns.

The mullah also called on the courts to support those who forbid evil and promote virtue, referring to the Bassij forces who target women in the streets, violently forcing them observe their mandatory Hijab.

Evidence from UNSR report on continued persecution of Kurdish language teachers in 2020

Kurdish teacher Zara Mohammadi was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on national security charges by the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court on 12 July 2020 after an unfair trial. The Government claimed she had received a fair trial and that the verdict was being appealed.

Evidence Ahwazi detainees continued to be tortured in the Intelligence Ministry detention center in Ahwaz in 2020

Following the bloody crackdown on prisoners in Ahwaz's Central prison last Tuesday, a large number of political prisoners from the prison have been transferred to the intelligence services' secret detention centres and have been subject to torture in the past few days, local sources have informed the Ahwaz Human Rights Organisation (AHRO).

7. Section 7. Worker Rights

7.3.2. Omissions in 2018

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.
[...] 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, 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 (SWTSC) 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 Moharramzadeh, Hossein Karimi Sabzevar, Reza Shahabi and Farahnaz Shiri are five bus drivers and members of SWTSC 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. […] 

**Dismissal of labor activists due to their trade union activities in 2020**

- **Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Workers Strike Amid Worsening Economy, Deadly Coronavirus Crisis, 29 July 2020**
  […] Meanwhile, employees at the Haft Tapeh sugar factory in the southwestern city of Shush have been on strike for nearly 50 days demanding unpaid wages, a renewal of their social-security benefits, and the return of workers fired for protesting, including prominent activist Esmail Bakhshi, who has been detained several times in recent months. […]

- **Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021: Iran, 3 March 2021**
  […] Civil Liberties
  […] E Associational and Organizational Rights
  […] E3 0-4 pts
  Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 1/4
  […] Workers who engage in strikes are vulnerable to dismissal and arrest. […] 

**Evidence of continuation of largescale rallies and protests by teachers, truckers, and workers from a wide variety of sectors demanding wage increases and payment of back wages in 2020**

- **ACLED, Regional Overview: Middle East: 12-18 April 2020, April 2020**
In Iran, dozens of protests were held by farmers and labor groups over a range of issues, including unpaid salaries and benefits as well as farming water supplies. At least eight labor protests were related to problems for workers and businesses caused by the spread of the coronavirus. [...] 

❖ ACLED, CDT Spotlight: Social Unrest in Iran: 12-18 April 2020, April 2020
[...] Multiple sources of grievances
Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrations in Iran have largely been linked to economic and labor grievances. Among the most common sources of protests were the requests of financial aid and the disbursment of months-long unpaid salaries, as well as discontent with the tardive introduction of confinement measures and the disposal of medical waste in urban areas. [...] 

❖ ACLED, Regional Overview: Middle East: 3-9 May 2020, May 2020
[...] In Iran, workers across various sectors protested over unpaid salaries, unfavorable contracts, and unemployment, culminating in a 30% increase in demonstrations compared to the week prior. The spike comes as the number of coronavirus infections and fatalities continues to fall, possibly portending a return to widespread protest activity. Concern with the perceived mismanagement of the coronavirus outbreak along with lingering anger over both the violent suppression of demonstrations in November 2019 and the accidental downing of a passenger plane in January 2020 could all lead to escalating unrest in the coming months, if not weeks. [...] 

❖ ACLED, Regional Overview: Middle East: 10-16 May 2020, May 2020
[...] Protests continued in Iran against unpaid salaries and unfavorable contracts. Multiple protests were related to the coronavirus pandemic, as drivers, hair salon owners, and gym owners demanded to either be allowed to re-open businesses or receive financial aid. There was also one report of a prison riot, but officials have denied that the incident took place. [...] 

❖ Center for Human Rights in Iraq, Strikes Break Out in Iran’s Critical Oil Industry Amid Continuing Labor Unrest, 4 August 2020
[...] With workers in Iran’s critical oil refining, petrochemicals and drilling industries striking in southern Iran over working conditions and unpaid wages since July 31, and sugar mill workers in Khuzestan Province protesting unpaid wages since June 13, the plight of Iran’s workers continues to prompt unrest in the country. [...] 

❖ Zamaneh Media, Labor Rights in Iran: Special Report on Worker Strikes in the Oil, Gas, and Petrochemical Industry in Iran, December 2020
[...] The Oil Workers’ Strike of Summer 2020
[...] In July 2020, a new chapter opened in this history: the contractual workers of the oil industry organized one of the biggest workers’ strikes Iran has seen in the last three decades. In 2020, oil and gas workers’ strikes began on August 2nd with the call of the workers of the Central Piping Group and the Project Team. The call to protest and strike came when the negotiation between workers and contractors, as well as officials from the Ministry of Labor office and authorities of the Services Department of Special Economic Zones, failed. The workers demanded payment of deferred wages, a salary increase, reduction of working hours, and improvements in work conditions. ¹
The strike spread with the help of social media and online messenger applications such as Telegram, and by the fourth week, it covered more than 50 oil centers and power plants in ten different provinces of the country. For more than a month, more than 10,000 energy contractual workers joined the strike in protest of job insecurity, low wages, salary payment delays, lack of safe and healthy working conditions, and inappropriate housing. 

Demands of Contractual Workers of the Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Industry
The syndicate demands of the oil, gas, and petrochemical contractual workers can be categorized in five general headings:
A) Job security: The main complaint, according to Mohammad Maljoo, an independent economist, is against “what is called triangular employment: a worker works for a governmental employer but is hired by a contractor company that acts as a broker.”
The workers’ main demand is to have a direct contract with the main governmental employer and to eliminate intermediary contracting companies - at least the elimination of second-hand contractors - in the private sector.

B) Decent wages and payment of deferred wages: At the forefront of the workers’ demands of the “Central Piping Group and Project Team” call was the problem of late or non-payment of wages and salary increases. In their call, they demanded a salary of between 4.5 to 12 million tomans per month for various levels of skills. The Supreme Labor Council, the governmental entity that calculates and announces the national minimum wage every year, set the 2020 minimum wage much lower than the amount the workers’ representatives demanded. The amount was set without the consent of workers’ representatives - who do have legal say in this and are often chosen from the Islamic labor organizations, which are government-approved unions. The amount was set also without considering the official inflation rate and the cost of the household subsistence baskets (which are the two criteria for determining the minimum wage under Article 41 of the Labor Law). The final 2020 minimum wage was set for one million and 835 thousand tomans. In an earlier common statement, independent labor organizations demanded an increase in the minimum wage to 9 million tomans.

During the strike, the oil workers wrote a letter to the Islamic Republic’s Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, demanding that companies must be forced to pay their wages, benefits, and assurance rights in a manner commensurate with their job position.

C) Work in safe environments and under standard conditions: In February 2007, the contractual workers of the South Pars projects asked for in their statement of demands a “suitable dormitory and bath” at their workplace. 12 years later, this demand still has no response. The working conditions of the oil contract workers are exhausting. During the day, they face long working hours in an environment filled with toxic gases and pollution coupled with a lack of safety tools. For rest, they get a dormitory bed in unsanitary and crowded Conex sheds and receive low-quality food. For the commute between the field and the dorms, they get non-standard transportation vehicles that often lack air conditioners in the fatal heat of summer - especially in the southern regions of the country where refineries and oil, gas, and petrochemical projects are based.

This summer, the temperature in some oil areas reached over 50 degrees Celsius. Government affiliated offices were closed, but the oil and gas contractors refused to close work or even reduce the working hours, resulting in tragic consequences. On 7 August 2020, Ebrahim Arabzadeh, a contractual worker of the South Tehran Company (Bandar Mahshahr reservoirs and storage facilities) died due to overheating during work.

Project workers - the dormitory and rest area in one of the petrochemical sites. According to Article 96 of the Labor Law, the General Inspectorate of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for monitoring the proper implementation of the Labor Law and observing the rules of technical protection and safety.

D) Legal contracts: From February 2007 to July 2016, oil, gas, and petrochemical workers have demanded the elimination of illegal contracts, which include oral contracts and signatures on white contract, a common practice in which terms are not written at the moment of signing. They have also constantly objected to illegal parts or clauses within the contracts (for example, when the duration of work is set at less than 15 days, etc.). Contractors do not even abide by or implement the content of these contracts. Additionally, in “special economic zones”, workers are not subject to the minimum benefits of the labor law.

E) The right to collective organization and negotiation: Due to the historical sensitivity of Iran’s regime on oil workers and oil’s decisive role in the Iranian economy, the oil industry work environment is highly securitized governmentally. No worker organization is recognized officially by the state. Protests result in job contracts not being renewed. For repeated protests, the workers not only lose their jobs, but their names are also added to the “blacklist” of contractors. Workers are demanding recognition of their right to organize, form syndicates, and go on strikes, as well as the elimination of the legal and security prosecution of workers and labor activists. […]

1 The workers of the “Central Piping Group and Project Team” who called for the strike are in fact skilled workers (including manufacturers, electricians, welders, plumbers, etc.) who have a special position in production and are not replaced because of their expertise, thus their collective abandonment of work would mean the closure of projects.

2 ILNA, 29 July 2020

II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

B. Rights to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly and to freedom of expression

Labour rights

A journalist and four Haft Tappeh workers were arrested during July 2020 protests,60 and the Ministry of Education dismissed Mr. Habibi in April 2020.61

Several strikes took place in recent months across different sectors,62 with reports of excessive actions against strikers. In June 2020, police reportedly violently stopped a nurses' protest in Mashhad63 and briefly detained 11 participants, while seven North Khorasan Teachers' Union members had prison and flogging sentences confirmed for participation in privatization protests that took place in 2018.64

Evidence of increased pressure against these protesters through intimidation, wrongful arrests, and arbitrary charges in 2020

Zamaneh Media, Classrooms Will not Open While Teachers Are in Prison: Special labor report on teachers and the reopening of schools in Iran, September 2020

Teachers Have No Protest Rights!

The Islamic Republic of Iran does not allow independent syndicate activities for teachers and does not recognize their right to strike and protest. Police and security forces have repeatedly cracked down on teachers gathering to protest. The Judiciary has charged and issued harsh sentences to many teachers' syndicate activists.

In February 2020, seven teachers' union activists in North Khorasan were sentenced to more than 41 years in prison and more than 200 lashes in two separate cases judged by the Revolutionary Court and the Criminal Court of Bojnourd.2 These teachers were arrested during the 2018 protests. Among the teachers who are currently imprisoned due to their syndicate activities at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year are Mohammad Habibi (Member of the Board and Head of the Teachers' Union of Iran), Esmaeil Abdi (Secretary of the Teachers' Union of Iran), Yaser Amini Azar (Member of the Teachers' Union of Mahabad), Mohammad Ali Zahmatkesh (Member of the Teachers' Union of Shiraz) and Hashem Khashtar (Member of the Board of Directors of the Teachers' Union of Mash'had). Nahid Fath'alian, Zeinab Hamrang, and Seyed Biglou are retired teachers who are also in prison. They were arrested during a gathering of retired teachers last year.

This is the third October (Mehr) that Mohammad Habibi is behind prison bars instead of in the classroom. He has been held alternately in Evin and Fashafouyeh prison for the past 28 months without a single day of leave. Mohammad Habibi is a critic of the process of commodification of education and protests the privatization of schools in Iran. [...]


I. Introduction

While the release and pardons of some human rights defenders, lawyers, dual and foreign nationals and labour rights activists are welcomed, State targeting of individuals from these groups continues.

II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

B. Rights to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly and to freedom of expression

Labour rights

63 Ibid., p. 10.
21. The Special Rapporteur recognizes some recent positive steps concerning labour rights, but encourages the Government to end the harassment of labour rights activists. He is encouraged by the authorities’ increased consideration of the issues at the Haft Tappeh agro-industrial company, including at a meeting on 5 August 2020,56 and by the reported pardons of some detained activists. The issues presented by worker representatives at the 5 August meeting had reignited protests in June 2020, including over unpaid wages, which had increased after the company’s 2016 privatization.57 The reported pardoning and release of Haft Tappeh workers Esmail Bakhshi, Mohammad Khonifar and Ali Nejati,58 and independent teachers’ union representative Mohammad Habibi,59 is positive. A journalist and four Haft Tappeh workers were arrested during July 2020 protests,60 and the Ministry of Education dismissed Mr. Habibi in April 2020.61 The Government claimed that charges in the open cases against Mr. Bakhshi, Mr. Khonifar and Mr. Nejati were at the preliminary stages and that Mr. Habibi had requested retirement.

22. A lack of independent trade unions has restricted workers’ ability to negotiate during a time of economic recession. Several strikes took place in recent months across different sectors,62 with reports of excessive actions against strikers. In June 2020, police reportedly violently stopped a nurses’ protest in Mashhad63 and briefly detained 11 participants, while seven North Khorasan Teachers’ Union members had prison and flogging sentences confirmed for participation in privatization protests that took place in 2018.64 The Government stated it had made reform efforts to promote and improve worker associations and to strengthen tripartite talks.

23. Labour rights activists continue to be imprisoned. Haft Tappeh supporter Sepideh Qoliyan was returned to prison on 21 June 2020 after being freed on bail, as she refused to request a pardon.65 The Government stated a pardon must be requested for it to be considered. Jafar Azimzadeh, a leader of the Free Union of Iranian Workers, remains detained after receiving a new 13-month prison sentence, upheld by an appeals court in August 2020.66 He has since been attacked by fellow prisoners, contracted COVID-19, been denied medical treatment, transferred prisons and been put in solitary confinement.67 The Government claimed his general health was good and that he had denied the attack claim. Esmail Abdi, an Iranian Teachers’ Trade Association member, was due for release in November 2020 after serving a five-year sentence on arbitrary national security charges for advocating for teachers’ and education rights.68 However, the authorities have revived a suspended 10-year sentence against him, also related to labour rights activism.69 Mr. Abdi reportedly contracted COVID-1970 and is not receiving proper treatment for other conditions. The Government claimed that a prison clinic physician had recently examined him and had reported no specific health problem. [...]
sentence that he had received after his arrest during the 2019 May 1 ("May Day") protests on the charge of “assembly and collusion to act against national security.” On June 21, authorities arrested Sepideh Gholian, another labor activist, who was sentenced to five years in prison on the charge of “assembly and collusion to act against national security,” after she was arrested during the Haftappeh strike in November 2018.

[...] Due Process Rights, Fair Trial Standards, and Torture in Prison

[...] Authorities also have opened new cases against human rights defenders who were serving time in prison. On May 28, Ismael Abdi, a prominent member of Iran’s Teachers Union on a furlough from serving a 6-year sentence he received for his activism, was detained again after authorities reimposed another previously suspended 10-year prison sentence, without his prior knowledge. [...]  

❖  **Amnesty International, Urgent Action: British-Iranian Labour Activist Detained, 23 February 2021**

[...] Mehran Raoof, a British-Iranian national and a labour rights activist, is being arbitrarily detained in Tehran’s Evin prison.

[...] Mehran Raoof was detained around the same time as several other labour rights activists across the country in October 2020 in a coordinated crackdown to quash advocacy on workers’ rights.

[...] At least one labour rights activist, Arash Johari, who was arrested during the crackdown in October 2020, has since been sentenced to 16 years in prison in connection with his labour rights activism, leading to fears that others, including Mehran Raoof, could also face harsh prison sentences. [...]