



General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 September 2022

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-first session

12 September–7 October 2022

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Joint written statement* submitted by Women's Human Rights International Association, Edmund Rice International Limited, France Libertes: Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, Association of World Citizens, International Society for Human Rights, non-governmental organizations on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Human rights record of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past year

The situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran has deteriorated drastically since Ebrahim Raisi took office as President a year ago.

Raisi has been identified by former prisoners and human rights groups as a member of the Tehran Death Commission that ordered the execution of thousands of political prisoners during the 1988 massacre⁽¹⁾. Some 30,000 political prisoners, the vast majority members of the opposition People's Mojahedin (PMOI or MEK), were extra-judicially executed or forcibly disappeared during the massacre. Later, as the Islamic Republic of Iran's Judiciary Chief, Raisi was involved⁽²⁾ in the violent crackdown on the 2019 anti-government protests in which some 1,500 demonstrators were killed.

In his latest report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, (A/HRC/49/75) ⁽³⁾, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javaid Rehman, urged the international community to seek accountability for both the 1988 massacre and the 2019 protests. Paragraph 71 of the report states:

"The Special Rapporteur urges 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 1988 and the November 2019 protests."

Record of human rights abuses during Ebrahim Raisi's first year in office:

A year into Raisi's presidency, which began on 3 August 2021, at least 521 prisoners, including 21 women and six juvenile offenders, were executed.

In late July 2022, at least 33 prisoners were hanged, and public executions were resumed. At least seven prisoners died under torture in the past year.

Information gathered⁽⁴⁾ shows that since early 2022, the authorities have regularly carried out mass executions across the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On 15 June 2022, authorities in Gohardasht Prison in Alborz province executed at least 12 people. This followed the mass execution of at least 12 people on 6 June 2022 in Zahedan Prison in Sistan and Baluchistan province.

On 14 May 2022, the authorities executed nine people: three in Zahedan Prison, one in Vakilabad Prison in Khorasan-e Razavi province, four in Adelabad Prison in Fars province, and one in Dastgerd Prison in Isfahan province.

In late July, one prisoner died due to a hunger strike, while several prisoners passed away due to a delay in their treatment. A number of other prisoners, including a Sunni cleric⁽⁵⁾, died under suspicious circumstances. Among the prisoners executed, some had been languishing in prison for up to 20 years.

On 16 May 2022, a dissident group made public a trove of classified documents belonging to Iran's Prisons Organisation, including a list⁽⁶⁾ of 5,370 prisoners on death row.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's state-run press announced on 2 August 2022⁽⁷⁾ that the Supreme Court had upheld sentences of blinding of the eyes for three people, including a woman, based on the authorities' draconian law of Qisas (retribution, or 'an eye for an'). The prisoners were transferred to Tehran for their sentences to be implemented.

In May and July 2022, authorities amputated the fingers⁽⁸⁾ of two prisoners charged with petty theft. Both prisoners were transferred to Tehran's notorious Evin Prison from provincial prisons for the implementation of the amputation sentences. In April, a special guillotine machine was installed in Evin to centralise the implementation of amputation sentences issued across the country.

Amnesty International on 3 August 2022 published a research briefing(9) documenting how the Islamic Republic of Iran's security forces unlawfully fired live ammunition and birdshot in May 2022 to crush largely peaceful protests over soaring food prices and a deadly building collapse.

Amnesty International verified that four people were killed in connection with the protests and documented a pattern of birdshot injuries amounting to torture amongst protesters and bystanders, including children. The authorities imposed internet shutdowns and mobile network disruptions to block peoples' ability to communicate with each other and to conceal their crimes.

Families of the victims of the 1988 massacre, who have been denied justice for their loved ones for more than three decades, faced increased harassment by the authorities. Furthermore, the authorities are continuing to destroy mass graves that contain the remains of victims of the 1988 massacre. In May 2022, families of the victims reported new measures by the authorities at the site of a mass grave in Khavaran cemetery, south of Tehran, aimed at destroying evidence of the massacre. As part of the attempt to destroy the mass grave, the authorities have erected a wall all around the site, making it impossible for families to access the area. The authorities have furthermore installed surveillance cameras around Khavaran cemetery, allowing them to control access to the site and identify visitors.

Photos and video footage(10) of the cordoned site have been published on social media. Denial of public access to the Khavaran mass grave would allow the authorities to destroy the site in total secrecy. Khavaran is believed to contain the remains of thousands of victims of the 1988 extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances.

In July 2022, Stockholm's District Court in Sweden handed down a landmark judgement, sentencing former Iranian prison official Hamid Noury to life imprisonment for his role in the 1988 massacre. Human rights group welcomed(11) this long-awaited act of justice which should serve as a guiding precedent to the international community for achieving accountability and justice for crimes against humanity.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet hailed the "historic conviction," tweeting(12): "States should use universal jurisdiction to bridge accountability gap for serious crimes & ensure truth+justice."

Meanwhile Special Rapporteur Rehman stated(13):

"The process and verdict in Sweden constitute a landmark and important leap forward in the pursuit of truth and justice for a dark chapter in Iranian history. It is also a clear signal that denial, despite substantive evidence, and impunity can no longer be tolerated."

"I urge other States to take on similar investigation and prosecution of serious human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran using principles of universal jurisdiction. There is a serious accountability gap for past and present gross violations of human rights law, and national courts in other States play a fundamental role in filling that gap."

"Together with my predecessors and colleagues in Special Procedures, I have repeatedly called for accountability for the summary executions and enforced disappearances of 1988 and sought to engage with authorities in this regard."

"However, the events continue to be denied by Iranian authorities. I hope this verdict is a first step towards full truth, justice and compensation for victims, their families and civil society organisations that persist in their demands for justice."

Hamid Noury, acting as Deputy Assistant Prosecutor of Gohardasht Prison in 1988, was a junior figure in the massacre. Meanwhile, the most senior Iranian officials involved at the time, including current President Ebrahim Raisi, continue to evade responsibility.

Last month, Hossein-Ali Nayyeri, the current Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Supreme Disciplinary Court for Judges and former Head of the Tehran Death Commission, broke his silence and defiantly defended the 1988 massacre with total impunity.

Asked about the 1988 mass executions, Nayyeri retorted(14): "In such critical circumstances, what were we to do? We had to hand down verdicts decisively. ... In such circumstances, we cannot run the country by offering them hugs and kisses!"

The failure of the international community to hold the perpetrators of the 1988 massacre to account for more than three decades has fuelled a culture of impunity in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran's abysmal human rights record during Raisi's first year in office is a testament to that impunity.

In January, some 470 current and former UN officials, human rights and legal experts, Nobel laureates, and international NGOs and academic institutions wrote a collective letter⁽¹⁵⁾ to the Human Rights Council calling for an international inquiry into the 1988 massacre, which they said is believed to amount to "crimes against humanity" and "genocide." The letter urged the Council to challenge the impunity enjoyed by Iranian officials by mandating an international investigation into the 1988 mass executions and enforced disappearances.

We urge the OHCHR not to lose time and to urgently begin an impartial investigation into the 1988 massacre.

Furthermore, UN Member States should now follow in Sweden's footsteps by exercising universal jurisdiction and opening criminal investigations against senior perpetrators of the 1988 massacre.

Finally, in light of Ebrahim Raisi's key role in past atrocities, including the 1988 massacre, and the atrocious human rights abuses carried out in the Islamic Republic of Iran during his first year in office as President, we believe that he should not be allowed to appear at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. The world body of nations should not welcome mass murderers.

HANDS OFF CAIN Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (France) Pax Christi Australia Justice for Victims of 1988 Massacre in Iran (JVMI) Association des femmes Iraniennes en France (AFIF) Comité de Soutien aux Droits de l'Homme en Iran (CSDHI) Association delle Donne Democratiche Iraniane in Italia Association of Anglo-Iranian Women in the UK Iran Libero e Democratico (Italia) Iranian youth association in Switzerland Association de Réfugiés politiques pour les droits de l'homme – France Associazione Medici e Farmacisti Democratici Iraniani in Italia Association des jeunes Iraniens pour la démocratie et la liberté-Luxembourg Association IranRef (Belgique) Iranska Kvinnosamfundet i Sverige (Sweden) Anglo-Iranian Professionals Association of Iranian Political Prisoners-UK Associazione Italiana per i Diritti Umani in Iran, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1-<https://iran1988.org/1988-massacre/>

2- <https://justice4iran.org/16240/>

3- <https://www.undocs.org/A/HRC/49/75>

4-<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/iran-horrific-wave-of-executions-must-be-stopped/>

5- <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/human-rights/stop-executions-in-iran/baluch-cleric-hanged-after-15-years-of-imprisonment/>

6-<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/18878493/prisoners-death-row-iran-drinking-alcohol/>

7-<https://shahrvand-newspaper.ir/1401/05/11/Main/PDF/14010511-2588-7-14.pdf>

8-<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/iranian-officials-must-be-held-accountable-for-amputating-the-fingers-of-two-men/>

9-<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5789/2022/en/> ("They are shooting brazenly": Iran's militarized response to May 2022 protests)

10-<https://iran1988.org/jvmi-warns-of-new-measures-to-destroy-evidence-of-irans-1988-massacre-at-khavar-mass-grave/>

11-<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/iran-conviction-of-former-iranian-official-over-involvement-in-1988-prison-massacres-landmark-step-towards-justice/>

12-<https://twitter.com/UNHumanRights/status/1547876040311054337>

13-<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/07/iran-un-expert-welcomes-historic-verdict-universal-jurisdiction-case>

14-<https://iran1988.org/top-iranian-judiciary-official-defends-1988-massacre/>

15-<https://iran1988.org/signatories-of-open-letter-to-un-human-rights-council-25-january-2022/>