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Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/191](#) on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The report contains information on the patterns and trends with regard to the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the progress made in the implementation of the resolution and recommendations to improve the human rights situation.

* [A/76/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/191 on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. It covers the period from 11 June 2020 to 10 June 2021.

2. The report contains information from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, non-governmental and media organizations and individuals interviewed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as observations from the United Nations human rights mechanisms. The Government continued to engage with OHCHR and the United Nations human rights mechanisms during the reporting period. The Secretary-General acknowledges the detailed comments provided by the Government in response to the interim report presented at the forty-seventh session of the Human Rights Council.¹ The present report should be read in conjunction with the interim report.

3. The overall situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran remains of serious concern, with no meaningful efforts made to improve compliance with international human rights law. The economic crisis, aggravated by the imposition of sectoral sanctions and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, remains a major concern. Internal factors involving impediments to the rule of law and weak justice and accountability mechanisms result in impunity, perpetuate existing violations and increase the risk of future violations. The failure to establish a mechanism for accountability in accordance with international standards and to provide remedies to victims for violations committed in the context of protests held in November 2019 is emblematic. Protesters, human rights defenders, lawyers and civil society actors continue to be subjected to intimidation, arbitrary detention and criminal prosecution, sometimes leading to the death penalty. Women and minorities continue to face entrenched discrimination.

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

A. Death penalty and arbitrary deprivation of life

1. Use of the death penalty

4. The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to carry out the death penalty at one of the highest rates in the world.² The Secretary-General reiterates his concern at the inclusion in law of the death penalty for a range of acts, the imposition of the death penalty in violation of fair trial standards and the lack of official data around executions. Non-governmental organizations have reported that, between 1 January and 18 June 2021, at least 108 individuals had been executed, including 35 for drug offences.³ This is 10 more executions than in the whole of 2020 for executions for that type of offence,⁴ indicating a regression from the positive steps that the Government had taken in reducing executions through amendments to the drug law

¹ A/HRC/47/22.

² See www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/04/death-penalty-2020-middle-east-and-north-africa-dominates-list-of-worlds-top-executioners/.

³ Submission to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). See also www.iranhr.net/en/articles/4755/; <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4721/>; and https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2021-gb-290321-BD.pdf.

⁴ A/HRC/47/22, para. 5.

in 2017. By comparison, 24 and 30 individuals were executed on drug-related charges in 2018 and 2019, respectively.⁵ In 2020, at least 267 individuals, including nine women, were executed.⁶

5. Between 1 January and 18 June 2021, 26 individuals of the Baloch minority were executed,⁷ the majority for drug offences.⁸ Reports indicate a large number of executions of members of minorities so far in 2021, including from the Kurdish⁹ (eight for drug offences) and Arab¹⁰ (on national security charges, including one for *moharebeh* – taking up arms to take lives or property and to create fear in the public) minorities.¹¹ Ali Khasraji, Hossein Silawi and Naser Khafajian of the Arab minority were executed in secret on 28 February 2021.¹² A large number of individuals of the Arab minority remain on death row or subjected to enforced disappearance following arrest. In 2020, at least 69 individuals of the Kurdish minority were executed.¹³ The Supreme Court upheld the death sentences for 10 Kurdish political prisoners on charges involving “acting against national security”, *efsad-e fel-arz* (spreading corruption on Earth), *moharebeh* and “membership of Salafi groups”.¹⁴ The Government asserted that the death penalty was carried out in compliance with fair trial standards and in a transparent manner.

6. In 2020, at least two protesters were executed and eight charged with crimes carrying the death penalty or sentenced to death. Amirhossein Moradi, Mohammad Rajabi and Saeed Tamjidi were sentenced to death in relation to the protests of November 2019. In December 2020, the Supreme Court accepted their request for a retrial, but the retrial has been postponed three times.¹⁵ On 14 June 2021, Mr. Moradi was transferred to Shapour detention centre for investigation in a new case against him.¹⁶ In July 2020, the Supreme Court upheld death sentences for Mehdi Salehi Ghaleh Shahrokhi, Mohammad Bastami, Majid Nazari Kondari, Hadi Kiani and Abbas Mohammadi in relation to protests in 2017 and 2018.¹⁷ The Secretary-General notes with concern the use of unsubstantiated murder charges against protesters to justify the imposition of the death penalty. Emblematic cases include the execution of Mostafa Salehi and Navid Afkari on 5 August and 12 September 2020, respectively.¹⁸ Furthermore, the death penalty was imposed on individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression. Ruhollah Zam, founder of Amadnews, a website and Telegram channel, was executed on 12 December 2020 for, inter alia, *efsad-e fel-arz*.¹⁹

2. Execution of child offenders

7. The Secretary-General has consistently called for a halt to the execution of child offenders.²⁰ Under international human rights instruments ratified by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the execution of persons who were under 18 years of age at the time

⁵ See https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2019-GB-BD.pdf; and https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran-GB.pdf.

⁶ See https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2021-gb-290321-BD.pdf.

⁷ Submission to OHCHR.

⁸ Ibid. See also <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4721/>.

⁹ Submission to OHCHR.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. See also www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1338642021ENGLISH.pdf.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Submission to OHCHR.

¹⁵ Ibid. See also www.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-death-sentence-retrial-idUSKBN28F0BO.

¹⁶ See www.radiozaman.com/673248/.

¹⁷ Ibid. See also <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4350/>.

¹⁸ Submission to OHCHR.

¹⁹ See <https://cpj.org/data/people/roohollah-zam/>.

²⁰ See, for example, A/75/287, para. 61; and A/HRC/43/20, para. 66.

of their offence is absolutely prohibited.²¹ The Islamic Penal Code retains the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 9 lunar years for girls and 15 lunar years for boys in cases in which the child is convicted of *qisas* (retribution in kind) or *hudud* crimes (crimes for which punishments are mandated and fixed). While article 91 of the Penal Code gives judges the discretion to exempt children from the death penalty, the continued imposition of death sentences for child offenders shows that that article has failed to have a significant impact. Some child offenders spend more than a decade awaiting their execution, causing great mental anguish that may amount to torture.

8. In 2020, at least four child offenders were executed. Two of the executions were carried out during the reporting period. Mohammad Hassan Rezaiee was executed on 31 December 2020 in a case emblematic of fair trial concerns, including forced confessions.²² As of March 2021, more than 85 child offenders remained on death row, with some, including Arman Abdolali, Hossein Shahbazi and Ali Arjangi, at risk of execution at the time of finalization of the present report. The Government highlighted the general policy of the authorities to encourage reconciliation and provide financial grants for the payment of *diya* (blood money), as well as the various institutional entities established to facilitate this. The Secretary-General notes with concern that those efforts do not appear to have excluded the possibility of execution in those three cases. In any event, the application of the death penalty on child offenders constitutes a serious breach of international law. The Secretary-General calls for a revision of the Penal Code to prohibit the imposition of the death penalty on individuals who were under 18 years of age at the time of the alleged crime, as well as for the abolition of the death penalty.

3. Excessive use of force during peaceful assemblies and by border officials

9. According to an OHCHR analysis, excessive force was used by, inter alia, security officials, border officials and law enforcement agents. There are no official statistics on deaths resulting from the excessive use of force by State actors.

10. The lethal use of force in the context of the nationwide demonstrations in 2019, which involved the use of live ammunition and violence by security forces against protesters, was documented in previous reports of the Secretary-General.²³ The only official force authorized to control protests is the anti-riot special units (*yeganeh vize*), which by law are authorized to use only non-lethal riot control devices.²⁴ Nonetheless, reports show the use of machine guns, sniper rifles, heavy firearms and shotguns by a range of State security and intelligence forces.²⁵

11. Between 1 January and 18 June 2021, at least 24 *kolbar* (border couriers) and *sookhtbar* (fuel couriers), predominantly from the Kurdish and Baloch minorities, were killed as a result of the excessive use of force.²⁶ This includes the killing of 10 *sookhtbar* by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on 22 February 2021.²⁷ In 2020, approximately 60 *kolbar*, including children, were killed and more than 170 were injured as a result of the use of force by border officials.²⁸ None of those killings has been investigated by the authorities, leading to continued impunity for those crimes. The Government underlined the challenging security situation at the borders

²¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6; and Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 37.

²² See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26637&LangID=E.

²³ A/75/287, paras. 14–21; and A/HRC/47/22, para. 12.

²⁴ Submission to OHCHR.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Submission to OHCHR.

²⁷ See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26852&LangID=E>.

²⁸ Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://hengaw.net/en/news/statistical-report-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-iranian-kurdistan-during-2020>.

and noted its efforts to support stable job opportunities for border couriers, including through the creation of 3,500 entrepreneurship and 11,000 jobs created for couriers in 2020.

4. Arbitrary deprivation of life in detention

12. Official data on the number of deaths in custody are unavailable. Reported cases indicate that some deaths are due to torture, the denial of medical treatment or both. Reports show torture by the police, intelligence and other security forces without evidence of a system of oversight capable of effectively investigating such violations.²⁹ Among the reported cases are the deaths as a result of torture of Mehrdad Taleshi in Evin prison and Bahman Uqabi in Kermanshah Dizelabad prison, in January 2021.³⁰ Since 2003, at least 32 political prisoners have reportedly died in State custody, either as a result of torture or ill-treatment, including the denial of medical care.³¹ The Government has observed that torture is prohibited under Iranian law.

13. The denial of adequate medical care in detention, allegations of which were rejected by the Government, continues to be of concern. An alarming number of prisoners, especially human rights defenders, prisoners of conscience, environmentalists and political prisoners, have become critically ill in prison, or have had serious medical conditions left untreated. In addition to Behnam Mahjoubi's death in prison owing to circumstances detailed in a previous report,³² on 5 June 2021, political prisoner Sassan Niknafs died in hospital after having displayed declining consciousness in prison.³³ Mr. Niknafs was serving a five-year prison sentence in Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary since July 2020, despite the assessment by the Legal Medical Organization that he could not withstand incarceration owing to his health condition.³⁴ Among political prisoners and civil rights activists denied urgent medical care are Mohammad Nourizad,³⁵ Saeed Eghbali³⁶ and Hossein Sepanta.³⁷

14. The Secretary-General recalls that States have a responsibility to care for the life and bodily integrity of individuals deprived of their liberty by the State and, as noted by the Human Rights Committee, "a heightened duty of care to take any necessary measures" to protect the lives of such individuals. This duty includes providing them with, inter alia, the necessary medical care and appropriate regular monitoring of their health.³⁸ In certain circumstances, deaths in detention may amount to arbitrary deprivation of life. The Secretary-General urges the authorities to take effective measures to prevent the death of prisoners and other individuals in State custody.

15. The spread of COVID-19 in overcrowded prisons lacking sleeping accommodation and basic sanitary facilities represents an additional risk to prisoners' lives.³⁹ Several deaths of prisoners caused by the spread of COVID-19 in prisons were reported, including those of Salem Zand in Zahedan prison in August 2020⁴⁰ and Kazim Ibadi

²⁹ See www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1328912020ENGLISH.PDF.

³⁰ Submission to OHCHR.

³¹ Ibid. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/06/iran-election-political-prisoners-dying-under-candidate-raisis-watch/>.

³² A/HRC/47/22, para. 17.

³³ See www.isna.ir/news/1400031712322/.

³⁴ See <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4763/>.

³⁵ Submission to OHCHR.

³⁶ See www.hra-news.org/2021/hranews/a-29548/.

³⁷ See www.en-hrana.org/political-prisoner-hossein-sepanta-facing-ongoing-medical-negligence-in-adelabad-prison.

³⁸ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36 (2018), para. 25.

³⁹ A/HRC/43/61. See also www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26345&LangID=E.

⁴⁰ Submission to OHCHR.

in Ardabil prison.⁴¹ While acknowledging the temporary release schemes of the authorities in February and March 2020 to prevent the spread of the pandemic in prisons, the Secretary-General reiterates his concerns that some categories of prisoners were disproportionately excluded, including political prisoners, protesters, lawyers and human rights defenders.⁴² Some political prisoners have been in prison for years without a single day of furlough. Maryam Akbari Monfared, sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for participating in protests in 2009, has remained imprisoned for the past 12 years. Harassment against her increased after she filed a formal complaint, seeking official investigation into the executions of political prisoners, including her siblings, in 1988.⁴³ Zeinab Jalalian, a Kurdish political prisoner serving a life sentence for *moharebeh*, has been held in prison since 2008 without furlough.⁴⁴

16. During the reporting period, several women political prisoners were transferred to Qarchak prison. The prison, initially developed as an industrial chicken farm, lacks the infrastructure necessary to function as a prison that meets international standards.⁴⁵ It is without a proper sewage system or sufficient toilets, leading to a highly polluted and dangerous environment.⁴⁶ There are similar concerns regarding the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary.⁴⁷ In particular, shortage of water is a critical issue, forcing prisoners to buy water for their daily use.⁴⁸

B. Access to justice and accountability

1. Impediments to accountability

17. Available information suggests that measures taken by State authorities to prevent human rights violations and provide effective remedies are largely non-existent or, at best, insufficient. The climate of impunity is compounded by a lack of due process and by acts of intimidation against lawyers. Reports indicate that the judiciary fails to perform an independent role and that the human rights violations and crimes appear to be part of a policy to silence and discourage perceived or real political opposition.⁴⁹

18. The competent Iranian authorities have neither conducted prompt and impartial investigations into the disproportionate and lethal use of force by State agents during the countrywide protests in 2019⁵⁰ and the shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 in January 2020⁵¹ nor ensured accountability in line with international human rights law and standards, despite repeated domestic calls and calls by the international community. The Government asserted its fulfilment of all international obligations in connection with the shooting down of flight 752. It noted bilateral negotiations with Ukraine on that matter and negated any arrests of those expressing sympathy with victims. While noting the decision of the Government to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² A/75/287, paras. 31–36.

⁴³ See <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=22861>; and <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=23162>.

⁴⁴ See www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3605/2021/en/.

⁴⁵ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.en-hrana.org/qarchak-womens-prison-irans-largest-womens-prison; and www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/05/iran-prison-doctors-abuse-and-deny-treatment-to-persecuted-women/.

⁴⁶ See <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/08/prisoners-in-irans-gharchak-prison-for-women-protest-inhumane-living-conditions/>.

⁴⁷ A/HRC/43/61, para. 61.

⁴⁸ Submission to OHCHR.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ A/75/287, paras. 14–21; and A/HRC/47/22, para. 12.

⁵¹ A/75/287, para. 22.

pay compensation to the families of those killed in flight 752, the Secretary-General underlines that financial compensation does not replace a full accountability process for the perpetrators of the downing. The Secretary-General remains concerned at prosecutions of protesters following the protests of November 2019, with at least 500 people subjected to criminal investigations, and reports of inhuman treatment and torture to confess to association with opposition groups or foreign Governments.⁵² Violations of fair trial rights and standards in prosecutions before revolutionary courts are particularly concerning, given the use of charges involving *moharebeh*, a capital offence.⁵³

19. Impunity also prevails in relation to past violations. In April 2021, the authorities issued an order denying members of the Baha'i community the right to bury their deceased in their dedicated space in Golestan cemetery, forcing them instead to use space between existing graves or at the Khavaran mass grave site,⁵⁴ which is believed to contain victims of enforced disappearances and summary executions in the summer of 1988.⁵⁵ The order is the latest in a series of reported efforts allegedly aimed at destroying evidence of the execution of political dissidents at that time and at the harassment and criminal prosecution of families of victims calling for truth and accountability.⁵⁶

2. Torture and due process

20. The Secretary-General is alarmed at the number of documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of children, women and men. Testimonies, photos, audio files and forensic evidence show a pattern of physical and mental coercion to force confessions in the absence of other evidence. The heavy reliance of the justice system on confessions during investigations seems to be a major incentive for torture, reportedly undertaken by a range of actors, including the police, police intelligence units, the Ministry of Intelligence, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and security forces. While domestic law invalidates the use of forced confessions in courts, testimonies show that judges often refuse to investigate torture allegations and rely on forced confessions as evidence for conviction. The Government rejected all references to allegations of torture.

21. Solitary confinement and long pretrial detentions continue to raise concerns.⁵⁷ The use of prolonged solitary confinement may amount to a breach of article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁵⁸ Indefinite and prolonged solitary confinement is prohibited under the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Emblematic is the solitary confinement of Habib and Vahid Afkari since 5 September 2020, reportedly in retaliation for asking about the fate and whereabouts of their brother, Navid Afkari, who was subsequently executed.⁵⁹ They have reportedly been repeatedly beaten with sticks and cables and threatened with death and threats to imprison, kill, sexually

⁵² Submission to OHCHR. See also www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1328912020ENGLISH.PDF.

⁵³ Submission to OHCHR.

⁵⁴ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/04/iran-stop-destruction-of-mass-grave-site-and-allow-dignified-burials-of-persecuted-bahais/; and www.bic.org/news/iranian-authorities-prohibiting-bahais-dignified-burial.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ [A/HRC/47/22](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2021/04/4722), paras. 24 and 25.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 20 (1992), para. 6.

⁵⁹ Submission to OHCHR; and [A/HRC/47/22](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/2021/04/4722), paras. 7 and 22. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/09/witness-to-the-torture-of-executed-champion-wrestler-navid-afkari-held-incommunicado/>; www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4250/2021/en/; <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4736/>; and www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4349/2021/en/.

assault or otherwise harm their family members. On 12 June 2021, while protesting their continued solitary confinement, family members were reportedly beaten by plain-clothes State agents.⁶⁰ On 14 June 2021, a retrial request was filed with the Supreme Court for Vahid Afkari. In view of allegations of serious due process and fair trial violations, the Secretary-General calls for an immediate review of their case in line with international human rights law and international fair trial standards. Students Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi have remained in pretrial detention in Evin prison since their arrest in April 2020, with periods of solitary confinement, and reportedly subjected to torture and ill-treatment.⁶¹ They are reportedly permitted only limited access to open air and to telephone calls.

22. The Secretary-General recalls that lack of effective, meaningful legal representation in the course of judicial proceedings is inconsistent with international human rights law and international fair trial standards. Lawyers' ability to defend clients is often hindered by the actions or inactions of the competent national authorities, including the non-provision of essential documents and information about court dates, limitations to client visits and harassment. Under article 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, individuals accused of crimes against national security may only choose lawyers from a list pre-approved by the judiciary.⁶² The Secretary-General notes the assertion by the Government that the judiciary had proposed an amendment to article 48 to delete the reference to the pre-approved list and calls upon the authorities to ensure the right to effective legal representation, including the right to a lawyer of the accused's own choice, at all stages of investigative and judicial processes. The Government stressed legislative and policy measures taken in 2020, including the Law on the Reduction of Ta'zir Imprisonment, illustrating the authorities' intention to improve the justice system and ensure the rights of the accused.

3. Lawyers and human rights defenders

23. Human rights defenders and lawyers arrested or sentenced during the reporting period include children's rights defender Afsaneh Azimzadeh, in December 2020,⁶³ and women's rights defender Tahmineh Mofidi, in January 2021.⁶⁴ In January 2021, the appeals court confirmed the sentences of women's rights defender and journalist Raheleh Askarizadeh to two years' imprisonment, and a two-year travel ban and ban from media, political and social media activities.⁶⁵ In January 2021, the appeals court also confirmed six years' imprisonment for civil rights activist Jila Karamzadeh Makvandi, on the charge of "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the State".⁶⁶ In April 2021, Ms. Karamzadeh and Ms. Askarizadeh were summoned to serve their sentences.

24. In February 2021, the eight years' prison sentence of Hoda Amid was upheld for "collaboration with the hostile Government of the United States of America against the Islamic Republic of Iran on women and family issues" after she had convened workshops on women's rights with sociologist Najmeh Vahedi. The latter's seven-year prison sentence was upheld in the same case.⁶⁷ In February 2021, a revolutionary court sentenced lawyer Reza Eslami to seven years' imprisonment for cooperation

⁶⁰ See <https://p.dw.com/p/3ungz>.

⁶¹ Submission to OHCHR.

⁶² A/74/273, para. 12.

⁶³ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.hra-news.org/2021/hranews/a-28535/.

⁶⁴ Ibid. See also www.hra-news.org/2021/hranews/a-28650/.

⁶⁵ Ibid. See also <https://journalismisnotacrime.com/en/wall/rahaaskarizadeh/>.

⁶⁶ Submission to OHCHR.

⁶⁷ Ibid. See also www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/iran_-_ua-_najmeh_vahedi_hoda_amid_16_feb_2021_en.pdf.

with an “enemy State” through his participation in a law training course in Czechia.⁶⁸ Lawyer Farzaneh Zilabi, representing the workers’ union of the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company, was summoned to court in May 2021.⁶⁹ She was charged with national security-related charges and suspended from practising law for six months. On 13 June 2021, lawyer Amirsalar Davoudi was temporarily released after the Supreme Court approved the request for his retrial.⁷⁰ Lawyers Mohammad Najafi and Giti Pourfazeli remain imprisoned.

25. In March 2021, a Tehran appeals court reduced the prison sentence of Saba Kord Afshari to seven and a half years for protesting against compulsory veiling laws. She remains detained, is denied medical treatment and has been physically assaulted by prison guards. Her mother, Raheleh Ahmadi, remains arbitrarily detained for protesting against veiling laws.⁷¹ The Secretary-General notes the reduction of the sentences of Yasaman Aryani, Monireh Arabshahi and Mojgan Keshavarz, imprisoned for peacefully advocating women’s rights, but remains concerned at their imprisonment, their health condition and their denial of visitation rights.⁷² The Secretary-General welcomes the release after five and a half years of human rights defender Arash Sadeghi on 1 May 2021, pursuant to the Sentence Reduction Law.⁷³

26. The targeting of relatives and new charges brought against human rights defenders and lawyers to prolong their arbitrary detention continued. While welcoming the temporary release of Nasrin Sotoudeh on 17 March 2021, the Secretary-General remains concerned at her conviction, connected to the exercise of her profession as a lawyer for human rights defenders.⁷⁴ In February 2021, the bank account of her husband, Reza Khandan, himself previously detained for defending human rights, was frozen without justification.⁷⁵ The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that Ms. Sotoudeh had been granted furlough on three occasions and had access to medical care in prison and visits. Also of concern is the sentencing to 18 months’ imprisonment of Farangis Mazloum on charges related to her advocacy against the detention conditions of her son, human rights defender and long-term prisoner Soheil Arabi.⁷⁶ In May 2021, Mr. Arabi, in detention since 2013, was summoned to a hearing for new charges.⁷⁷ Narges Mohammadi, released in October 2020, received a new sentence of 30 months’ imprisonment in May 2021.⁷⁸ On 12 and 17 June, while visiting families of killed protesters and imprisoned lawyers, Ms. Mohammadi was violently beaten and threatened by State agents.⁷⁹ On 12 April 2021, Golrokh Iraee was informed that Branch 26 of Tehran revolutionary court had sentenced her in absentia to an additional year in prison, a two-year travel ban and a

⁶⁸ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.hra-news.org/2021/hranews/a-28731.

⁶⁹ See <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4743/>.

⁷⁰ See www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/amirsalar-davoudi-released-temporarily-bail-after-spending-two-years-and-seven-months-detention.

⁷¹ See www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/prison-sentence-saba-kord-afshari-reduced-7-years-and-6-months.

⁷² Submission to OHCHR.

⁷³ www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/arash-sadeghi-released-prison.

⁷⁴ A/74/273, para. 31.

⁷⁵ See www.iranhumanrights.org/2019/01/iran-sentences-men-who-supported-womens-protests-against-compulsory-hijab-to-six-years-prison.

⁷⁶ See www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/soheil-arabi-acquitted-new-charge.

⁷⁷ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/soheil-arabi-summoned-hearing-same-charge-he-has-recently-been-acquitted.

⁷⁸ Submission to OHCHR.

⁷⁹ See www.iranhumanrights.org/2021/06/prominent-activist-in-iran-fears-life-is-in-danger-after-violent-confrontations/.

two-year ban on participating in political parties and groups.⁸⁰ The Government denied that anyone is arrested or prosecuted on the basis of their occupation.

27. It is of concern that several human rights defenders and other prisoners were transferred to prisons in distant locations from their families, reportedly with the aim of isolating them.⁸¹ Of concern are also reports of transfers of human rights defenders and political prisoners to the ward of violent offenders. Among those transferred are Ms. Iraee,⁸² Ms. Aryani, Ms. Arabshahi,⁸³ Ms. Monfared, Ms. Kord Afshari, Ms. Keshavarz, Sepideh Farhan, Sakineh Parvaneh and Ms. Sotoudeh.⁸⁴

4. Environmentalists

28. Seven environmentalists from the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation remain detained on espionage charges.⁸⁵ Since their arrest in January and February 2018, only three of them have been released on furlough for periods of some days in March 2021. British-American-Iranian Morad Tahbaz was subjected to solitary confinement for six weeks in May 2021 and was returned to the public ward in June. He has not received any medical attention for his serious health condition and has not been granted furlough, despite serving one third of his sentence. At least two of the environmentalists have reportedly been subjected to psychological torture and threats. The Secretary-General reiterates his concern that one of the environmentalists, Niloufar Bayani, was convicted in part because of her work as a consultant for the United Nations Environment Programme. Ms. Bayani is facing a new defamation case after claiming ill-treatment, torture and sexual harassment during her interrogation.⁸⁶ At the time of reporting, several of the environmentalists had served one third of their sentences and were hence eligible for parole under Iranian law.

5. Dual and foreign citizens

29. The detention of a number of foreign and dual citizens on unsubstantiated espionage charges and following unfair trials remains a serious concern. Swedish-Iranian Ahmadreza Djalali⁸⁷ was held in solitary confinement from November 2020 in preparation for his execution, before being returned to the public ward in April 2021.⁸⁸ There are serious concerns for his life, given both his health condition and continued risk of execution. After her release in March 2021, British-Iranian Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe received a new sentence in April 2021 of one-year imprisonment and a one-year travel ban for “propaganda against the system”.⁸⁹ Austrian-Iranian Massud Mossaheb’s 10-year prison term was upheld in July 2020, a decision partially based on a forced confession subsequently broadcast on State television. Mr. Mossaheb

⁸⁰ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/golrokh-irae-sentenced-absentia.

⁸¹ Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/03/iranian-courts-are-unlawfully-banishing-political-prisoners-into-prison-exile/>.

⁸² See www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/golrokh-irae-sentenced-absentia.

⁸³ See www.iranhumanrights.org/2020/10/iran-moving-women-political-prisoners-to-jails-with-common-criminals/; and www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/saba-kord-afshari-ends-hunger-strike.

⁸⁴ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/saba-kord-afshari-ends-hunger-strike.

⁸⁵ See www.irna.ir/news/82927394; and www.ensafnews.com/216369.

⁸⁶ Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/02/conservationist-niloufar-bayani-iran-torture-and-sexual-threats-detailed-in-letters-by-jailed-former-un-environment-consultant/>.

⁸⁷ A/HRC/WGAD/2017/92.

⁸⁸ Submission to OHCHR.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

has been denied proper medical treatment for several serious ailments.⁹⁰ Similar reports of inadequate medical treatment concern Austrian-Iranian Kamran Ghaderi and British-American-Iranian Morad Tahbaz. American-Iranian Baquer Namazi remains on medical release but is prohibited from leaving the country. His son Siamak Namazi remains imprisoned. British-Iranian Anoosheh Ashoori was reportedly forced to sign confessions under torture and prolonged solitary confinement. In February 2021, Mr. Ashoori's access to a telephone was suspended, denying him contact with his family.⁹¹ New cases of detention during the reporting period include the arrest and detention by intelligence agents of German-Iranian Jamshid Sharmahd, in July 2020.⁹² His whereabouts remain undisclosed and his chronic illnesses are reportedly worsening.⁹³ German-Iranian Nahid Taghavi has reportedly been held in prolonged solitary confinement since her arrest in October 2020, with limited contact with her family, and has been denied representation by her chosen lawyer.⁹⁴ Ms. Taghavi reportedly went on trial in April 2021 on unspecified security charges.⁹⁵

6. Women and girls

30. Discrimination against women and girls is entrenched in law and practice, often justified by references to religion. The Secretary-General remains concerned that the Government has not taken meaningful steps to comply with its obligations under international human rights law. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains one of very few States that have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As stated in the present report, the authorities continued the criminal prosecution and harassment of women and men who advocate the rights of women. The Government stressed that the Constitution guarantees the rights of women and equality and pointed to government measures to promote the rights of women in all areas, including through the sixth national development plan and the Judicial Security Document of 2020. It also cited its view of the precedence of domestic law as a reason for failing to ratify the Convention.

31. Compulsory veiling laws enforced by the police, the Basij militia and the "morality police" remain a concern. Appearing in public without a hijab is punishable by imprisonment. The Secretary-General notes with concern the targeting, imprisonment and intimidation of those protesting compulsory veiling, including through peaceful movements, such as The Girls of Revolution Street and My Stealthy Freedom.⁹⁶ The Government stressed that every society had its own dress code based on cultural identity or tradition and that violations should be punished by law.

32. The Secretary-General notes the finalization of the bill on "preserving the dignity and protection of women against violence", presented to Parliament on 13 January 2021, and reiterates his concerns that it does not criminalize child

⁹⁰ See www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1333012020ENGLISH.pdf.

⁹¹ See www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/19/briton-held-in-iran-completely-shut-off-after-losing-phone-access.

⁹² See <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/12/abducted-german-iranian-denied-choice-of-attorney-whereabouts-still-unknown/>; and www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3993/2021/en/.

⁹³ See www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3993/2021/en/; <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/12/abducted-german-iranian-denied-choice-of-attorney-whereabouts-still-unknown/>; and <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/06/ailing-german-national-remains-detained-in-iran-without-access-to-counsel/>.

⁹⁴ See <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/11/concern-grows-over-german-iranian-women-held-in-solitary-at-evin-prison/>; and www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3588/2021/en/.

⁹⁵ See www.dw.com/en/daughter-of-evin-prisoner-nahid-taghavi-stay-loud-for-all-political-prisoners/a-56195398.

⁹⁶ Submission to OHCHR.

marriage or marital rape and fails to provide effective protection against violence and to ensure access to remedies.⁹⁷

33. The Secretary-General is concerned at legislative initiatives seeking to reverse the rights of women and girls to sexual and reproductive health. In April 2021, the Guardian Council returned the draft bill on “youthful population and protection of the family” to Parliament.⁹⁸ The bill would, if adopted, represent considerable infringement on the right of women and girls to privacy, health and life, and would reverse the family planning policies for which the country had been previously hailed. The bill would limit the already restricted rights of women and girls to sexual and reproductive rights and impose severe restrictions and prohibitions on voluntary sterilization, abortion and access to modern contraceptive goods, services and information. The Secretary-General calls upon the authorities to ensure that all women and girls have access to safe, affordable and modern contraceptive methods, services and information, consistent with the right to health guaranteed under article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, which the Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified.⁹⁹

7. Minorities

34. Individuals belonging to religious, ethnic or sexual minorities continued to be subjected to discrimination in addition to other violations as described in the present report. Following the mass arrest in January 2021 of more than 100 Kurdish civil society activists, at least 34 were sentenced to imprisonment, with some reportedly for as long as 26 years.¹⁰⁰ The Government stressed the equal rights of all Iranians.

35. Also of concern is the criminalization of the advocacy of minority rights. The prosecution of Zara Mohammadi and of Anisa Jafari-Mehr for teaching the Kurdish language and culture is emblematic. In February 2021, Ms. Mohammadi’s sentencing to imprisonment was upheld, but reduced to five years.¹⁰¹ Ms. Jafari-Mehr was arrested by security forces at her home in November 2020 and transferred to an unknown location. She was summoned to court in February 2021.¹⁰² In July 2020, the Supreme Court upheld the 15-year prison sentence against Abbas Lisani, on national security charges, following his defence of the right of the Turkic languages minority to education in their mother tongue and protesting government policies.¹⁰³ He has recently refused to drink any liquids in protest over his detention conditions.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Alireza Farshi was convicted and imprisoned on national security charges for peaceful activities on International Mother Language Day in 2014 and is facing new charges related to his advocacy.¹⁰⁵ He has reportedly been subjected to physical violence by authorities and was transferred from Evin prison to Fashafuyeh prison.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁷ See <http://women.gov.ir/fa/news/14159/>; and A/HRC/47/22, para. 37.

⁹⁸ Submission to OHCHR.

⁹⁹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 22 (2016).

¹⁰⁰ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/03/joint-letter-urgent-international-action-needed-secure-release-kurdish-activists.

¹⁰¹ See www.iranhr.net/en/articles/4620/; and www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/woman-human-rights-defender-zahra-mohammadi-sentenced.

¹⁰² Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://cpj.org/data/people/anisa-jafari-mehr/>.

¹⁰³ Ibid. See also <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4355/>; and www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1331302020ENGLISH.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ Submission to OHCHR.

¹⁰⁵ See <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/02/non-persian-mother-languages-treated-as-national-security-threat-in-iran/>; and www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/02/civil-rights-activist-turkish/.

¹⁰⁶ Submission to OHCHR.

C. Rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly

1. Presidential elections

36. Presidential elections were due to be held on 18 June 2021. In early May 2021, the Guardian Council announced 12 additional criteria for candidates, in addition to the restrictive and discriminatory criteria already contained in articles 2 and 115 of the Constitution.¹⁰⁷ The Government explained that the additional criteria were interpretations of existing criteria. On 25 May 2021, the Guardian Council approved seven male candidates and disqualified 585 other candidates, including 40 women.¹⁰⁸

37. Several campaigns called for a boycott of the elections for various reasons, including their undemocratic nature, and the population's increasing frustrations with the ruling establishment.¹⁰⁹ On 25 May, the judiciary confirmed that a warning against critical coverage of presidential candidates had been sent to media outlets.¹¹⁰ In the run-up to the elections, journalists seeking to report on the background of presidential candidate Ebrahim Raisi, the current head of the judiciary, were reportedly summoned.¹¹¹

38. The right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including the right to vote and to stand for election, enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is at the core of democratic governance.¹¹² The right to vote and to be elected in genuine elections is intrinsically linked to other human rights, including the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly.¹¹³ The Government noted that the Constitution, endorsed by popular vote, provided the right to public participation to all the people.

39. The Secretary-General notes that 2021 marks the tenth anniversary of the house arrest of former presidential candidates Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, as well as Mr. Mousavi's spouse, Zahra Rahnavard, and reiterates his call for their release.¹¹⁴

2. Freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly

40. The repression of civic space continued, including through the criminalization of the exercise of the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and continued interference with media independence.¹¹⁵ The Secretary-General reiterates his call to reverse the court decision of March 2021 that dissolved Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society and to allow it and its members to operate without interference.¹¹⁶ On 20 June, two additional members of that non-governmental organization were summoned.

¹⁰⁷ See www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf; and www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1400/02/18/2499308/.

¹⁰⁸ See www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1400/03/04/2509394/.

¹⁰⁹ See <https://p.dw.com/p/3tX51>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. See also www.mehrnews.com/news/5220208/.

¹¹¹ See www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/iran-growing-harassment-of-journalists-as-presidential-election-campaign-begins.html; and www.mehrnews.com/news/5220208/.

¹¹² Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 25 (1996), para. 1.

¹¹³ Ibid., paras. 12, 15 and 19; and general comment No. 37 (2020), para. 100.

¹¹⁴ [A/67/327](http://www.unhcr.org/refugees/47/22), para. 28.

¹¹⁵ [A/HRC/47/22](http://www.unhcr.org/refugees/47/22), para. 44.

¹¹⁶ See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26141&LangID=E; [A/HRC/47/22](http://www.kayhan.ir/fa/news/191280), paras. 42–44; www.kayhan.ir/fa/news/191280; <http://www.kayhan.ir/fa/news/158067>; and www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/10/iran-joint-statement-court-ordered-dissolution-prominent-charity-group.

41. Of particular concern are harassment and intimidation by the authorities against people organizing and participating in demonstrations regarding labour rights and socioeconomic conditions.¹¹⁷

42. The Secretary-General welcomes the release of labour rights defender Jafar Azimzadeh in April 2021.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, between April 2020 and April 2021, more than 37 workers and labour rights defenders were arrested and 46 were sentenced to imprisonment or flogging.¹¹⁹ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps agents arrested labour rights defender Mehran Raouf in October 2020, alongside others.¹²⁰ Following several months in solitary confinement, he appeared in court in April and June 2021 on unspecified charges.¹²¹ Ali Nejati, a retired worker and labour rights defender from the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company, who had previously been pardoned, was summoned to prison in February 2021 to serve a five-year prison sentence based on his activism.¹²² Other labour rights defenders continue to be arbitrarily detained, including teacher Esmail Abdi, imprisoned since 2016 for defending labour rights. His suspended sentence of 10 years' imprisonment was reimposed in May 2020.¹²³ Mr. Abdi was transferred from Evin prison to Raja'i Shahr prison in March 2021, and has reportedly been denied medical care in prison.¹²⁴ Arash Johari was arrested in October 2020, reportedly held in solitary confinement and, in January 2021, sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment on national security charges.¹²⁵ In November 2020, a sentence of 74 lashes was enforced against Davood Rafiei, for protesting against his unjustified dismissal.¹²⁶

43. Several journalists were convicted and imprisoned as a result of their reporting, including under accusations of "spreading false news".¹²⁷ In January 2021, Reza Taleshian Jelodarzadeh, editor-in-chief of *Nour-e Azadi* magazine, was arrested and sent to prison for three years for "disturbing public opinion" and "spreading anti-establishment propaganda", in part owing to social media posts.¹²⁸ Mahmoud Mahmoudi, a Kurdish journalist and editor of *Aigrin Roj Weekly*, was arrested in January 2021 and detained in an undisclosed location after signing a letter against the mass arrest of Kurdish activists.¹²⁹ In February 2021, photojournalist Nooshin Jafari was taken to prison to serve a four-year sentence for "insulting the sacred" and "propaganda against the system".¹³⁰ In February 2021, Arash Ganji's 11-year prison sentence on national security-related charges for translating a book was upheld.¹³¹

¹¹⁷ A/HRC/47/22, paras. 44–47.

¹¹⁸ Submission to OHCHR. See also www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/jafar-azimzadeh-released-prison.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. See also www.en-hrana.org/iranian-labor-rights-activists-and-workers-face-ongoing-rights-violations-a-statistical-look-at-the-situation-of-iranian-workers-over-the-past-year.

¹²⁰ See www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1337432021ENGLISH.pdf.

¹²¹ See www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/nahid-taghavi-and-mehran-raouf-return-to-solitary-confinement-after-iran-court-appearance-1.1213736; and www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/trial-of-activists-in-iran-delayed-by-10-days-over-access-to-lawyers-1.1241042.

¹²² Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/03/traditional-new-year-furloughs-and-other-privileges-denied-to-irans-political-prisoners/>.

¹²³ See www.iranhumanrights.org/2020/06/prominent-teachers-rights-activist-facing-additional-years-in-prison.

¹²⁴ Submission to OHCHR.

¹²⁵ Ibid. See also www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/british-iranian-labour-activist-detained.

¹²⁶ Submission to OHCHR.

¹²⁷ See <https://cpj.org/2021/03/iran-convicts-5-newspaper-and-news-agency-employees-on-false-news-charges/>.

¹²⁸ See <https://cpj.org/2021/02/iran-arrests-journalist-reza-taleshian-jelodarzadeh/>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://cpj.org/2021/02/iranian-journalist-nooshin-jafari-begins-4-year-jail-term-on-propaganda-and-insult-charges/>.

¹³¹ Ibid. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/03/for-translating-a-book-about-syria-arash-ganji-must-serve-5-years-in-an-iranian-prison/>.

Mr. Ganji's sentence follows the detention of three members of the Iranian Writers' Association in October 2020 to commence prison terms for their work against censorship.¹³² In May 2021, journalist Najaf Mehdipour was detained on unknown charges,¹³³ and an appeals court confirmed the conviction of Kayvan Samimi, editor of *Iran-e Farda* magazine, arrested in December 2020 after attending a May Day rally, but reduced the original prison sentence.¹³⁴ In addition, threats continued to be reported against journalists working for overseas-based Persian language news services and their families.¹³⁵

44. The exercise of freedom of expression online remains severely restricted and shutdowns and disruption of Internet and telecommunications services continued, in particular in connection with protests.¹³⁶ Online censorship and arrest for postings on Instagram, Telegram and other social media platforms, including on charges of "insulting the Prophet of Islam", "connection with opposition groups" and "insulting the police", continued.¹³⁷

45. If adopted, current legislative proposals, including the bills on "organization of social media", "requirements for preventing and countering the publication of false information, news and content in cyberspace" and "requirements for the publication of data and information", would further restrict access to online platforms and suppress the exercise of freedom of expression and right to information online.¹³⁸

D. Right to an adequate standard of living, response to the COVID-19 pandemic and impact of sanctions

1. Poverty and the economic situation

46. The deep economic crisis, characterized by high inflation, high unemployment and deteriorating basic services, has had a detrimental impact on the living conditions of children, women and men, fuelling protests over high inflation and unpaid wages.^{139,140} Challenges include resource constraints associated with the ongoing imposition of sanctions, notably on oil exports and the financial sector, and the broader effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on wider economic activity. The Government stressed the long-term direct and indirect impacts of unilateral coercive measures on all rights and on the economy, asserting their unlawfulness.

47. In March 2021, the Chamber of Trade announced that the increase of the COVID-19 pandemic in red alert zones would eliminate 3 million jobs.¹⁴¹ By December 2020, close to 1.5 million people had left the job market,¹⁴² and the population of economically active women had been reduced by about 1 million.¹⁴³

¹³² Ibid. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/12/iranian-authorities-go-after-more-members-of-writers-association/>.

¹³³ See <https://cpj.org/2021/05/iranian-journalist-najaf-mehdipour-imprisoned-with-no-charges-disclosed/>.

¹³⁴ Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://cpj.org/2020/12/iranian-journalist-kayvan-samimi-begins-3-year-prison-sentence-over-protest-coverage/>.

¹³⁵ Submission to OHCHR.

¹³⁶ See www.accessnow.org/iran-blackout-2021-internet-shutdowns-sistan-baluchistan; and <https://iran-shutdown.amnesty.org/>.

¹³⁷ Submission to OHCHR; and A/HRC/47/22, para. 50.

¹³⁸ Submission to OHCHR.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ A/74/273, paras. 59–65; and A/HRC/43/20, paras. 44–58.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See www.amar.org.ir/Portals/0/News/1399/bikari%2099-3.pdf.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

Even before that, the rate of women's participation in the job market was only one fifth that of men.¹⁴⁴

48. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare, by the end of March 2021, 670,000 unemployed had been paid unemployment insurance benefits for three months owing to COVID-19, while the number of people who had registered for such benefits was 1.7 million in August 2020.¹⁴⁵ For 2021, the Supreme Labour Council approved a 39 per cent increase in the minimum wage for unskilled workers and 26 per cent for skilled workers.¹⁴⁶ Even then, the minimum wage will remain below 40 million rials per month, while the poverty line in the Islamic Republic of Iran is estimated at 100 million rials per month.

49. According to the International Monetary Fund, inflation in the Islamic Republic of Iran is expected to rise from 36.5 per cent in 2020 to 39 per cent in 2021. The Government stopped setting preferential rates for foreign currencies for certain commodities, including food and medicine, leading to increases in the price of food and to the scarcity of some pharmaceutical items.¹⁴⁷ The inflation rate of food items reached 67 per cent in March 2021 compared with the previous year.¹⁴⁸ Price increases have contributed to pushing increasing segments of the population below the poverty line.¹⁴⁹ The Social Security Organization Research Institute estimates that 30 per cent of the population lives in absolute poverty.¹⁵⁰ Unofficial data suggest that the actual number is far higher, with poverty levels particularly high in provinces with minority populations.

50. Between June 2020 and June 2021, over 1,700 peaceful protests were held by workers across the country for basic rights, including to claim unpaid salaries, higher wages and better health insurance coverage.¹⁵¹ In the same period, retirees held over 200 rallies, demanding adjustments to their pensions.¹⁵² Sixty per cent of retirees receive a monthly salary of less than 28 million rials, and an estimated 70 per cent of retirees live below the poverty line.¹⁵³ According to official statistics, about 3.5 million retirees are covered by the social security pension fund. To date, the Government has not implemented its promise of increasing retirement pensions by 130 per cent in the new Iranian year, which began on 20 March 2021.¹⁵⁴

2. Response to COVID-19

51. Sanctions and banking restrictions continued to have an adverse effect on the health sector, including shortages of pharmaceutical and medical items.¹⁵⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the challenges in the health system. Sanctions have affected access by the Government to foreign currency reserves to purchase medical supplies and the import of those products, such as insulin.¹⁵⁶ Foreign medication required for the treatment of life-threatening or rare conditions remains

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Submission to OHCHR.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ See www.amar.org.ir/Portals/0/News/1399/dahake.pdf.

¹⁵⁰ See <https://cutt.ly/7nBqDXF>.

¹⁵¹ See <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/04/crippling-economic-hardship-enflames-iranian-protests/>.

¹⁵² Submission to OHCHR. See also <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/01/suffering-iranian-retirees-joining-nationwide-protests-against-chronic-state-failures-swo/>.

¹⁵³ Submission to OHCHR.

¹⁵⁴ See <https://cutt.ly/8nBqJDV>.

¹⁵⁵ A/74/273, paras. 59 and 63; and A/HRC/43/20, paras. 50–52. See also www.irna.ir/news/84057232.

¹⁵⁶ See <https://khabaronline.ir/news/1444878>; and <https://ifpnews.com/iran-producing-97-of-medicines-it-needs-domestically>.

III. Cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

A. Human rights treaty bodies

55. The Government has reiterated its commitment to engaging with international human rights mechanisms and to submitting its outstanding periodic reports. The Secretary-General notes that the reports required under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have been overdue since 2013 and 2018, respectively. The Government noted its submission on 21 June 2021 of its report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and stated that the reports under the other two treaties mentioned above were in preparation.

B. Special procedures

56. In March 2021, in its resolution [46/18](#), the Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Secretary-General encourages the Government to pursue constructive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur and to invite him to visit the country.

57. In December 2019, the Government invited the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights to visit the Islamic Republic of Iran.

58. Between 1 June 2020 and 18 April 2021, special procedure mandate holders issued 30 communications regarding the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. A total of 18 public statements were issued between 1 June 2020 and 18 June 2021. The Government has replied to 18 communications.

C. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

59. The Secretary-General welcomes the dialogue between the Government and OHCHR and encourages the Government to continue and enhance its engagement with OHCHR in technical cooperation. On several occasions, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and OHCHR raised concerns with the Government about the situation of child offenders at imminent risk of execution and the detention of dual and foreign nationals.

IV. Recommendations

60. **The Secretary-General:**

(a) **Urges the Government to abolish the death penalty and introduce an immediate moratorium on its use and to prohibit the execution of child offenders in all circumstances and commute their sentences;**

(b) **Urges the Government to ensure that international fair trial standards are met, notably by ensuring that all defendants, including those accused of crimes against national security, are given access to legal counsel of their choosing during the preliminary investigative stage and all subsequent stages of the judicial process;**

(c) Urges the Government to release immediately all persons detained arbitrarily for legitimately exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly, and to ensure that security measures in relation to future protests are in accordance with international standards, including the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials;

(d) Urges the Government to ensure prompt, thorough, transparent and effective investigations by an independent and impartial body into the use of excessive and lethal force during protests, deaths in custody and reports of torture and other ill-treatment, and to prosecute and hold accountable public officials, including law enforcement officials, found responsible for issuing or carrying out the relevant orders;

(e) Urges the Government to guarantee the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to ensure that any limitations to those rights, including online, are in accordance with the established criteria for permissible restrictions under international human rights law;

(f) Urges the Government to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, writers, labour rights activists, artists and environmentalists are able to engage in their respective professional activities safely and freely, without fear of reprisal, harassment, arrest, detention or prosecution, and to extend the policy of temporary release of prisoners in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to all detainees who pose no threat to public safety;

(g) Urges the Government to take further steps to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls, to take effective measures to protect them from other human rights violations, in accordance with its obligations under international law and consistent with international standards, and to advance their equal participation in public life;

(h) Urges the Government to protect the rights of all persons belonging to minority groups and to address all forms of discrimination against them promptly;

(i) Noting the economic and financial challenges experienced by the Islamic Republic of Iran, urges States that have imposed sanctions on it to take appropriate steps to ensure that measures, such as humanitarian exemptions, are given prompt, broad and practical effect in order to minimize the adverse consequences of the sanctions;

(j) Calls upon the Government to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization;

(k) Encourages the Islamic Republic of Iran to submit outstanding periodic reports to the treaty bodies and calls upon the Government to implement the recommendations of United Nations human rights mechanisms and to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran;

(l) Encourages the Government to continue to engage with OHCHR in following up on all recommendations made in the reports of the Secretary-General.