



**52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council**

**Statement by Javaid Rehman  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

Geneva

20 March 2023

*[Check against delivery]*

**Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of civil society**

I present this report today amidst the most serious human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past four decades.

I begin by expressing my profound admiration for millions of peace-loving Iranian women, men, girls and boys, who have, since September, challenged State authorities and joined peaceful protests in all the country's provinces at the risk of their lives to express outrage over the death in police custody of Jina Mahsa Amini and to demand respect for and recognition of their human rights. Today on 20 March, I would like to wish all the brave peace-loving Iranians – within and outside – of the country, a very happy Nowruz.

**Mr. President,**

My report thoroughly examines the circumstances of the death of Ms. Amini in the custody of Iranian morality police three days after her arrest for allegedly not complying with the country's discriminatory dress code. I present to this Council available evidence including eyewitness testimonies and comments from reliable medical sources establishing that Ms. Amini died on 16 September as a result of beatings by the State morality police. As per usual practice, State authorities have characteristically denied any wrongdoing or misconduct on their part and presented the results of so-called investigations that were neither credible nor transparent and failed to meet the minimum requirements of impartiality and independence. None of the members of the morality police involved in the death of Ms. Amini has been held accountable.

Once again, I would like to stress that her death was not an isolated event but the latest in a long series of extreme violence against women and girls committed by the Iranian authorities. The obligatory wearing of hijab and its brutal enforcement is emblematic of this violence and of the denial of fundamental women and girls' human rights and dignity. A month only before the death of Ms. Amini, President Raisi signed a decree ordering further repressive measures for "improper hijab". The responsibility of top senior officials in instigating this violence can therefore not be ignored.

**Mr. President,**

The legitimate claims of Iranian peoples of all ages, genders, ethnic, linguistic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds, for an end to the serious human rights violations, including gender-based violence and discrimination, and their aspiration to a democratic and secular system of governance were met with brutal State violence.

Security forces have fired live ammunition, birdshot, and other metal pellets directly at unarmed and peaceful protesters, among them many children and youth who posed no imminent threat to life or serious injury, as well as at bystanders and those who were running away. Protesters including children were beaten to death. At least 527 people, including 71 children were killed, and hundreds of protesters severely injured. Dozens have lost their eyes because of direct shots to the head.

Iranian doctors have also reported women and girls participating in protests were targeted with shotgun fire to their faces, breasts, and genitals.

From the very first days of protests, State authorities have tried to shutdown all avenues of freedom of expression, disrupting Internet, censoring social media platforms and proceeding with mass arbitrary arrests and detentions. Recently authorities recognised that over 22 000 people had been arrested.

Dozens of human rights defenders, at least 600 students, 45 lawyers, 576 civil society activists, 170 women human rights defenders, at least 62 journalists, artists, academics were arbitrarily arrested and detained. Threats, including in some cases death threats, harassment, detention and violence against journalists and their families including employees of BBC News Persian, Iran International news channel and other media outlets is particularly alarming.

There are reports of torture and ill treatment inflicted upon people involved in protests. Children released have described sexual abuses, threats of rape, floggings, administration of electric shocks and how their heads were maintained under water, how they were suspended from their arms or from scarves wrapped around their necks.

**Mr. President,**

I am outraged that despite appeals by my mandate and by the international community, Iranian authorities have thus far executed at least 4 persons associated with protests after arbitrary, summary, and sham trials marred by torture allegations. These summary executions are the symbols of a State ready to use all means to instil fear and quash protests. At least 17 protestors have already been sentenced to death and more than 100 currently face charges that carry the death penalty.

On the occasion of the 44th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, on 1 February, the Supreme Leader of Iran announced that prison sentences of “tens of thousands” of detainees would be commuted or detainees pardoned, provided that they admit and recognize their crimes. This Order excludes dual nationals and those charged with "corruption on earth," a capital offence charge many of those arrested in relation to the protests, face.

**Mr. President,**

In addition to the unfolding tragedy since 16 September, I remain deeply concerned at the continuing and exponentially increasing violations of human rights in the country. This includes the sharp increase in executions, particularly upsurge in the execution of drug offenders, the continuous execution of persons sentenced to death as children, resumption of public executions and the disproportionate use of the death penalty against persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities in 2022. At least 500 persons, including two persons sentenced as children and 13 women were executed in 2022, the highest number of executions in the past five years. Since January 2023, 143 persons have already been executed following grossly unfair trials.

I am equally alarmed at the continuing violence against women and girls, including coordinated chemical attacks throughout the country against schoolgirls which were repeatedly and until recently denied by the Government.

Following contradictory declarations about a possible closure of the morality police, recent public stances leave no doubt as to the intentions of State authorities to continue to brutally repress women and girls. A "Chastity and hijab" plan is currently in discussion before the parliament with the view to identifying unveiled women and girls and depriving them of receiving any social and public services. On 8 March, several young women who filmed themselves unveiled dancing in the streets to celebrate Women's International day were arrested and forced to apologise on all State media.

**Mr. President,**

I am extremely concerned that ethnic and religious minorities, who have suffered decades of systemic and systematic discrimination and persecution continue to be the targets of brutal State repression. More than half of the total number of persons killed since the start of the protests are from the Baluchi and Kurdish-populated provinces. The Baha'i religious minority remains the most severely persecuted, with a marked increase in arrests, targeting and victimization.

I am alarmed that a number of dual and foreign nationals currently arbitrarily detained face ill-treatment and mental and physical torture. I was horrified at the execution of British-Iranian national Mr. Alireza Akbari in January and at the sentencing to death of German Iranian Jamshid Sharmahd last month. Olivier Van de Castele, a Belgium aid worker sentenced to 40 years in prison and 74 lashes continues to be detained in isolation in inhumane conditions.

**Mr. President,**

My report to this Council in March 2022 and my current report firmly establishes my conclusions that there is absence of accountability for serious human rights violations and for crimes under international law within the political, constitutional, and legal system of Iran.

The scale and gravity of the violations committed by Iranian authorities, especially since the death of Ms. Amini points to the possible commission of international crimes, notably the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, enforced disappearances, torture, rape and sexual violence, and persecution.

In the absence of accountability at the domestic level, I have strongly advocated the establishment of an independent international fact-finding mission and I look towards fully cooperating with it to ensure justice and accountability for victims of human rights violations.

I thank

you.