



IOPHR

**International Organisation to
Preserve Human Rights**

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IOPHR report on Human Rights Violations in Iran

The Iranian regime faced with inner unrest and unpopularity and economic ineptitude has over the last few years expanded its policy of oppression and suppression, in order to stamp out any form of expression that it sees as a threat to its extremist ideology.

In this report IOPHR (International Organisation to Preserve Human Rights) will highlight some of the recent systematic multipronged approach used by the Iranian regime to suppress its citizens and consistently violate the rights of its population, in order to keep its tentacles on power.

The Iranian regime through its IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps) arm, already controls the Iranian economy via a vast network of shell companies that control vital Iranian resources. In fact IRGC networks' reach often extends outside of Iranian borders, under the guise of religious or cultural programs. All of which are aimed at, either for earning hard currency for its many programs or for foreign influence. IRGC through these systematic programs keeps a tight grip on power within Iran, and in the surrounding region, either through economic control or by influencing foreign organisations that are able to provide it a lifeline for its activities.

Viewed through this perspective, one can clearly see that the Iranian regime's both clandestine and blatant campaign of oppression of all potential opposition both inside and outside of Iran, is simply another method of keeping its rein on power, and thus complementary with its program to hold economic and political grip on the resources that it requires to maintain its reign.

This campaign of suppression has many threads and the aim of this report is to highlight few of these threads. Each thread of suppression is in fact either an attempt to intimidate, or torture (both physical and psychologically) the regime's opponents or promptly shutdown any current or possible future vulnerability that it senses. It is also important to recognise that on occasions any potential victim can at any moment be subject to multiple threads of attack and at the same time also be part of much larger campaign of suppression.

It is also important to note that in order to facilitate this multipronged approach, two months ago the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, selected Ebrahim Raisi (who is not only one of Khamenei's closest allies, but also one of his most ruthless) to be the new head of judiciary. Raisi according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the U.S. State Department was involved in the notorious "mass executions" of political prisoners in the 1980s. Raisi, who is experienced in mass elimination of regime's opponents, is in fact one of the key appointments of the regime in its program of oppression. Raisi, true to form, since his appointment has even outdone his predecessor, as according to regime's own official records, he has executed 44 people, two of whom were 17-year old juveniles, all in the face of global condemnation by the United Nations, Amnesty International and other human rights organisations. In fact the recent execution of juveniles was a complete affront to UN human rights convention, to which Iran is a signatory.

The number of annual executions in Iran is second only to China on absolute terms, and on the basis of percentage of population, is already at the top of the world league table of executions, by a very large margin. With Raisi in-charge the number of executions will in all probability only increase. Especially, when you consider that under so called "reformist president", Rohani, the number of executions in Iran have not fallen, by much once you adjust for the drop in the number of executions for drugs, due to the change in the law. In fact IHR (Iran Human Rights group) reports that only 34 percent of the executions in Iran are publicly announced by the ruling establishment, and the rest were divulged by IHR sources in the country. The one place that the Iranian regime does not seem to discriminate on gender, is in execution of its citizens. As since Rohani came to power, total of 88 women have been executed. Iran is in fact the only country in the world in which thousands of [women have been executed](#) or subjected to torture for being opposed to the regime.

The suppression campaign:

The Iranian regime in order to keep its rein on power, must not only identify any current vulnerability, but also look ahead for any future weakness that may arise. In particular, it needs to keep a tight vigil on any potential face of future popular uprising. It is in this context that anyone who is deemed to be popular, by the people of Iran, and thus the possible potential face of future opposition, even if they don't currently have any type of political ambitions, are viewed as a threat.

The Iranian regime is already well experienced in silencing any type of popular political uprising, through various means. A clear example, of which, is the nine year house arrest of popular faces of 2010 presidential election campaign, namely Mr Karroubi, Mir Hussein Mossavie, and their spouses. The initial global protest and the subsequent silence by the international community, all point to the success of the regime, in not only silencing its opponents, but also keeping any type of global protest at bay, and thus limit any potential international fall back on the regime.

In this light, the arrest of Nasrin Sotoudeh and Narges Mohammadi who are both popular human right activists, takes on a different context. Nasrin Sotoudeh, only crime was to stand up for women's right in Iran. However, given the sensitivity of women's rights issue within Iran and her popularity (which was highlighted in a poll few months ago), made her a threat to the regime and was of the main reason for her harsh prison sentence of 38 years (of which she is scheduled to serve 12 years) and 148 lashes. The harsh sentencing of Nasrin Sotoudeh, was initially met with a global outcry, both within US and Europe, and yet after this initial outcry, status quo was promptly resumed in particular in European dealings with the Iranian regime.

The case of Narges Mohammadi, a peaceful activist, is another example of the regime's stamping out campaign of popular faces within Iran. Mohammadi, has been serving a 16-year prison sentence since 2015, for the charges of "membership in the [now banned] Defenders of Human Rights Centre," "assembly and collusion against national security," and one year for "propaganda against the state." She is also well known in Iran as an advocate against the death penalty, and her prominence on human right arena and her opposition to the Iranian's regime human rights violations, predates even the activities of Nasrin Sotoudeh. Mohammadi whilst in prison has also recently been vocally active against the regimes policy of hostage taking of dual nationals. As she co-authored a protest letter with fellow inmate Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, an Iranian-British dual citizen, in demanding access to medical treatment outside the prison.

The frequent arrests of Iranian dual citizens, is yet another method used by the Iranian regime to intimidate Iranian citizens and the international community. As the regime seems to be happy to arrest any dual national who enters Iran for visiting their families or for business, under the guise of spying for foreign governments. This tactic, is simply a blatant hostage taking strategy, and a means to pressurise foreign governments either to free the agents of the Iranian regime held captive abroad, or as means of financial or political leverage. This hostage taking strategy, was even openly discussed by the Iranian Foreign Minister recently, when he offered to free the captured Iranian dual nationals, in exchange for UK and US governments help in freeing Iranian agents held in US and other countries. The most prominent Iranian dual citizens currently under arrest,

apart from the mentioned Ms Ratcliffe are Baqer and Siamak Namazi, father and son, and Dr Ahmadreza Jalali whose freedom was recently demanded by a signed petition from 100 Nobel laureates. This hostage taking policy is clearly aimed at bending the will of the international community towards the will of the Iranian regime, in matters of foreign or trade policy. A policy that seems to be only growing in practice, as illustrated by the recent arrest of the British Council employee Aras Amiri.

Furthermore, one of the ways political prisoners are pressurised both physically and psychologically is through the lack of medical attention within Iranian prisons. The overcrowding and general conditions in Iranian prisons are so bad that many inmates health over time deteriorates and the lack of medical attention within prisons only goes to accelerate this decline. Prominent political prisoners like Narges Mohammadi and Dr Ahmadreza Jalali , Arash Sadeghi (who is suffering from cancer) and Soheil Arabi (who suffers from injuries he received as result of torture and beatings from prison authorities) find themselves in the midst of psychological mind games due of their declining health condition. As there are consistently denied hospital treatments, only for them, then to be rushed to hospital when their lives are in imminent danger, and then rushed back to prison, before they can fully recover from their condition. This stop and go approach to health treatment, not only extenuates their poor health, but also places the prisoners mind and body under immense pressure, not to mention the stress felt by their loved ones, who are also innocent victims of the brutal Iranian regime. The case of Narges Mohammadi, is a typical example of this type of torture, as not only the prison authorities barred her transfer to hospital on many occasions, but after they were forced to take her to hospital for emergency surgery, they then forcefully, against her doctor's instructions, returned her to her cell. Saeed Shirzad, is yet another political prisoner who is repeatedly refused medical treatment for ailments, he has received as result of his harsh treatment whilst in prison, and as a result of his recent hunger strike protesting the treatment of his fellow political prison inmates.

The number of political prisoners in Iran in only increasing, as in Iran you can be arrested for simply expressing your opinion on social media. As state forces are threatened by Iranians who call for peaceful reforms, like Hengameh Shahidi, whose 7.5-year prison sentence was recently upheld by the appeal court. A case that is purely based on her social media posts, in which she criticised the former Chief Justice Sadegh Larijani and demanded a report on his 10-year tenure.

Moreover, human rights violations under Raisi have already increased in number, during his short tenure. As now the regime has placed laws in place, which restrict the access of the accused to lawyers. Already before these laws, political prisoners were not free to choose their own lawyers, as they were told to choose a lawyer from a small list of lawyers who are approved by the regime through their allegiances to the regime. Now with the newly proposed laws, under Raisi supervision, these amendments to Iran's code of criminal procedure, could effectively strip detainees who are facing punishments, such as the death penalty, life imprisonment and amputation, of the right to access a lawyer, while they are under investigation.

According to an [analysis of the bill](#) published by Amnesty, these amended law, if passed, would permit the prosecution to immediately deprive individuals arrested on "national security" and certain other serious criminal charges of access to a lawyer for 20 days, which could be extended to cover the whole investigation phase. In Iran, those charged with "national security" offences include human rights defenders, journalists and political dissidents targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

The regime's oppressions of Iranian women also has no end. As illustrated by the arrest of women rights activists like Mojgan Keshavarz, Monir Arabshahi, and Yasmin Aryayi, who are not allowed familial visits. As anyone who openly opposes the forced headscarf policy, faces harsh treatment at the hands of the Iranian morality police. As recently as, 13th May 2019, Basji forces violently beat the Tehran University students protesting the imposed headscarf policy, of the regime. Iranian women's rights are also constantly eroding in Iran under the tyrannical actions of the regime. For only last week one of the country's prosecutors banned female cyclists by calling female cyclists sinners, and stated that the female cycling is punishable in accordance with the [Islamic Penal Code](#).

Furthermore, in response to chronic economic and political conditions in Iran, since December 2017 there have been growing number of widespread protests and strikes involving numerous sectors of Iranian society. Including labour protests amongst factory workers, truckers, teachers, students and women rights activists, who protest the forced headscarf or 'Hijab' policy. The response of the regime to these protest has once again been intimidation, brutal beating and imprisonment and in some cases torture. In many cases the protesting activist have simply disappeared without their families being notified. Just recently, during the May Day protests, the Iranian authorities arrested more than 35 people in a demonstration in front of Iran's parliament that was organised by 20 independent local labour rights organisations. While the authorities

released several of those detained, including Reza Shahabi, a prominent labour activist, security forces continue to detain others in Evin prison. They include the activists Neda Naji, Atefeh Rangriz, Nahid Khodajoo, Nasrin Javadi, and Farhad Sheikhi, Hassan Saeedi, and two journalists arrested at the protest, Marizeh Amiri and Keyvan Samimi.

Over the past year, Iranian authorities have arrested several labour activists. On January 20th, authorities arrested Ismael Bakhshi and Sepideh Gholian, two activists who had alleged that authorities had tortured them during their detention in November 2018. Amir Aligholi, Sanaz Allahyari, and Amir Hossein Mohammadifar, members of the editorial board of the online publication Gam, have also been detained since January. Several members of Iran's teachers' union, including Ismael Abdi, Mohammad Habibi, and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi, who were arrested in the past two years, remain in prison for their peaceful activism.

Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) protect the right to form and join labour unions. Iran is a party to both of these treaties. Yet, clearly is willing to ignore all these treaties, in order to quell any type of protest.

Suppression by the regime's forces does not just stop with economic related protests, but also extends to violation of rights of ethnic minorities. Like the arrest of Kurdish, Baluchy and Arab minorities, who are willing to protest their treatment by the regime, and as result often face long prisons sentences or executions like the case of Ramin Panahi, a Kurdish activist who was executed last year on trumped up charges, in the midst global outcry from various human rights organisations including the UN and Amnesty International.

The despotic tactics of the Iranian regime against its citizens doesn't just target ethnic minorities but for forty years has been frontline response to any form belief system, which does not agree with regime's extremist interpretation of Islam. Namely for forty years, the Iranian regime has openly persecuted, discriminated, arrested and even executed religious minorities. These persecutions have only increased and under Raisi stewardship of the Judiciary, is likely to only grow, as he is one the fundamental key players in propagating the regimes extremist ideology. Notably, since he took charge of the judiciary, there has been increased harassment and arrests of Bahia's. Only two weeks ago, seven Baha'is were each sentenced to three years in jail, for their religious beliefs. International human rights watchdogs as well as the United Nations Organization

have criticized the Islamic Republic for harassing and jailing Baha'is for their beliefs. The Baha'is in Iran are deprived of university education and the right to work within the government, and their businesses are shut down by religious authorities of the Islamic Republic. The government's behaviour has been characterised by the International Bahai Community as “economic apartheid.”

Another minority group that bears the brunt of regimes intolerance is the Christian converts. According to International Christian Concern, in Iran: “any practice that contradicts regimes version of Islam is regarded as a national security threat, punished severely by the court system. In Iran Christians may be looking at large fines, detention, lengthy prison sentences, or even execution under Islamic Sharia law. The sentences of Christian converts are left up to the interpretation of the judge and may be founded on anything — the judge's mood that day, what he had for breakfast, his interpretation of Sharia law, or his level of hatred toward Christianity.” The daughter of a former pastor in Iran — Dabrina Bet-Tamraz — recently described the persecution and suffering to which her family is being subjected after being sentenced to lengthy prison terms for “crimes” related to Christianity. Last year, a group of United Nations “special rapporteurs” on human rights issued a joint statement calling on Iran to “ensure a fair and transparent final hearing” for Bet-Tamraz and the two Christian converts. The statement read, in part: “We are aware of several other reported cases in which members of the Christian minority have received heavy sentences after being charged with ‘threatening national security’, either for converting people or for attending house churches. This shows a disturbing pattern of individuals being targeted because of their religion or beliefs, in this case a religious minority in the country. Members of the Christian minority in Iran, particularly those who have converted to the faith, are facing severe discrimination and religious persecution.”

The persecution of religious minorities in Iran does not just cover non-Islamic faiths. As even the minorities within Islam are persecuted, like Sunni Muslims, and Sufis. The harsh treatment of Sufis by the regime goes back to the inception of the Iranian republics. As Sufism promotes spiritual and ethical values such as tolerance, selflessness, and generosity. Being a Sufi is a personal spiritual practice, a method of life and lifestyle. Sufis also believe that religion and politics should be separated. All of which is directly opposed to the extremist intolerant interpretation of Islam that the regime supports and propagates globally. Over these years Gonabadi Sufis' house of worships have been regularly attacked and destroyed, and their 92-year old leader placed under house arrest and their members attacked, tortured and given long prison sentences. Only few days ago, fifteen Gonabadi Sufis who are political prisoners in Iran, have gone on strike inside the prison to object to prison conditions.

In recent years, Iranian authorities have arrested and sentenced hundreds of Gonabadi Sufis across the country. With charges include “threatening national security,” “disruption of public order” and “agitating the public consciousness”. In some occasions, they have also been convicted of the offense of “enmity against God”. Many of Iranian Gonabadi Sufis who were arrested in winter 2018 following gatherings outside of their leaders’ residence and support for his safety have been sentenced to heavy prison terms.

In a series of speedy trials after the event, more than 200 Sufis were convicted. The court then announced heavy sentences that included one case of the death penalty and prison terms ranging from four months to 26 years. Some were also sentenced to corporal punishments like flogging and domestic exile. One of the Sufis, was killed under torture and another, Mohammad Salas, was executed after speedy trial, without proper legal representations and under false charge of killing three people by driving over them with a bus. Sala’s execution led to an international outcry by various global human rights organisations and US state department. The regime activities against executed Salas does not even stop after his death, as recently his tomb was attacked and vandalised by the supporters of the regime.

Currently five female Sufi and 120 men are serving these harsh sentences in different prisons in Tehran province. Although they have been charged with “threatening national security” and “disruption of public order” which are considered national security and political charges, they are not being held with political prisoners”. Arguing that they were denied a fair trial, many chose not to appear in their court sessions, as a form of collective protest.

In reality, the regime is happy to suppress any form of activity that it feels is against its benefits; even if those activities are carried out for the benefit of its citizens. For example, the arrest of environmental scientists last year, under the trumped up charge of spying. These environmentalists: Houman Jokar, Sepideh Kashani, Niloufar Bayani, Amirhossein Khaleghi, Sam Rajabi, Taher Ghadirian, Abdoreza Kouhpayeh, and Morad Tahbaz, who are members of a local environmental group, the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, appeared in court without their lawyers being able to review the indictment prior to the session. Judge Abdolghassem Salavati of Branch 15 also restricted the defendants’ choices for lawyers to a list approved by the judiciary. During the trial, one of the detainees interrupted the session, claiming that they were tortured and coerced into making false confessions, according to a source confirmed by Human Rights Watch.

One of these scientist was Kavous Seyed Emami, an Iranian-Canadian university professor who [died in detention](#) under suspicious circumstances.

Recently, the environmental situation in Iran has made global headlines, given the recent floods. In response to this tragic natural disaster, the regime instead of helping its citizens has arrested anyone who decided to protest the regime's response, like the arrest of Khalaf Mardani , the tribal Sheikh arrested for protesting inadequate relief response by the regime.

Because of the floods according to official reports 89,000 homes have been demolished or severely damaged with more than 220,000 people being forced into emergency shelters. "Twenty-five provinces and more than 4,400 villages across the country were affected by the floods," as reported by the Interior Minister, Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli.

The flood damages amount to between \$2.2 and \$2.6bn at the free market rate. Yet Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, has deferred allocating funds from reserves to deal with unprecedented flood damage, all the while the Iranian regime is happy to spend millions abroad, when millions of its citizens' are in desperate need of aid. Yet, when a group of its citizens started a group to help the flood victims, the regime forces stepped-in to arrest them, under false charges. Like the recent violent arrest of Nahid Shaghghi, Women's Charity Group Member at her home, who was involved in helping the victims of the flood. Three weeks before Shaghghi's arrest, another member of VIW, Akram Nasirian was arrested by unidentified security agents in Tehran. Prior to her arrest, Nasirian had also worked in flood-impacted areas of the country. She is currently being held in Evin Prison's Ward 209, reportedly accused of "promoting non-observance of the hijab" and "disturbing public opinion," with no access to legal counsel.

As if these violations of rights of Iranian citizens were not enough, the suppression by the regime's forces now has extended beyond the banning of social media forums like Telegram, and twitter. As now the regime censorship extends to any form of free speech, on any type of platform, as exemplified by the recent case of three Iranian writers: Baktash Abtin, Keyvan Bajan and Reza Khandan-Mahabadi. Just last Wednesday, 15th May 2019, Tehran court notified the writers' lawyers that it has imposed six-year prison terms on Abtin, Bajan and Khandan-Mahabadi. Each writer was sentenced to five years for "colluding against national security" and one year for "spreading propaganda" against the government, all for simply expressing their personal views about the Iranian regime.

All these acts of blatant oppressions by the Iranian regime, are in reality, one of the only means that it has to maintain its stronghold over its oppressed citizens. While institutions like the IRGC attempt to take even firmer grip on the Iranian economy and its resources, in order to propagate their extremist ideology and for the personal benefit of the Iranian ruling elite.