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EXPOSING IRAN'S SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY



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Exposing Iran's Systematic Human Rights Abuses and Crimes Against Humanity

The month of March saw a milestone session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva with regards to the violations of human rights in Iran, in addition to several reports by human rights organizations shedding light on the Iranian regime's crimes against humanity and violations of the rights of Iranian women and girls.

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights violations in Iran, Professor Javaid Rehman, reached significant conclusions at the end of his six-year mandate indicating the need for international investigations into the massacre of political prisoners in Iran in 1988. In his report to the Human Rights Council, he urged the international community to call for accountability with respect to long-standing emblematic events that have been met with persistent impunity, including the enforced disappearances and summary and arbitrary executions of 1981 and 1988 and the protests of November 2019.

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission, appointed in November 2022 by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate violations of human rights during Iran protests, also submitted its first report stating, "The violent repression of peaceful protests and pervasive institutional discrimination against women and girls has led to serious human rights violations by the Government of Iran, many amounting to CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY."

On March 6, Amnesty International issued a report containing testimonies of dozens of Iranian women and men which provided "a frightening glimpse into the daily reality of women and girls" in Iran because of the "Iranian authorities' intensifying persecution of women and girls, designed to wear down their courageous resistance to the country's abusive, degrading and discriminatory compulsory veiling laws."

In the meantime, the London-based Justice for Iran (JFI) human rights NGO, released a report entitled, "Waging War on Civilians: Exposing Iran's Repressive Units and Crimes Against Humanity," in which it listed 20 military units and 542 individuals responsible for committing crimes against humanity in Iran during the crackdown on the 2022 nationwide protests and uprising in Iran.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

In his February 9, 2024, [report to the UN Human Rights Council](#), Professor Javaid Rehman provided an overview of the situation of human rights in Iran. He expressed deep concern "at the spike in death penalty sentences and executions," "executions in relation to the protests," "execution of child offenders," "execution of women," "arbitrary arrests, detention and violations of the right to a fair trial," "increasing limitations placed upon the rights to freedom of opinion and expression," "the situation of women and girls," including "law and policies of enforced veiling," and "rape and sexual violence," "the arrest and detention of human rights defenders and lawyers," and "the situation of minorities."



The situation of women and girls

The “situation of women and girls” was one of the UNSR’s key concerns. Following are excerpts from his report in this regard:

70. Throughout his mandate, the Special Rapporteur has provided recommendations calling upon the authorities to eliminate in law and in practice all forms of persecution of and discrimination and violence against women and girls; take all necessary steps to advance their equal participation in public life; ensure that the rights of women human rights defenders are protected; and ratify and fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. He regrets that the Iranian authorities have effectively maintained a system of gender apartheid and insisted on draconian laws, policies and practices that increasingly violate the human rights and human dignity of Iranian girls and women. The Special Rapporteur urges the Iranian authorities to respect the fundamental human rights and dignity of all Iranian girls and women and allow them their right to make informed choices about how they express themselves, in particular about their clothing.

Laws and practices encouraging violence against women and girls

71. The Special Rapporteur seeks an immediate end to the monitoring of women’s dress or behaviour in public or private life through the use of the so-called morality police or surveillance technology.

72. The Special Rapporteur has clearly stated on numerous occasions the unacceptability of violence against girls and women. However, he is shocked at the persistence of laws and practice that continue to support and encourage violence against women and girls. Misogynistic legislation and discriminatory practices and behaviour have continued to permeate many aspects of public and private life. The criminal justice system continues to exonerate perpetrators of violence against women and girls, or reduce their punishments, as well as exempting them from criminal liability and qisas, for example for a man witnessing his wife committing adultery, who kills or assaults either or both parties.

Age of criminal responsibility

73. The Special Rapporteur remains extremely concerned about the age of criminal responsibility in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Assigning criminal responsibility to girls from the age of 9 lunar years for qisas and hudud crimes has not only resulted in tragic cases, whereby girls who have committed offences have been sentenced to death and executed, it is also gender discriminatory and defies international human rights law. When reviewing these cases, it is tragic to note that the girls who were executed were themselves victims, often of domestic violence or forced marriages. The Special Rapporteur has previously raised alarm at the executions of Mahboubeh Mofidi and Zeinab Sekaanvand in 2018 and raises his deep concern about the case of Samira Sabzian, who was executed in December 2023.

Absence of women in political and administrative leadership

74. The Special Rapporteur regrets the almost complete absence of women in roles of political and administrative leadership in the country, as established by the failure to accept the candidacy of a woman for the positions of Supreme Leader and President. Currently, there are no women in the Assembly of Experts, the Expediency Council or the influential Guardian Council. Female representation remains poor in the Iranian parliament – in the parliamentary elections in February 2020, only 16 of the 290 (5.8 per cent) seats were won by women and 60 per cent of all female candidates were disqualified by the Guardian Council. There is no female minister in the Cabinet and while three women were appointed

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as county governors out of 430 governorships, all were replaced after Ebrahim Raisi was elected President. As of September 2023, there is reportedly one female serving as a county governor and one woman as Vice-President for women and family affairs. Women are ineligible to serve as the head of the judiciary and cannot be appointed as adjudicating judges.

Age of girls' marriage

75. Related to the age of maturity is the age of marriage, which for girls currently remains 13, and even younger girls can be married at the behest of the father and with the approval of the courts. Child marriages are forced marriages and inherently destructive to the life of the girl child. The Special Rapporteur is extremely concerned at the increasing number of child marriages in recent years. He urges the authorities to ... end child marriages and to raise the minimum age of marriage for both women and men to 18.

76. There is substantial disappointment at the inherent gender discrimination at all institutional levels, as well as within the law, practices and societal attitudes.

Institutional impunity and absence of accountability

In the section dealing with the continuing institutional impunity and absence of accountability, the UNSR expressed regret that "Continuing impunity and the absence of accountability remains a noticeable but unfortunate feature of the constitutional, political and legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Lack of independent and transparent investigation of Mahsa Jina Amini's death

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The Special Rapporteur "is extremely disturbed at the lack of any independent, impartial and transparent investigation into the death in police custody of Ms. (Mahsa Jina) Amini, as well as the killings of hundreds of protesters, in particular women and children, in the context of the ensuing protests... Despite the gravest of tragedies faced by the Iranian people, it is a matter of extreme disappointment that the authorities have failed to undertake impartial, independent and transparent investigations in those cases. None of the security officials or other officers responsible have been held accountable, sanctioned or removed from their positions."

Lack of independent investigation into the poisoning of schoolgirls

83. Similarly, the Special Rapporteur regrets the failure of the authorities to conduct independent, impartial and transparent investigations into the reported poisoning of thousands of schoolgirls in 2022 and 2023. While the authorities claimed to have investigated these events, thus far it is not certain whether any individuals have been held accountable for the targeted poison attacks on girls' schools.

Failing to establish an accountability framework in law and in practice

86. In addition to the more recent atrocities, the Special Rapporteur, other human rights mechanisms, and civil society have documented historic examples of serious violations of human rights, including the killing of protesters, torture, arrests, detentions, executions, and enforced disappearances of large numbers in nationwide protests in 2009, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Other examples include large-scale enforced disappearances and summary and arbitrary executions of real or perceived political dissidents, including children, in 1981, 1982 and 1988. The Special Rapporteur regrets to note that none of these events have been the subject of investigation, inquiry by the Iranian authorities and those responsible remain unaccountable. The State machinery, on the other hand, has been deployed for the destruction of any remaining evidence of those crimes, as well as the harassment and

targeting of individuals seeking accountability and justice, in what appears to be a determined policy of wiping these events from memory.

State policy of intimidation and persecution of families seeking justice

87. The culture of perpetuating impunity has evolved into a State policy of intimidation, harassment and persecution of all those seeking accountability, truth and justice. Institutional and entrenched impunity has resulted in systematic harassment of human rights defenders, lawyers and other individuals campaigning for accountability, in a pattern that has emerged over several decades, whereby victims of human rights violations and their families are consistently and systematically denied the truth and access to justice.

The absence of an independent judiciary

88. The Special Rapporteur regrets that the absence of an independent judiciary, its consistent politicization, particularly through the use of the revolutionary courts, has been a significant factor in the failure of accountability within the country. The judiciary, including the revolutionary courts, persistently violate the rule of law, natural justice principles and the international human rights obligations undertaken by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Iranian authorities have consistently refused to conduct investigations into gross violations of human rights that are compliant with international law, notwithstanding the consistent calls for such investigations by United Nations bodies and experts and human rights organizations. Instead of being allowed an effective participation in investigations, the victims, their families, or their lawyers are frequently intimidated and ill-treated in an effort to prevent or discourage them from raising complaints or protesting.”

4 Appeals to abolish the death penalty, repeal mandatory dress code laws, and call for accountability

Prof. Javid Rehman, the UNSR on the situation of human rights in Iran called on the Iranian authorities to immediately abolish, through legislation, the death penalty for all offenses. Among others, he also made the following recommendations to the Iranian authorities to:

- (n) Repeal all laws and regulations that impose a mandatory dress code and abolish regulations and procedures whereby women’s dress or behaviour in public or private life are monitored or controlled by State agencies;
- (o) Repeal legislation that mitigates or exonerates perpetrators of violence against women and girls, including for so-called honour killings and criminal acts within marriage;
- (p) Amend the Constitution and repeal existing gender-discriminatory laws and practices;
- (q) End child marriage, including by raising the minimum age of marriage to 18;
- (r) Conduct independent, impartial, thorough, effective, credible and transparent investigations into the deaths of Jina Mahsa Amini, Armita Geravand and those of all girls and women since September 2022, and ensure that all the perpetrators responsible are held accountable;
- (s) Undertake prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the killing of protesters and into acts of violence, including torture, enforced disappearances and arrests that have taken place in the context of the nationwide protests since 16 September 2022;
- (t) Immediately end all forms of violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions of protesters, identify and apprehend all those suspected of criminal and violent acts against protesters and ensure that all the perpetrators responsible are held accountable;

(u) Immediately end all forms of violence, including rape and sexual violence and harassment of girls and women protesters, conduct immediate, independent and impartial investigations into the targeting of girls and women, and acts of violence, including rape and sexual violence, and discrimination against girls and women, and immediately take concrete steps to apprehend and punish all those involved in violent crimes against girls and women, including in the poisoning of girls in schools;

The Special Rapporteur also urged the international community “to call for accountability with respect to long-standing emblematic events that have been met with persistent impunity, including the enforced disappearances and summary and arbitrary executions of 1981 and 1988 and the protests of November 2019.”

THE INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSION

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran said in its first [report](#) on March 8, 2024, concluded that the Iranian regime had committed “crimes against humanity” through its actions during the clampdown on the protests that began in September 2022.

“The violent repression of peaceful protests and pervasive institutional discrimination against women and girls has led to serious human rights violations by the Government of Iran, many amounting to **CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY**.”

It also said the Iranian regime was responsible for the “physical violence” that led to the death of Mahsa Amini” in September 2022.

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The FFM report to the Human Rights Council said violations and crimes under international law committed included “extra-judicial and unlawful killings and murder, unnecessary and disproportionate use of force, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, torture, rape, enforced disappearances, and gender persecution.”

The report said the clerical regime deployed “unnecessary and disproportionate use of lethal force” to put down the protests which disproportionately impacted women, children, and members of ethnic and religious minorities.

It said Iranian security forces sexually assaulted detainees, adding that they used shotguns, assault rifles and submachine guns against protesters “in situations where there was no imminent threat of death or serious injury” to them, “thereby committing unlawful and extra-judicial killings.”

The Fact-Finding Mission found “a pattern of extensive injuries to protesters’ eyes caused the blinding of scores of women, men and children, branding them for life.”

Encouraging use of torture to extract confessions

In detention, the State authorities tortured victims to extract confessions or to intimidate, humiliate or inflict punishment. The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission said, “Authorities are doubling down on their repression of families of victims, journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers, medical doctors, and many others simply for expressing their views, supporting the protesters, or seeking truth and justice for victims.



“State authorities at the highest levels encouraged, sanctioned and endorsed human rights violations through statements justifying the acts and conduct of the security forces.”

According to the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission, “State security forces, in particular the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Basij forces and the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Faraja), among others, participated in the commission of serious human rights violations and crimes under international law.”

On December 20, 2022, the President of the Human Rights Council announced the appointment of Sara Hossain (Bangladesh), Shaheen Sardar Ali (Pakistan), and Viviana Krsticevic (Argentina) to serve as the three independent members of the Mission and appointed Sara Hossain as its Chair.

Call to stop executions and to release all detained protesters

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission made the following conclusions and recommendations:

122. Pervasive and deep-rooted structural and institutionalized discrimination against women and girls, permeating all areas of their public and private lives, was both a trigger and an enabler of the widespread serious human rights violations and crimes under international law committed against women and girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as others advocating for equality and human rights...

123. Given the gravity of its findings, the mission urges the Iranian authorities to halt all executions and immediately and unconditionally release all persons arbitrarily arrested and detained in the context of the protests or for non-compliance with or advocacy against the mandatory hijab; cease the judicial harassment of protesters, victims and their families; repeal or amend laws that discriminate against women and girls, as well as men and boys, in particular those on the mandatory hijab; and disband the persecutory system of its enforcement.

124. The mission calls on the Iranian authorities to provide justice, truth and reparations to victims of human rights violations in connection with the protests that started on 16 September 2022, survivors and their families, in accordance with international human rights standards. In the light of the pervasive impunity and structural discrimination inside the country, Member States should explore avenues for international and domestic accountability outside the country, together with providing transformative reparations for victims, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction (for example, commemorations and tributes to victims) and guarantees of non-repetition...

Need to extend mandate of Fact-Finding Mission

125. Despite its significant findings, with more time available the mission could strengthen its documentation of the structural and institutionalized discrimination underlying the protests that it has uncovered and ensure the effective preservation of evidence for use in legal proceedings.

126. The courage and resilience of women, men, and children of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement underscores the critical need for global solidarity with those continuing to fight for equality, justice, the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly and the rights of women and girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: DRACONIAN CAMPAIGN TO ENFORCE COMPULSORY VEILING LAWS

Iran: Draconian campaign to enforce compulsory veiling laws through surveillance and mass car confiscations, is the title of a report by Amnesty International published on March 6, 2024.

The report concentrates on the Hijab and Chastity Bill nearing adoption by the Iranian regime's parliament. The bill aims to codify and intensify the authorities' assault on women and girls for defying compulsory veiling.

Iranian authorities are waging a large-scale campaign to enforce repressive compulsory veiling laws through widespread surveillance of women and girls in public spaces and mass police checks targeting women drivers, said Amnesty International on the eve of International Women's Day.

The new report by Amnesty International contains testimonies from 46 individuals, including 41 women, one girl, and four men. The interviews were carried out in February 2024, coupled with a review of official documents including court verdicts and prosecution orders. They indicated that a plethora of state agencies are involved in persecuting women and girls for simply exercising their rights to bodily autonomy and freedom of expression and belief.

Amnesty International has released [excerpts](#) of 20 of the testimonies to provide a glimpse into the frightening daily reality faced by women and girls in Iran.

[Diana Eltahawy](#), Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa said, "In a sinister attempt to wear down resistance to compulsory veiling in the wake of the 'Woman Life Freedom' uprising, Iran's authorities are terrorizing women and girls by subjecting them to constant surveillance and policing, disrupting their daily lives and causing them immense mental distress. Their draconian tactics span from stopping women drivers on the road and carrying out mass confiscation of their vehicles to imposing inhumane flogging and prison sentences."

According to Amnesty International, official announcements indicate that since April 2023, Iran's [Moral Security Police](#) have ordered the arbitrary confiscation of hundreds of thousands of vehicles with female drivers or passengers as young as nine without or in "inappropriate" headscarves. According to testimonies, such orders are based on pictures captured by surveillance cameras or reports from plain clothes agents patrolling the streets and using a police app, called Nazer to report license plates of vehicles with non-compliant female drivers or passengers.

The women targeted and their relatives have received threatening text messages and phone calls, instructing them to report to the Moral Security Police to hand over their vehicles as punishment for defying compulsory veiling. Amnesty International reviewed screenshots of 60 such text messages issued over the past year to 22 women and men.

Women also described to Amnesty International how their access to public transport, airports and banking services is regularly denied and conditioned upon them wearing a headscarf. Women detailed how state enforcers, especially at airports, denied access to women and girls in hats and scrutinized the length and fit of their sleeves, trousers, and uniforms.

Women further described such encounters are routinely accompanied by verbal abuse, including gender-based insults and threats of prosecution. One woman also told the

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organization about an incident in late 2023 where an enforcer at a metro station in Tehran punched her 21-year-old cousin in the chest.

A 17-year-old girl told Amnesty International that her school principal temporarily suspended her after a CCTV camera captured her unveiled in a classroom, and threatened to report her to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards if she removed her headscarf again.

In January 2024, the authorities implemented a flogging sentence of 74 lashes against Roya Heshmati for appearing unveiled in public. In a testimony on her social media account, she recounted her flogging by a male official in the presence of a judge in a room she described as a “medieval torture chamber.”

JUSTICE FOR IRAN: EXPOSING IRAN'S REPRESSIVE UNITS AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

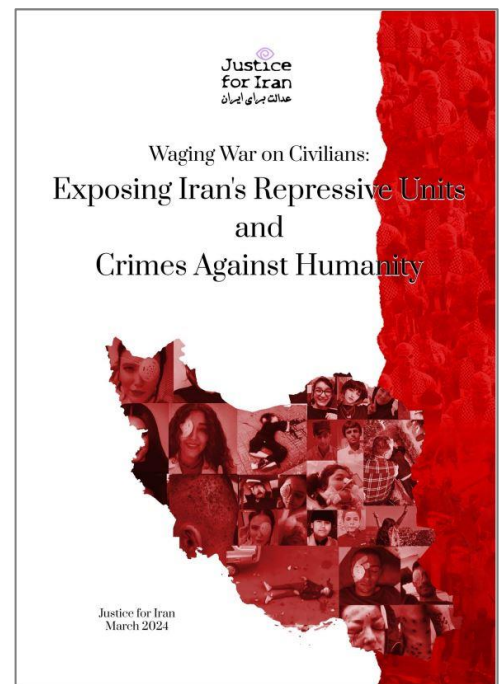
The London-based Justice for Iran put out its report on March 6, 2024. The [report](#) entitled, “Waging War on Civilians. Exposing Iran’s Repressive Units and Crimes Against Humanity,” JFI highlights serious human rights violations during the crackdown on the 2022-23 protests in Iran.

Security forces, treating the protests as armed conflict, deployed military units, and utilized lethal weapons to suppress demonstrations. The crackdown involved indiscriminate shootings, targeting civilians, bystanders, and buildings. Additionally, security forces used brutal force against detainees and employed child soldiers. These actions, along with the government’s portrayal of protests as a ‘war against the State,’ may constitute crimes against humanity, JFI said.

The report is based on the review of 35,000 pieces of audiovisual evidence collected by Justice for Iran.

The JFI has identified at least twenty suppression units within the Revolutionary Guard Corps, Basij, and the police force. The responsibility of some of these military units in suppressing the protests, including the combat battalions of Imam Hossein in the IRGC provincial Corps, and Special Forces combat units like the 3rd Division of Hamzeh Seyed Al-Shohada, 15th Brigade of Imam Hassan Special Forces, and Mahdi Special Forces Unit, is for the first time investigated within the framework of international law. The report also identifies 526 individuals who played a role in crimes against the protesters.

The findings of this 250-page report indicate that the authorities of the Islamic Republic at the highest levels responded to protests under the label of “hybrid war” and treated them as an armed conflict. They categorized protesters as combatants or Muharb and deployed military combat units specialized in confronting and killing armed combatants, along with security forces equipped with deadly light and heavy military grade weapons for suppressing the protesters. These forces were authorised to kill, torture, and terrorise protesters and even passersby, who are unequivocally classified as civilians according to the principles of international law.



The findings of the report indicate that security forces, as part of a pre-designed and practiced plan, deliberately targeted protesters, passersby, passing vehicles, public transportation, residential buildings, commercial buildings, and medical centers to instill fear and terror among citizens. These actions were carried out extensively in at least 15 cities in 10 provinces. The videos collected by Justice for Iran show at least 40 instances of indiscriminate shooting at protesters, passersby, and passing vehicles, and 63 instances of shooting at residential buildings, shops, and hospitals.

TIME TO END IMPUNITY AND HOLD PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE

For the first time, a UN body has confirmed that some of the crimes committed during the 2022-23 protests in Iran amounted to crimes against humanity. In the meantime, the UN Special Rapporteur has underlined the need to hold the Iranian regime accountable for the arbitrary executions and forced disappearances which took place in 1981, 1982, 1988 and during the protests in November 2019.

Other reports and findings by human rights NGOs and organizations also authenticate the extensive violations of human rights and women's rights in Iran.

The time has come to refer the dossier of the Iranian regime's human rights violations to the UN Security Council and prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes in international courts.