**Deadly Repression of the Ongoing Popular Uprising in Iran**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UK GOVERNMENT**

Amnesty International is calling on the UK government to help end the crisis of systemic impunity, and show support for women and girls in Iran by:

1. **Calling on Iranian authorities to (i) immediately quash all convictions and death sentences against protesters, and refrain from seeking further death sentences (ii) ensure that any of those charged with a recognizable criminal offence is tried in proceedings meeting international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty, (iii) release all those detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.** It should be recognised that Iranian authorities are resorting to the use of the death penalty against those detained for exercising their rights of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly as a tool of political repression and revenge against those standing up for human rights in Iran.
2. **Ensuring the swift operationalization of the recently established UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to investigate human rights violations in Iran** related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022, especially with respect to women and girls. The UK should ensure that its mandate is sufficiently resourced and urge the Iranian authorities to fully cooperate with the FFM and allow unhindered access to the country. The UK should also support FFM in its mandate to collect, consolidate and preserve crucial evidence for future prosecutions by sharing information and witness testimony from those persons who may be within their jurisdiction.
3. **Exercising extraterritorial jurisdiction, including universal jurisdiction, to conduct independent and effective investigations and prosecutions** whenever anyone reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law or other serious human rights violations finds themselves within the jurisdiction of the UK. If there is sufficient admissible evidence, the relevant national authorities should issue arrest warrants and seek to prosecute all those suspected of criminal responsibility before national courts, in proceedings that meet international standards or extradite a suspect to a jurisdiction that will do so.
4. **Undertaking diplomatic initiatives to monitor trials, particularly before Revolutionary Courts.** The UKshould urgently seek to ensure that high level observers are able to attend all **ongoing trials where defendants are at risk of being sentenced to death** in connection with the protests as well as those of human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience.
5. **Undertaking diplomatic initiatives to visit prisons:** The UK should seek to visit prisons where human rights defenders and others are being arbitrarily detained for peacefully exercising their human rights, including in relation to their participation in protests.

For more updates on the human rights situation in Iran**: [Latest - Amnesty International](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/?qlocation=2027)**

**OVERVIEW**

The Iranian authorities’ deadly repression of the ongoing popular uprising in Iran, which erupted after the [**death in custody**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6060/2022/en/) of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini on 16 September 2022, is the latest in [**the cycle of violent attacks**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5789/2022/en/) and militarised response to protests as waged by the authorities against people expressing their legitimate grievances as early as December 2017.

Amnesty International has consistently documented crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed by the Iranian authorities in the context of protests, including:

* [**unlawful killings**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2308/2020/en/) following unwarranted use of lethal force,
* [**mass arbitrary arrests and detentions**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2891/2020/en/),
* [**enforced disappearances**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/08/iran-world-turning-blind-eye-to-crisis-of-mass-enforced-disappearance/),
* [**torture and other ill-treatment**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4349/2021/en),
* the sentencing of individuals to lengthy prison terms or [**death**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/09/iran-secret-execution-of-wrestler-navid-afkari-a-travesty-of-justice) following grossly unfair trials

Whilst the landmark UN fact-finding mission marks a long-awaited turning point in tackling systematic impunity in Iran, states must now ensure that the mandate is made operational and sufficiently resourced without delay.

**DEATH PENALTY**

From publicly available materials and other sources, Amnesty has identified [13 individuals](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6424/2023/en/) grave risk of execution in connection with the protests, including for acts not involving “intentional killing”, in violation of Iran’s obligations under international law. The authorities have violated their fair trial rights and subjected several to torture and other ill-treatment, including floggings, electric shocks, death threats, rape and other forms of sexual violence. Amnesty International fears that many others may remain at risk of facing the death penalty, given the thousands of people arrested and number of indictments issued by the authorities. Based on our most recent records the names of these individuals are as follows:-

* **Javad Rouhi, Ebrahim Narouie, Kambiz Kharout, Majid Kazemi, Manouchehr Mehman Navaz, Mansour Dahmardeh, Mohammad Boroughani, Mehdi Bahman, Mehdi Mohammadifard, Mohammad Ghobadlou, Saleh Mirhashemi, Saeed Yaghoubi, and Shoeib Mir Baluchzehi Rigi**
* At least five others – **Sahand Nourmohammad-Zadeh; Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou; Hossein Mohammadi; Reza Arya (Aria); and Mahan Sadrat (Sedarat) Madani** – are facing retrials on capital charges after their convictions and death sentences were quashed by the Supreme Court and their cases returned to lower courts.
* At least three others known to Amnesty International – **Saeed Shirazi, Abolfazl Mehri Hossein Hajilou, and Mohsen Rezazadeh Gharegholou** – have undergone trial on charges that carry the death penalty. At the time of writing, there is no publicly available information on the outcome of their trials. Dozens of other individuals are being investigated for capital crimes brought in relation to the protests.

The horrifying execution of young protesters, [**Mohsen Shekari,**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-horrifying-execution-of-young-protester-exposes-authorities-cruelty-and-risk-of-further-bloodshed/)[**Majidreza Rahnavard,**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-public-execution-of-majidreza-rahnavard-exposes-authorities-revenge-killings/) **Mohammad Mehdi Karami** and **Seyed Mohammad Hosseini** following expedited and grossly unfair sham trials, shows how authorities are acting on public threats to expedite capital proceedings and carry out executions in an attempt to instill fear in the public. Amnesty International fears that many others in Iran could face the death penalty in relation to the popular uprising, given the thousands of people arrested and indicted.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the fairness of proceedings in all of the above cases[[1]](#footnote-2) and believes that the gravity of fair trial violations in the cases of the individuals effectively renders the proceedings against them show trials intended to deter others from taking part in the popular uprising.

Amnesty’s concerns about the unfairness of the proceedings and blatant biases against defendants are further heightened by historical public statements and official documents that show the head of the judiciary, parliamentarians, prosecution authorities and a senior police chief calling for speedy trials, the imposition the death penalty and public executions.

Amnesty International has documented the torture and other ill-treatment of 10 of the individuals names above. Documented methods of torture include beatings, floggings, electric shocks, being suspended upside down, rape and other forms of sexual violence. The authorities have used torture-tainted “confessions”, some of which were broadcast on state media prior to their trials, as evidence to issue convictions.

Amnesty International calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately quash all death sentences, refrain from seeking the imposition of the death penalty and drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of human rights.

**WIDESPREAD USE OF LETHAL FORCE**

Iran has been rocked by a nationwide popular uprising against the Islamic republic system since the death in custody of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini at the hands of Iran’s “morality” police on 16 September 2022. Security forces have responded with unlawful force, including lethal, killing hundreds of men, women and children and injuring thousands of others.

“*In the name of the God of Rainbows”* - This is how 10-year-old Kian Pirfalak started his video for a school project, capturing the hope of Iran’s children for a brighter future. **Kian is one of at least** [**44 children**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-authorities-covering-up-their-crimes-of-child-killings-by-coercing-families-into-silence/) **unlawfully killed with absolute impunity by Iran’s security forces since mid-September. Many more have also been injured in a bid to crush the spirit of resistance among the country’s youth and retain their iron grip on power at any cost. Children from Iran’s Baluchi and Kurdish minorities constitute 63% of child victims recorded by Amnesty International. Authorities’ campaign of denial and cover-up has involved systemic harassment and intimidation of the families of children unlawfully killed.**

Since protests erupted in mid-September up until 22 November 2022, **Amnesty has recorded the names and details of at least 305 people killed by security forces.** Amnesty International continues to believe the real death toll is higher and it is continuing its investigations to identify victims.

The security forces are ruthlessly persisted in their widespread use of unlawful lethal force, exposing a clear intent to kill or maim protesters in their quest to quell the popular uprising at any cost. Since the 15 November 2022, they have intensified their exclusive use of **live ammunition to disperse protests in provinces populated by Kurds and other oppressed ethnic minorities. Our records show that the period of repression from September to December 2022, has had a disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities, with the majority of the over 300 killed by security forces being from Iran’s oppressed Baluchi and Kurd minority groups.**

**ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS**

According to a leaked audio file obtained by BBC Persian, the authorities **arbitrarily arrested between 15,000 and 16,000 people in the first wave of arrests** since the protests began. Those arrested include protesters, journalists, human rights defenders, dissidents, university students and schoolchildren.

Many have been subjected to enforced disappearance, incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and unfair trials. On 8 November 2022, the Iranian judiciary announced that **1,024 indictments had been issued in relation to the protests in Tehran province alone**, without providing further details on the charges.

The safety and treatment of those detained in Iran continues to be a pressing concern, as exemplified by the torture of prisoners at Evin Prison during the fires on the 15 October 2022. On 18 November 2022, Amnesty International issued a [**public statement**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6129/2022/en/) outlining the evidence we have gathered that raises serious concerns that the authorities sought to justify their bloody crackdown on prisoners under the guise of battling the fire and preventing prisoner escapes[[2]](#footnote-3). The arbitrary and abusive force used by Iran’s security forces and prison officials against prisoners who were confined within the walls of a prison affected by fire and had no chance to escape offers further evidence of the extreme brutality Iranian authorities routinely use to crush dissent.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Iran’s discriminatory compulsory veiling laws have violated women’s rights for decades, leading to daily harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment of women and in the case of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini, her death.

Amnesty International has called on Iranian authorities to end their persecution of women who speak out about [**compulsory veiling**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/7783/2018/en/), and abolish the discriminatory and humiliating practice that perpetuates violence against women. Forced veiling laws violate a whole host of rights, including the rights to equality, privacy and freedom of expression and belief.

Compulsory veiling is entrenched in Iran’s Penal Code (Article 638) and other laws and regulations that enable security and administrative bodies to subject women to arbitrary arrest and detention, and deny them access to public institutions including hospitals, schools, government offices and airports if they do not over their hair. Iranian authorities must immediately repeal Article 638 of the Penal Code and abolish discriminatory bans on women’s appearance in public without out a headscarf.

The international community must not be confused by deliberately vague statements from Iranian authorities of disbanding the so-called [**“Morality Police**](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-international-community-must-not-be-deceived-by-dubious-claims-of-disbanding-morality-police/)**”** (*gasht-e-ershad*). During a press conference on 3 December 2022, Iran’s Prosecutor General, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, said: “The ‘morality police’ (*gasht-e ershad*) has nothing to do with the judiciary and it was closed by whichever [body] that established it in the past.” He then qualified his statement, adding: “The judiciary will continue to regulate people’s behaviour in society,” indicating that the policing of women’s bodies under compulsory veiling laws will continue. [**State media outlets**](https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1702933/%D8%AD%DA%A9%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D9%87%D9%85%DA%86%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7-%D9%88-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1-%DA%AF%D8%B4%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B7%DB%8C%D9%84-%D8%B4%D8%AF) reported the next day that “No official authority in the Islamic Republic of Iran has confirmed the closure of the morality police”.

**EXPLAINER: THE UN FACT-FINDING MISSION**

*“While the fact-finding mission should have come far sooner, it sends a clear message to the Iranian authorities that they can no longer commit crimes under international law without fear of consequences”* Agnes Callamard, Amnesty International

On 24 November 2022, the UN Human Rights Council passed a landmark resolution to establish a fact-finding mission to investigate human rights violations in Iran related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022, especially with respect to women and children. The fact-finding mission has a mandate to collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and preserve evidence, including in view of cooperation in any legal proceedings.

**NEXT STEPS:** States must ensure that the mandate is made **operational** and **sufficiently resourced** without delay and call upon the Iranian authorities to cooperate fully with the mission and allow unhindered access to the country.

The continuing violence against women and girls is embedded in compulsory veiling laws and fuelled by ongoing impunity for those violently enforcing them. However, women and girls continue to be at the forefront of Iran’s popular uprising, challenging decades of gender-based discrimination and violence. They have defied Iran’s discriminatory and degrading compulsory veiling laws. Women and girls who do not are treated as criminals by the state, and face daily harassment and violence, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and denial of access to education, employment and public spaces.

The so-called “morality police” and other law enforcement bodies place all women and girls under surveillance, but the policing of women’s bodies is not confined to the state. Iran’s abusive, discriminatory and degrading forced veiling laws enable other non-state actors to harass and assault women and girls on a daily basis in public.

1. Documented violations of fair trial rights include: denial of the rights to access a lawyer of their choosing from the time of arrest and throughout the investigation and trial proceedings; to be presumed innocent; to remain silent and not to be compelled to incriminate oneself or to confess guilt; to be protected from torture and other-ill-treatment; to obtain full access to relevant evidence; to the exclusion of evidence obtained in violation of international standards; and to receive a fair, public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Testimonies obtained by Amnesty International from prisoners, victims’ relatives, journalists and human rights defenders with contacts inside the prison reveal that prison officials at Evin prison and anti-riot police **repeatedly fired teargas and metal pellets** at hundreds of prisoners, and subjected many to **brutal beatings** with batons, particularly on their heads and faces. Amnesty International is also gravely concerned about eyewitness accounts emerging from inside the prison indicating that security forces **pointed guns to the heads of several women prisoners** and may have also **fired live ammunition** towards some male. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)