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“THEY VIOLENTLY RAPED ME”

SEXUAL VIOLENCE WEAPONIZED TO CRUSH IRAN’S “WOMAN LIFE FREEDOM” UPRISING

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Cover photo: An artist's representation of survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence, including women, men and children as young as 12. The abstract artwork was inspired by testimonies of survivors who endured horrific ordeals at the hands of Iran's intelligence and security forces during the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising and, yet, showed enormous courage and resilience in sharing their stories and speaking out for truth and justice. © Amnesty International

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GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
1. AGAH	The Investigation Unit of Iran’s police which has its own detention centres. Agahi is a subdivision of Iran’s police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA) (see row 5).
2. BAZDASHTGAH-HAYEH AMNIATI	“Security detention facilities” holding individuals arrested in relation to national security offences. Under Iranian law, security and intelligence bodies can establish such facilities with the approval of the Prisons Organization (see row 15). Prosecution authorities are obliged to inspect these facilities at least every 15 days and report their findings to the Head of the Judiciary, who is appointed by the Supreme Leader (see row 21).
3. DIYAH	“Blood money”, which is financial compensation paid to the victim or their next of kin in the cases of murder or bodily harm, generally in exchange for the victim or their next kin to forgo “retribution in-kind” (<i>qesas</i>).
4. EF SAD-E FEL-ARZ	“Spreading corruption on earth”, a charge carrying the death penalty under Article 286 of Iran’s Islamic Penal Code, which stipulates: “Whoever, in a widespread manner, commits: crimes against individuals’ physical integrity, crimes against national security, causes disruption in the economic structure of the country, commits arson and destruction, distributes poisonous or dangerous substances, or runs corruption and prostitution centres, in a manner that causes severe disruption in the public order of the country or causes extensive damage to the physical integrity of individuals or private and public property, or spreads corruption or prostitution on large scale is ‘corrupt’ on earth.” This charge fails to meet requirements for clarity and precision needed in criminal law and grants judges wide interpretative powers, in breach of the principle of legality and legal certainty under international law.
5. FARAJA	The Persian acronym for Iran’s police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The full name of FARAJA in Persian is <i>Farmandehi Entezami Jomhouri Islami</i> . The head of FARAJA is appointed by the Supreme Leader (see row 21).
6. FORMER DETAINEE	The term used in this report for referring to detainees who were not subjected to rape or other forms of sexual violence themselves, but who witnessed or otherwise learned about the commission of rape or other forms of sexual violence against other detainees.
7. HEFA FATEB	The Persian acronym for the operational unit in Greater Tehran of the Intelligence Protection Organization of Iran’s police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Persian acronym of Iran’s police force is FARAJA (see row 5) and the Persian acronym of its affiliated

WORD	DESCRIPTION
	Intelligence Protection Organization at the national level is SAHEFA FARAJA (see row 17).
8. INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GAURDS	A major security and intelligence body in Iran operating alongside the Ministry of Intelligence. The organization's head is appointed by the Commander in Chief of the Revolutionary Guards, with the approval of the Supreme Leader (see row 21) who appoints the Revolutionary Guards' Commander in Chief. The organization was established in its current form following the nationwide protests of 2009.
9. KHANEHAY-E AMN	Unofficial secret detention places such as houses or apartment buildings that are repurposed by intelligence and security bodies to unlawfully deprive individuals of their liberty. Security and intelligence officials colloquially refer to these unofficial detention places as "safe houses" (<i>khanehay-e amn</i>). "Safe houses" are not registered under the Prisons Organization (see row 15) and fall outside the law.
10. MOHAREBEH	"Enmity against God", a charge carrying the death penalty which is defined under article 279 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code as: "Taking up arms with the intention of [taking] people's lives, property, or honour in order to cause fear among them in a manner that causes insecurity in the atmosphere. Whenever a person takes up arms against one or a few specific individuals because of personal disputes and his acts are not directed at the public and whenever a person takes up arms but due to his inability does not cause insecurity, they shall not be considered as <i>mohareb</i> ."
11. MONAFEQ	Pejorative epithet used by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1980s to refer to members and supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) (see row 13).
12. OTHER ILL-TREATMENT	An abbreviated term for other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment that does not fulfil one or more of the key elements of the torture definition under international law relating to intention, the required purpose, and the "severity" of pain and suffering (see row 23). Nevertheless, just like torture, other forms of ill-treatment are absolutely prohibited under international law. The prohibition of other forms of ill-treatment is interpreted broadly and aims to secure respect for the physical and mental integrity of all individuals at all times.
13. PMOI	People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, also known as Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) which is an opposition group outside Iran that advocates for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic system.
14. POLICE AMNIAT-E OMOUMI	The Public Security Police is a subdivision of Iran's police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA) (see row 5).
15. PRISONS ORGANIZATION	The abbreviated name of the State Prisons and Security and Corrective Measures Organization, a state body that falls under the direct supervision of the Head of the Judiciary and is charged with the management of the affairs of all prisons, detention centres and their affiliated bodies in the country.
16. RAPE	Rape, as defined under international law, includes all non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object. Under international law, rape constitutes torture (see row 23) when it is carried out by, at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of public officials, including when it takes place outside of state facilities. Rape is a form of sexual violence (see row 19).

WORD	DESCRIPTION
17. SAHEFA FARAJA	The Persian acronym for the Intelligence Protection Organization of Iran's police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FARAJA) (see row 5), which has operation units in cities and provinces across the country. For each security and intelligence body, there typically exists an affiliated counter-intelligence organization which operates under the command of the Office of the Supreme Leader (see row 21). SAHEFA FARAJA is tasked with supervising and controlling intelligence, communications and documents related to the activities of the respective security and intelligence body, as well as preventing espionage and sabotage while gathering intelligence.
18. SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE AGENTS	Agents working for Iran's security and intelligence bodies, including the Ministry of Intelligence, the Revolutionary Guards, and the paramilitary Basij force. They are also agents working in the various branches of Iran's police force, Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA), including the Public Security Police (see row 14) and the Special Forces (see row 26). They may wear uniforms bearing the insignia of the aforesaid intelligence and security bodies or they may operate in plain clothes.
19. SEXUAL VIOLENCE	Sexual violence includes rape, which constitutes torture when committed by state officials (see row 16). Forms of sexual violence other than rape committed by state officials also constitute torture (see row 23) or other ill-treatment (see row 12) under international law. Forms of sexual violence other than rape include verbal sexual threats and mocking, fondling, groping sexual organs, beatings on sexual organs and unjustifiable bodily searches. Acts of sexual humiliation such as depriving persons of clothes, parading naked individuals in front of others, forcing individuals to perform sexual acts, forcing persons to pose in sexually explicit positions, and using sexually explicit language, are designed to degrade and humiliate an individual and induce feelings of shame and fear, and also constitute torture or other ill-treatment under international law.
20. SIGHEH	Temporary marriage
21. SUPREME LEADER	The highest political authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is an unelected position and has oversight over all three branches of the state – the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The Supreme Leader appoints the Head of the Judiciary and the Prosecutor General. He is also the chief commander of all the security forces in the country. Ali Khamenei has been the Supreme Leader since 1989.
22. SURVIVOR	Individuals whose rights have been violated are often described as “victims” of human rights violations, but many of those whose rights have been violated and human rights defenders prefer to use the term “survivor” instead of “victim” as a way of reflecting the agency and resilience of those whose rights have been violated. Throughout this report, Amnesty International uses the word “survivor” to refer to those who were subjected to rape (see row 16) and/or other forms of sexual violence (see row 19). For the purposes of this report, the organization uses “rape survivor” in relation to individuals who were subjected to rape, but notes that rape survivors were also often subjected to other forms of sexual violence, in addition to rape. While noting that rape is a form of sexual violence, for the purposes of this report, the organization uses “survivor of sexual violence” in relation to survivors who were subjected to forms of sexual violence other than rape.

WORD	DESCRIPTION
23. TORTURE	Torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted by, or at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or another person acting in an official capacity on a person for such purposes as obtaining from them or a third person information or a confession, punishing them for an act that they or a third person have committed or are suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing them or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind.
24. UN	United Nations
25. UN FACT-FINDING MISSION ON IRAN	Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, established by the UN Human Rights Council following a resolution adopted in November 2022. The Fact-Finding Mission has a mandate to thoroughly and independently investigate human rights violations related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022, to establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the violations, and to collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and preserve evidence, including in view of cooperation in any legal proceedings.
26. YEGAN-E VIJEH	The Special Forces of Iran's police, a subdivision of Iran's police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA) (see row 5).

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The agents beat all of us through punching and kicking, and with batons and hosepipes. Many of us were injured. One woman’s nose and teeth were broken. They threatened to rape the female family members of the men and sexually assaulted all the women. [They] were grabbing the women’s breasts and genitals. They completely ripped off their tops right in front of our eyes so that the top half of their bodies were bare. They even threatened to rip their breasts off and cut off their breasts with knives.”

Behrooz, a protester recounting what he experienced and witnessed in a police station belonging to the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoum*).¹

Iranian intelligence and security forces committed horrific acts of rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual violence, which amount to torture and other ill-treatment, against women, men and children as young as 12 who were arbitrarily detained in connection with the nationwide protests that took place during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising between September and December 2022, following the death in custody of Mahsa/Zhina Amini.

Sexual violence was used by state agents with total impunity as a weapon of torture to crush protesters’ spirit, self-esteem and sense of dignity, to deter further protests, and to punish them for challenging the political and security establishment and its entrenched system of gender-based discrimination, as enforced through draconian legislation including abusive compulsory veiling laws.

Survivors of sexual violence included women and girls who removed their headscarves and other protesters including men and boys, schoolchildren, teachers, university students, women’s rights defenders, environmental and other civil society activists, journalists, and members of the oppressed Baluchi and Kurdish ethnic minorities.

¹ In this instance and throughout the report, Amnesty International has used pseudonyms and withheld identifying details of individuals interviewed. See Chapter 2 “Methodology” for further details. The organization has made editorial changes to the testimonies featured in this report for clarity.

Intelligence and security forces responsible for carrying out arbitrary arrests and subsequent torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, included the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary Basij force and the Ministry of Intelligence, as well as various bodies of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the country's police force, including the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*), the Investigation Unit of the police (*agahi*), and the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*).

Amnesty International gathered testimonies from 45 individuals on the commission of rape and other forms of sexual violence against protesters arrested across Iran between September and December 2022 in connection with the uprising and obtained and reviewed relevant documents, wherever available, including medical records, photographic evidence of injuries, and written complaints made by survivors and/or their families.

Based on these 45 testimonies, Amnesty International documented in detail the cases of 45 survivors of rape or other forms of sexual violence – 12 women, 26 men, one girl, and six boys.

The cases of 45 survivors documented by Amnesty International covered 17 of Iran's 31 provinces, namely: Alborz, East Azerbaijan, Esfahan, Gilan, Hormozgan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Khorasan-e Razavi, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Markazi, Mazandaran, Tehran, Sistan and Baluchestan, West Azerbaijan, and Zanjan.

The prevalence of sexual violence during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising is difficult to estimate, as stigma and fears of reprisal lead to under-reporting. Nevertheless, the organization's detailed documentation of 45 cases across more than half of Iran's provinces, along with accounts from 14 interviewees, including 10 survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence and four former detainees, about additional instances of rape and other sexual violence against scores of detained protesters, indicates that the documented cases are not isolated violations but are part of a wider pattern.

Of the 45 survivors whose cases Amnesty International documented in detail, 16 were raped and 29 were subjected to other forms of sexual violence. The rape survivors included six women, seven men, a 14-year-old girl, and two boys aged 16 and 17. Six of the 16 rape survivors – four women and two men – were subjected to gang rapes by up to 10 male state agents.

State agents raped women and girls vaginally, anally and orally, while men and boys were raped anally. Survivors were raped with wooden and metal batons, glass bottles, hosepipes, and/or the sexual organs and fingers of agents. Eight survivors were raped in detention facilities belonging to the Revolutionary Guards; four in vans belonging to the security forces, which, in three cases, were identified as the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*); one in what appeared to the survivor to be a school or preschool unofficially and unlawfully repurposed as a makeshift detention place; one in a residential building near a Basij base; and two in unidentified buildings.

The other 29 survivors were subjected to forms of sexual violence other than rape. In the cases of women and girls, these routinely included male security and intelligence agents putting their hands under their clothing and into their underwear; grabbing, groping, beating, punching, and kicking their breasts, genitals and buttocks; stripping them of their clothes including in front of male detainees; conducting intrusive body searches; holding them naked for hours or days in detention, including in front of video cameras and in freezing conditions; forcibly cutting their hair; dragging them violently by their hair; and threatening to rape them and their female relatives. In the cases of men and boys, documented forms of sexual violence included agents threatening survivors and their relatives with rape; forcing them to undress; subjecting them to cold temperatures while naked; administering electric shocks to their genitals; sticking needles into their genitals; touching, pressing, kicking and beating their testicles and buttocks; and putting ice on their testicles for prolonged periods.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence were frequently accompanied by other forms of torture and ill-treatment, including horrific beatings resulting in fractures and other severe injuries. Intelligence and security forces routinely denied survivors medical care, including for rape-related injuries such as infections, and vaginal and rectal bleeding, even when survivors repeatedly asked for help.

RUTHLESS CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTERS

On 16 September 2022, the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa/Zhina Amini, days after her arbitrary arrest by Iran's “morality” police for not complying with the country's abusive, degrading and discriminatory compulsory veiling laws for women and girls sparked an unprecedented popular uprising in the country. Hundreds of thousands of protesters, including schoolgirls and schoolboys, poured into the streets in cities and provinces across Iran in largely peaceful protests. Women and girls were at the forefront of the uprising, challenging decades of gender-based discrimination and violence, and the slogan “Woman Life Freedom” (*Zan Zendegi Azadi* in Persian and *Jan Jian Azadi* in Kurdish) was chanted by countless protesters and

written on walls across the country. Consistent with patterns of nationwide protests that have rocked Iran since late 2017, the focus of public outrage encompassed broader grievances against the political establishment, with protesters calling for the end of the Islamic Republic system and its replacement with a secular democratic system respecting human rights.

The authorities responded to the nationwide protests by unleashing a brutal militarized crackdown to crush the spirit of resistance, deter protesters from further gatherings, and punish them for standing up against the Islamic Republic system and challenging gender-based discrimination and oppression. Security forces extensively and unlawfully fired live ammunition, metal pellets and teargas, and resorted to severe beatings to disperse largely peaceful protests and intimidate and punish protesters, resulting in the unlawful killing of hundreds of protesters and bystanders, including scores of children. Thousands more sustained serious injuries including loss of limbs or sight.

The authorities also carried out mass arrests across the country, sweeping up tens of thousands of protesters, university students, schoolchildren, women and girls removing their headscarves in public, journalists, lawyers, political dissidents, members of oppressed ethnic minorities, LGBTI individuals, and human rights defenders and other civil society activists. The authorities subjected detainees to enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, and imposed lengthy prison terms following grossly unfair sham trials.

During and in the aftermath of the uprising, the authorities also intensified their use of the death penalty as a tool of political oppression against protesters, dissidents, or those perceived as such, and members of ethnic minorities to terrorize the general population and suppress further protests.

In November 2022, in response to the human rights crisis unfolding in Iran, the UN Human Rights Council overwhelmingly voted to establish a UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran to investigate human rights violations related to the protests. The Fact-Finding Mission is due to present a comprehensive report on its findings to the UN Human Rights Council during its 55th session in March 2024.

PATTERNS OF ARREST AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Intelligence and security forces in uniforms or plainclothes arbitrarily arrested survivors from the streets during or in the aftermath of protests, or from their homes or workplaces. They forcibly placed survivors into their vehicles before transferring them to formal or unofficial places of detention where they subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment, including by raping them and/or inflicting other forms of sexual violence.

In some cases, the authorities unlawfully deprived survivors of their liberty by abducting them, rather than carrying out formal arrests, and no formal arrest record existed and agents abandoned survivors on the streets hours or days after seizing them. In other cases, survivors were eventually registered either at a detention facility run by the security and intelligence bodies or following transfer to a prison after several days or weeks.

Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces perpetrated rape and other forms of sexual violence against detainees at the time of arrest, in vehicles during transfer to detention, and within detention places themselves.

Detainees often faced hours of torture and other ill-treatment including rape or other forms of sexual violence, for the purpose of inflicting maximum humiliation and punishment. Once traumatized and disoriented, they were frequently interrogated and coerced into giving false “confessions,” including of connections to foreign entities and receipt of funds to take part in protests.

Places of detention where rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated included official detention facilities or security compounds belonging to the police, the Revolutionary Guards, the Ministry of Intelligence, and the paramilitary Basij force, as well as unofficial detention places such as houses or apartment buildings known colloquially as “safe houses” (*khanehay-e amn*), and makeshift detention places such as warehouses, parking lots and schools.

Children were often held alongside adults and subjected to the same patterns of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence. Women and girls were often held in detention centres run by all-male intelligence and security forces with no regard for their gender-specific needs, exposing them to heightened risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

RAPE AND GANG RAPE

Amnesty International documented in detail the rape of 16 protesters arbitrarily arrested between September and December 2022 in connection with the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising. Of the 10 cases involving rape by a single perpetrator, **Kian**, a schoolboy, was raped with a hosepipe. His friend **Farshad**, also a schoolboy,

and his relative **Ahmad**, who were arbitrarily arrested, detained and raped during the same incident. **Kamal** and **Ali**, two men who participated in the protests, were raped with batons or wood, and batons and glass bottles, respectively. Two other rape survivors, **Mehdi Mohammadifard** and **Soheil**, sustained serious injuries including rectal bleeding that required hospitalization. Mehdi Mohammadifard was sentenced to death on the basis of torture-tainted “confessions”.

One woman, **Zahra**, recounted in a written statement provided to Amnesty International that, while in a van belonging to the Special Forces of Iran’s police (*yegan-e vijeh*), an agent pulled down her trousers in the presence of other women detainees and raped her. She added that she witnessed another agent ordering two handcuffed women in the van to perform oral sex acts on him and, when one woman refused, he dragged her out of the van by her hair.

The mother of another woman, **Parisa**, told Amnesty International that her daughter was also raped in a van belonging to the security forces with an agent inserting a finger inside her vagina.

An agent raped schoolgirl, **Zeynab**, who was held in an unidentified detention facility after being arbitrarily arrested by the police. A mental health professional who treated her told Amnesty International that the rape took place on the last day of her one-month-long detention and involved the agent telling the girl that, if she wanted to be released, she had to be raped. The agent also threatened Zeynab that if she told anyone about the rape, her family would be harmed.

Six of the 16 rape survivors whose cases were documented by Amnesty International – four women and two men – were subjected to gang rapes.

Several agents gang raped **Maryam** vaginally and anally with their sexual organs and a glass bottle in a Revolutionary Guards detention facility. She recalled the guards telling her:

‘You are all addicted to penis, so we showed you a good time. Isn’t this what you seek from liberation?’

Security forces threw university student **Simin** into a van and took her, while blindfolded, to an unidentified building where she was raped by two male agents with the involvement of one female agent. She told Amnesty International:

“A woman ordered me to undress...As I was taking my clothes off, two men came into the room. The woman and one of the men violently held me on the ground while the other man raped me...I was lying on the ground lifeless afterwards when the second man...who had held me down during the first rape, raped me again.”²

Multiple agents gang raped protester **Shirin** vaginally and anally with their sexual organs and with batons while holding her in an empty residential building near a Basij base for nine hours, according to a mental health professional who treated her.

Multiple members of the security forces in plain clothes also gang raped **Fatemeh** multiple times anally and vaginally while holding her for two weeks in what she said appeared to be a school classroom, which was unlawfully used as a makeshift place of detention, according to a mental health professional who treated her.

Farzad told Amnesty International that multiple plain-clothes agents gang raped him and **Shahed**, another protester, in a van belonging to the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*) after they refused to obey an order for detainees in the van to strip naked. He recalled:

“They made us face the walls of the vehicle and gave electric shocks to our legs...They tortured me through beatings with batons, punching and kicking resulting in my nose and teeth being broken. They pulled down my trousers and raped me...I was really being ripped apart...I was throwing up a lot and was bleeding from my rectum.”

WIDER CONTEXT OF TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces perpetrated torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, against protesters for the purposes of intimidation, punishment and humiliation, for reasons based on discrimination, and to obtain forced “confessions” that formed the basis of indictments and convictions in cases where protesters were subsequently put on trial.

Beyond rape and other sexual violence, common methods of physical torture and ill-treatment included beatings with batons and chains; slapping, kicking and punching; flogging; prolonged solitary confinement; electric shocks to different body parts; exposure to extreme temperatures; forcing detainees to perform humiliating acts; pulling the hair of both women and men; forced administration of chemical substances

² The organization has made editorial changes to the testimonies featured in this report for clarity.

including pills and injections; forcing detainees into painful stress positions for prolonged periods, often while blindfolded or while having their head covered in a bag or sack; and the denial of medical care. Other reported torture methods included submerging victims under water; sticking needles into sensitive body parts; forcible extraction of nails; pepper spraying including on the eyes; mock executions; and suspension from the neck and wrists.

Common forms of psychological torture included threats to further physically torture, kill or imprison survivors for life; threats to arrest, kill, rape or otherwise torture, physically harm and/or forcibly disappear their family members; bombardment of light or sound over a sustained period, including at night; persistent use of degrading verbal insults and profanities directed against them and members of their families; and exposure to screams of other detainees being tortured.

Some survivors told the organization that, during interrogations, state agents often threatened to have them charged and convicted of capital offences such as “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*) and/or “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*).

Survivors told the organization that agents routinely denied detainees sufficient food and potable water. A survivor of gang rape, **Fatemeh**, told a mental health professional interviewed by Amnesty International that when detainees asked for food and water, the agents told them to “Eat from your own faeces”.

Another survivor of gang rape, **Farzad**, told Amnesty International that, when he asked for water, an agent punched him in the face, saying:

“This is not a hotel. If you ask for water one more time, I will beat you so hard you will die”.

The mother of a schoolboy, **Kian**, told Amnesty International that, for three weeks, her son was held in a dark, cold solitary confinement cell with his hands and feet chained and, every night, Revolutionary Guards agents just threw him a piece of dry bread from under the door.

Survivors also reported being subjected to cruel and inhuman detention conditions such as extreme overcrowding, filthy and unsanitary conditions, infestation with cockroaches and mice, lack of bedding facilities, poor or no access to toilet and washing facilities, which in some cases resulted in detainees urinating on themselves, and lack of access to gender-specific facilities and hygiene and menstrual products for women and girls.

SENTENCED TO DEATH AFTER SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Amnesty International documented the cases of five protesters – **Mansour Dahmardeh, Mehdi Mohammadifard, Ebrahim Narouie, Javad Rouhi, Majid Kazemi** – who were subjected to rape and/or other forms of sexual violence and subsequently sentenced to death based on torture-tainted forced “confessions”. The authorities arbitrarily executed Majid Kazemi on 17 May 2023, while Javad Rouhi died in custody in suspicious circumstances on 31 August 2023.

All five men were sentenced to death after grossly unfair trials. Documented violations of their rights to a fair trial included the right to access a lawyer of their choosing from the time of arrest and throughout the investigation phase; the enjoyment of the presumption of innocence; the right to remain silent; the right to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention; the right to be tried by an independent, competent and impartial tribunal; and the rights to appeal and to have their convictions and sentences meaningfully reviewed by a higher court.

In all five cases, the charges carrying the death penalty stemmed either from acts which are protected under international human rights law or from alleged acts which do not meet the threshold of “the most serious crimes”, which under international human rights law are crimes involving intentional killing. The latter included alleged acts such as vandalism, arson, stone-throwing, disturbing public order, or carrying a weapon. Under international law, such crimes must never be punished by the death penalty and its imposition would constitute a violation of the right to life, which is guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

Amnesty International found that any complaints of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, were never effectively, independently and thoroughly investigated by prosecutorial and judicial authorities when raised by detainees or defendants before prosecution authorities or in court.

LONG-TERM PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON SURVIVORS

Amnesty International found that months after their horrific ordeals, all the women, men and child survivors continued to deal with the physical and psychological traumas of rape and other forms of sexual violence that they suffered at the hands of intelligence and security forces.

Survivors told the organization that the physical impact began in detention when agents routinely denied them medical care, including painkillers and medication, for injuries and other physical harm sustained as a result of rape and/or other forms of sexual violence, including for lacerations to skin and genital areas, vaginal and rectal bleeding, and infections. This caused survivors immense and, in some cases chronic, physical pain and led to long-term physical problems requiring medical care.

Fearing stigma and violence from others, including from male family members, or reprisals by the authorities if discovered, some survivors did not seek medical care at all, while others sought medical treatment in other provinces, far from their homes, or informal care from family friends who are medical professionals.

In all cases, survivors told the organization that the psychological impact on them has been profound. Survivors have been left with post-traumatic stress disorder and/or experienced severe fear, anxiety and depression. Survivors told the organization that they continued to suffer from nightmares, flashbacks and panic attacks and some, particularly those subjected to rape, reported being too scared to leave their homes, fearing rearrest and further sexual violence. Child survivors have been unable to focus on their education.

Amnesty International also found that survivors have struggled with suicidal thoughts and they know of others, including their friends who were detained or other protesters they met in detention, who also had suicidal thoughts or engaged in acts of self-harm or tried to commit suicide after the sexual violence. The mother of Kian, a schoolboy, who was raped, told Amnesty International that her son attempted suicide twice while in custody.

Sahar, a Baluchi woman, recounted the traumatic impact of sexual violence at the hands of security forces who removed her clothes, apart from her underwear, and touched her breasts and genitals while mocking her body and skin colour and threatening her with rape:

“I used to be a fighter in life. Even when the Islamic Republic tried to break me down, I carried on. However, recently, I think about suicide a lot. I don’t have the same resilience that I used to have. I am like a person who waits all day for night time so I can sleep.”

CRISIS OF SYSTEMIC IMPUNITY

A crisis of systemic impunity for crimes under international law and other gross human rights violations has long prevailed in Iran. As a result, not a single state official has been criminally investigated in line with international standards, let alone tried and punished, for sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment perpetrated against those arbitrarily detained in the context of the uprising, even when complaints have been made by survivors.

Indeed, consistent with their appalling long-standing record, prosecutorial authorities have actively contributed to the machinery of torture in various ways. During the height of the repression, when prosecution officials visited detention centres or when detainees were transferred out of detention centres and taken before the office of the prosecutor, they turned a blind eye to visible marks of torture, ignored detainees’ complaints of torture, and refused to order investigations, thereby enabling the continuation of widespread torture. In the following months, the prosecutors became further complicit in the system’s cycle of repression as they and judges used “confessions” which survivors said were extracted through torture and other ill-treatment as evidence to impose spurious charges and secure unjust convictions and sentences.

Amnesty International also examined a leaked official document, written by the Deputy Prosecutor of Tehran in October 2022 and published by a media outlet outside Iran in February 2023, which reveals that the authorities covered up complaints of rape by two young women against two Revolutionary Guards during the protests. In the document, the Deputy Prosecutor of Tehran advised to classify the case as “completely secret” and suggested that it be gradually “closed over time by removing the suspects [from their positions] without mentioning the names of the law enforcement agencies involved.”

The majority of survivors interviewed by Amnesty International for this report refrained from filing complaints after release, fearing further harm from the authorities and believing the judiciary to be a tool of repression rather than redress. Out of the 45 survivors of sexual violence whose cases were documented by Amnesty International, only three survivors – two children and a man – raised formal complaints after release. The adult survivor was forced to withdraw his complaint after security forces threatened to kidnap and/or kill him and his family members, while the two children and their families stopped pursuing their complaints after months of inaction by the prosecution. One of two child survivors was told by a high-ranking agent that he mistook a body search for sexual violence.

The Iranian authorities have engaged in a campaign of denial, distortion and cover-up of their crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations and refused to cooperate with or allow access to

the country by the UN Fact-Finding Mission investigating the human rights violations committed in the context of the protests. Instead, they have announced various non-judicial national “fact-finding committees” whose methods of work, mandates and findings remained shrouded in secrecy, and whose composition includes members who have publicly justified violations or denied their occurrence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To break the cycle of crimes under international law and impunity, the Iranian authorities must publicly condemn rape and other forms of sexual violence by intelligence and security forces and make it clear that any public official who ordered, committed, instigated, or consented to such human rights violations will be brought to justice in fair trials. This requires, as a matter of urgency, allowing the UN Fact-Finding Mission to enter Iran to conduct prompt, independent, and effective investigations in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) into all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, by intelligence and security forces.

The authorities must guarantee the right of survivors to be protected against reprisals and to have access to the right to reparation and redress, which includes restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. They must also immediately and unconditionally release all survivors of sexual violence and any other individuals arbitrarily detained for the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, and quash all indictments, convictions and sentences, including death sentences, issued after unfair proceedings.

There are serious structural obstacles, which make Iran’s judicial system unable and unwilling to investigate crimes under international law and other human rights violations committed by state agents. These include the lack of independence of the judiciary, the intertwining of the judiciary and security forces, and the appointment of individuals to senior prosecutorial and judicial positions who must themselves be investigated for crimes under international law. Tackling these barriers to create a credible, effective and fair judicial system requires political will and fundamental constitutional, legislative and administrative reforms, which Amnesty International and various UN bodies, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran and the UN Human Rights Committee, have repeatedly called for, and which the Iranian authorities have demonstrated they have no will to implement.

In this context, Amnesty International urges the international community to respond decisively to Iran’s crisis of systemic impunity and seek justice and reparations for the survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence amounting to torture and other ill-treatment by:

- Supporting the extension of the mandate of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran by the UN Human Rights Council to ensure that an independent international mechanism continues to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyse evidence of the crimes under international law committed in Iran, in view of cooperation in any legal proceedings; and
- Exercising universal and other extraterritorial jurisdiction in relation to crimes under international law and serious human rights violations committed by Iranian authorities, including rape and other forms of sexual violence amounting to torture and other ill-treatment, irrespective of the absence or presence of the accused in their territory. This includes initiating adequately resourced criminal investigations, identifying those suspected of responsibility, including commanders and other superiors, and issuing, when there is sufficient admissible evidence, international arrest warrants.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the context of Amnesty International's ongoing investigations into the crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed by the Iranian authorities during and in the aftermath of the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising between September and December 2022, the organization researched the commission of rape and other forms of sexual violence by Iran's intelligence and security forces against protesters detained in connection to the uprising.

Between January 2023 and August 2023, the organization gathered testimonies from 45 individuals on the commission of rape³ and other forms of sexual violence⁴ against protesters while they were arbitrarily detained between September and December 2022 in connection with the uprising. The individuals were selected on the basis of their willingness to share their accounts, and included those who reached out to Amnesty International in response to a public call the organization made on 13 February 2023 on its Iran-focused social media channels encouraging people to share information related to torture and other ill-treatment in detention in the context of the uprising.

The 45 individuals whose testimonies were obtained included five rape survivors; 22 survivors of sexual violence⁵ other than rape; five family members of rape survivors; five family members of survivors of sexual violence; a close friend of one survivor of sexual violence; and three mental health professionals – one clinical psychologist and two psychotherapists – who treated survivors of rape and other sexual violence. The remainder of those interviewed were four former detainees who were not themselves subjected to sexual violence in detention but, while in detention, witnessed or learned about the commission of rape and/or other forms of sexual violence against other individuals detained alongside them.

Of the abovementioned 45 individuals, the organization conducted in-depth interviews with 42 and reviewed written statements from three. The 42 individuals interviewed were 12 women, 28 men, and two boys who were interviewed with the consent, and in the presence, of their parents. Of the 42 individuals interviewed, 35 were inside Iran and seven were outside. All interviews were conducted in Persian and took place remotely via secure communication platforms. The three written statements reviewed were from a female rape survivor, a female survivor of sexual violence and a close male friend of a male rape survivor. Due to fears of reprisal, the three individuals preferred to only share their accounts in writing. Their written statements were provided to the organization by lawyers and human rights activists based outside Iran who were given consent for the testimonies to be shared with Amnesty International.

Based on the accounts of these 45 individuals, the organization has documented in detail the cases of 45 survivors of rape or other forms of sexual violence – 12 women, 26 men, one girl, and six boys – whose ages range from 12 to 48.⁶

These 45 survivors were from 17 of Iran's 31 provinces: Alborz, East Azerbaijan, Esfahan, Gilan, Hormozgan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Khorasan-e Razavi, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Markazi, Mazandaran, Tehran, Sistan and Baluchistan, West Azerbaijan, and Zanjan.

Of these 45 survivors, 16 were raped – six women, seven men, a 14-year-old girl, and two boys aged 16 and 17 – and 29 were subjected to forms of sexual violence other than rape. Six of the 16 rape survivors – four women and two men – were subjected to gang rape.

³ See row 16 "Rape" in the glossary above.

⁴ See row 19 "Sexual violence" in the glossary above.

⁵ See row 22 "Survivor" in the glossary above.

⁶ In the cases of three child survivors of rape and other sexual violence, Amnesty International interviewed both the survivor and one or both of their parents.

The documentation of the cases of 16 rape survivors included direct testimonies from the survivors in five cases; testimonies from survivors' family members in another six cases; and from mental health professionals in four cases. One of the five survivors interviewed by Amnesty International also stated that another man was raped alongside him during the same incident.

The documentation of the cases of the 29 survivors of sexual violence other than rape included direct testimonies from the survivors in 22 cases; from survivors' family members in another four cases; from mental health professionals in two cases; and from a close friend in one case.

Of the 45 survivors, seven were from the oppressed Baluchi ethnic minority and eight were from the oppressed Kurdish ethnic minority.

Three survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence remained in detention at the time of publication, including one child,⁷ one individual who is under sentence of death,⁸ and another who had a death sentence overturned and is awaiting retrial.⁹

In addition to the detailed documentation of the cases of 45 survivors of rape or other forms of sexual violence, accounts from 14 of the aforementioned 42 interviewees – including 10 survivors¹⁰ of rape or other sexual violence and four former detainees¹¹ – about additional instances of rape and other sexual violence against scores of detained protesters, indicate that the documented cases are not isolated violations but are part of a wider pattern. Three of the 14 interviewees¹², who were from three different provinces, told Amnesty International that they were eyewitnesses to incidents that involved the commission of sexual violence against groups of detainees, composed of up to 50 people. Two of the 14 interviewees,¹³ who were from two provinces, told the organization that they heard multiple women detainees screaming and pleading with security forces in a way they found extremely distressing, leading them to believe the women or girls were being subjected to sexual violence.

Ten of these 14 interviewees¹⁴ told Amnesty International that they were eyewitnesses to or otherwise learned about at least six more rape survivors and nine additional survivors of sexual violence either while they were still in detention or, in one case, following release.

Given that the testimonies of the 10 interviewees who reported the individual cases of at least six more rape survivors and nine additional survivors of sexual violence did not contain comprehensive details on the biographical information, circumstances of arrest, treatment in detention, nature of interrogations and current legal status and whereabouts about these additional survivors, Amnesty International excluded them from the count of 45 survivors whose cases were recorded as having been documented in detail and logged them separately. Nevertheless, the information reported to the organization about these 15 additional survivors is reflected in the report, including in the testimonies of the 10 aforementioned interviewees that are featured for illustrative purposes.

Of these 15 additional cases, the information regarding the six rape survivors was provided by: a male survivor¹⁵ of sexual violence who reported the rape of a friend; another male survivor¹⁶ of sexual violence who reported hearing a woman in detention who screamed for a prolonged period that she had been raped by multiple agents and called out for contraception; a male survivor¹⁷ of rape who reported that, while in detention, he conversed with a man who said he was raped; one female survivor¹⁸ of rape who reported talking to two women held alongside her who disclosed that they had been raped; and one female survivor¹⁹ of sexual violence who similarly reported that while in detention, she conversed with one woman who disclosed that she had been gang raped.

⁷ See the case of Kian in section 5.3.5.

⁸ See the case of Mansour Dahmardeh in Chapter 8 "Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence".

⁹ See the case of Mehdi Mohammadifard in Chapter 8 "Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence".

¹⁰ See the case of Omid in section 5.5, the case of Kambiz in section 5.4, the case of Maryam in section 5.2.1, the case of Mahtab in section 6.5, the case of Kaveh in section 7.1, the case of Zahra in section 5.3.3, the case of Dariush in section 6.3, the case of Hesam in section 10.1.1, the case of Behrooz in section 5.4, and the case of Farzad in section 5.2.3.

¹¹ See the case of Hamed in section 5.5, the case of Nastaran in section 5.4, the cases of Mahmoud and Arian in section 5.4.

¹² See the testimonies of Omid in section 5.5, Behrooz in section 5.4, and Hesam in section 10.1.1. Omid witnessed the commission of violence against a group of detainees held alongside him. After his release, a friend also confided in him about his rape in detention following his arbitrary arrest during the uprising.

¹³ See the testimonies of Mahmoud and Arian in section 5.4.

¹⁴ See the cases of Omid in sections 5.5 and 9.2, Kambiz in section 5.4, Maryam in section 5.2.1, the case of Mahtab in section 6.5, the case of Kaveh in section 7.1, the case of Zahra in section 5.3.3, the case of Hamed in section 5.5, the case of Dariush in section 6.3, see the case of Farzad in section 5.2.3; and the case of Nastaran in section 5.4.

¹⁵ See the testimony of Omid in section 9.2.

¹⁶ See the testimony of Kambiz in section 5.4.

¹⁷ See the testimony of Farzad in section 5.2.3.

¹⁸ See the testimony of Maryam in section 5.2.1.

¹⁹ See the testimony of Mahtab in section 6.5.

The information about the nine additional survivors of sexual violence was provided by: a male survivor²⁰ of sexual violence who reported witnessing the commission of sexual violence against a man; another male survivor²¹ who similarly reported witnessing the commission of sexual violence against a trans woman; a female survivor²² of rape who reported witnessing the commission of sexual violence against two women; a female former detainee²³ who reported talking with two women held in detention alongside her, who disclosed they had been subjected to sexual violence; one male survivor²⁴ of sexual violence who reported talking to a man in detention who disclosed that he had been subjected to sexual violence; and one former male detainee²⁵ who reported talking to two men in detention who disclosed that they had been subjected to sexual violence.

As part of its investigation for this report, Amnesty International was able to obtain and review documentary evidence for nine of the survivors of rape and/or other forms of sexual violence whose cases were documented in this report. These included photographic evidence showing bruising and flogging marks on the bodies of nine survivors, including on the breasts, thighs, backs, faces and necks of two women; the legs, thighs, backs, and heads of six men; and injuries to the hands of one child. The photographs were taken within hours or days of survivors' release from detention. The organization also reviewed medical records from five survivors, which corroborated their accounts. The organization also examined official documents related to complaints made by the families of two child survivors, including complaint letters to the authorities, and screenshots of notices from the police confirming the registration of complaints. The organization also analysed legal documents related to criminal cases opened against six survivors.

Through the interviews conducted and other information obtained in relation to the 45 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence documented in detail for this report, the organization was also able to document additional human rights violations including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and other forms of torture and ill-treatment against the 45 survivors and others swept up in the wave of mass arrests carried out by the Iranian authorities to crush the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising, as well as violations of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

In the course of its broader ongoing investigations into crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed by the Iranian authorities to crush the nationwide protests of September-December 2022, Amnesty International gathered an additional 39 testimonies from former detainees and relatives of detainees related to torture and other ill-treatment in detention in the context of the uprising, not involving claims of rape or other sexual violence. While the cases of these 39 individuals are outside the specific scope of this research and are not documented in this report in detail, they have provided the organization with valuable information about the profiles of individuals arbitrarily detained in the context of the uprising and the circumstances of their arrests; the widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment against detained men, women and children including the most commonly used methods of torture; the conditions of prisons and detention centres in various provinces across the country; and the security and intelligence bodies involved in the arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment of protesters and others arrested in connection to the uprising.

In most instances, Amnesty International has used pseudonyms, refrained from specifying dates and locations of interviews, and removed any identifying details, including names, ages, ethnicity, and the geographic location in which individuals were detained, when referring to specific cases documented in the report, in order to protect the privacy, safety and security of survivors and other sources. The organization has made editorial changes to the testimonies featured in this report for clarity. In some cases, the organization has used the term "primary source" for individuals who provided first-hand information about detainees.

Amnesty International reviewed official statements by the authorities published in state-owned and state-affiliated media outlets in Iran and searched for and analysed videos that were broadcast on state television providing the authorities' version of events and showing detainees making what were presented as "confessions".

The organization also reviewed a leaked official document written by a prosecutorial official in Tehran province on 13 October 2022, concerning complaints by two women that they were subjected to rape and/or other sexual violence by two Revolutionary Guards agents. The document was first published by Iran International, a Persian-language media outlet based outside Iran, on 8 February 2023.

²⁰ See the testimonies of Kaveh in section 7.1.

²¹ See the testimonies of Kambiz in section 7.2.

²² See the testimony of Zahra in section 5.3.3.

²³ See the testimony of Nastaran in section 5.4.

²⁴ See the testimony of Dariush in section 6.3.

²⁵ See the testimony of Hamed in section 5.5.

Throughout the process of research, the organization maintained close contact with trusted human rights defenders and journalists based outside Iran who were working on the situation of detainees subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and had their own channels of communications with survivors, their relatives and other eyewitnesses.

The prevalence of sexual violence during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising is difficult to estimate given that stigma and well-founded fears of reprisals lead to under-reporting. One of the mental health professionals interviewed by Amnesty International told the organization that she believes the number of male and female survivors of sexual violence to be much higher than those reported, citing fears of societal violence and ostracization, as well as arrest by the authorities.

Amnesty International has extensively documented the widespread and systematic use of torture and other ill-treatment against prisoners in Iran, including against those arrested and detained in the context of repeated crackdowns on nationwide protests since December 2017.²⁶ During these previous extensive investigations, witnesses and survivors did not report the extensive use of rape and other sexual violence in detention. On the other hand, more than half of the testimonies gathered by the organization in relation to the treatment of protesters detained during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising – 45 out of 84 – involve claims of state agents committing rape and/or other forms of sexual violence, indicating an alarming increase compared to previous waves of protests.

On 24 November 2023, Amnesty International wrote to the President, Ebrahim Raisi, the Minister of Interior, Ahmad Vahidi; the Head of the Judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, the Secretary-General of the High Council for Human Rights, Kazem Gharibabadi, and the head of the Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, Hossein Mozaffar, detailing its findings and recommendations in relation to the use of rape and other sexual violence by state agents against those detained in the context of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, and seeking comments and clarifications. No response had been received by the time of publication.

Amnesty International is continuing its investigations into crimes under international law and other human rights violations committed by the Iranian authorities in the context of the uprising and will publish its findings and analysis in forthcoming publications.

Amnesty International expresses deep gratitude to all survivors, their family members, former detainees, and mental health professionals for their courage in speaking to the organization about the horrific ordeals that protesters endured at the hands of Iran’s intelligence and security forces with the complicity of prosecutorial and judicial authorities. Amnesty International also extends its appreciation to human rights defenders and journalists outside Iran who collaborated and exchanged information with the organization.

We remain unwavering in our commitment to advocate for the human rights of all survivors in Iran, including the right to truth, justice, and reparation.

²⁶ Amnesty International, “Iran: Child detainees subjected to flogging, electric shocks and sexual violence in brutal protest crackdown”, 16 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/iran-child-detainees-subjected-to-flogging-electric-shocks-and-sexual-violence-in-brutal-protest-crackdown/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Quash death sentences of young protesters subjected to gruesome torture”, 27 January 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-quash-death-sentences-of-young-protesters-subjected-to-gruesome-torture/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Tortured prisoners at Evin prison are in urgent need of international protection” (Index: MDE 13/6129/2022), 18 October 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6129/2022/en/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: A decade of deaths in custody unpunished amid systemic impunity for torture”, 15 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/iran-a-decade-of-deaths-in-custody-unpunished-amid-systemic-impunity-for-torture/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Security forces use ruthless force, mass arrests and torture to crush peaceful protests”, 11 August 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/iran-security-forces-use-ruthless-force-mass-arrests-and-torture-to-crush-peaceful-protests/>; Amnesty International, *Iran: Harrowing accounts of torture committed with impunity – new findings on Afkari brothers* (Index: MDE 13/4349/2021), 26 June 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4349/2021/en/>; Amnesty International, *Iran: Trampling humanity – Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran’s November 2019 protests* (Index: MDE 13/2891/2020), 2 September 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2891/2020/en/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown”, 16 December 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/12/iran-thousands-arbitrarily-detained-and-at-risk-of-torture-in-chilling-post-protest-crackdown/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Stop increasingly ruthless crackdown and investigate deaths of protesters”, 4 January 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/iran-stop-increasingly-ruthless-crackdown-and-investigate-deaths-of-protesters/>

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

“The agents removed my clothes from the moment we got there and touched my breasts and genitals... My hair was very long and they forcibly cut it up to my ears. They mocked me and said, ‘Didn’t you want to show your hair?’ They threw my hair on my lap and told me to go and show it in public.”

Sahar, a protester from Iran’s oppressed Baluchi ethnic minority, who was subjected to sexual violence while forcibly disappeared and held without any due process at an unofficial detention place²⁷

On 16 September 2022, the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa/Zhina Amini days after her arbitrary arrest by Iran’s “morality” police for not complying with the country’s abusive, degrading and discriminatory compulsory veiling laws for women and girls, sparked an unprecedented popular uprising not seen since the establishment of the Islamic Republic after the 1979 Revolution.

Hundreds of thousands of women, men, boys and girls poured into the streets across the country in largely peaceful protests between September and December 2022. Women and girls were at the forefront of the popular uprising, challenging decades of gender-based discrimination and violence. They defied discriminatory compulsory veiling laws, which have subjected them for decades to daily harassment and violence by state and non-state actors, and led to their arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and denial of access to education, employment and public spaces. Images of women courageously burning their headscarves and appearing in protests unveiled resonated nationally and globally.

The slogan “Woman Life Freedom” (*Zan Zendegi Azadi* in Persian and *Jan Jian Azadi* in Kurdish) quickly became the symbol and message of the uprising and was chanted by countless protesters, including elementary schoolgirls, and written on walls across the country.

As with previous waves of protests that have swept through Iran since December 2017,²⁸ the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising encompassed broader grievances against the existing political establishment from the

²⁷ For the case details of Sahar, see section 5.4.

²⁸ Amnesty International, “Iran: Security forces use ruthless force, mass arrests and torture to crush peaceful protests”, 11 August 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/iran-security-forces-use-ruthless-force-mass-arrests-and-torture-to-crush-peaceful-protests/>; Amnesty International, Iran: Trampling humanity – Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran’s November 2019 protests (Index: MDE 13/2891/2020), 2 September 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2891/2020/en/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown”, 16 December 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/12/iran-thousands-arbitrarily-detained-and-at-risk-of-torture-in-chilling-post-protest-crackdown/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Stop increasingly ruthless crackdown and investigate deaths of protesters”, 4 January 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/iran-stop-increasingly-ruthless-crackdown-and-investigate-deaths-of-protesters/>

outset. Protesters expressed demands for the dissolution of the Islamic Republic system and its replacement with a secular democratic system respecting human rights.

The protests were marked by visibly increased involvement of schoolchildren and university students displaying a bold determination to defy the unpopular theocratic establishment steeped in impunity, discrimination and oppression and to strive for Iran's transition to a system respecting equality and human rights.

The authorities responded to the nationwide protests by unleashing a brutal militarized crackdown to crush the spirit of resistance, deter protesters from further gatherings, and punish them for standing up against the Islamic Republic system and for challenging gender-based discrimination and oppression.

3.1 WIDESPREAD UNLAWFUL KILLINGS AND INJURIES

The Iranian authorities' campaign to crush the protests involved extensive deployment of the Revolutionary Guards, the Basij paramilitary force, and the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym *FARAJA*) and its various bodies, including the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*) and Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoum*), as well as plainclothes security agents.

Security forces extensively and unlawfully fired live ammunition, metal pellets and teargas and resorted to severe beatings to disperse largely peaceful protests and intimidate and punish protesters, resulting in the unlawful killing of hundreds of protesters and bystanders, including scores of children.²⁹

Ethnic minorities bore the brunt of the crackdown, with more than half of those unlawfully killed belonging to the oppressed Baluchi minority in Sistan and Baluchestan province and the oppressed Kurdish minority in the provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah and West Azerbaijan.

The security forces' unlawful use of force, including through live ammunition, metal pellets, teargas, and beatings with batons, also caused horrific debilitating and life-changing injuries amounting to torture or other ill-treatment to thousands of protesters and bystanders, including blinding, loss of limbs and impaired mobility. Many injured protesters and bystanders did not seek medical treatment at hospitals for life-threatening or life-long debilitating injuries, fearing arrest.

Evidence gathered by Amnesty International reveals that, in a vast number of instances throughout the three-month protest period, the use of any form of force by the security forces was wholly unlawful as the protests were peaceful in nature and the use of force by the security forces was solely aimed at dispersing, intimidating and punishing peaceful protesters and mourners, none of which are legitimate law enforcement objectives. In other instances, while some protesters engaged in stone-throwing, arson, vandalism and, more rarely, assault, security forces used force and firearms without any regard for the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, preventing the vast majority of protesters who remained peaceful from exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression. Security forces consistently used unlawful lethal force against protesters and bystanders when they posed no imminent threat of death or serious injury to security forces or others, which is the threshold under international law for using firearms.

Almost as soon as the authorities mobilized their well-honed machinery to ruthlessly crack down on the nationwide protests, orders were given by high-level officials to violently crush the protests at any cost.

According to an official leaked document, dated 21 September 2022, which was obtained and reviewed by Amnesty International, Iran's highest military body, the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces, issued an order to the commanders of the armed forces in all provinces, instructing them to "severely confront" protesters in a plan to systematically crush the protests at any cost. The General Headquarters of the Armed Forces is the top entity in Iran coordinating and overseeing the conduct of armed and paramilitary forces, as well as law enforcement agencies, including the police. Amnesty International documented a significant escalation in the use of live ammunition against protesters across the country immediately after the order was issued.³⁰

Amnesty International has also obtained another leaked document which recorded that, on 23 September 2022, the commander of the armed forces in Mazandaran province ordered security forces stationed in

²⁹ Amnesty International, *Iran: Killings of children during youthful anti-establishment protests* (Index: MDE 13/6104/2022), 9 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6104/2022/en/>. In this output, Amnesty International documented the causes and circumstances surrounding the unlawful killing of 44 children by the security forces during the protests of September-December 2022. The organization is continuing its investigations to update its findings.

³⁰ Amnesty International, "Iran: Leaked Official Documents Ordering Deadly Crackdown Highlight Need for International Action" (Index: MDE 13/6070/2022), 30 September 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6070/2022/en/>

central areas to “confront any unrest by rioters and anti-Revolutionaries without mercy and going as far as causing deaths”.³¹

3.2 MASS ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND CRACKDOWN ON CIVIL SOCIETY

In parallel to their violent dispersals of protests resulting in hundreds of unlawful killings and thousands of injuries, the authorities waged a campaign of mass arrests across the country, sweeping up tens of thousands of men, women and children as young as 10 years old.

The authorities have consistently refused to reveal the exact number of people arrested and prosecuted in the context of the uprising, but leaked information and statements by officials indicate that tens of thousands of people were swept up in the wave of arbitrary arrests. In a leaked audio file obtained by BBC Persian and published on 14 November 2022, an official is heard stating in a closed meeting that the authorities had arrested between “15,000 and 16,000 people in the first wave of arrests” after the protests began.³² In March 2023, in advance of the Persian Nowruz (new year), Iran’s Head of the Judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, announced that 22,000 people held in connection with the uprising had been pardoned. According to the statement, the 22,000 people had either been convicted or were undergoing criminal investigations, stating that most had been released at the time of the announcement.³³

Those targeted for arrest included protesters, university students, schoolchildren, as well as women and girls who had removed their headscarves in public. The authorities also used the uprising to opportunistically further crush Iran’s civil society, arresting hundreds of journalists and other media workers, political dissidents, members of oppressed ethnic minorities, LGBTI individuals, and human rights defenders including lawyers, women’s rights activists, labour rights activists, and civil society activists.

The authorities arrested people from the streets during protests or in their immediate aftermath during raids targeting the homes or workplaces of individuals identified through images taken by security and intelligence agents during protests or from surveillance cameras. Security forces also arrested injured protesters and bystanders from hospitals, interrupting their treatment against medical advice.

Family members who enquired about their detained loved ones or sought truth and justice for loved ones unlawfully killed during the protests were also targeted for arbitrary arrest and detention.

Based on testimonies gathered by Amnesty International, reports by media and human rights organizations, as well as videos shared on social media, plainclothes members of the security forces often infiltrated crowds of protesters and subsequently carried out violent arrests with the support of other members of security forces in uniforms or plainclothes who were stationed nearby or suddenly appeared at the scene of protests.

Former detainees and others with direct information told Amnesty International that the mobile phones of individuals swept up in the wave of arrests were searched and prosecution authorities subsequently opened criminal investigations against them based on protest-related text messages or other “incriminating” content found on their phones, such as criticism of the authorities or, in the case of women, pictures of them not wearing headscarves in public and/or on social media posts.

Amnesty International documented how the authorities subjected those arrested to enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, as well as to unjust prosecutions and unfair trials on bogus national security charges, including “spreading propaganda against the system”, “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security”, “disrupting public order”, “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) and “spreading corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*). Many were sentenced to imprisonment and flogging, and some were sentenced to death in connection with the protests.³⁴

³¹ Amnesty International, “Iran: Leaked Official Documents Ordering Deadly Crackdown Highlight Need for International Action” (Index: MDE 13/6070/2022), 30 September 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6070/2022/en/>; BBC Persian, اعتراض‌های ایران؛ فایل صوتی منسوب به مقام اطلاعاتی: غضنفر‌های ما بیش از آ‌ای ۶ تأثیر منفی دارند
[“Iran protests: Audio file attributed to intelligence official: our own [personnel are more detrimental than MI6]”, 14 November 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-63618568> (In Persian).

³² BBC Persian, اعتراض‌های ایران؛ فایل صوتی منسوب به مقام اطلاعاتی: غضنفر‌های ما بیش از آ‌ای ۶ تأثیر منفی دارند
[“Iran protests: Audio file attributed to intelligence official: our own [personnel are more detrimental than MI6]”, 14 November 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-63618568> (In Persian).

³³ Islamic Republic News Agency, ۲۲ هزار نفر از عفوشدگان مربوط به اغتشاشات اخیر هستند
[“22 thousand pardoned in relation to the recent protests”], 13 March 2023, <https://www.irna.ir/news/85055898/> (In Persian).

³⁴ See section 3.4 for more details.

3.3 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Intelligence and security forces routinely subjected detainees to enforced disappearance for days or weeks by refusing to provide any information to their families about their fate or whereabouts. Some detainees were held in official places of detention or security compounds belonging to intelligence and security forces, while others were taken to unofficial detention places, including warehouses and schools, as well as residential buildings colloquially referred to as “safe houses” (*khanehay-e amn*) in Iran.³⁵

Distressed relatives visited police stations, prosecution offices, Revolutionary Courts, prisons and other known detention centres to enquire about their loved ones. In some cases, officials deliberately concealed information they had on the fate and whereabouts of forcibly disappeared individuals to their relatives, even though they were in their custody. In other cases, officials admitted to relatives that their loved ones were in custody but refused to disclose their place of detention or any charges they faced.

The use of incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance left many families in a state of deep anguish and uncertainty. Families were left in fear about whether their loved ones were dead or alive, especially amid mounting reports of deaths resulting from the unlawful use of lethal force by the security forces during the protests, as well reports of deaths in custody, and the refusal of the authorities to return the bodies of those killed to their families.

Those subjected to enforced disappearances are at heightened risk of torture and other ill-treatment, as they are placed completely outside the protection of the law. Amnesty International has long documented the widespread and systematic use of torture and other ill-treatment against detainees by intelligence and security agents in Iran. Consistent with long-standing patterns, those arrested in the context of the September – December 2022 protests, including children, whose cases Amnesty International documented, were systematically subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and continue to live with the long-term physical and psychological consequences.³⁶

Consistent with long-standing patterns of systemic impunity, the Iranian authorities have refused to conduct any thorough, transparent, independent and impartial investigations into credible evidence of widespread enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment of detainees and to take any steps to hold those responsible to account. Indeed, prosecutors and judges repeatedly dismissed torture allegations raised by victims in pre-trial detention or in court during their trials, and relied on “confessions” extracted through torture and other ill-treatment to issue indictments and convictions. Meanwhile intelligence and security bodies have continued to threaten victims and their families with further harm in order to coerce them into withdrawing complaints or deter them from filing complaints and pursuing truth, justice and reparation.

3.4 DEATH PENALTY AS A TOOL OF OPPRESSION

During and in the aftermath of the uprising, the authorities used the death penalty as a tool of political repression against protesters, dissidents and members of ethnic minorities to torment and terrorize the general population and dissuade them from further protests.

From the outset, the authorities sought to demonize and dehumanize protesters, calling them “rioters” and “thugs,”³⁷ and state officials urged the judiciary to expedite the prosecution of individuals detained in connection with the protests and called for the swift imposition of the death penalty. Some parliamentarians used inflammatory language when referring to protesters by labelling them as “*mohareb*” (an individual accused of “waging war against God”), likening them to the Islamic State (IS) armed group, and calling on the judiciary to “show no leniency” and to impose death sentences on them to “serve as a lesson” to others.³⁸

The judicial authorities sought to make an example of those arrested by charging some with the most serious offences, carrying the death penalty, and violating their fair trial rights in an egregious way. Scores of people arrested in connection to the protests were investigated and/or prosecuted by the authorities on overly broad and vaguely worded capital charges, including “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) and “spreading

³⁵ See section 4.2 for more details.

³⁶ See Chapter 6 “Wider context of torture and other ill-treatment”.

³⁷ Amnesty International, “Iran: Death penalty sought in sham trials” (Index: MDE 13/6219/2022), 16 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6219/2022/en/>

³⁸ Amnesty International, “Iran: Death penalty sought in sham trials” (Index: MDE 13/6219/2022), 16 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6219/2022/en/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: List of individuals at risk of execution in connection to nationwide protests” (Index: MDE 13/6308/2022), 16 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6308/2022/en/>

corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*), which violate the principle of legality. International law restricts the imposition of the death penalty, if retained, for the “most serious crimes” involving intentional killing.³⁹

Between December 2022 and November 2023, the authorities arbitrarily executed eight men – **Majid Kazemi, Majidreza Rahnavard, Milad Zohrevand, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Mohsen Shekari, Saeed Yaghoubi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini** – in relation to the uprising following grossly unfair trials in the provinces of Alborz, Esfahan, Hamedan, Khorasan-e Razavi, and Tehran.⁴⁰ Following their arrests, the eight men were denied access to lawyers during the investigation phase of their cases. For seven of the men – Majid Kazemi, Majidreza Rahnavard, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Mohsen Shekari, Saeed Yaghoubi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini – Amnesty International obtained information indicating that intelligence and security forces subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment in detention to extract forced “confessions” that formed the basis for their convictions in court. Documented methods of torture and other ill-treatment against them included severe beatings, electric shocks, suspension upside down, mock executions, and threats to kill their family members.

The forced “confessions” of several of the men were broadcast on state television prior to their trials, some just days after they were arrested, violating their rights to the presumption of innocence, to remain silent, and not to self-incriminate. For instance, Majidreza Rahnavard, who was arrested on 19 November 2022, was shown with a heavily bandaged arm making forced “confessions” in a propaganda video that was published on 20 November 2022, the day after his arrest, raising serious concerns that he was subjected to torture.⁴¹ He was arbitrarily executed on 12 December 2022, just three weeks after his arrest, following an expedited grossly unfair trial.⁴² Given the Iranian authorities’ long-standing pattern of extracting video-recorded “confessions” under torture and other ill-treatment, Amnesty International has serious concerns that all the televised “confessions” were obtained under coercive circumstances.

Despite serious torture allegations, due process violations, and other material and procedural flaws including lack of evidence, the authorities expedited all the men’s cases, with the exception of Milad Zohrevand, and Iran’s Supreme Court rubberstamped their unjust convictions and sentences by the Revolutionary Courts within weeks or months of their arrests.

Some of the men were arbitrarily executed for their alleged participation in acts such as blocking streets, arson or vandalism, in contravention of international law which limits the use of the death penalty to the “most serious crimes” involving intentional killing. Others were executed in relation to the deaths of security forces during protests, for which they denied any responsibility. At least six of the men were executed in secret without prior notice to their lawyers and families.

The authorities have orchestrated a cruel campaign of harassment and intimidation against the families of those executed for seeking truth and justice, compounding their anguish and suffering, in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Family members have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention as well as ongoing harassment and intimidation, including through the denial of the right to hold peaceful gatherings at the graves of their loved ones and destruction of their graves.⁴³

Amnesty International knows of at least two other men who are under a death sentence, putting them at risk of execution.⁴⁴ Dozens more risk being sentenced to death in connection with the uprising.

³⁹ Amnesty International, “Iran: Death penalty sought in sham trials” (Index: MDE 13/6219/2022), 16 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6219/2022/en>

⁴⁰ Amnesty International, “Iran: Horrifying execution of young protester exposes authorities’ cruelty and risk of further bloodshed”, 8 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-horrifying-execution-of-young-protester-exposes-authorities-cruelty-and-risk-of-further-bloodshed/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Public execution of Majidreza Rahnavard exposes authorities’ revenge killings”, 12 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-public-execution-of-majidreza-rahnavard-exposes-authorities-revenge-killings/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Executions of tortured protesters must trigger a robust reaction from the international community”, 19 May 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-young-man-at-grave-risk-of-execution-in-connection-with-protests-amid-killing-spree/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Executions of tortured protesters must trigger a robust reaction from the international community”, 19 May 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-young-man-at-grave-risk-of-execution-in-connection-with-protests-amid-killing-spree/>; Amnesty International, X post: Amnesty International is horrified by reports of the chilling execution of Milad Zohrevand on 23 November in Hamedan Central prison, 24 November 2023, <https://twitter.com/AmnestyIran/status/1728096676261277927>

⁴¹ Rokna Press, *ببیند / اولین فیلم از اعترافات قاتل 2 بسیجی در مشهد* [“See the first video of the confessions of the murderer of two Basijis in Mashhad”], 22 November 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/ytd9ef8z> (in Persian).

⁴² Amnesty International, “Iran: Public execution of Majidreza Rahnavard exposes authorities’ revenge killings”, 12 December 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-public-execution-of-majidreza-rahnavard-exposes-authorities-revenge-killings/>

⁴³ Amnesty International, *Iran: Harassment of families of victims unlawfully killed during protests must end* (Index: MDE 13/7084/2023), 21 August 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/7084/2023/en/>

⁴⁴ See the case of Mansour Dahmardeh in Chapter 8 “Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence”.

3.5 HARASSMENT OF VICTIMS' FAMILIES

Consistent with well-documented patterns of denial, distortion and cover-up of crimes under international law and other serious violations of human rights, the Iranian authorities have refused to reveal the real toll of people unlawfully killed by the security forces during the uprising and have consistently denied responsibility for the unlawful killings. In addition, to absolve themselves of responsibility, the authorities have attributed the responsibility for many of the killings to “rioters” or “terrorists” or blamed the deaths on accidents or suicides.

Consequently, to date, not one official has been held to account for the unlawful killings of protesters and bystanders or other crimes under international law committed during and in the aftermath of the uprising, including enforced disappearances and torture. Indeed, the authorities have refused to conduct any thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into the crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed in the context of the uprising, and failed to take any meaningful steps to hold those suspected of criminal responsibility to account.

Instead, in an attempt to obfuscate the truth and evade responsibility, the authorities have pressured relatives of those unlawfully killed to appear in propaganda videos or to sign written statements propagating official narratives and publicly absolving authorities of responsibility in the deaths of their loved ones. Judicial authorities have also dismissed complaints from victims' families without carrying out effective investigations.

In parallel, the authorities have subjected victims' families to increasing harassment and intimidation to instil fear and to silence their calls for truth and justice. In particular, victims' families have been subjected to harassment and intimidation for publicly condemning the killing of their loved ones by security forces, challenging official state narratives about their deaths, calling for accountability, holding memorials and other gatherings bringing together bereaved families, writing social media posts deemed critical of the authorities, and lodging official complaints about the killings of their loved ones.

The violations against victims' families include arbitrary arrest and detention; prosecution on vaguely worded national security charges, in some cases leading to prison and flogging sentences; summoning them for coercive interrogations by prosecution officials or intelligence and security bodies; subjecting them to unlawful surveillance; threatening to kill or otherwise harm them and their surviving family members; denying them the right to hold peaceful gatherings; destroying or damaging the graves of their loved ones; and threatening to exhume victims' bodies and rebury them in unidentified locations. The authorities have also pressured many families who sought criminal investigations into the unlawful killing of their loved ones to accept “blood money” (*diyah*) from government funds pursuant to laws which provide for state-funded financial compensation in cases where the perpetrator may not be identified and apprehended. According to information obtained by Amnesty International, despite threats of reprisals, many families have refused and bravely insisted on their rights to truth and justice.

The authorities have also tried to cruelly bar victims' families from holding commemorative ceremonies at the gravesites of their loved ones, including on the occasion of their birthdays, and subjected family members to unlawful surveillance, threats, summons and/or arbitrary detention ahead of planned events. Those families who defiantly held gatherings reported the heavy presence of security forces cracking down on ceremonies, subjecting people to physical surveillance by observing and taking pictures, deploying tear gas or firearms to disperse crowds, violently beating, and/or arresting family members and supporters.

3.6 INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS

On 24 November 2022, in a statement made during a special session of the UN Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said that Iran was “in a full-fledged human rights crisis” and called on the Iranian authorities to stop using violence and harassment against peaceful protesters, release all those arrested for peacefully protesting, and impose a moratorium on the death penalty.⁴⁵ During the same special session, to address the human rights crisis unfolding in Iran, the international community took collective action through a UN Human Rights Council vote to establish a UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran to thoroughly and independently investigate

⁴⁵ UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, “High Commissioner to Human Rights Council’s Special Session: Iran Must Stop Violence against Peaceful Protesters, Release All those Arrested, and Impose a Moratorium on the Death Penalty”, 24 November 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2022/11/high-commissioner-human-rights-councils-special-session-iran-must-stop-violence><https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2022/11/high-commissioner-human-rights-councils-special-session-iran-must-stop-violence>

human rights violations related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022, to establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the violations, and to collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and preserve evidence, including in view of cooperation in any legal proceedings.⁴⁶

In February 2023, in his report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, Javād Rahman, raised serious concerns about the crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed by the Iranian authorities during the uprising. In his report, he stated that “Severe violations of the rights to life, liberty and security of person, the right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right not to be subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence, and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention have been documented since the start of the protests as part of an apparent policy instigated at the highest level of the State to crush the protests at all costs. The scale and gravity of these violations point to the possible commission of international crimes, notably the crimes against humanity of murder, imprisonment, enforced disappearances, torture, rape and sexual violence, and persecution.”⁴⁷

In a statement released on 5 July 2023, the UN Fact-Finding Mission said it had sent seven letters to the Government of Iran, including repeated requests for a visit to Iran to gather information critical to its investigations, but said that the requests had gone unanswered.

On 14 September 2023, in advance of the one-year anniversary of the uprising, the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran warned in a statement that the Iranian authorities were exacerbating punitive measures against people exercising their human rights including freedom of religion, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly”. The Fact-Finding Mission noted that the Iranian authorities had failed to respond to repeated requests for information and said that, based on the human rights body’s investigations, “rather than upholding human rights, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has refined and reinforced its capacity and actions to quell dissent, including with the use of surveillance technology.”

The Fact-Finding Mission is due to present a comprehensive report on its findings to the UN Human Rights Council during an interactive dialogue at its 55th session in March 2024.

⁴⁶ United Nations Human Rights Council, “Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran”, 24 November 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>

⁴⁷ UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 7 February 2023, A/HRC/52/67, para. 75.

4. UNLAWFUL DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

“My daughter was arrested in the street by plainclothes security forces. They grabbed her from behind...and threw her to the ground... One agent put his foot in the middle of her chest and twisted it into her chest. She had chest pain for a month after this incident. They then transferred her and others arrested to a ‘safe house’... While handcuffed during the transfer, an agent put a finger inside her vagina.”

The mother of Parisa, a woman protester who was raped following arbitrary arrest for writing protest slogans on walls⁴⁸

Intelligence and security forces in uniforms or plainclothes arbitrarily arrested survivors from the streets during or in the aftermath of protests or from their homes or workplaces. They forcibly placed survivors into their vehicles, before transferring them to formal or unofficial places of detention, where they subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment, including by raping them and/or inflicting other forms of sexual violence.

In some cases, the authorities unlawfully deprived survivors of their liberty by abducting them, rather than carrying out formal arrests, and no formal arrest record existed, with agents abandoning survivors in the streets hours or days after seizing them. In other cases, survivors were eventually registered either at a detention facility run by the security and intelligence bodies or following transfer to a prison after several days or weeks.

Evidence gathered by Amnesty International indicates that intelligence and security forces carrying out arbitrary arrests and subsequent torture and other ill-treatment included the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary Basij force, the Ministry of Intelligence, and various bodies of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the country’s police force, including the Public Security Police (*police*

⁴⁸ For the case details of Parisa, see section 5.3.2.

amniat-e omoumi), the investigation unit of Iran's police (*agahi*), and the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*).

The survivors whose cases Amnesty International documented in a detailed manner for this report include women protesters who removed their headscarves during protests and other protesters who took to the streets between September and December 2022 and/or expressed their support for the protests through writing slogans on walls or publishing posts online. These protesters came from different walks of life and included schoolchildren, teachers, university students, journalists, members of oppressed Baluchi and Kurdish ethnic minorities, as well as women human rights activists, environmental activists, and other human rights defenders.

4.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF ARRESTS, ABDUCTIONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Most frequently, intelligence and security forces arbitrarily arrested survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence, whose cases Amnesty International documented, from the streets during the protests and/or while writing or spray-painting slogans on walls. Other survivors who also protested, including women's rights activists, journalists, and individuals who posted about the protests on social media, were often arbitrarily arrested by intelligence and security forces from their homes, neighbourhoods, or places of work. Agents carrying out arrests generally did not present arrest warrants.

Survivors told the organization that the state agents involved in their arrests and subsequently in their detentions, rape and other forms of sexual violence were sometimes in uniforms but often in plain clothes. Agents were almost always male, never identified themselves by name or revealed their affiliation, and usually wore masks or covered their faces in other ways to avoid identification.

Most survivors told Amnesty International that security and intelligence agents blindfolded them or put hoods over their heads immediately upon arrest so they could not see where they were being transferred and kept them blindfolded throughout most of their ordeals.

Amnesty International's research found that the circumstances of the unlawful deprivation of liberty of survivors, who were arrested in the context of the uprising, involved various patterns.

In some cases, the deprivation of liberty resembled abductions or kidnappings, rather than formal arrests, with no formal record of the individuals having been arrested. In such cases, intelligence and security forces arrested protesters without any due process, threw them into unmarked vehicles for transfer to formal or informal places of detention,⁴⁹ and subjected them to torture or other ill-treatment, including through rape and other forms of sexual violence, for hours or days. Survivors were often then abandoned in remote areas or dumped near the scene of their abduction.⁵⁰ Survivors detained under these circumstances told the organization that, following their release, they were left shocked and bewildered about what had happened to them. Even months afterwards, they remained in a state of fear and confusion about whether they had been charged and would face criminal prosecution.

In other cases, the deprivation of liberty began with similar due process violations which made the arrest akin to an abduction such as forceful placement into a vehicle, blindfolding and transfer to undisclosed places. However, the detainees were eventually registered either at a detention facility run by the security and intelligence bodies or following transfer to a prison after several days or weeks.⁵¹ In these cases, Amnesty International's findings reveal that, upon arrival at detention facilities, security and intelligence agents routinely subjected detained protesters to hours of torture and other ill-treatment, without any initial interrogations to gather information.

Detainees were often placed in solitary confinement for days or weeks after their arrests and subjected to incommunicado detention, deprived of access to their families and lawyers.

Subsequently, traumatized and disoriented detainees were typically subjected to questioning and forced to write false, self-incriminating "confessions". The interrogations focused on baseless claims of affiliation with Western governments, banned opposition groups, including monarchist groups and the People's Mojehdin

⁴⁹ See section 4.2 below for more detail.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the testimonies of Simin in section 5.2.2; Shirin in section 5.2.4; Fatemeh in section 5.2.5; Kamal in 5.3.1; Sahar in section 5.4; and Afshin in section 4.1.

⁵¹ See section 4.2 for more detail.

Organization of Iran (PMOI),⁵² and Persian-language media outlets based outside of Iran. Interrogators pressured protesters with vague, leading questions, coercing them to disclose non-existent connections by asking, “What are your affiliations? Which groups do you work for? Who gives you orders? And from where did you receive funds to protest?”

Security and intelligence agents interrogated detainees individually in interrogation rooms or collectively in halls or courtyards. In both cases, the interrogations frequently involved further torture and other ill-treatment or threats thereof. After interrogations, detainees were usually transferred to the main prison in their city or to the central prison in the provincial capital or another nearby larger city, where they were generally held for varying periods ranging between days and several months. Occasionally, detainees were released directly from the detention centre without being transferred to a prison; this often involved being placed in a vehicle while blindfolded, and then abandoned on a street. In the cases of two survivors documented by the organization, the individuals, who include one child, continue to be held in detention at the time of publication.⁵³

The timing of detainees’ first contact with prosecution authorities also varied. Often, after hours or days of torture and prior to prison transfer, detainees were brought before the office of the prosecutor for brief questioning by a prosecution official without defence lawyers present. In some instances, a prosecution official visited the detention facility, either authorizing ongoing detention or promising release or transfer to a prison. In all cases, despite encountering detainees with visible injuries indicative of torture and hearing their complaints of torture, prosecution officials ignored credible evidence of torture. They did not initiate investigations nor took steps to protect the detainees against further torture and other ill-treatment. In some instances, they instructed detainees to remain silent and comply with instructions. In other instances, they threatened further torture, reiterated the inflammatory accusations of the security forces against the protesters, and warned of severe punishments, including lengthy prison terms or the death penalty.⁵⁴

Intelligence and security forces routinely subjected those arbitrarily arrested to enforced disappearance by refusing to provide any information to their families about their fate or whereabouts, sometimes for days or weeks. Most frequently, detainees were allowed to call their family for the first time after they were transferred to a prison. Relatives interviewed by Amnesty International told the organization that the enforced disappearance of their loved ones caused them deep distress, especially as they agonized whether they were dead or alive and being subjected to torture including rape and other forms of sexual violence.

“MY FRIEND AND I JUST HUGGED EACH OTHER AND CRIED”

Plainclothes members of the Basij paramilitary force abducted schoolboy, Afshin,⁵⁵ and one of his schoolfriends for writing the protest slogan “Woman Life Freedom” on a wall in the street. The father of Afshin told Amnesty International that plainclothes Basij agents took his son and his schoolfriend to an unofficial location without any due process, and tortured them, including through touching their genitals and threatening them with rape. He said that the agents also beat the boys with planks of wood and batons, punched and kicked them, gave them electric shocks, and flogged them with hosepipes. Several hours later, the agents dumped the boys semi-conscious in a remote area and left them there. The father added that the agents threatened the terrified boys that if they ever told anyone about their detention and torture, they would do the same to their families including their younger siblings. Afshin, who spoke to Amnesty International in the presence of his father, recalled:

“They put blindfolds on us and kept hitting us on our heads at the time of arrest. They took us to a warehouse, confiscated our phones, and interrogated us. Then they started beating us. They hit my face with the back of a gun, which was very painful, gave electric shocks to my back, and beat me with batons on the bottom of my feet and hands. They beat my friend even worse than me.

They demanded to know the name of our school and home addresses. They threatened that if we told anyone what they did to us, they would detain us again, do even worse to us, and deliver our corpses to our families.

⁵² The People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) is an opposition group outside Iran that calls for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic system. The group engaged in armed struggle against the Islamic Republic system in the 1980s. For more information, see Amnesty International, *Blood-soaked secrets: Why Iran’s 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity* (Index: MDE 13/9421/2018), 4 December 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/9421/2018/en/>

⁵³ See the cases of Kian in section 5.3.5 and Mansour Dahmardeh in Chapter 8 “Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence”.

⁵⁴ See section 10.1 for more detail.

⁵⁵ The case of Afshin is also featured in section 10.1.3.

Then they took us in a car, I was semi-conscious by this point. I was dazed and confused and completely out of it. They dumped us somewhere remote. When I gained consciousness, it took me several minutes to figure out where we were. My friend and I just hugged each other and cried.”

Afshin’s father told Amnesty International that when he saw his son, his face was bruised and that neither he nor his friend could walk because the Basij agents had beaten the soles of their feet with batons. He said that his son needed someone to hold him up and help him walk.

4.2 DETENTION PLACES USED TO COMMIT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces perpetrated rape and other sexual violence against detainees at the time of arrest, in vehicles during transfer from the place of arrest to formal or informal places of detention, and within the detention places themselves.⁵⁶

Some survivors told the organization that they were taken to official places of detention or security compounds belonging to the police, the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary Basij force, or the Ministry of Intelligence. Others said they were taken to unofficial secret detention places such as houses or apartment buildings that are unlawfully repurposed by intelligence and security bodies to keep individuals in custody. Security and intelligence officials colloquially refer to these unofficial detention places as “safe houses” (*khanehay-e amn*). These places are not registered under the Prisons Organization, which falls under the direct supervision of the Head of the Judiciary, and manages the affairs of all prisons, detention centres and their affiliated bodies; hence, detainees and their relatives never find out the exact location in which they were held.⁵⁷ Intelligence and security forces also used warehouses, parking lots, and schools as makeshift detention places.

Under Iranian law, security and intelligence bodies can establish, with the approval of the Prisons Organization, detention facilities known as “security detention facilities” (*bazdashtgah-hayeh amniati*) to hold individuals accused of national security offences.⁵⁸ These detention facilities are legally required to operate under the supervision of the Prisons Organization.⁵⁹ Prosecution authorities are obliged to inspect them at least every 15 days and report their findings to the head of the judiciary.⁶⁰ The Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Protection of Citizens’ Rights mandates that the Head of the Judiciary create a committee to enforce legal provisions concerning the administration of detention centres, including the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, and to hold to account those who perpetrate abuses.⁶¹

However, these legal protections have long been flouted by prison officials and prosecution and judicial authorities, allowing intelligence and security bodies to engage in widespread patterns of enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment without any accountability in detention places that are officially run by them. Furthermore, while these detention facilities are officially established, it is important to note that their locations may not always be known to detainees or the public as they are not often indicated by signs.

Unofficial secret detention places fall completely outside the protection of the law. This is while according to Iranian law, including the Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Protection of Citizens’ Rights, law enforcement officials and interrogators must refrain from transferring detainees to unidentified locations.⁶²

⁵⁶ Under international law, regardless of whether rape or other forms of sexual violence take place outside official state facilities, they still amount to torture and ill-treatment if they are carried out by, at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of public officials. See Inter-American Court on Human Rights, *Fernandez Ortega et al v. Mexico*, Judgment of 30 August 2010, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_215_ing.pdf, para. 128. For further details, see Chapter 11 “International law and standards”.

⁵⁷ The official name of the Prisons Organization is the State Prisons and Security and Corrective Measures Organization.

⁵⁸ Iran, Prohibition of Forming Special Detention Facilities and Allocation of One Detention Facility for Security Crimes in Each Province, www.rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/131562; Iran, Executive Regulations for Management of Security Detention Facilities, 21 November 2006, Note to Article 3, <https://vista.ir/article/258941>

⁵⁹ Iran, Executive Regulations for Management of Security Detention Facilities, 21 November 2006, Articles 2 and 4-6, <https://vista.ir/article/258941>

⁶⁰ Iran, Executive Regulations for Management of Security Detention Facilities, 21 November 2006, Article 2, <https://vista.ir/article/258941>; See also Islamic Republic of Iran, The Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Protection of Citizens’ Rights, 5 May 2004, Article 1(13), www.rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/94150

⁶¹ Iran, The Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Protection of Citizens’ Rights, 5 May 2004, Article 1(15), www.rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/94150

⁶² Iran, The Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Protection of Citizens’ Rights, 5 May 2004, Article 1(7), www.rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/94150

Amnesty International found that, sometimes, detainees were transferred to several different detention facilities, both official and unofficial, before being released or moved to prisons days or weeks after their arrests.⁶³ It was common for detainees to face torture and other ill-treatment at each facility, with some experiencing rape or other forms of sexual violence on one or multiple occasions.

A protester and survivor of sexual violence, Omid,⁶⁴ told Amnesty International that he witnessed the authorities misusing ambulances to transfer security forces between locations and to pick up arrested protesters. Some of the detainees were subsequently transferred to a detention facility where detainees were tortured or otherwise ill-treated, including through rape and other sexual violence.

In many cases, survivors did not initially know where they were detained or by which intelligence and security body and only found out through others detained alongside them or discovered their place of detention and affiliated security body after they had been released. The only way that some other survivors discovered which security body was detaining them was from the letterhead of “confession” documents they were forced to sign during interrogations under torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other sexual violence. Others never discovered where they were detained or by which state body.⁶⁵

Intelligence and security forces often held children as young as 12 years old alongside adults, contrary to international standards, and subjected them to the same patterns of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence.

Women and girls as young as 14 years old were often held in detention centres run by all-male intelligence and security forces with no regard for their gender-specific needs, exposing them to a heightened risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Upon arrival to detention places run by intelligence and security bodies, women and girls were forced to strip naked and intrusively searched, sometimes by male agents, who justified these acts by claiming that they needed to ensure the detainees had no weapons, mobile phones or other banned items.

Survivors told the organization that rape and other forms of sexual violence, regardless of where they occurred, was usually accompanied by other physical and psychological forms of torture and other ill-treatment.⁶⁶

⁶³ See section 4.1 above for more details.

⁶⁴ For the details of the case of Omid, see section 5.5.

⁶⁵ See, for example, the testimonies of Simin in section 5.2.2, Zeynab in section 5.3.4, and Sahar and Azadeh in section 5.4.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 6 “Wider context of torture and other ill-treatment”.

5. RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST PROTESTERS

“They started ripping my clothes and, when I begged for them to stop, they punched me hard in my mouth... I remember two men raping me. After that, I lost consciousness. I regained consciousness when they threw water on my head and shouted to others ‘Come and take this filthy slut’. The guards...threw me into the cell as if I was nothing more than rubbish. They said ‘You are all addicted to penis, so we showed you a good time. Isn’t this what you seek from liberation?’”

Maryam, a protester who was gang raped by Revolutionary Guards agents following her arbitrary arrest for removing her headscarf and chanting during protests⁶⁷

Amnesty International found that Iranian intelligence and security forces committed horrific acts of rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual violence, which amount to torture and other ill-treatment, against women, men and children who were arbitrarily arrested and detained during the nationwide protests of September-December 2022.

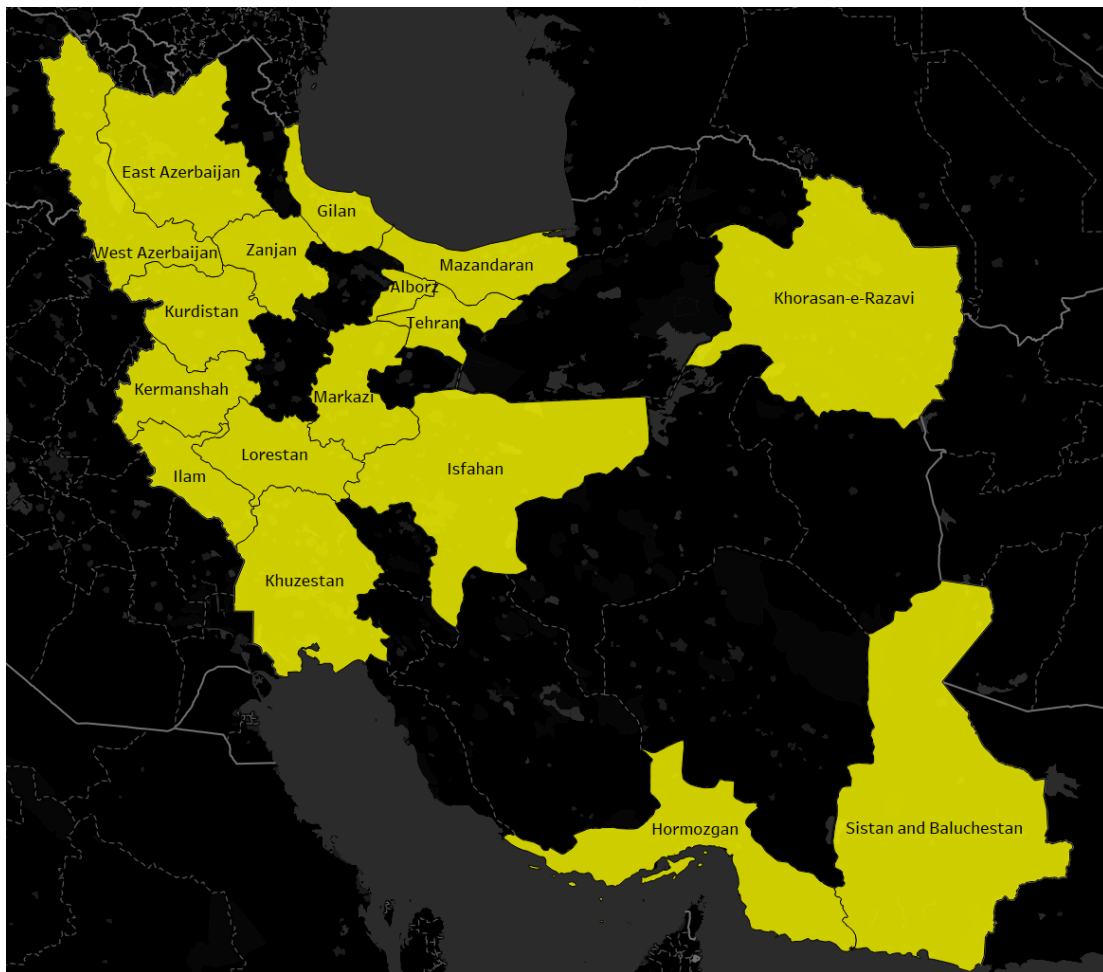
Sexual violence was used as a weapon of torture by state agents with total impunity to crush the spirit of resistance among protesters, to deter them from further protests, to punish them for challenging the political and security establishment and entrenched gender-based discrimination, including compulsory veiling laws, and/or to obtain forced “confessions”.

⁶⁷ For the details of the case of Maryam, see section 5.2.1.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence was perpetrated by agents including from the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary Basij force, the Ministry of Intelligence, and various bodies of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is the country's police force, including the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*), the investigation unit of Iran's police (*Agahi*), and the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*). Those who committed rape and other forms of sexual violence included low ranking agents and, in at least two instances, high-ranking agents who, according to survivors, appeared to have command responsibility over detention facilities.⁶⁸

Based on the testimonies obtained by Amnesty International for this report from survivors, survivors' relatives, a survivor's close friend, and mental health professionals,⁶⁹ the organization documented in detail the cases of 45 survivors – 12 women, 26 men, one girl, and six boys. Of these 45 survivors, 16 were raped⁷⁰ and 29 were subjected to forms of sexual violence other than rape.⁷¹

Despite rape and other forms of sexual violence likely being widely under-reported given the fear of reprisals by the authorities and stigma attached, Amnesty International was able to document in detail 45 cases that took place in 17 of Iran's 31 provinces, namely: Alborz, East Azerbaijan, Esfahan, Gilan, Hormozgan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Khorasan-e Razavi, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Markazi, Mazandaran, Tehran, Sistan and Baluchstan, West Azerbaijan, and Zanjan.



Map of Iran showing the 17 provinces where Amnesty International documented rape and other forms of sexual violence against protesters during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising. © Amnesty International

⁶⁸ In two cases, survivors provided the agents' ranks, which are on file with Amnesty International.

⁶⁹ See Chapter 2 “Methodology” for further information.

⁷⁰ See sections 5.1-5.3.

⁷¹ See sections 5.4 and 5.5.

In addition to the detailed documentation of the cases of 45 survivors, Amnesty International received information about six additional survivors of rape and nine additional survivors of sexual violence other than rape, through interviews with survivors of rape and other sexual violence and other former detainees, who witnessed the violations or learned about them while in detention.⁷²

In addition, three survivors of sexual violence from three different provinces told Amnesty International that they were eyewitnesses to incidents that involved the commission of sexual violence against groups of detainees, composed of up to 50 people.⁷³ Two other former detainees from two provinces told the organization that they heard multiple women detainees screaming and pleading with security forces in a way they found extremely distressing, leading them to believe that the women or girls were being subjected to sexual violence.⁷⁴

Amnesty International's detailed documentation of 45 cases across more than half of Iran's provinces, along with accounts from survivors and other former detainees about additional incidents of rape and other sexual violence against scores of detained protesters, indicates that the documented cases are not isolated violations but are part of a wider pattern.

Rape and other forms of gender-based violence are rooted in and reproduce gendered inequality, power asymmetry and harmful norms. Across the world, gender-based violence usually has a disproportionate impact on women and girls but can also impact men and boys, especially when they are challenging, or are perceived as challenging, gender norms and roles. In this report, more than half of survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence are men and boys. Amnesty International is cognizant of the fact that the organization's sample may not be representative of the overall number of protesters who were subjected to rape and sexual violence during and in the aftermath of the September-December 2022 uprising in Iran, and therefore cannot draw conclusions on whether rape and other forms of sexual violence had a disproportionate impact on protesters based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity or other protected grounds in this context. However, Amnesty International has documented how the Iranian intelligence and security agents have used rape and other forms of sexual violence to punish women and girls, as well as men and boys, who participated in the protests against the political and security establishment, challenging decades of oppression as well as entrenched gender-based discrimination against women and girls in the country.

5.1 PATTERNS OF RAPE AND GANG RAPE

Amnesty International has documented in detail the rape of 16 protesters – six women, seven men, a 14-year-old girl, and two boys aged 16 and 17 – by state agents while they were in the custody of intelligence and security bodies including the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary Basij forces, and the police force, including the Special Forces of Iran's police (*yegan-e vijeh*).⁷⁵ The ages of the rape survivors range from 14 to 39.

Agents raped women and girls vaginally, anally and orally, forcing them into performing oral sex acts, while men and boys were raped anally. Agents raped victims with wooden and metal batons, glass bottles, hosepipes, and/or their sexual organs and fingers.

Rape was used as a weapon of torture to punish and humiliate protesters, and/or to intimidate them and force them to give false "confessions".

The cases of rape that Amnesty International documented took place in the provinces of East Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Mazandaran, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Tehran.

Six of the 16 rape survivors were subjected to gang rapes⁷⁶ and the rest were raped by a single perpetrator.⁷⁷

Four of the gang rape survivors were women and two were men. Two of the women survivors – **Shirin** and **Fatemeh** – were gang raped by multiple male state agents.⁷⁸ The other two women⁷⁹ – **Maryam** and **Simin** – and two men⁸⁰ – **Farzad** and **Shahed** – were raped by up to three male state agents. Additionally, one of the

⁷² See Chapter 2 "Methodology" for further details.

⁷³ See the testimonies of Omid in section 5.5, Behrooz in section 5.4, and Hesam in section 10.1.1.

⁷⁴ See the testimonies of Mahmoud and Arian in section 5.4.

⁷⁵ See sections 5.2 and 5.3.

⁷⁶ See section 5.2 "Survivors of gang rape".

⁷⁷ See section 5.3 "Survivors of rape by a single perpetrator".

⁷⁸ See the testimonies of Shirin in section 5.2.4 and Fatemeh in section 5.2.5.

⁷⁹ See the testimonies of Maryam in section 5.2.1 and Simin in section 5.2.2.

⁸⁰ See the testimonies of Farzad and Shahed in section 5.2.3.

survivors, Simin, said that she was gang raped by two male agents with the full knowledge of at least two female agents, one of whom was an active participant in the rape.⁸¹

Maryam was gang raped in a Revolutionary Guards detention facility.⁸² **Simin** was gang raped in an unidentified building unofficially and unlawfully repurposed to detain protesters.⁸³ **Shirin** was gang raped in an empty residential building near a Basij base.⁸⁴ **Fatemeh** was gang raped in what appeared to her to be a primary school or pre-school unofficially and unlawfully repurposed to detain protesters.⁸⁵ **Farzad** and **Shahed** were gang raped in a van belonging to the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*).⁸⁶

In the cases of the other 10 survivors who were raped by a single perpetrator, two boys⁸⁷ – **Kian** and **Farshad** – and five men – **Kamal**,⁸⁸ **Soheil**,⁸⁹ **Ali**,⁹⁰ **Ahmad**,⁹¹ and **Mehdi Mohammadifard**⁹² – were raped in Revolutionary Guards detention facilities. One woman, **Zahra**, was raped in a van belonging to the Special Forces of Iran’s police (*yegan-e vijeh*);⁹³ another woman, **Parisa**, was raped in a van but did not know the organizational affiliation of the agent who raped her.⁹⁴ Another woman survivor, **Zeynab**, was raped in an unidentified detention facility.⁹⁵

In addition to the detailed documentation of the cases of these 16 rape survivors, five survivors of rape or other sexual violence – **Omid**, **Kambiz**, **Farzad**, **Maryam** and **Mahtab** – told Amnesty International that they witnessed or learned about at least six additional rape survivors. Omid reported the rape of a friend.⁹⁶ Kambiz reported hearing prolonged screaming from a woman in detention who yelled that she had been raped by multiple agents and called out for contraception.⁹⁷ Farzad reported that, while in detention, he conversed with a male detainee who disclosed that he had been raped.⁹⁸ Likewise, Maryam reported that while in detention, she conversed with two women who disclosed that they had been raped.⁹⁹ Mahtab similarly reported that while in detention, she conversed with a woman who disclosed that she had been gang raped.¹⁰⁰

Given that the testimonies of Omid, Kambiz, Farzad, Maryam and Mahtab did not contain comprehensive details on the biographical information, circumstances of arrest, treatment in detention, nature of interrogations and current legal status and whereabouts about the six additional rape survivors, Amnesty International excluded the additional rape survivors from the count of 16 cases of rape recorded as having been documented in detail and logged them separately. Nevertheless, the information reported to the organization about these six additional survivors is reflected in the detailed testimonies of the five aforementioned survivors.

Evidence gathered by Amnesty International reveals that rape was frequently accompanied by other physical and psychological forms of torture and ill-treatment. These included beatings, floggings and electric shocks resulting in severe injuries to the survivors, including bruises, broken teeth, and wounding, fractures or other injuries to other parts of their bodies such as heads, necks, arms, legs, feet and backs.¹⁰¹ Common forms of psychological torture included threats to arrest, kill, rape or otherwise harm detainees’ family members.¹⁰² In the case of one rape survivor documented by the organization, agents in plainclothes forced him to refer to his mother using sexist slurs. He was also ordered to insult the memory of 16-year-old protester, Nika Shakarami,¹⁰³ who was killed on 20 or 21 September 2022 by security forces after being forcibly

⁸¹ See the case of Simin in section 5.2.2.

⁸² See section 5.2.1.

⁸³ See section 5.2.2.

⁸⁴ See section 5.2.4.

⁸⁵ See section 5.2.5.

⁸⁶ See section 5.2.3.

⁸⁷ See section 5.3.5.

⁸⁸ See section 5.3.1.

⁸⁹ See section 5.3.7.

⁹⁰ See section 5.3.8.

⁹¹ See section 5.3.5.

⁹² See section 5.3.6.

⁹³ See section 5.3.3.

⁹⁴ See section 5.3.2.

⁹⁵ See section 5.3.4.

⁹⁶ See the testimony of Omid in section 9.2.

⁹⁷ See the testimony of Kambiz in section 5.4.

⁹⁸ See the testimony of Farzad in section 5.2.3.

⁹⁹ See the testimony of Maryam in section 5.2.1.

¹⁰⁰ See the testimony of Mahtab in section 6.5.

¹⁰¹ See section 6.1 “Physical torture”.

¹⁰² See section 6.2 “Psychological torture”.

¹⁰³ Nika Shakarami was forcibly disappeared on 20 September 2022 after taking part in protests in Tehran. For the next nine days, her family repeatedly sought to obtain information about her from multiple police stations, detention facilities, intelligence bodies and the Legal Medicine Organization of Iran. However, authorities either denied any knowledge about her fate and whereabouts to her family or gave them conflicting information. Nine days after her enforced disappearance, on 29 September 2022, it transpired that she had died. Her burial

disappeared for nine days during the uprising, by stating that “Nika Shakarami was a deviant girl who was homosexual and therefore deserved to be raped”.

Intelligence and security forces also routinely denied detainees medical care for injuries sustained as a result of rape, beatings and other forms of torture and ill-treatment, even when survivors repeatedly asked for help.¹⁰⁴

Amnesty International also documented the cases of eight survivors who reported that security forces forced them and other detainees to take unidentified pills and one survivor who was injected into the arm with an unidentified substance. Survivors said they were subjected to further torture or other ill-treatment if they resisted.¹⁰⁵

Intelligence and security forces often threatened rape survivors that they had to stay silent about their torture or else they would face reprisals, including further torture and other ill-treatment as well as arrest and physical harm to their loved ones. In one case documented by the organization, a police agent who raped a teenage schoolgirl threatened the girl not to resist the rape to avoid prolonged detention and harm to her family.¹⁰⁶

5.2 SURVIVORS OF GANG RAPE

5.2.1 MARYAM

Revolutionary Guards agents arbitrarily arrested Maryam, a protester who removed her veil in public along with her friends, during protests. She was detained in solitary confinement in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre for nearly two months. Based on her account, during this time, several Revolutionary Guards agents subjected her to a violent gang rape and denied her access to medical care for her rape-related injuries. She told Amnesty International:

“My friends and I removed our veils in public and we were chanting. The thought never crossed my mind that the security forces would arrest us. More than 30 members of the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards, who were wearing black, came and threw us into a van in a horrific way.

The agents blindfolded and handcuffed us in the van and kept hurling sexual slurs at us and calling us ‘slutty girls’. They called us vulgar words, mocked and ridiculed us, slapped us, and punched and kicked us in our genitals and breasts. From the moment we were arrested, they beat us violently. I don’t know where on my friend’s body they hit her, but she fell unconscious as a result. There were several other people also arrested in the van and they beat all of us.

They told us ‘There is no God here. We are your God. We will bury you and nobody will find out.’

During interrogations, they insulted my sister and family a lot. They threatened me and said ‘We will bring your sister and tear her apart in front of you’ [implying they would rape her]. When I told them I was sorry, that I had made a mistake [by protesting], and pleaded with them to let me go because of God, the Islamic Republic [security forces] even insulted God. One agent said ‘I am your God. The other God has no signal here’.

Initially, I was held with my friends, but then they separated us. I tried to hold onto my friends’ hands because I was so terrified, but they kicked me violently and forcefully threw me into a solitary confinement cell. I was alone in my cell but I could hear the screams of other detainees.

They interrogated me straight away until the middle of the night. During interrogations, I did not have blindfolds. I was facing a wall and there was a piece of paper in front of me. I don’t know what detention centre I was in. The

certificate, reviewed by Amnesty International, cites 21 September 2022 as the date of her death. For more on her case, see Amnesty International, “Iran: Killings of children during youthful anti-establishment protests” (Index: MDE 13/6104/2023), 9 December 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6104/2022/en/>

¹⁰⁴ See section 6.4 “Denial of medical care”.

¹⁰⁵ See section 6.3 “Forced administration of chemical substances”. See also the cases of Sahar in section 5.4; Kambiz in section 7.2; Parisa in section 5.3.2; Maryam in section 5.2.1; Fatemeh in section 5.2.5; Kian in section 5.3.5; Azadeh in section 5.4; Dariush in section 6.3; and Fariba in section 7.1.

¹⁰⁶ For the case details of Zeynab, see section 5.3.4.

only way I found out that I was detained by the Revolutionary Guards is from the logo on the interrogation paper and the insignia on the van.

My eyes were open during the torture. I can still see all of the nightmare and horror as if it were in front of me.

There was one interrogator at the beginning and he told me 'I thought you were smart, but you're obviously yearning for something else'. He called two others to come in and told them 'It's time'.

They started ripping my clothes. I was screaming and begging them to stop. In response to my pleadings, they punched me hard in my mouth and my mouth got filled with blood...There were three of them, including the interrogator... They violently raped me in my vagina with their sexual organs and raped me anally with a drink bottle. Even animals don't do these things. I remember two agents raping me. I was very small compared to them. After that I lost consciousness. I regained consciousness when they threw water on my head and shouted to others 'Come and take this filthy slut'.

When the guards were taking me away, my legs were weak and I had no control over my them. The guards subjected me to harassment, slapping, and swearing all the way to the cell. They mocked me and accused me of 'play acting' because I couldn't walk properly and said 'Whore, slut, you were having sex every night and now you are playing innocent for us'. Then, they threw me into the cell as if I was nothing more than rubbish. The guards then said to me 'You are all addicted to penis, so we showed you a good time. Isn't this what you seek from liberation?'

They kept me in solitary confinement for weeks and gave me no medical care for my injuries, not even a tissue. No doctor ever came to see me. I suffered from bleeding and infection and had to use parts of my torn clothes for the bleeding. Whenever I asked them for medical care, they just mocked me. I did not think I was going to stay alive. The only time they gave me something was when I was screaming out in agony, they gave me a pill without telling me its name and forced me to have it in front of them. I still don't know what that pill was that they gave me. Their intention was to make us into the walking dead.

I met two other women who were brought to my cell for a period of time. They had also been raped vaginally and anally and had suffered injuries. When we shared our ordeals with each other, we could not stop crying. But, unlike me, they had not lost consciousness. They said they suffered horrific pressure. One of them tried to commit suicide after her release. What caused us more distress is that we were virgins and had fiancés, so we were afraid of being separated and shamed."

5.2.2 SIMIN

Security forces arbitrarily arrested Simin, a protester and university student, following regular protests organised by the students during the uprising. According to her testimony, security forces demanded to see her student identification card and then threw her into a van, and took her, while blindfolded, to an unidentified detention centre where two male agents gang raped her with the involvement of a female agent. She was held there overnight without any due process. The next day, she was once again blindfolded, put into a van and subsequently dumped in the street near where she had been arrested the previous day. She was left in a bewildered state of confusion about what happened to her over the last 24 hours. She told Amnesty International:

"I was returning to university with some friends, when several members of the security forces stopped us and other students at a checkpoint near the university and demanded to see our university identification cards. They were mostly male agents but there was a woman among them. After I showed them my card, they arrested me and put me in a van. There were other students inside the van. After about 5-10 minutes in the vehicle, they put a blindfold on me. I didn't know where they took us but, after I got released, I learned that it was a Revolutionary Guards detention centre.

In the detention centre, the security forces took me into a room where two male agents removed my blindfold after about 5-10 minutes and interrogated me for about an hour. They were asking me questions such as 'What are your affiliations? Why did you protest and ruin the university? Are you receiving money from somewhere?' They were threatening me. One of them threatened to pull out my nails.

After the interrogation, two women came and took me to another room. There, one of the women left while the other woman ordered me to undress and said ‘Remove your clothes. We want to do a body search and then send you to the general ward’. As I was taking my clothes off, two men, who were different from the ones who interrogated me, came into the room. The woman and one of the men violently held me on the ground while the other man raped me. That was the first time. I was lying on the ground lifeless afterwards when the second man, the one who had held me down during the first rape, raped me again. I don’t know where the woman had gone or if the first man who raped me was still in the room. I was lifeless by that point, so they had no need to pin me down.

Then, the room was empty when I came back to myself. I was alone when another woman, a different one, came into the room with a tissue and told me to ‘clean yourself’ from the sperm that was on my body. She dressed me and took me to a room that had a bed.

The next day, they blindfolded me, put me into a van and threw me out onto the street near my university.

I didn’t go to a doctor until about three months later when it occurred to me to do an HIV test. It was negative. I have no idea who they were and why they did this to me. I haven’t made a complaint. I don’t have any documents to prove that something like this happened to me.”

5.2.3 FARZAD AND SHAHED

Agents in plainclothes arbitrarily arrested Farzad, a protester, during protests while he was trying to help several girl protesters who were being violently dragged across the ground by security forces. Farzad told Amnesty International that plain-clothes agents gang raped him and another male protester, Shahed, while they were inside a vehicle. He recounted his horrific ordeal to Amnesty International:

“During the uprising, I was taking part in a protest when I saw plain-clothes security forces giving several girls electric shocks and dragging them across the street to arrest them. I went over to help them, along with several other protesters, when the security forces gave me electric shocks and sprayed pepper spray into my eyes. The girls got up and ran away. The security forces severely beat me, swore at me, and verbally threatened me. They arrested me and several others, blindfolded and handcuffed us, and put us into a van belonging to the Special Forces (*yegan-e vijeh*). I was given electric shocks to my face, hands, back, and threatened with rape.

They transferred us to a courtyard. There, I saw plain-clothes security forces sexually assaulting female detainees. One of the girls was yelling ‘I will not remove my clothes’. It was clear the agents were trying to strip and sexually assault them under the pretext of searching them.

There, the security forces sprayed pepper spray into the van I was in and closed the door, causing us to suffocate. We were dying from the pepper spray, it was extremely painful. They then searched us and put us into a different van. I called out that I was dying of thirst and wanted water. In response, one of the agents punched me in my face and I felt something jump down my throat – it was one of my teeth. Several other teeth also broke. After punching me, he said ‘This is not a hotel. If you ask for water one more time, I will beat you so hard you will die’.

They then told me and the other detainees in the vehicle to remove our clothes. There was an older man there and a 16-year-old boy and they even forced them to remove their clothes, even their underwear. Me and a young detainee [Shahed] refused and told them that if they forced us to remove our clothes, we would report it to Amnesty International, to other human rights organizations, and everywhere else we could find after being released.

The agents called me and the other man foul words, removed us from the van and forced us both into a third van. Once inside, they made us face the walls of the van and gave electric shocks to our legs so that our legs went completely limp and we fell to our knees and then onto the floor. Then, they pulled down my trousers and raped me. I couldn’t scream out. I was really being ripped apart. All of them raped me and the other detainee. After they raped me, they beat me severely again in the van. They tortured me through beatings with batons, punching and kicking resulting in my nose and [more] teeth being broken. My anus was hurting, my teeth were broken, and they were beating me. I couldn’t speak, my head was spinning, I was throwing up a lot, and was bleeding from my rectum when I went to the toilet. Me and the other detainee [Shahed] were both crying when it was over.

Then, they transferred us to an Agahi [detention centre belonging to the Investigation Unit of Iran's police] where they held us in the courtyard. There were many protesters there, around 60 men and 20 women. The agents didn't allow anybody to raise their heads so that we could not see their faces.

After several hours in the Agahi detention centre, they took me and the others straight to prison. Everyone was prohibited from contact with their families. My family had contacted all the institutions, but they gave no information about me. My family even went to the prison, but the prison officials told them I was not there. I saw several children in the detention centre. One of them was even 13 years old.

In the prison, many of the other detainees had been subjected to horrific torture prior to their arrival. The detainees who were transferred to the prison from the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards were particularly in a terrible physical and mental condition. They said they were tortured for a whole month in the detention centre belonging to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards, including through electric shocks. There were several people there whose entire bodies were covered with burns from electric shocks. There was one man who was tortured in a horrific way in a detention centre belonging to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards. He said he was raped with a baton and was bleeding heavily. He could not walk properly.

In the prison, I couldn't go to the toilet for a week, I felt so disgusted with myself and I was in so much pain because I had been torn. I didn't have any money to buy lotion so I used Vaseline given to me by another prisoner so that my anus wouldn't get dry and hurt me again if I used the toilet.

After several days in the prison, I was allowed to call my family. My family had contacted all the institutions, but none they all denied my family any information about me. They even went to the prison, but the prison officials told my family that I was not there.

I was released from prison without charge after several days. The authorities had tried to find something to charge me with, but they couldn't find anything. After my release, one of my friends who had also been detained in prison and then released called me to meet. The day after we met, he committed suicide. I don't know if he was raped as well. He told me he was tortured but he didn't tell me he was raped. He may have been ashamed to tell me he was raped, just like I was ashamed to tell him I had been raped."

5.2.4 SHIRIN

Security forces in plainclothes arbitrarily arrested Shirin during protests. A mental health professional who treated Shirin and three other protesters who were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence during the uprising told Amnesty International that Shirin was arrested without any due process by plainclothes agents who took her to an unofficial detention centre, which appeared to be an empty building in a busy area of her city. She told the organization that Shirin was gang raped nine or 10 times, and by multiple agents, and was released the next day near the place where she had been held. The mental health professional told Amnesty International:

"She was arrested in a violent manner by plainclothes Basij agents during protests who beat her with batons. She said the plainclothes agents were amongst the protesters. They had infiltrated the protests and were identifying people. The agents blindfolded and handcuffed her and other protesters, and then took them away on motorbikes. They took them to what seemed like an empty residential building near a mosque where there is also a Basij base. The agents initially held the male and female detainees together, blindfolded and handcuffed, in a small courtyard before moving the women to the second floor of the building. She and a number of the other women were separated and taken to a hall on another floor where they took them to multiple rooms to rape them.

She was detained in that building for around nine hours and was raped by nine or 10 times by multiple agents. She said that agents repeatedly took her and the other women into different rooms for 15-30 minutes at a time to rape them and then throw them out into the hall in a degrading manner when they had finished with them. Then again, a while later, they would take her to a room and rape her again. The agents raped her vaginally and anally with their sexual organs and with batons. They told her 'You have come to offer yourselves, so we are giving you what you want'. They also told her 'Nothing has happened here that is against Shariah [law]'. The agents would tell her that "This is the reason you came to the streets and we will do what we like with you'. She said the rape was systematic, that it was very clear they knew what they were doing, as if they had planned this.

She mentioned that the type of batons they were using were different from the types normally used by the Special Forces. The normal batons are usually black and their diameter is wider at the top. However, the batons these plain-clothes agents used had a plastic handle and a thin metal rod. They used these batons for rape. She was raped around 9 or 10 times by different agents.

The agents also subjected her to verbal harassment and humiliation, which she said was even more painful than the rape because the degrading language tormented her in the long-term and impacted her life. She was released in the middle of the night near where she was detained. The day after she was released, she got medical care and got an emergency [contraceptive] pill.”

The agents told both of my patients who were gang raped.¹⁰⁷ ‘Do not think we are going to take you to an official detention centre to open a case against you, so that you can become famous? We will take you somewhere and do things to you that nobody will believe anything you say.’ They said ‘We will do whatever we want with you, and you do not have any evidence to prove it’.



A screenshot of a video showing a type of metal baton that plain-clothes intelligence and security forces used against protesters during the uprising. Female rape victim, Shirin, saw the video in a news segment broadcast by a media organization based outside Iran and sent a screenshot to the mental health professional, stating that this was the type of baton used to rape her. The mental health professional provided the screenshot to Amnesty Interviewed. The earliest version of the video found on the internet can be seen here: <https://t.me/AzadIranTelegram/14043> ©Private

¹⁰⁷ The mental health professional reported the gang rape of another female survivor to Amnesty International. For the testimony related to the second survivor, see the case of Fatemeh in section 5.2.5.

5.2.5 FATEMEH

According to the same mental health professional who informed Amnesty International of Shirin's ordeal, plainclothes security forces arrested Fatemeh during protests and detained her for nearly two weeks in what appeared, to her, to be a school classroom, during which she was gang raped multiple times. Agents would come in groups of six, all of whom raped her, two at a time, vaginally and anally. During her detention, the agents forced her and other detainees to take chemical substances every day and, if anyone resisted, they were beaten. Fatemeh reported to the mental health professional that the chemical substances made her feel disorientated and that she experienced less physical pain in detention. She was released after agents threw her and the others violently into a van and abandoned them in a remote location. She reported that, once she was released, she was in a lot of pain and had to be admitted to hospital for several days. The mental health professional told the organization:

“Fatemeh and her friends were taking part in protests when they were arrested by plainclothes agents. During the protest, suddenly, a large number of plain-clothes agents on motorcycles appeared, arrested people and took them away. The agents arrested her in a violent manner, put a blindfold and handcuffs on her, put her on a motorcycle and drove her away.

She said that the agents took her and others to what appeared to be a primary school or pre-school. There were many detainees there. She was held in what appeared to be a classroom alongside other women and all were blindfolded most of the time, except when agents came to take pictures of their faces and during some of the sexual violence. The detainees could hear each other's voices.

The sanitary conditions were bad and people were forced to soil themselves there. When people asked for food and water, the agents told them to ‘eat from your own faeces’. She said that when the agents did give them water, it had an unusual taste, which caused her to believe they were putting something in the water. This placed a lot of psychological pressure on her.

During her detention, she was gang-raped several times. She said that six people would come, and in pairs, they would rape her, and then leave. She was raped in the same place where she was being held and tied up. She told me that four of the agents would stand and two people would rape her. After that, the next two people would rape her. That is to say, of these six people, they would take turns, in pairs, to rape her. She mentioned that one agent would hold her down while a second would rape her and then they would switch within the pair. When two people were raping her, it was as though the other four would encircle or surround her. They raped her both vaginally and anally. The agents usually kept her blindfolded during rape but, on some occasions, they removed her blindfold, which she said doubled the psychological pressure. The agents raped her in the same classroom in which the other detainees were also held. When they were raping her, she could also hear the voices of the other women detainees.

If someone made any sound or if anyone complained, the agents would beat them and that is why no one protested. She did not know if the other women were also raped but did hear some noises sometimes that made her believe they may have been raped.

During her detention, the agents consistently forced her and others to take unidentified pills every day and, if anyone resisted, they were beaten. The pills made her feel disorientated, dissociated from reality, and unconscious, and she said that she experienced less physical pain in detention because of them. Following her release, she experienced severe pain, sweating, and bodily aches which she described as like a detoxification process. At the time of release, one day, the agents violently put her and many other detainees in a van, which was over-crowded. The agents dropped people off at different locations and dumped her somewhere remote.

She suffered multiple injuries as a result of the gang rapes, including tears in both her vagina and anus. Consequently, she needed hospitalisation and medical treatment, including anal repair surgery.

Months after her release, she was still afraid to go out of the house because she was worried that security forces would follow her. Her mental health was not good.”

5.3 SURVIVORS OF RAPE BY A SINGLE PERPETRATOR

5.3.1 KAMAL

Revolutionary Guards agents arbitrarily arrested Kamal, a protester, on two separate occasions for taking part in protests. He was detained in multiple detention centres belonging to the Revolutionary Guards and in a prison. On the first occasion of his arrest, the torture and other ill-treatment inflicted upon him by Revolutionary Guards agents included rape. In detention, he witnessed injuries and torture marks on other detainees, including children. He recounted his ordeal to Amnesty International:

“I was arrested with other protesters by agents from the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards who were wearing balaclavas so that we would not be able to identify them. They were armed and were carrying pistols on their belts, Kalashnikov rifles, and electric shock tasers. They cuffed our hands and feet. They put us in private unmarked cars. In the car, they threatened to rape me by saying ‘We have prepared 10 bottles to rape you with’. They kept beating us in the car until they took us to the Revolutionary Guards detention centre and put us in different cells. In the car, they put my head down under the seat and kept beating my back.

In the Revolutionary Guards detention centre, they kept torturing me to get forced confessions. They were asking me things like if I have contact with opposition groups. If I didn’t sign the ‘confession’ papers, they would insult me, beat me, torture me and demand that I ‘hurry up and sign’.

That night, they took us to the prosecutor’s office... From there, I was taken to a prison for one day. They had cleared one section of the prison for protesters and the prosecutor had banned essential items in the section. There were only four or five plastic drinking cups, which all 23 or 24 detainees were sharing... We had to keep washing the plastic cups and reusing them. There were no items for personal hygiene. We had to drink water from the basin with our hands or with the shared cups. Most people were under 25 and some were children. Everyone had broken hands or legs, broken ribs, bruised bodies. I didn’t know how to sleep, on my back, on the left or the right side? I had been beaten with cables so much. They provided no medical care for anyone.

After one day in prison, they took me to another detention centre belonging to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards. My eyes were always blindfolded. They never allowed me to contact my family.

There were no clocks. There was nothing to tell the time. They used to take me for interrogations very late at night until the early hours of the morning. Two interrogation sessions took place in a basement. Others were held in different rooms. In the first interrogation session, they kept questioning me about my activism, which groups I was working with.

In the second interrogation session, on the second night, they stripped me down to my underwear, put me face down on a bed, and handcuffed my hands and feet to the bed. They threatened to harm my wife, insulted my wife, referred to her using sexist slurs and said she was having sexual relations with several men. It was a psychological war for them. They were putting psychological pressure on me to get a forced ‘confession’ and get me to say whatever they wanted. They would interrogate me for half an hour threatening that I had to make a ‘confession’, asking me where I was, what I did, what media organizations I communicated with. I told them I had not communicated with anyone. They told me I had protested and had received orders from groups to destroy my city. If I participated in a protest, it was my right. Every citizen has the right to protest.

They pulled down my underwear and an agent raped me ... with batons or wood. I felt like I was being ripped apart. I was tortured in different ways for four hours. When they returned me to my cell after the rape, I was mentally crushed. Why would they do this to a human being?

I couldn’t even sit on the toilet because of the pain. I couldn’t eat because I had problems with my stomach. They gave me no medication for the pain, and I was too scared to ask for painkillers. I was constantly in fear that the door to my cell would open and they would take me again.

I was interrogated five times. After that fifth time, nobody ever came for me. I asked the guards to allow me to contact my family but they dismissed my pleas. They said I had to wait for my interrogator as they were in charge of all decisions.

There was a camera above my head and the lights were on extremely bright all the time, so you had no idea what time of day or night it was. I couldn't sleep because of the bright light. I couldn't get any reprieve from the bright light unless I put my head under the dirty blanket.

I was held on my own except for the last few days when they brought other individual detainees into my cell because of the overcrowding. The cell was so small that we had to turn our backs when we were each using the toilet. We even had to eat right next to the toilet. The people who were brought to my cell had all been beaten and had bruises on their bodies, on their legs. Anyone who was brought to that detention centre was first beaten and then thrown into the cells.

From there, they took me to prison. The prison was better. At least there was water and cups there. They eventually released me, but the Revolutionary Guards agents arrested me again several weeks later. They took me to a Revolutionary Guards detention centre for a few hours. After that, they took me to a remote location outside the city where they removed my clothes and tortured me. I thought I was going to die. They hit me in my stomach saying 'Like a dog, he has seven lives'. They beat me and assaulted me. They did not take me before a judge. It was an abduction, they held me for several hours. I dragged myself home without any energy. I was in so much pain. When I got home, my family were terrified by how I looked. When they saw me, they screamed and cried. I felt completely destroyed psychologically and I just wanted to die because of all the torture.

Even several months after the torture, the bruising on the soles of my feet has still not healed. I can't sleep on my left side because of pain from my side all the way down to my knees. I feel agonising pain in the left side of my torso and my ribs if I touch that area. Many months have passed since then, yet I'm still suffering from health problems. I went to the doctor and was told I need to have colonoscopy but I haven't been back because I'm scared".

5.3.2 PARISA

The mother of Parisa, a young woman, described to Amnesty International how state officials subjected her daughter and other protesters detained alongside her to torture and other ill-treatment in front of each other after arresting them for writing protest slogans on walls. She said that agents subjected Parisa to enforced disappearance for several days and raped her in a van. She described how her daughter was held and tortured alongside other detainees in a "safe house" with a swimming pool filled with water. Based on the mother's account, Amnesty International believes that Parisa was held in an apartment block of a residential building. She reported to the organization:

"My daughter called me at 10.30pm and asked if I needed her to buy anything on her way home. After that call, I did not hear from her for several days. My daughter was arrested in the street by plainclothes security forces who beat her. They grabbed her from behind, from her neck, and threw her to the ground, making her head hit the ground hard. One agent stamped his foot in the middle of her chest and twisted it into her chest. She had chest pain for a month after this incident.

They then transferred my daughter and others arrested in a van to a 'safe house'. There were other detainees in the van, many of them children who were under 16-17 years old. There was a boy who was 10-12 years old. In the van, the agents were subjecting the detainees to psychological taunts. They accused my daughter of being a 'leader' and of being a member of [the People Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI)].¹⁰⁸ She was subjected to rape while handcuffed in the van during the transfer by security forces, who were all male. When she said she did not have a phone on her, an agent put his hands into her underwear and put a finger inside her vagina to purportedly search for a phone in there as well.

They were not taken before a judicial official. She was taken to a 'safe house'. We do not know which security body detained her. The state officials put her and the others in a room in the detention place where they were allowed to remove their blindfolds. There were around two people who were over 30, the rest were all children and people under 25.

¹⁰⁸The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) is an opposition group outside Iran that calls for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic system. The group engaged in armed struggle against the Islamic Republic system in the 1980s. For more information, see Amnesty International, *Blood-soaked secrets: Why Iran's 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity* (MDE 13/9421/2018), 4 December 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/9421/2018/en/>

The agents handcuffed my daughter and the others and put them into individual large sacks. The agents tied the sacks on top of their heads and then put my daughter and the others, while they were still inside the sacks, in an elevator and took them underground. The agents then put my daughter and the others, while they were still inside the closed sacks, in a swimming pool, which was filled with water, until they were suffocating. The water was freezing because of the time of year. Then, they would take them out, beat them with wooden sticks, and put them back into the swimming pool again. They repeated this multiple times.

The agents eventually took my daughter and the others out of the swimming pool. They put my daughter into a room that was like a solitary confinement cell while she was still inside the sack and left her there for several hours. There was nothing in the room, not a bed or no toilet facilities. She was forced to stay inside the sack and urinated in her clothes.

The next day, the agents removed her from the sack and took her for interrogations where they beat her. The interrogators told her that if she wanted to be released or pardoned, she had to give forced “confessions” and to write and sign documents that she worked for the PMOI, that she had received money from them to write slogans, and that she repented. When she did not comply, they slapped and beat her, including by thrusting their knees hard into her back. If she fell to the floor, they would drag her up from her hair.

At one point during the interrogations, she lost consciousness, and an official came to examine her. The official forced her to take a pill which he said was a painkiller. When she resisted, he pulled her hair and forced the pill into her mouth.

As a result of the torture, my daughter’s nose was broken. She has had to have dozens of physiotherapy sessions to heal from her injuries.”

5.3.3 ZAHRA

Agents from the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*) arbitrarily arrested Zahra, a protester, along with a friend and several other women, during protests. She and the other women were placed in a van and taken to a remote area. In a written testimony provided to Amnesty International, Zahra said that one agent raped her in the van in the presence of the other women detainees. She added that she witnessed another agent ordering two other women in the van to perform oral sex acts on him. Amnesty International does not have information about the length of time that Zahra was in detention or the circumstances of her release. In a written testimony provided to Amnesty International, Zahra wrote:

“The agents were all wearing black, the clothes that the Special Forces [*yegan-e vijeh*] wear. One of my fears was that these were Special Forces and could therefore easily make me disappear because they are very powerful. They dragged me across the ground, causing my clothes to tear.

There were five or six women detainees in the van and three or four agents. They were treating us in a horrific way and it was then that I realised they had no intention of taking us to their base [*payegah*]. They handcuffed my right hand to the left hand of my friend.

They took us to a remote area. The agent went outside the van and stood next to the door in front of two other women detainees. Those women were handcuffed separately from each other. He ordered the women to perform oral sex on him. One of the women was crying and was in a terrible state. When she did not comply with his order, he took her hair and dragged her out of the van.

One agent raped me in the van. This agent violently pulled down my trousers. It was not possible for me to defend myself and stop him from pulling my trousers down. He didn’t pull my trousers down completely, just half way. I repeatedly begged and pleaded but it seemed that he did not understand what I was saying at all. He had a demeanour that showed he did not want to speak a word, and he showed me what he wanted me to do with gestures of his head. Another agent told me that the agent who was raping me was instructing me to turn around. When I did not turn around, another agent who was there watching this kicked me in my back for disobeying and swore at me. I felt very sick at that moment. Afterwards, they violently pulled my trousers up.

I don’t know what the authorities’ goal is and what they are looking for in this country... Why do they send these people after me and other women? They did not have any mercy on me. They did not have any mercy on the women of their country. Did he not hear my voice in his ears? How does that man sleep at night? I was cursing

them out loud... They told me 'We have no honour, we are more dishonourable than everyone else'. God forbid this happens to anyone else. I would rather die a thousand times than experience that again...

Several days after I was released, I was called by unidentified number from someone threatening me. The person threatened me and warned 'If you don't want us to come after you, you have to come to us'. At first I thought it was a prank caller until they contacted my friend, too, with the same threatening message.

I will never be the same person again. You will not find anything that will bring me back to myself, to return my soul to me. Remembering this has aged me 10-20 years, but I hope that that my testimony will result in justice, and not just for me. It is best to tell these accounts so that maybe we can prevent similar bitter events from happening again in the future... in the hope that other women can be saved and that more women don't have to face such bitter ordeals. I am certain this has happened to many women, and not only women and girls, but they have done this to men and boys too. I ask whoever hears my voice, as a human, to offer a helping hand to these men and women who have endured this catastrophe. We are being persecuted in our country. We do not deserve this. Every human deserves to live a decent life.

5.3.4 ZEYNAB

Police in uniform arrested Zeynab, a teenage schoolgirl, while she was participating in protests after school with her friends. A mental health professional who treated Zeynab, interviewed by Amnesty International, said that she was detained in an unidentified detention facility for more than a month by the police during which she was subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. The mental health professional told the organization:

"The security forces put her and her friends into a van and took them to a detention centre. They were held in a room with more than a dozen girls of a similar age. There were no hygiene facilities which was unbearable for them. If any of the girls got their periods, they were not allowed sanitary towels and their blood went everywhere.

On the first day, she was interrogated by agents. In the days that followed, the agents told her and her friends they had to remove their clothes so they could do a body search. The female agents forced them to get completely naked because the agents said the detainees could be hiding items such as phones inside their clothes. They forced them to repeatedly do this in groups and threatened to kill their families if they refused. When the older girls complained, they beat them. They also insulted the girls with sexual insults. The female agents did the strip searches while the male agents were present and watched.

On the last day, before the paperwork for her release was complete, an agent present in the room told her that, if she wanted to be released and avoid her family being harmed, she had to be raped. He told her that she should have had sexual intercourse when she was nine years old.¹⁰⁹ They threatened that if she told anyone about the rape, her family would be harmed. The agent raped her vaginally, in such a way, that resulted in vaginal tearing and heavy prolonged bleeding that continued after her release.

Even though many months have passed since the sexual assault, this girl still cannot continue with her education. She is suffering from depression and is afraid of everyone. She feels that the moment she steps foot outside her home the same thing will happen to her again. This anguish is always with her. Until recently, she was wetting the bed in her sleep out of fear. Her father was very angry that she was raped and threatened to kill her. She is even scared of her father, of being alone with her father in case he wants to harm her."

5.3.5 KIAN, FARSHAD AND AHMAD

Revolutionary Guards agents arbitrarily arrested Kian, a teenage schoolchild and protester, in the context of the protests and took him, while blindfolded, to a Revolutionary Guards detention centre where he was held for several weeks. During this period, he was forcibly disappeared and repeatedly tortured to make false statements incriminating himself. His mother told Amnesty International that state agents raped Kian with a

¹⁰⁹ Iran's Islamic Penal Code sets the age of criminal responsibility for girls at nine-years-old. Under Iran's Civil Code, the legal age of marriage for girls is 13 years but girls under this age can be also married to a person chosen by their father or paternal grandfather provided there is a court permission. Official statistics indicate that there are thousands of early and forced marriages involving girls, including those under the age of 10 years old.

hosepipe and gave electric shocks to his genitals. Kian's mother described the sexual violence and other acts of torture that Kian endured:

“A large number of security forces were present during my son's arrest. Many people were arrested at the same time, including other young male relatives and friends. They were all beaten severely at the time of arrest. The security forces blindfolded and handcuffed them and then took them away in an unmarked car. I heard all this from eyewitnesses who were present.

For the next 23 days, we had no contact with my son and the others. We had no idea where he was. The security forces took him to a Revolutionary Guards detention centre and put him in a solitary confinement cell that was so small that he could not even lie down and stretch his legs. It was very dark and cold. Every night, they threw him a piece of dry bread from under the door. He was given nothing else to eat. He was held in solitary confinement for around three weeks and tortured there...

His hands and feet were chained up. He said they forced him to take unidentified pills and did not tell him what the pills were but said to him 'Take the pill to reduce the pain of your torture'. He said when he took them, he felt dizzy and confused, so he stopped taking them by putting them under his tongue and then spitting them out.

My son said: 'The agents would hang me and flog the soles of my feet. They hung me to the point that I felt like my arms were about to rip off. I told them to bring me down and I would say whatever they wanted ... I didn't know what they used, every time they struck my feet, it felt like I was being struck by lightning. They gave electric shocks to my genitals. They put a hosepipe into my anus.' He didn't mention how many times he was raped. He didn't talk about the details of the injuries either.

Once, they wrapped a scarf around his neck and choked him so that he was suffocating. Then, with the same scarf, they hung him. They took him for interrogation every day and forced him to confess ... They tortured him to confess crimes he did not commit. He said they kept putting words in his mouth. My son told me: 'I was forced to say what they wanted because they raped me with a hosepipe. They were taking my hand and forcibly making me fingerprint the papers'... My son was crying. I did not want to ask him anymore because I thought he would be reminded of it.

My son attempted suicide twice in custody. Once, he took the pills he had collected and, another time, he consumed cleaning liquid.

When we wanted to get my son a lawyer, the authorities would not allow the lawyer to represent him, so he withdrew from the case.

I was able to have a very short visit with him several weeks after he was arrested when he was moved to the youth detention facility, I hadn't seen him for nearly a month. During the visitation, I saw all the torture marks, the swelling on the soles of his feet, the swelling on his forehead. He said they grabbed his hair and hit his head on the wall. He didn't tell me about the rape on our first visit, he told me during our second visit.”

Kian's mother and father told Amnesty International that the Revolutionary Guards arbitrarily arrested their son's friend, Farshad, who is also a teenage schoolboy, and one of their male relatives, Ahmad, together with Kian, and likewise subjected them to torture including rape. They said the survivors were threatened by agents not to speak publicly about their torture.

At the time of publication, Kian remained in detention without trial.

5.3.6 MEHDI MOHAMMADIFARD

Mehdi Mohammadifard, a 19-year-old protester, was arrested in relation to his participation in protests in Noshahr, Mazandaran province. According to primary sources, he had gone into hiding the previous day after being summoned for interrogation by the Revolutionary Guards in relation to his participation in protests. Following his arrest, while he was held for a week in solitary confinement, during which he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including rape, to force him to make self-incriminating statements. As a result of rape, he suffered anal injuries and rectal bleeding and was transferred on an emergency basis to a hospital outside prison. He was returned to detention the next day and before he had recovered. A Revolutionary Court in Mazandaran province sentenced Mehdi Mohammadifard to death twice

based on his torture-tainted “confessions”. His conviction and death sentences were later overturned by the Supreme Court and returned to a lower court for retrial. He remains imprisoned.¹¹⁰

5.3.7 SOHEIL

Revolutionary Guards agents arbitrarily arrested Soheil several hours after he took part in protests. His brother told Amnesty International that he was held for an extended period of time in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre in circumstances amounting to enforced disappearance. During this time, agents subjected him to rape and other forms of torture and ill-treatment, including through denying him medical care for injuries sustained under torture. He tried to commit suicide in detention. According to his brother, interviewed by Amnesty International, his torture-tainted “confessions” were used as evidence against him at his trial.

5.3.8 ALI

Plain-clothes agents from the Revolutionary Guards arbitrarily arrested Ali in the context of the protests and subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment, including through rape and severe beatings with chains, which caused injuries to his legs and shoulder blades.

A mental health professional who treated survivors of sexual violence told Amnesty International that Revolutionary Guards agents raped Ali with batons and glass bottles and forced him to refer to himself using a degrading homophobic slur while he was being raped. While interrogating him, the agents also forced him to say sexist slurs against his female relatives, which caused him immense distress.

5.4 OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In addition to documenting the cases of six women and one girl who survived rape, Amnesty International found that security and intelligence agents routinely subjected women and girls who were arrested in connection with the protests to other forms of sexual violence. These included male security and intelligence forces putting their hands under the clothing of women and girls and into their underwear; grabbing, groping, beating, punching, and kicking their breasts, genitals and buttocks; stripping them of their clothes and performing intrusive body searches, including in front of male detainees; holding them naked for hours or days in detention, including in front of video cameras and in freezing conditions; forcibly cutting their hair; dragging them around violently by their hair; and threatening to rape them and their female relatives.

Intelligence and security forces perpetrated these acts of sexual violence, which amount to torture or other ill-treatment, to intimidate women and girls and punish them for transgressing socially constructed norms about the way women are expected to behave, including through removing their headscarves in defiance of compulsory veiling laws and taking part in the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising.

In at least one case documented by Amnesty International, state officials perpetrated sexual violence against a woman, **Fariba**, in apparent retribution for disobeying orders to beat another female detainee.¹¹¹

“THEY TOUCHED MY BUTTOCKS AND GENITALS WITH THEIR FINGERS AND PRESSED DOWN OVER MY CLOTHES. I FELT REPULSED.”

Plain-clothes agents arbitrarily arrested Azadeh while she was participating in a protest with her friends and subjected her to enforced disappearance for two weeks in an unknown location. During this time, multiple agents subjected her to sexual violence, including through groping her breasts, buttocks and genitals. A family member interviewed by Amnesty International told the organization about Azadeh’s ordeal:

“She participated in the protests from the first day. She and her university friends were at the protests chanting when they were arrested by plainclothes agents. At the time of arrest, the security forces pulled her

¹¹⁰ For further details about the case of Mehdi Mohammadifard, see Chapter 8 “Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence”.

¹¹¹ See the case of Fariba in section 7.1.

hair violently and beat her with a baton. The agents also beat her with something that was like a belt. The marks of the belt are still on her legs, back and breasts. On one occasion, blood came out from her mouth and nose. She was detained for two weeks in an unknown place. Her father had sought information and tried to find her many times from the authorities by going to the police and prosecutor's office. They kept telling him to submit a salary payslip as a guarantee for bail. Psychologically, she is not well at all. She sent me photographs and I saw bruises under her arms. She is stressed and has heart palpitations.

She recounted her arrest and detention to me:

'They ran after me and put their hands over my mouth to stop me from screaming. They constantly beat me. The agents blindfolded me. I couldn't see anything. They put me into one car, and then another. They were pressing down on my genitals with their fingers. They grabbed my breasts and squeezed hard.

In the unknown location, for the first two-three hours, no-one bothered me. Then, once every 30 minutes to an hour, an agent would come for me and say rude things to me. A man would come and touch my breasts, like a sadist. I could feel their breath on me and they would touch me. They touched my buttocks and genitals with their fingers and pressed down over my clothes. I felt repulsed. Two agents did this to me.

During interrogations, they pulled my lips and told me to confess. They said 'Which whore is giving you money?' They threatened 'Do you want us to bring your mother here as well? Shall we bring your teenage brother here? We will bring your family here.'

In this unknown location, they also beat me. They grabbed the corners of my mouth, put their fingers inside, and forcibly put a pill into my mouth, which made me feel sleepy. When I was falling asleep, they would slap me and take me somewhere and beat me. They did this to me two-three times. I would feel disorientated and stressed. My brain couldn't handle it. They would beat me again, then they would say rude things to me.

After a while, I was released with a surety. When they wanted to release me, they brought me blindfolded to another location and removed my blindfold. After two weeks, when I was able to see where I was, it seemed I had been brought to a police station. They gave some documents that were prepared in advance."

Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces routinely used gendered slurs and vulgar language against detained women and girls, labelling them "slutty girls" and "whores" who "wanted to be naked" simply for defying compulsory veiling. State agents mocked women and girls for protesting against compulsory veiling, violently cut off their hair, and told them that they deserved to be punished with rape or other forms of sexual violence for removing their headscarves and protesting.

Amnesty International also documented the use of degrading racist insults against women from the oppressed Baluchi ethnic minority about their bodies and skin colour.

"THEY KEPT ME IN MY UNDERWEAR FOR THE WHOLE THREE DAYS."

Sahar, a woman from the Baluchi ethnic minority, told Amnesty International that she was subjected to sexual violence while forcibly disappeared for several days after security forces, abducted her in the context of the protests and held her without any due process at an unofficial detention facility. She was unable to identify her captors or the location of her detention as she was kept blindfolded throughout her ordeal, which also involved interrogations, in what she described as a parking lot. Sahar told Amnesty International:

"I was walking in my neighbourhood, and the security forces suddenly came up from behind me. They put a gun to my head, covered my mouth with their hands to stop me from screaming, put a sack over my head, handcuffed me, and threw me into a car. They held me for three days inside somewhere that was like an [underground] parking garage. Sometimes, I could hear car doors opening and closing and I could hear children.

I was detained by about four or five male agents. They removed my clothes, apart from my underwear, and touched my breasts and genitals. They beat me. They insulted, belittled and mocked my body and skin colour, saying things like ‘Look at her skin colour, her skin is full of marks. She has so much confidence in herself even though she is so ugly. You Baluchis think you deserve respect.’ They threatened me with rape and told me things like ‘You people are OK with sex. You get together with your friends to have sex. Come and have sex with us’. I could hear them but not see them because they kept me blindfolded. They used to come and touch my ears when they said this sort of thing, or touch my hair or my skin. I felt very unsafe.

They gave me an injection into my arm. My body suddenly went hot and a strange taste came into my mouth. I was confused and disoriented for the rest of the time as a result. After they gave me the injection, I have no idea if I was forced to sign anything and give a forced ‘confession’. For two days afterwards, I couldn’t walk properly and had a dry mouth. To this day, I still don’t know what they injected me with.

My hair was very long and they forcibly cut it up to my ears to humiliate me. They mocked me and said ‘Didn’t you want to show your hair?’ They threw my hair on my lap and told me to go and show it in public.

After three days, they took me near where they had arrested me. They told me not to make a sound and said I could only open my eyes after they had left.

My detention had a big impact on my psyche. I used to be a fighter in life. Even when the Islamic Republic tried to break me down, I carried on. However, recently, I think about suicide a lot. I also have trouble speaking sometimes and I don’t have the same resilience that I used to have. I am like a person who waits all day for night time so I can sleep.”

One former detainee, **Nastaran**,¹¹² told Amnesty International that, although she herself was not subjected to sexual violence in detention, while she was held in the general ward of a prison, she met two young women, also arrested in connection with the protests, who told her about the sexual violence perpetrated against them by security forces. She recounted:

“There were two girls there whom agents had dragged across the ground. Their backs were all injured and bloodied. One of them told me ‘As the agents dragged me, my clothes got pulled up and [state agents] present at the scene completely saw my breasts and body’.”

Two male protesters, **Mahmoud** and **Arian**, from two different provinces told Amnesty International that, while in detention, they heard several female detainees screaming and pleading with security forces in a way they found extremely distressing, leading them to believe the women or girls were being subjected to sexual violence. For example, Mahmoud, a protester who was arbitrarily arrested in the context of the protests and held in a detention centre belonging to the Revolutionary Guards, told Amnesty International that he heard screams from women in who were shouting and pleading **“Don’t do this”**.

A third male protester, **Kambiz**, who was arbitrarily arrested in the context of the protests and held in a detention facility controlled by the Revolutionary Guards, told Amnesty International that he heard a female protester detained in the floor above screaming that she had been raped and that she wanted a contraceptive pill. He recalled:

“When we were there, the women detainees were held in the floor above ours. On the second night that I was there, there was a lot of screaming coming from the women detainees. We heard constant screaming from a woman who yelled that she had been raped by multiple agents and called out for contraception. After she screamed out, we heard noises as if she was beaten by agents. When myself and the other male detainees got upset about this and beat on the doors in support of her, the agents came and beat us. The room housing women was right above us and we could easily hear them when they shouted.”

A fourth male protester, **Behrooz**, who was arbitrarily arrested in the context of the protests told Amnesty International that he and nine other men who were held in a police station belonging to the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*) witnessed how security forces stripped five detained women of their tops, leaving their breasts exposed. He recounted:

“The agents held all 15 of us – 10 men and five women – in one large room. There were around six agents who had handcuffed us all. There were two-three people who looked very young and looked like children. There was

¹¹² Nastaran was arbitrarily arrested in a violent manner by plain-clothes agents wielding firearms after she attended protests organized by a women’s rights group.

one girl who was crying a lot. In our conversations, I realised she was a schoolgirl in Year 8, so she was probably 13-14 years old. They beat her a lot. There were two boys who looked around 16-17 years old.

The agents beat all of us through punching and kicking, and with batons and hosepipes. Many of us were injured. One woman's nose and teeth were broken, and her nose was bleeding. I, myself, was bleeding from my arms, legs, face and head. The agents threatened to rape the female family members of the men and sexually assaulted all the women.

In the two to three hours we were in the detention centre, the agents sexually assaulted the women detainees in front of us. There were two agents who were grabbing the women's breasts and genitals. They even exposed the women's breasts and grabbed them. They completely ripped off their tops right in front of our eyes so that the top half of their bodies were bare. They even threatened to rip their breasts off and cut off their breasts with knives. They were doing this to the women for about an hour and a half. They were beating us male detainees and we were in handcuffs so we couldn't do anything to help the women.

When they were transferring us out of there and to other detention centres, they put the women with those same torn clothes into the van. All we could hear in the van was the sound of the women crying."

These patterns of forcing detainees to bear witness to sexual violence reveal the authorities' intention to use sexual violence to instil fear among large numbers of protesters in detention and to send a message to them that public dissent would lead to serious human rights violations against them that would crush their dignity and humanity. Perpetrating sexual violence in front of witnesses also added to the anguish of survivors as well as witnesses and further exposes how such acts were perpetrated for the purpose of humiliating and punishing protesters, and dissuading them from further acts of resistance.

5.5 OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN AND BOYS

In addition to documenting the cases of seven men and two boys who were raped, Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces routinely subjected men and boys who took part in protests – challenging gender-based discrimination and gender norms, as well as decades of oppression, inequality and poverty – to others forms of sexual violence. These included agents threatening men and boys with rape; forcing them to undress; subjecting them to cold temperatures while naked; administering electric shocks to their genitals; sticking needles into their genitals; touching, pressing, kicking and beating their testicles and buttocks; and putting ice on their testicles for prolonged periods.

Former male detainees also told Amnesty International that interrogators used gendered and derogatory language to refer to their female relatives, including mothers and sisters, calling them vulgar words such as "whore" and insulted the memory of Mahsa/Zhina Amini and female victims unlawfully killed during the protests. In some cases, interrogators even forced detainees to repeat some of these gendered insults.¹¹³ Survivors told the organization that this caused them immense mental suffering and constituted some of the worst forms of psychological torture they endured.

One man, Hamed, who was arrested in the context of the protests, told Amnesty International that two male protesters who were detained alongside him in a Ministry of Intelligence detention centre told him about the sexual violence to which they were subjected:

"They took me to a detention centre belonging to the Ministry of Intelligence where I met many detainees. There, I witnessed some people with torture marks on their bodies. One group of protesters had been arrested by Agahi and beaten so much that their whole backs were covered in blood. They had been forced to stand for many hours – up to 16 hours – in the Agahi detention centre. One protester told me he was arrested by Basij agents for writing protest slogans in public and held in an unknown location. He said that, while he was blindfolded, agents pulled down his trousers and threatened him with sexual violence. Another protester who was arrested by the police told me that agents beat him, completely stripped him of his clothes for about 30 minutes, and threatened him with sexual violence."

¹¹³ See the case of Ali in section 5.3.8 and the case of Nader in section 5.5.

“THEY GAVE ELECTRIC SHOCKS TO OUR GENITALS. I CAN’T EXPLAIN HOW EXCRUCIATING THE PAIN WAS.”

Omid, a protester, told Amnesty International that he and up to 50 other detainees arrested in relation to the protests were collectively subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, while detained in a security base belonging to the Basij paramilitary force (*payegah-e basij*). He recounted that plain-clothes Basij agents arrested him and dozens of others during protests, after initially masquerading as protesters and then, horrifyingly, emerging from among the crowd to reveal their identities by violently beating protesters and transferring them to detention. Omid told Amnesty International of his torture at the Basij base:

“At the time we were arrested, there were many security forces. Even the ambulances that came to pick up arrested protesters during the protest had security forces in them. The security forces who arrested us were wearing plain clothes. They emerged from among us protesters. If we were 60 people, they made up 20 of us. They were plain-clothes Basijis. All the Basijis had batons and taser guns. They had a certain look. One guy had tattoos up to his neck, with clothes that were torn and baggy. We couldn’t believe that these were Basijis. We couldn’t tell them apart from genuine protesters.

There were around 40-50 of us arrested and we were beaten severely at the time of arrest through slaps, punches, electric shocks, and with the end of rifles. They put some of us, including me, in a van and others in ambulances without registration plates. There were about three or four children arrested alongside us in the van. They were around 16-17 years old. They were crying a lot. They were very scared and kept calling for their mothers. Me and others tried to comfort them and told them not to be afraid regardless of what happens.

When we arrived at the Basij base...the Basiji agents forced us all to stand facing the wall and smashed our heads against it in a way that our foreheads were all bleeding heavily. They beat us with batons on our backs, sides and legs.

They opened our legs and gave us electric shocks to our genitals in [the area of the perineum] with stun guns. That area is very sensitive. When they did that, I can’t even explain how excruciating the pain felt. You couldn’t continue standing on your feet. If we fell to the ground after being given electric shocks, they would kick us in our faces and stomachs and force us to stand again, threatening that if we fall down again, next time it would be worse. They were ruthless. Any time someone fell to the ground, 10 members of the security forces would kick them and trample all over them. We were all holding onto the wall so tight so we wouldn’t fall. I was continuously beaten the whole time I was there.

They used sexist slurs against female members of our families, and we couldn’t say anything back to them because they would hit us with the end of their Kalashnikov rifles.

They kept ordering us to repent and say things like ‘I will sacrifice my life for [the Supreme Leader]’, and to swear at Reza Pahlavi¹¹⁴ and monarchists. None of us did this and, as a result, we all got beaten severely.

None of the 40-50 of us detained there had any weapons, yet they were calling us ‘terrorists’ and accusing us of attempting to ‘disrupt public security’.

Fortunately, I was released. As I was being released from the Basij base, I heard the commander order the remaining detainees to pull their trousers down. I heard this sentence clearly.

“We are not living in Iran. We are just existing. We have no human rights ... Your support is heart-warming for us. It is heart-warming for us when people amplify our voices. If they did not support us, we would not be able to continue. I, myself, would not go out to protest. If they did not support us, if you [Amnesty International] did not document the human rights violations, if you did not want to secure our rights, why would we go and protest? When we see all of your efforts, I can say that me, all of my friends, all of us, will not stop taking to the streets until the end.”

¹¹⁴ Reza Pahlavi is the son of the last king of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was overthrown during the 1979 Revolution, leading to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

“THE AGENT PRESSED HIS FINGER [INTO] MY ANUS FROM OVER MY CLOTHES.”

Nader, a teenage schoolboy, told Amnesty International that he was subjected to sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment following his arbitrary arrest in the context of protests. The violations took place in a detention centre of the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*).¹¹⁵ Nader recounted the details of his ordeal to the organization:

“When I turned up to the protest, I noticed many security forces there. Suddenly, 10 agents came and arrested me, put me into a car, and took me to a detention centre belonging to the police. Their manner towards me was demeaning. They ordered me to insult myself using vulgar language and to insult my family. I was tortured in different places. First, I was tortured in the corridor, then in a very small room, then in a room where a group of us were tortured.

Upon entering the detention centre, the agents first blindfolded me with a dirty mask and handcuffed me. When I went up the stairs, they lifted my mask and told me to untie my shoelaces. About 10 agents then ripped my clothes off, leaving me in my underwear. They pushed me and my head hit against a wall. They punched, kicked and flogged me until I was on the brink of death.

Then, two agents threw me into a torture room where I was alone for three hours. One agent tied my legs to a chair and then I think he left, leaving me alone with another agent who beat and flogged me including on my feet. He flogged me dozens of times. The agent also sexually assaulted me. The agent pressed his finger [into]¹¹⁶ my anus from over my clothes. The sexual assault took place in the room where I was flogged. He hit me while my hands and feet were tied. He was demanding to know what group I was from, and why I was protesting. I was forced to make confessions and sign about 10 documents. I don't know what the documents contained because I was blindfolded. They only opened my blindfold for a moment to allow me to sign. They wanted me to write that I had been tricked by others to participate in protests. I didn't write anything willingly. Everything I wrote, they told me to write.

Then, they put me into another room which was underground and where they also brought other detainees, so that there were 15 of us there. They tortured us in a variety of ways, both physical and psychological. They broke our pride. They used vulgar language against me. They ordered me to insult myself 10 times, and to insult my mother and father using vulgar language. There, they also forced me to fingerprint some documents.

They ordered us to make chicken sounds for 30 minutes. They said ‘Make chicken noises, so much that you lay eggs’. They ordered us to do stretching movements for an hour, which was very hard to do after being tortured when our bodies were in pain. We were facing the wall and they used a metal object ... and flogged us with it like a whip. It was like a lead weight cord rope. I don't know exactly what it was. Then they ordered us to pray... They hit me a lot in my head. They kicked and flogged my genitals which was very painful. There were about 15 agents – the same number as the detainees – who were torturing us.

They treated me in a very violent manner. They kicked me in my nose. I don't know why they treated me so badly. I had never experienced anything like this.

That same day, in the evening, they put us all in a van and took us to another detention centre where they brought another 15 people so that we were 30 people. There were no other children there, besides me. Everyone else was over 25 years old. As soon as we entered, we were greeted by an agent who kicked us. There, they put all 30 of us in a small cage for a few hours out in the yard. They subjected us to cold temperatures there. We were all in handcuffs. We were in the cage for several hours before they allowed us to leave the cage and took us to a room for body inspection. They also forced all of us to say our names in front of a video camera while being filmed. They did this so that, if people were arrested again, they would have a record of their prior arrest and they would take the second cases more seriously. When we left the cage, they took us to a room and held us there for two days. They didn't give us any food or water. We had to drink water from the tap in the one toilet they had or drink from the toilet hose. The room was small and there wasn't

¹¹⁵ The Public Security Police is a subdivision of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA), which is Iran's police. For more information, see the Glossary at the beginning of the report.

¹¹⁶ Amnesty International was unable to ascertain the occurrence of penetration and has, therefore, not documented this incidence of sexual violence as rape.

enough space for 30 people to lay down, and we were squeezed against one another. They knew I was under 18 but they said I was not allowed to contact my parents until I was transferred to prison.

The other detainees there were injured. They had broken arms, broken heads, and blood-stained clothes. There was one detainee whose clothes were completely torn and drenched in blood. His head and hands were fractured and his right leg wasn't moving. He had been tortured by the Special Forces of the police [*yegan-e vijeh*] at the time of arrest.

The next morning, they took us before a prosecutor who had come to the detention centre. He told me to go and study, don't think about this kind of thing anymore.

I had nightmares for a month afterwards but now all of my fear has gone away, and I would still participate in protests.

Some of my friends who were detained separately told me that, during the torture, the agents would submerge their heads under water.”

6. WIDER CONTEXT OF TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

“Most of their torture was concentrated on the lower half of the body. They beat me on my back, ankles, and testicles. They beat my feet so much they got swollen. The worst form of torture they perpetrated was putting a needle into my large toe... The pain of this was horrific and unbearable. After they did this, they forced me to get up and walk around with my injured foot.”

Dariush was arrested and detained by the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards for sharing social media posts about the protests.¹¹⁷

Amnesty International found that security and intelligence agents who committed rape or other forms of sexual violence also systematically subjected those detained in the context of the protests to other methods of torture and ill-treatment, both physical and mental.

Detainees were also held in conditions violating the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, including extreme overcrowding, filthy and unsanitary conditions, infestations with cockroaches, lack of bedding facilities, deprivation of sufficient food and potable water, poor or no access to toilet and washing facilities, which in some cases resulted in detainees urinating on themselves, and lack of access to gender-specific facilities and hygiene and menstrual products for women and girls. Detainees were also routinely denied medical care including for injuries sustained through rape and other forms of torture or through the use of unlawful force during the protests.

¹¹⁷ For details on the case of Dariush, see sections 6.3, 10.1.1 and 10.1.3.

6.1 PHYSICAL TORTURE

Most frequently reported methods included beatings with batons and chains; slapping, kicking and punching; flogging; suspension from the neck and wrists; forcing detainees into painful stress positions for prolonged periods, often while blindfolded or having their head covered in a bag or sack; prolonged solitary confinement; and electric shocks to different body parts. Other documented methods included sticking needles into sensitive body parts; exposure to extreme temperatures; forcible extraction of nails and putting needles into nails; pepper spraying including on the eyes; mock executions; forcing detainees to perform humiliating acts; pulling the hair of both women and men; and forced administration of chemical substances including pills and injections.

Several survivors told the organization that intelligence and security forces particularly targeted younger protesters in detention, including children, for torture and other ill-treatment in order to teach them a lesson to dissuade them from ever protesting again.

Kamal, a protester, who was subjected to rape and other forms of torture while held in detention centres belonging to the Revolutionary Guards, told Amnesty International of the harrowing scenes he witnessed in detention, including seeing torture marks on children.¹¹⁸

“I was taken from the Revolutionary Guards detention centre to the prison for one day. The authorities had cleared one section of the prison for protesters. There were some detainees who had been tortured so badly that when I saw them, I forgot about my own pain.

Everyone had broken hands or legs, broken ribs or bruised bodies. I could not believe the extent to which some of the young people – children from ages 14 to 17 and others who were 20 to 25 years old – had been tortured. At least the condition of us older ones was better than the younger ones. One of the children, if you had seen his buttocks, you would cry for him day and night. His buttocks had huge blisters as large as two hands because they had beaten his buttocks so much. I cannot even explain how it looked. They had also broken his ribs, hands, and head. Those children and youth looked like a defeated multitude as a result of all their torture. Because it was their first time being arrested, the security forces had tortured them severely to stop them from protesting again.”

6.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE

In all cases documented by Amnesty International, survivors also reported security and intelligence agents subjecting them to various forms of psychological torture causing them additional pain and suffering and aimed at punishing and humiliating them further and/or obtaining forced “confessions”. These commonly included threats of further torture including rape against the detainees; threats to kill or imprison detainees for life; threats to arrest, kill, rape or otherwise torture, physically harm and/or forcibly disappear their family members, including children, parents, spouses, and siblings; persistent use of degrading verbal insults and profanities directed against them and members of their families, especially female family members; forcing detainees to utter insulting words against themselves; and bombardment of light or sound over a sustained period, including at night.

Some survivors told the organization that, during interrogations, state agents often threatened to have them charged and convicted of capital offences such as “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*) and/or “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) and have them executed in order to intimidate them and force them to make forced “confessions”.

Many former detainees told Amnesty International that, to further torture them psychologically, the authorities held them in rooms where they could often hear sounds of torture and detainees screaming and crying out from pain, and this exacerbated their mental distress and anguish, inducing further shock and pain. According to former detainees, some of the sounds emanated from what they referred to as “torture rooms” where security forces would take individuals for the purpose of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence.

¹¹⁸ For details on Kamal’s case on page 5.3.1.

“THEY WERE EXTREMELY VIOLENT”

Plainclothes members of the paramilitary Basij force arbitrarily arrested Elnaz, a woman protester, for writing protest slogans on walls. She was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, at the time of her arrest, during transfer to a detention centre belonging to the Investigation Unit of Iran’s police, and in the detention centre itself. Elnaz told Amnesty International about the horrific ordeal she endured:

“I went to write slogans on the walls. The members of the security forces, who were wearing plain clothes, attacked me. They were beating me with batons and flogging me with something made of leather material. They beat me on my legs and hit me multiple times on my buttocks so hard that I could not sit, sleep or stand for several weeks afterwards. They were extremely violent, as if they were beating someone who had murdered their mother. I was screaming for help. A man came to help me, but they beat him too.

I tried to escape but they beat me so much. One of them grabbed my hair, which is very long, and was dragging me towards their car. So much of my hair fell out as a result of him pulling and dragging me by my hair. I tried to escape as he was trying to pull me into the car, but he took out a gun, held it at my head, and said ‘I swear to God I will shoot you if you do not get in the car’. They forced me into the backseat of the car, handcuffed me and pulled something over my head so that I could not see anything.

In the car, they kept threatening me and saying things like ‘You are fighting against Khamenei’s soldiers.¹¹⁹ Just wait and see what we will do to you.’ They kept telling me I had a boyfriend, that I had drunk alcohol and taken drugs. One of them was almost sitting on top of me and I pleaded with him to get off me because I was suffocating and could not breathe. He got off me and then removed the hood from my head. At that point, one of the agents in the front started filming me. He ordered me to insult myself and say ‘*goh khordam*’ [a derogatory colloquial term in Persian which can be used to mean ‘I made a mistake’ or ‘I regret what I did’]. I said it and he laughed at me mockingly. He repeated this about 30-40 times while filming me.

They transferred me to another car which had two Basijis and a female agent in the front. They took me to the Agahi headquarters [Investigation Unit of Iran’s police]. Inside, I was interrogated by multiple agents. One interrogator kept asking me what slogans I had written, who I had taken money from, who I was connected to, and who my leader was. He kept wanting to link me to [media organizations] and wrote BBC, Manoto [a UK-based Persian-language media organization] in my interrogation documents. I was forced to sign and fingerprint all the documents because I thought it was the end for me and I had to do whatever they told me. They held me overnight and, the next day, I was interrogated by the chief who was extremely rude and insulting to me, and looked at me as if I was rubbish... He said, ‘Do you have no shame protesting at your age?’ I was lucky to be released that day.

Physically, it took a month for my body to heal from the beatings. I also had many nightmares, but the experience did not frighten me away. In fact, it motivated me even more that we are on the right path.”

6.3 FORCED ADMINISTRATION OF CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

Nine survivors¹²⁰ also told Amnesty International that security forces forced them and other detainees to take unidentified pills or receive unidentified injections, causing disorientation and delusions, or inducing nightmares or feelings of “sedation”. Survivors said that if they resisted, the security forces would subject them to further torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings and violently pulling their hair.

¹¹⁹ Ali Khamenei is the Supreme Leader of Iran.

¹²⁰ See the case of Azadeh in section 5.4, the case of Dariush in section 6.3, the case of Fariba in section 7.1, the case of Fatemeh in section 5.2.5, the case of Kambiz in section 7.2, the case of Kian in section 5.3.5, the case of Maryam in section 5.2.1, the case of Parisa in section 5.3.2, and the case of Sahar in section 5.4.

For example, **Fatemeh** who survived gang rape, reported to the mental health professional who treated her following her release that agents forced her and other detainees to take unidentified pills every day; and subjected those who attempted to resist to beatings. Fatemeh explained that the pills made her feel disorientated and dissociated from reality and that, following her release, she experienced severe pain, sweating, and bodily aches which she described as like a detoxification process.¹²¹

A relative of another survivor of sexual violence **Azadeh** similarly told Amnesty International that during an interrogation session, an agent forced her to take a pill and when she resisted, he pulled her hair and forced the pill into her mouth.¹²²

Another survivor, **Sahar**, told Amnesty International that while forcibly disappeared and held in an identification location, security forces gave her an injection into her arm.¹²³ She said:

“My body suddenly went hot and a strange taste came into my mouth. I was confused and disoriented for the rest of the time as a result. After they gave me the injection, I have no idea if I was forced to sign anything and give a forced ‘confession’. For two days afterwards, I couldn’t walk properly and had a dry mouth. To this day, I still don’t know what they injected me with.”

Another example of this cruel practice is the case of teenage boy **Kian** who was raped by the Revolutionary Guards while forcibly disappeared. His mother told the organization that his torturers forced him to take unidentified pills that made him feel dizzy and confused.¹²⁴

“THEY PUT ME ON THE GROUND, HELD MY FEET UP, BEAT AND FLOGGED MY FEET WITH CABLES, BATONS AND METAL POLES”

Agents from the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards in plain clothes arbitrarily arrested Dariush after he shared social media posts expressing support for the protests. He told Amnesty International that the agents raided his family home in a violent manner, before arresting him and then transferring him to various detention centres where Revolutionary Guards agents subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence. He also reported hearing the screams of other detainees and the account of one detainee about being subjected to sexual violence at the same facility. Dariush recounted:

“The agents put me in a car, blindfolded me, and took me to a detention centre where they put me into a solitary confinement cell that was filthy. From the cell, I could hear other detainees being tortured and begging for the agents to let them go.

In the afternoon, three agents came, put a blindfold on me, removed me from the cell and took me to the courtyard. They were swearing at me and ordering me to insult myself and say ‘*goh khordam keh bar andazam*’ [using a derogatory colloquial term in Persian used in this context to say ‘I regret being a seditionist’].

They beat me in my stomach, sides, legs, and kicked my genitals. They put me on the ground, held my feet up, and beat and flogged my feet with cables, batons and metal poles. They gave electric shocks to my sides, ankles and feet. They removed my trousers and gave me electric shocks to my testicles. If they wanted to increase the severity of the torture, they would pour water on me and give me electric shocks again. They forced me to stand and walk around, even though I could not feel my feet or walk on them and kept falling to the ground. One of them also threatened to rape me.

Then, they took me to a room where they put a piece of paper in front of me that had a list of questions such as ‘what group do you belong to’ and ‘who are you collaborating with’. However much I explained that I did not work with any groups, they dismissed my explanations. They kept asking if I had communicated with media organizations outside Iran and sent clips to media outlets such as Iran International or to Masih Alinejad.¹²⁵ They asked about the PMOI and accused me of being a monarchist. They told me to write that I was sorry and that I regretted being a ‘seditionist’.

¹²¹ For further details about Fatemeh’s case, see section 5.2.5.

¹²² For further details about Azadeh’s case, see section 5.4.

¹²³ For further detail about Sahar’s case, see section 5.4.

¹²⁴ For further details about Kian’s case, see section 5.3.5.

¹²⁵ Masih Alinejad is an Iranian-American journalist and women’s rights activist based in the United States.

They returned me to my cell. The next morning, I was woken up around 4am by the sounds of other detainees being tortured and screaming. These sounds affected me greatly and I even tried to block my ears so that I could not hear them. The screams of others being tortured caused me a lot of anguish and was worse for me than even my own torture. On the same day, they took me to a room and told me to sign a document saying that I had not been harmed there. When I protested and said I had been tortured, an agent warned that if I wanted to leave, I had to sign the document.

They blindfolded me again, put me in a van and transferred me to another detention place controlled by the Revolutionary Guards. They kept me there in a solitary confinement cell for several weeks and beat me during interrogations. At times, when there was extreme overcrowding in the detention centre, they brought another detainee in my cell but told us we were not allowed to speak. The second person they brought to my cell had been tortured severely, even worse than me, including through beatings and electric shocks to his testicles, which resulted in him having problems urinating.

Most of their torture was concentrated on the lower half of the body. They beat me on my back, ankles, and testicles. They beat my feet so much they got swollen. The worst form of torture they perpetrated was putting a needle into my large toe. The pain of this was horrific and unbearable. After they did this, they forced me to get up and walk around with my injured foot. They also subjected me to psychological torture through insults and profanity. At night they used to give me a cream to help with the swelling of my foot but then they used to start the beatings again the next day.

They also used to give three to four different pills to the detainees in that detention centre. I identified two of the pills because I am familiar with them: methadone, which made me feel like I was in another realm, and alprazolam, which caused delusions to the point that you thought the walls were talking. They also gave another pill which they said was a 'truth' pill, which induced nightmares. If we refused to ingest the pills, the agents would force us to sign documents that we refused medication the doctor had prescribed. They used to supervise us to ensure that we swallowed the pills by forcing us to open our mouths for inspection.

On three occasions, they told me I was free and they gave me clothes to wear, only to take me back to my cell, in order to destroy me psychologically.

They detained me for no reason, no crime other than a few social media posts. When they released me, they warned me that if I spoke out about what happened to me, they would shut me up. They threatened that my ordeal was not over and that they would kill me by hitting me with a car or lorry or that I would end up in a ditch.

When I was released, I was mentally crushed. Even now, I do not have any peace. I still have nightmares and am afraid that they will arrest me again.”

6.4 DENIAL OF MEDICAL CARE

Intelligence and security forces routinely denied survivors medical care, including for rape-related injuries such as infections, and vaginal and rectal bleeding, even when survivors repeatedly asked for help.

Maryam, who survived gang rape, told Amnesty International that she was denied medical care while suffering heavy vaginal bleeding and infection after she was gang raped:

“They kept me in solitary confinement for weeks and gave me no medical care for my injuries, not even a tissue. No doctor ever came to see me. I suffered from bleeding and infection and had to use parts of my torn clothes for the bleeding. Whenever I asked them for medical care, they just mocked me.”¹²⁶

Two other survivors of rape, **Kamal** and **Farzad**, similarly told Amnesty International about their lack of access to medical treatment and medication, including painkillers, for their rape-related injuries. Kamal said,

¹²⁶ For further details about the case of Maryam, see section 5.2.1.

“I couldn’t even sit on the toilet because of the pain. I couldn’t eat because I had problems with my stomach. They gave me no medication for the pain, and I was too scared to ask for painkillers. I was constantly in fear that the door to my cell would open and they would take me again.”¹²⁷

Farzad similarly recounted:

“In the prison, I couldn’t go to the toilet for a week... I was in so much pain because I had been torn. I didn’t have any money to buy lotion so I used Vaseline given to me by another prisoner so that my anus wouldn’t get dry and hurt me again if I used the toilet.”¹²⁸

Even in those rare cases of severely injured survivors being provided some medical care, their treatment was interrupted against medical advice and before they had recovered. For instance, a relative of protester, **Mehdi Mohammadifard**, who is based outside Iran, told Amnesty International that, as a result of rape, he suffered severe anal injuries and rectal bleeding and was transferred on an emergency basis to a hospital outside prison, but was returned to detention the next day before he had recovered.¹²⁹

6.5 CRUEL AND INHUMAN DETENTION CONDITIONS

Survivors were held in conditions violating the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, characterized by extreme overcrowding, filthy and unsanitary conditions, infestations with cockroaches and mice, severely limited or no access to toilet and washing facilities, lack of climate-appropriate accommodation and bedding, and denial of sufficient food, potable water and essential items to maintain personal hygiene.

Kamal who survived rape recounted the cruel and inhuman conditions he endured at a detention centre belonging to the Revolutionary Guards as follows:

“There were only four or five plastic drinking cups, which all 23 or 24 detainees were sharing... We had to keep washing the plastic cups and reusing them. There were no items for personal hygiene. We had to drink water from the basin with our hands or with the shared cups... Everyone had broken hands or legs, broken ribs, bruised bodies... They provided no medical care for anyone. There was a camera above my head and the lights were on extremely bright all the time, so you had no idea what time of day or night it was. I couldn’t sleep because of the bright light. I couldn’t get any reprieve from the bright light unless I put my head under the dirty blanket.”¹³⁰

Teymour who survived weeks of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, similarly recounted:

“After 12 days, they put me in a section of the prison they called the ‘political wing’ which had 600 people there. They had cleared most of that wing for the protesters and, apart from about 10 people who had been there from before, everyone else was in detention in relation to the protests. There were not enough beds for the number of detainees and there were only about eight toilets and showers for all 600 people. The prison authorities did not give medical care to the detainees. There was a prison doctor but he made no difference. Even if someone was having a seizure or was dying, the doctor would just tell them ‘You have a cold’. There was one detainee in a wheelchair with a broken ankle and elbow.”¹³¹

Some survivors were held in small and cold solitary confinement cells, without access to sunlight or fresh air, for days or weeks and were only taken out of their cells for interrogations.

The mother of a schoolboy, **Kian**, told Amnesty International that, for three weeks, her son was held in a dark, cold solitary confinement cell with his hands and feet chained and, every night, Revolutionary Guards agents just threw him a piece of dry bread from under the door.¹³²

A protester, **Teymour**, reported that before being transferred to an overcrowded prison, he was held in a solitary confinement cell under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence for 24 hours a day for 12 days. He said:

¹²⁷ For further details about the case of Kamal, see section 5.3.1.

¹²⁸ For further details about the case of Farzad, see section 5.2.3.

¹²⁹ For further details about the case of Mehdi Mohammadifard, see section 5.3.6.

¹³⁰ For details about the case of Kamal, see section 5.3.1.

¹³¹ For further details about the case of Teymour, see section 7.3.

¹³² For details about the case of Kian, see section 5.3.5.

“There was a dirty blanket there which hadn’t been washed for 10 years. They never let me outside during that time for some air. They did not allow me to call my family. I was only allowed to call my family on the 13th day of my detention.”¹³³

Survivors consistently told Amnesty International that agents deprived them of sufficient food and potable water, and subjected them to torture or other ill-treatment, including beatings and insults, for making requests.

A survivor of gang rape, **Fatemeh**, told a mental health professional interviewed by Amnesty International that when detainees asked for food and water, the agents told them to “eat from your own faeces”. Fatemeh further revealed that when the agents did give them water, it had an unusual taste, which caused her to believe that they were adding some unidentified substances to the water, and this intensified her anguish.¹³⁴

Farzad, who also survived gang rape, said that when he asked for water, an agent punched him in the face, saying:

“This is not a hotel. If you ask for water one more time, I will beat you so hard you will die.”¹³⁵

Kambiz, who also survived sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment, stated:

“The detention centre was overcrowded and was holding 200-300 people in a place built for 100 people. The situation there was terrible ... I lost nearly a third of my body weight in detention. They gave food that would be enough for 10 people to 30 of us.”¹³⁶

The mother of **Parisa**,¹³⁷ who was subjected to rape, told Amnesty International that security forces put her daughter in a large sack, tied it on top of her head and left her alone in a cell for several hours without access to a toilet. She stated that while inside the sack, Parisa was forced to urinate in her clothes.

Women survivors also reported lack of access to gender-specific facilities and hygiene and menstrual products for women and girls. A mental health professional who treated rape survivor **Zeynab**¹³⁸ told Amnesty International:

“There were no hygiene facilities, which was unbearable for them. If any of the women or girls got their periods, they were not allowed sanitary towels and their blood went everywhere.”

“I DON’T WANT THE AUTHORITIES TO BE ABLE TO KILL, RAPE AND TORTURE PEOPLE SO EASILY”

Agents of the Basij paramilitary force arbitrarily arrested **Mahtab**, a protester, in a violent manner for putting flyers with the “Woman Life Freedom” slogan on car windscreens. The Basiji agents who arrested her threatened to shoot her before putting her in a car and transferring her to a police station. She was held in multiple detention centres belonging to the police and the Ministry of Intelligence for several days before being transferred to a prison. She told Amnesty International that she was subjected to sexual violence in a police station, and described that, while she was detained for around 10 days in a prison, she was placed alongside dozens of women in filthy conditions and saw bruising on the bodies of other women. Mahtab recounted:

“I was arrested by Basijis who beat me, blindfolded me, put me in a car and took me to a police station. Then, they took me to another police station where female agents stripped me of my clothes and told me to sit down and stand up several times. There were 10 of us in a small cell. The others had all been beaten and had bruises all over their bodies. They had kicked a woman and broken her nose. There was another woman who was pregnant, they had kicked her in her torso, on her side. That night, I got a urinary tract infection because of the filthy detention conditions. We were all sleeping on the floor. The room was very dirty and there were lots of cockroaches. It was cold. The toilet was filthy, and it did not have a washbasin for us to wash our hands after using the toilet. There was no drinking water.

That day, I was transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence detention centre where I was interrogated every day by agents who kept trying to force me to make false confessions, stating that I was incited to take part in protests by foreign media, including Iran International. They kept threatening to charge me with ‘moharebeh’

¹³³ For further details about the case of Teymour, see section 7.3.

¹³⁴ For details about the case of Fatemeh, see section 5.2.5.

¹³⁵ For details about the case of Farzad, see section 5.2.3.

¹³⁶ For details about the case of Kambiz, see section 7.2.

¹³⁷ For details about the case of Parisa, see section 5.3.2.

¹³⁸ For details about the case of Zeynab, see section 5.3.4.

[enmity against God] to try and force me to work with them, which I repeatedly refused. I was forced to sign multiple 'confession' papers in the Ministry of Intelligence detention centre.

In prison, there were 40 of us women and, among us, there was a 16-year-old girl. There was one bathroom for 40 of us. The majority of the women had been arrested by the Revolutionary Guards and had been severely tortured. The women were young and had small petite bodies. Most had bruises on their bodies and marks where they had received electric shocks. You could also see marks on women from being beaten with batons.

One woman told me that she was raped anally by three members of the security forces. She said that, afterwards, when they looked at her file and noted that she had been married previously, they said to her: 'Whore, why didn't you tell us you're not a virgin so we could rape you from the front as well?'

Another woman said she was home asleep at night when she woke up to a gun pointed at her forehead. She used to scream in her sleep in detention because of the trauma.

After I was released, I was terrified because I kept remembering my arrest and detention. I was too scared to leave my home, and to even to go out and buy bread. I had to see a psychiatrist and take medication. The fear I have is less now but when I hear news about what's going, my body automatically goes into a state of anxiety and shakes.

I was not harmed as much as other people, I wasn't beaten. I don't want the authorities to be able to kill, rape and torture people so easily, to toy with peoples' mental state. If I didn't go to protest, I would not have been able to live with my own conscience. We can't raise our voices outside the country, so I am grateful that you are amplifying our voices for us."

7. PURPOSES OF TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT INCLUDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

“The purpose of the interrogation and torture was just to humiliate you and destroy your spirit. One interrogator kept taking me out of my cell and removing my clothes. They made fun of me while I was naked, mocking me... They kicked me all over my body, including my testicles.”

Amin, a protester who was arrested in connection to the protests by agents in plain clothes and subjected to torture, including sexual violence, while forcibly disappeared.¹³⁹

Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces perpetrated torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, against protesters for the purposes of intimidation, punishment and humiliation, for reasons based on discrimination, and to obtain forced “confessions”, which in some cases formed the basis of criminal investigations and/or prosecutions against survivors.

7.1 PUNISHMENT, INTIMIDATION AND HUMILIATION

Survivors consistently told Amnesty International that intelligence and security forces employed torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, for the purposes of intimidation, punishment and humiliation in order to break their spirit, self-esteem and sense of dignity, to instil fear, and

¹³⁹ For details about the case of Amin, see section 7.1.

to inflict lasting trauma, thereby discouraging them from participating in future protests or other acts of resistance, including, in the case of women and girls, removing veils in public.

The organization's findings reveal a pattern of security and intelligence agents subjecting detained protesters to hours of torture and other ill-treatment immediately after arrest, without any initial attempt to gather information through interrogations. This is indicative of the authorities' efforts to use torture as a punitive measure and to send a chilling message that protesters will face brutal consequences simply for their dissent and/or activism.

Omid, a protester, told Amnesty International that members of the paramilitary Basij force arbitrarily arrested him in the context of protests and transferred him to a Basij base, where he was held for a few hours. There, they subjected him and other detainees to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, primarily to inflict severe physical and psychological suffering upon them, and not because they were seeking to obtain information or "confessions":

"They did not even interrogate us. They were continually beating us. They kept threatening us. They said: 'You have come to the end of the line. You will die here. We are going to kill you. Who are you to think you can protest? We will not even give you to the security bodies, the police or the Revolutionary Guards. We will kill you here ourselves. Why are you even protesting? What are you protesting for? The achievements of the [1979] Revolution have been so great that there is no reason to protest'."¹⁴⁰

The testimonies of survivors obtained by Amnesty International show that security and intelligence forces routinely employed methods of torture and other ill-treatment that pursued punishment through humiliation. Such acts included stripping detainees or groups of detainees of their clothing including in front of others; forcing detainees into performing degrading acts; subjecting detainees to ridicule, vulgar slurs and degrading words; and denying detainees access to basic necessities like food, water, items to maintain personal hygiene, including sanitary towels, and medical care. In some instances, detainees were also denied access to toilet facilities, which intensified physical and mental suffering and even compelled them to urinate on themselves. In other instances, intelligence and security forces also denied survivors access to washing facilities, leaving them covered in blood and semen.

Survivors noted that sexual violence served as an especially brutal technique to humiliate, attack their dignity and break them, given its intensely personal and traumatic nature.

A mental professional who treated Shirin, a protester who was gang raped by security forces, told Amnesty International that Shirin told her that she still feels a sense of humiliation when she recalls the degrading words that the rapist used, causing her devastating pain and anguish, even though months have passed since the torture.¹⁴¹

"OFTEN, THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERROGATION AND TORTURE WAS JUST TO HUMILIATE YOU AND DESTROY YOUR SPIRIT"

Amin, a protester, told Amnesty International that security forces in plain clothes arrested him in connection to protests, and subjected him to enforced disappearance for two weeks. He added that during this period, security forces repeatedly subjected him to methods of torture, including sexual violence, which were designed to humiliate and degrade him and create a sense of helplessness and despair. He reported to the organization:

"For about 10-12 days, my family had no information about me. They enquired about me from different authorities. It seemed as if my detention was not made official because my family could not find me on any list. The interrogators changed and rotated. They kept taking me for interrogations but did not interrogate me. They often did not want anything from you. Sometimes, it was clear they were trying to find something to pin on you and accuse you of something but, often, the purpose of the interrogation and torture was just to humiliate you and destroy your spirit. The plainclothes security forces do whatever they want.

One interrogator kept taking me out of my cell and removing my clothes. He did this about 20 times. They made fun of me while I was naked, mocking my body. They kicked me all over my body, including my testicles. They did this when I was both clothed and naked. They gave me electric shocks, including on my neck, and hit me on my chest so hard that I felt backwards and my head hit the floor. They threatened to have some family members expelled from their jobs. They gave me threats that I don't feel comfortable repeating.

¹⁴⁰ For further details about the case of Omid, see section 5.5.

¹⁴¹ For further details about the case of Shirin, see section 5.2.4.

You grow to feel safe in your cell. Sometimes, when they brought you back from interrogations, they would come back after only five minutes to take you for interrogation again.

The day they released me, they threw me to the ground with my face in the dirt. They removed the sack from over my head and told me: ‘Count to 500. Then open your eyes. Go and get lost. This is the last time we want to see you.’ I counted to more than 500 before I opened my eyes. Then I just sat down and looked around me. They had dumped me in a road on the outskirts of my town.

Many peoples’ spirits have been destroyed. Everything is different, but maybe it is my own perception that has changed. The authorities will not leave until they have killed us all. I just want to die so I can be rid of it all.”

Amnesty International also documented several instances where intelligence and security forces perpetrated sexual violence against women and men in front of each other as a further punitive tactic to inflict humiliation and suffering on the detainees.¹⁴²

A woman protester, Mahtab,¹⁴³ who was arbitrarily arrested in the context of the protests and detained in multiple detention centres belonging to the police and the Ministry of Intelligence told Amnesty International about what she witnessed in detention and what she was told by other female detainees when she was taken to prison. Mahtab reported:

“In prison...another woman told me she was held for 23 days in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre where she was tortured. She had young daughters and told me that the Revolutionary Guards told her ‘You’re a whore and your daughters are whores’. She said that, when she was in a detention centre prior to transfer to prison, one day they took all the detained women and sat them down and then stripped all the male detainees naked and flogged them in front of the women. And the women were forced to watch.”

“THEY THREW US NAKED IN THE STREET”

Kaveh, a male protester who was arrested twice – the first time by plainclothes Basiji agents and the second time by the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*) – told Amnesty International that security forces forced another male detainee, who was also arrested in the context of the protests, to perform a sex act on himself in front of all the other detainees and agents to humiliate him. He told the organization:

“The first time I was arrested, there were around 10 of us. The agents arrested us and took us to the Basij base. When we got to the base, about five or six of them piled on me and beat me. One of the Basiji agents recognised me from a protest that took place on the previous night. He alerted the other agents and told them that he and other Basijis had beaten me previously but said ‘he hasn’t learned his lesson’. He called over another agent to come and see me. This agent beat me up; he also had a pair of pliers, which he used to rip off one of my nails. They beat us from the moment we entered the detention centre. There were many other detainees there. They then beat us on our ribs and beat us with batons and flogged us.

They put me in solitary confinement but did not interrogate me. They kept me in the cell for a couple of hours and then they took me out and beat me. They didn’t even ask me any questions. They told me to sign some papers, but I refused so they beat me. The agents beat us all until around 3-4am in the middle of the night until all of our bodies were covered with bruises. One of the Basijis threatened to break my bones. They threw me on the ground and flogged me on my back. All the others were flogged on their backs too and had bruising on their bodies. They kicked me in my chest with their boots, breaking one of my ribs. I couldn’t breathe because of this.

Around 4am, they removed all our clothes and threw us naked in the street outside the Basij base. Nobody would give us a lift in their cars because of how we looked. I was in hospital for several days after that.

The second time I was arrested, me and some other people were writing slogans on walls, when the agents took us to the Public Security Police detention centre, about 50 or 60 people were detained there for spray painting pro-uprising chants on walls. One of the detainees was addicted to drugs and was unwell. He still had a can of spray paint on him. One of the agents ordered him, in front of everyone, to force the bottle of spray

¹⁴² See the cases of Behrooz in section 5.4.

¹⁴³ For further details about the case of Mahtab, see section 6.5.

paint into his anus. The agent was mocking him and the other agents were laughing. The detainee refused the order and the agents then severely beat him.

They took us in groups of 10 to the middle of the yard for the commander of the facility where we were detained to inspect us one by one while the Chief of Public Security Police [in the city] told him information about each of us. The commander put his feet on all our necks and said 'Beat them. They are the ones. They are rioters and *monafeq*.¹⁴⁴ They are worse for us than America and Israel.' Then, the agents beat us."

In at least one case known to the Amnesty International, state officials carrying out interrogations subjected detainees to sexual violence as a punishment for disobeying orders, including orders to commit acts of violence against others in detention.

"THEY STRIPPED ME OF MY CLOTHES SO THAT I WAS COMPLETELY NAKED, HANDCUFFED ME TO A METAL POLE, AND LEFT ME THERE"

The Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards arbitrarily arrested Fariba, a woman protester, in the context of the protests and transferred her to a detention centre controlled by Revolutionary Guards where she was subjected to days of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence. In a written statement provided to Amnesty International, she said that she was subjected to degrading forced nudity in front of a CCTV camera as a form of punishment for refusing orders from an interrogator to beat a young girl in detention. Fariba recounted:

"The security forces blindfolded, handcuffed and arrested me. That day, I was interrogated for a few hours and then taken to the prosecutor's office to be charged. The prosecution official there, whose tone was harsh and who insulted me and used profane language against me, accused me of national security charges. He did not allow me to even defend myself and, instead, tried to force me to accept the charges. The security forces then took me to the wing of the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards in a detention centre.

There, a female agent came and told me to remove all my clothes and, while completely naked, to stand up and sit down three times while facing and three times with my back to her. They took me to be examined by a doctor who told me that I was too thin and had to have a nourishment pill. Then they took me to a freezing cold solitary confinement cell.

The next day, the agents blindfolded and handcuffed me again and took me for interrogations. On the way to the interrogation room, I could hear a man yelling angrily and ordering someone to sit down, and I could hear another person breathing heavily and gasping for breath. In that moment, I felt terrified and thought to myself that, whatever they do to me, I hope they do not rape me.

During the interrogation, the interrogator's phone rang several times and he kept repeating to the person on the line that he was in a hotel and to call back later. In their opinion, a security detention facility is a hotel! When they were returning me to my cell, I looked at the floor from under my blindfold and saw blood. I was walking over blood. Perhaps that blood was related to the person who I heard gasping for breath and moaning.

In my cell, every time the agents brought me food, they also forced me to take a small pale pink pill, which I secretly discarded each time and did not ingest. I was frightened that they would discover I was not swallowing the pill.

During my last interrogation, which took many hours, the interrogator told me that if I cooperated with them as an informant, introducing to them suspicious people who were working against the authorities, they would close my case and remove it from my record. I told him that if I was a traitor I would not have ended up in detention. Everything changed after this incident.

One morning, they took me into a room, removed my blindfold and put a young girl, a child who was blindfolded, in front of me. They ordered me to beat her. I could tell they had already tortured this innocent girl. When I refused, they removed my headscarf and violently grabbed my hair so hard that I screamed with all my soul and then I was thrown to the ground. I noticed that one of the male agents twisted my hair around his wrist and dragged me out of the room by my hair. I felt so much pain circulating in my head that I lost consciousness and woke up back in the cell.

¹⁴⁴ Pejorative epithet for members and supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI).

Several days later, two female agents came, blindfolded me, and dragged me outside to the yard. They stripped me of my clothes so that I was completely naked, handcuffed me to a metal pole, and left me there. No matter how much I screamed, they did not pay any attention to me. The autumn weather was very cold and I had a terrible headache, but the worst thing of all that tormented me was being naked in front of a camera, so much so that I started crying loudly. I started shivering severely and I lost consciousness. I woke up in hospital.

This was the summary of those days of my detention. The days that will always remain in my mind to know what the cruelty of the tyrant did to me. For the rest of my life, I will have to take medication for mental health and receive treatment from a psychiatrist. I was healthy, but this government made me sick.”

7.2 DISCRIMINATION

Intelligence and security forces also committed sexual violence for reasons of discrimination, including based on gender identity or expression, and to punish people for not conforming to gender-based stereotypes of how men and women are expected to behave.

“THEY ASKED ME IF I’M TRANS. WHEN I REPLIED NO, ONE OF THEM SLAPPED ME AND SAID ‘IT’S CLEAR FROM YOUR Demeanour YOU’RE TRANS’.”

Kambiz, a bisexual man, was arrested in the context of the protests and survived torture and other ill-treatment, including threats of rape and other forms of sexual violence, in detention. He told Amnesty International that plainclothes agents from the Basij paramilitary force arrested him and took him to a detention centre belonging to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards. There, he said agents demanded to know if he was transgender and said that his “demeanour” was like that of a transgender person. The security forces stripped him naked, beat him, punched his head and face, punched him in his legs and buttocks, gave him electric shocks to his sides, and threatened to rape him with a baton. He also told the organization that he witnessed agents in the detention centre subjecting a person whom he perceived as a trans woman to sexual violence and holding her alongside male detainees. Kambiz described his ordeal:

“I was arrested by security forces wearing plain clothes. They put me into the back of an unmarked car, punched me in the head and face, and insulted me. They had a pistol and a rifle, and threatened to use them against me.

In the detention centre, they took me to a room where they stripped me naked and beat me. Several people started to interrogate me. They asked me if I’m trans [transgender]. When I replied no, one of them slapped me and said ‘It’s clear from your demeanour you’re trans’. They beat me, slapped me, and punched me in my face so much that one of my teeth fell out.

They interrogated me from the morning until night and asked me many other questions, including about my education and religion. If I did not answer their questions, the interrogators pressed my nipples with a pair of pliers. Lots of people came and punched me, kicked me, and gave me so many electric shocks. They beat me on my buttocks and threatened to rape me with a baton. They beat me on my head with a baton so hard that I had a seizure and collapsed. They told me ‘It’s not important for us if you die. Your grave is open. We have come to execute you’.

They kept beating us all. Some of the other detainees had broken arms and legs, and had been injured in the protests. They also forced us to ingest things that made all of us disorientated and have us memory loss.

There was a trans woman there who they harassed. When the agents took us out to the yard, they touched her buttocks and said to her ‘Why did you go into the street to protest? You should be caressed and kissed.’ They used to verbally harass her a lot. Once, when an agent touched her buttocks and she swore at him, they beat her up so much that we basically witnessed her corpse. When we tried to defend her, they beat us too. She described to me that, when she was arrested by the Basijis and Revolutionary Guards, they touched her buttocks, pulled down her trousers and sexually assaulted her. They might have even raped her, but she did not say anything, perhaps out of shame. When she was speaking to her family on the phone, she pleaded with

them to get her out and said ‘The agents have done things to me that you would not believe’. Every time we were talking about what they had done to her, she would break down and cry.

From the detention centre of the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards, they took me to another detention centre that was overcrowded and was holding 200-300 people in a place built for 100 people. The situation there was terrible. The detainees had many injuries, broken arms and legs, one person’s eye had exploded but they refused to give anyone medical treatment. I lost nearly a third of my body weight in detention. They gave food that would be enough for 10 people to 30 of us. There, they forced me to take some pills that made me dizzy, sleepy and disorientated. I was sleeping all the time.

After about 15 days, they took me to the Revolutionary Guards detention centre again for interrogations. They made me listen to the sounds of people screaming as if they were being tortured. I’m sure it was a recording because it sounded like it was being repeated. They wanted to force me to make forced confessions in front of a video camera, otherwise they threatened that they would arrest my family members. When I refused, they beat me and arrested several of my relatives. They said ‘It doesn’t matter if you die. They swore about Mahsa Amini and said ‘Mahsa Amini caused all of this. So what if a person dies? It will mean there will be one less of these disgusting people.’

After I was released, I was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for several weeks.”

7.3 EXTRACTION OF FORCED “CONFESSIONS”

Amnesty International found that the ordeal of people arrested in the context of the protests often began with acts of torture, including sexual violence, that aimed at inducing extreme pain, fear and helplessness and breaking their spirit and resistance. Once the victims were severely traumatized and disoriented after hours of torture, the intelligence and security agents tried to force them to make false incriminating “confessions”.

This phase typically involved abusive interrogations during which victims were asked to denounce themselves for participating in protests, removing their headscarves in the cases of women and girls, writing critical social media posts in support of protests, or communicating with media outlets outside Iran.

Survivors and their families told the organization that interrogators demanded detainees to make forced “confessions” in front of a video camera and/or sign and fingerprint “confession” papers, which were often pre-written by interrogators and detainees were not allowed to read them before signing. They said they were beaten if they refused or dared to request to read the statements before signing. They were also threatened with the arrest of their family members if they refused. In the case of one survivor of sexual violence, Kambiz, the security forces carried out these threats.¹⁴⁵

Additionally, some detainees were forced into making false “confessions”, including fabricated claims that they engaged in arson or vandalism, possessed firearms, fired live ammunition at civilians or security personnel, murdered members of the security forces.¹⁴⁶ In some cases, security and intelligence agents threatened to use these forced “confessions” to prosecute survivors if, following their release, they made complaints about their torture or other ill-treatment or took part in further protests. In other cases, their forced statements were used as “evidence” in sham trials and formed the basis of their convictions on bogus national security or other spurious charges.

In many cases documented by Amnesty International, interrogations were accompanied by further torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, as well as psychological manipulation and promises of relief from further torture in exchange for the desired “confessions”.

The mother of Kian, a schoolboy who was arrested in the context of the protests by the Revolutionary Guards, told Amnesty International that he was forced to give “confessions” incriminating himself after he was raped.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ See the case of Kambiz in section 7.2.

¹⁴⁶ See the cases of Ebrahim Narouie, Javad Rouhi in section, Mansour Dahmardeh, and Mehdi Mohammadifard in Chapter 8 “Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence”.

¹⁴⁷ For further details about the case of Kian, see section 5.3.5.

A protester, Hossein, who was arrested by plainclothes agents told Amnesty International that he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre to make forced “confessions”. He said:

“They removed my clothes except for my underwear. They turned on the cooler and then sprayed water on my body. I was freezing and they told me they would only stop if I made forced confessions and said whatever they wanted me to say.”

“THEY STRIPPED ME NAKED AS SOON AS I GOT INTO THE DETENTION CENTRE. THEY EVEN REMOVED MY UNDERWEAR.”

Jamshid, another male survivor arbitrarily arrested in the context of the protests, told Amnesty International how security forces subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment including sexual violence to force him to make “confessions”. He reported that he was given electric shocks to his testicles and threatened with rape if he did not falsely admit to all the allegations they made against him. He reported:

“I was arrested by plain-clothes members of the security forces who were armed. They beat me, blindfolded me, handcuffed me from the back, and then put me into the boot of a car. They took me to the prosecutor’s office where the prosecution official, without even asking me anything, told me to ‘get lost’ and to leave the room. I told him that he was supposed to ask me questions, but he just told me to ‘get lost’ again.

The agents blindfolded and handcuffed me again and took me from the prosecutor’s office to the car. They shoved me in the back seat of the car, pushing my head down into the back of the front seat. They took me somewhere which I believe was a mosque because the sound of the Azan (call for prayer) was very loud and close.

There, they delivered me to another set of agents. They stripped me naked as soon as I got into the detention centre. They even removed my underwear. The agents put me into a small room. One agent took my fingerprints and interrogated me. They beat me so severely that I lost consciousness twice in two days. They slapped me, punched me, hit me with a baton on my head, causing my skin to break in multiple places, and gave me electric shocks.

They wanted the pin number to my phone, so they beat me for it. They asked if I knew a specific man and when I replied ‘no’ they beat me and said that I had to say I knew him. They asked me if I knew a specific woman, I replied ‘no’. They asked me what contact I had with anyone outside Iran, I said ‘none’. They beat me and told me that I had to say ‘yes’ to everything.

I was blindfolded and had my hands cuffed behind my back during this whole time. They gave electric shocks to my neck and testicles. They threatened that if I did not cooperate they would rape me with batons and bottles.”

“THE ENTIRE TIME I WAS IN DETENTION...IT WAS HUMILIATION, SEXUAL INSULTS AND PRESSURE TO MAKE FORCED CONFESSIONS.”

Erfan, who was arbitrarily arrested by plainclothes agents during a protest, told Amnesty International that Ministry of Intelligence agents subjected him and others detained alongside him to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, to punish and humiliate them and to elicit forced “confessions”. He told the organization of his seven-hour ordeal which involved abusive interrogations conducted without access to a lawyer:

“I was at a protest when, suddenly, from within the crowd, an agent wearing plain clothes grabbed me and dragged me into a side road. I recognised him from earlier in the protest. He and several other agents were beating me when some protesters saw me and tried to help. I got up and ran away but then another group of security forces caught me and beat me. Some of them were wearing plain clothes while others were in regular police uniforms or those belonging to the Special Forces of the police [*yegan-e vijeh*]. One of them took out a baton and started beating me on the head. I fell to the ground; 20-30 members of the security forces surrounded me, kicking and punching me. One of them kicked me between my legs. They handed me over to

that first group of plain-clothes agents, who started beating me, then tore my shirt and pulled it over my head. I couldn't breathe and I was afraid that I was going to die right there.

The agents handcuffed my hands behind my back, blindfolded me, and took me on a motorbike to a petrol station where I was put on the ground and held briefly with some other detained protesters. There, one agent threw liquid on my back and told me that it was petrol and that they were going to set me on fire.

The agents handed us over to the Ministry of Intelligence whose [agents] put us inside their van. In the van, they beat and struck my neck so much that I couldn't even lift my neck. I realized that the skin on my head was ripped off and I was bleeding. I told them that my head was broken and I had severe nausea, but they shouted at me and insulted me, saying that I was pretending to be sick.

I could see a little from under my blindfold and saw some children in the van. There were six male detainees and two female detainees. I was the oldest one. All the others were aged between 15 years old and 20 years old. They took us to a detention centre. There was also a [conscript] soldier there.¹⁴⁸ It could have been a prison because we could hear prisoners chanting near us. After about 30 minutes, a female agent came and took the women detainees.

Inside the detention place, I could see from under my blindfold. They had tied some peoples' wrists so tight that they were crying. The agents made us sit in front of a wall and interrogated us, asking questions such as whether we were at the protests, how many mobile phones we have and whether we have Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp and Twitter, among other questions about our families. I told them I was not at the protests, and they punched me in the mouth and kicked me in the chest.

They interrogated us three times during the seven hours I was held in the detention centre. It was as if they were carrying out three different types of interrogations or the interrogations had three distinct parts – one part by the Ministry of Intelligence, a second part by the prison, and a third part by the prosecutor. This is what it felt like to me... They interrogated us alongside each other and in different places within the detention centre, including once in the corridor. In the interrogation corridor, they would kick us. There were people sitting on both sides of the corridor. When the agents would walk past, they would kick us... In the middle of the interrogation in the corridor, another group of agents came. They would ask the very young detainees 'Do you think Mahsa Amini was abused?' They insulted her with vulgar words.

If someone wanted to go to the toilet, the agents would take them, point a gun at them and tell them 'If you move I will shoot you with a bullet. Finish up so we can go'.

There was a boy who the agents kept throwing around this way and that way towards walls and doors. This child was just 15 years old. We heard the interrogator, himself, say that he was 15 years old. There were 16- and 17-year-olds among the detainees too.

The agents took forced confessions from us. They removed our blindfolds, took pictures of us with our eyes closed, and told us we were not allowed to open our eyes. They forced us to sign and fingerprint documents. I don't know what I signed.

After the interrogation in the corridor, they took us to the yard and forced us to sit on the ground which was cold. Some of the detainees asked if they could stand because of the cold ground but the agents refused. At that point, one of the boys started crying.

At one point, I heard a commotion and tried to look from under my blindfold, but an agent came and kicked my chest.

They then transferred me and several other detainees from the yard into a van again. There were six of us male detainees. The agents told us they had photographs and videos of us and said we were not allowed to attend protests or to 'like' or 'follow' anyone on social media. They beat us with batons and gave us electric shocks. They ordered us to insult ourselves using sexual slurs. One agent asked us if we had engaged in sex work. When we didn't answer or our answer was short, they would give us electric shocks. There was a boy who was 15 or 16 years old who answered the question, but two or three of the agents still beat his head, chest

¹⁴⁸ Young men who reach the age of 18 must generally spend about two years of compulsory military service. In some cases, conscripts are assigned to work in prisons.

and stomach so severely that they, themselves, ran out of breath. They also beat him with batons and gave him electric shocks.

They released us one by one in the street. They took me on a bridge, gave me a couple of blows with a baton, and then threatened to throw me off the bridge, before releasing me.

The entire time I was in detention, from 8pm until 3am when they released us, it was humiliation, sexual insults, and pressure to make forced confessions.”

“THEY DID EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO GET A FORCED CONFESSION FROM ME.”

Teymour, who was arbitrarily arrested by plain-clothes agents in the context of the protests, told Amnesty International that he was subjected to nearly two weeks of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence such as touching his genitals and rape threats, while he was in the custody of the Ministry of Intelligence. He told Amnesty International how the torture was perpetrated to force him to make “confessions”:

“Two plain-clothes agents arrested me, blindfolded me, and forced me into their car. There were several agents inside car, including from the police; there was also a [conscript] soldier.¹⁴⁹ In the car, the agents punched me in my head and face, touched my genitals, used vulgar insults against me, and threatened to rape me. They wanted to scare me. They took me to a police station, and then inside an area within the station that was controlled by the Ministry of Intelligence. There were three interrogators and two were senior agents. They searched my phone and found some videos I had sent to media outlets outside Iran. They demanded to know why I had sent the videos, beat me, slammed my head against a table and threatened to [further] harm me. They struck my head with something, which ripped my skin. I think it was a baton.

For nearly one and a half hours in the detention place, they were beating me and wanted to force me to make confessions in writing. I refused to write anything on paper but they, themselves, wrote some false statements that had nothing to do with me, and forced me to sign and put my fingerprints on the papers. They accused me of receiving money from hostile media in exchange for the videos and demanded to know where the money was being kept. They demanded to know who my friends were and with whom I filmed the videos.

Then, they took me from the Ministry of Intelligence area of the police station to the main area of the police station again. The agents in the police station forced me to put my fingerprint on some more papers with written statements they had already prepared. They didn’t hit me, but they tried to scare and humiliate me by swearing at me, mocking me, and insulting me with vulgar words.

They kept me in a room overnight and didn’t let me call anyone. The next day, two agents took me to the prosecutor’s office. On the way, they warned me that I was not allowed to speak to anyone there. The prosecution official ordered my detention in prison, and that I be kept in the custody of the Ministry of Intelligence there. He asked me about what I had been accused of and I rejected the accusations. I showed him the torture marks on my body, but he said ‘No, these are not from last night. They are from an earlier time’. The agents there also told him that the marks were from prior to my detention. The prosecution official told me what my charges were and ordered me to sign a document.

From there, I was taken, while blindfolded, to prison, to a section therein that is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence. They took me to a solitary confinement cell where I was held for 24 hours a day for 12 days. There was a dirty blanket there which hadn’t been washed for 10 years. They never let me outside during that time for some air. They did not allow me to call my family. I was only allowed to call my family on the 13th day of my detention.

In the Ministry of Intelligence section, the agents would take me to another room for interrogations where they tried to get forced confessions from me because of the videos on my phone. They [again] asked me questions like who I had sent the videos to and how much money I had received. They demanded to know the password to

¹⁴⁹ Young men who reach the age of 18 must generally spend about two years of compulsory military service in Iran. In some cases, conscripts are assigned to work for the various divisions of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country’s police force, and accompany police officers who carry out arrests.

an application on my phone and they beat me because I wouldn't give it to them. They would twist my fingers backwards and put pressure on them. They did everything they could to get a forced 'confession' from me.

They threatened me with death, the charge of *moharebeh* ("enmity against God") [which carries the death penalty], and imprisonment for 30 years if I refused to sign papers.

Every four or five days, a prosecution official would come and I had to sit in front of him and write what I had done. The agents tried to get a forced 'confession' but because I didn't write anything, they would give me electric shocks and beat me with batons right in front of the prosecution official. I saw the prosecution official three separate times. If I tried to look up to see the prosecutor, the agents would beat me and give me electric shocks to my torso, head and neck.

After 12 days, they put me in a section of the prison they called the 'political wing' which had 600 people there. They had cleared most of that wing for the protesters and, apart from about 10 people who had been there from before, everyone else was in detention in relation to the protests. There were not enough beds for the number of detainees and there were only about eight toilets and showers for all 600 people. The prison authorities did not give medical care to the detainees. There was a prison doctor but he made no difference. Even if someone was having a seizure or was dying, the doctor would just tell them 'You have a cold'. There was one detainee in a wheelchair with a broken ankle and elbow.

I was released on bail after about six weeks in detention."

8. SENTENCED TO DEATH AND EXECUTED AFTER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

“I swear to God I am innocent. I didn’t have any weapons on me. They [security forces] kept beating me and ordering me to say this weapon is mine...I told them I would say whatever they wanted, just please leave my family alone. I did whatever they wanted because of the torture.”

Protester Majid Kazemi, who was arbitrarily executed on 17 May 2023 following a grossly unfair trial amid torture allegations including rape threats which went unaddressed¹⁵⁰

Amnesty International documented the cases of five protesters, **Mansour Dahmardeh, Mehdi Mohammadifard, Ebrahim Narouie, Javad Rouhi, Majid Kazemi**, who were sentenced to death, including one who was subsequently arbitrarily executed, based on forced “confessions” obtained under acts of torture and other ill-treatment which included rape, rape threats and other forms of sexual violence.

Mansour Dahmardeh, from the oppressed Baluchi ethnic minority remains at risk of execution. Mehdi Mohammadifard’s death sentence was overturned and his case was sent to a lower court for retrial. Ebrahim Narouie, also from the Baluchi minority, had his death sentence overturned by the Supreme Court and was released on bail. Javad Rouhi died in custody in suspicious circumstances; and Majid Kazemi was arbitrarily executed.

All five men were sentenced to death after grossly unfair trials that bore no resemblance to legitimate judicial proceedings. Their right to a fair trial was flagrantly violated, including through the denial of access legal representation at the investigation phase of their cases and a lawyer of their choosing from the time of arrest and throughout trial and appeal proceedings; their right to protection from torture and other ill-treatment; their right not to incriminate themselves; their right to the presumption of innocence; their right to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention and to be tried by an independent, competent and impartial tribunal; and their right to a meaningful review of their cases by a higher court.

Amnesty International documented the case of 22-year-old Baluchi protester **Mansour Dahmardeh**, who has a disability that results in him suffering seizures, was forced to make “confessions” under torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings and sexual violence, resulting in a broken nose and teeth and hospitalisation

¹⁵⁰ For further details about the case of Majid Kazemi, see below.

for several days, according to a primary source.¹⁵¹ Until around mid-July 2023, he was also denied timely adequate medical care for a growth on his leg for which he needed urgent surgery. His family was forced to pay for the cost of his surgery, despite the authorities bearing responsibility for the medical care of prisoners under international law.¹⁵²

Revolutionary Guards agents arrested Mansour Dahmardeh in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan province, on 30 September 2022, several hours after he attended Friday prayers in the Great Mosalla of Zahedan, a large prayer site near the city's main mosque, and took part in a protest outside a nearby police station that was violently quashed by security forces. Following his arrest, he was held in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre in circumstances amounting to enforced disappearance. A primary source told the organization that, around January 2023, he was sentenced to death on the charge of "corruption on earth" (*efsad-e fel arz*) by a criminal court in Zahedan in relation to his participation in the protest and that his conviction is based entirely on his torture-tainted "confessions" of having thrown three stones and setting fire to a vehicle tyre during the protests. Amnesty International learned from a primary source that Mansour Dahmardeh has attempted suicide twice in prison using a fork, raising concerns about his mental health and further risks of self-harm. At the time of writing, he remained imprisoned in Zahedan prison, Sistan and Baluchestan province, and was at risk of execution.

Amnesty International also documented the cases of two **Mehdi Mohammadifard**, 19, and **Javad Rouhi**, 35, who were sentenced to death in Mazandaran province based on "confessions" extracted under torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence.¹⁵³ Mehdi Mohammadifard was sentenced to death twice and Javad Rouhi was sentenced to death three times.

Mehdi Mohammadifard was arrested in the early hours of 2 October 2022 after he had gone into hiding the previous day after being summoned for interrogation by the Revolutionary Guards in relation to his participation in protests in Noshahr, Mazandaran province. According to primary sources, during his arrest, agents severely beat him and pushed him to the ground, fracturing his nose. The organization learned that following his arrest, he was held for a week in solitary confinement in a cell infested with mice and cockroaches, and during this period, he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including through rape, severe beatings, and suspension upside down, to force him to make self-incriminating statements. The organization learned that, as a result of rape, he suffered anal injuries and rectal bleeding and was transferred on an emergency basis to a hospital outside prison. He was returned to detention the next day before he had recovered.

Revolutionary Guards agents arrested Javad Rouhi in a violent manner from the street in Noshahr, Mazandaran province, on 22 September 2022, after he was identified in a video that showed him dancing during protests a day earlier. The authorities subjected him to enforced disappearance by concealing his fate and whereabouts from his family for six weeks. During this time, he was held in solitary confinement in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre in Sari, Mazandaran province. According to primary sources, he was subjected to severe beatings and floggings, including on the soles of his feet and while being tied to a pole, given electric shocks with tasers, exposed to freezing temperatures, and subjected to sexual violence by having ice put on his testicles for 48 hours. Revolutionary Guards agents repeatedly pointed a gun to his head and threatened to shoot him if he did not make forced "confessions". Following his torture, Javad Rouhi developed urinary incontinence, digestive complications, mobility issues, speech impairment and sustained other injuries.

Mehdi Mohammadifard and Javad Rouhi were convicted in the same case and received two death sentences each in December 2022 on the charges of "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*) and "corruption on earth" (*efsad-e fel-arz*) in connection with their participation in protests in Noshahr. Javad Rouhi was also sentenced to death for "apostasy" based on his torture-tainted "confessions" that he burned a copy of the Quran. The Revolutionary Court in Sari, Mazandaran province, stated in its verdicts, which Amnesty International reviewed, that the young men incited widespread arson or vandalism by dancing, clapping, chanting or burning headscarves, all of which are peaceful acts protected under international law. For Javad Rouhi, the court solely relied on his torture-tainted "confessions" of forcibly entering and throwing items from inside a traffic police booth. The court also cited Javad Rouhi's "confessions" that he warned other protesters against entering the governor's office and claimed that this proved his "leadership". Javad Rouhi maintained in court that his participation in the protests was peaceful.

¹⁵¹ Amnesty International, "Iran: Four young Baluchi men at risk of execution" (Index: MDE 13/6524/2023), 13 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6524/2023/en/>.

¹⁵² "The provision of health care for prisoners is a State responsibility. Prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community, and should have access to necessary health-care services free of charge without discrimination on the grounds of their legal status" as per the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 24.

¹⁵³ Amnesty International, "Iran: Tortured protesters sentenced to death: Javad Rouhi, Mehdi Mohammadifard and Arshia Takdastan" (Index: MDE 13/6390/2023), 27 January 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6390/2023/en/>.

For Mehdi Mohammadifard, the prosecution similarly cited his forced “confessions” of setting fire to state buildings and a video clip purportedly showing him throwing Molotov cocktails into the traffic police booth. His lawyer stated in court that the clip did not prove that he provoked or participated in widespread arson and that his “confessions” were obtained under coercion.

In May 2023, their convictions and death sentences were overturned by the Supreme Court and sent back to a lower court for retrial. At the time of writing, Mehdi Mohammadifard was held in the central prison in Noshahr and his case remained pending before the lower court.

On 31 August 2023, Javad Rouhi died in custody under suspicious circumstances. On the same day, the judiciary’s news organization, Mizan News Agency, reported that he “died” after he suffered a seizure in Noshahr prison and was transferred to a hospital.¹⁵⁴ The report said that the authorities had launched an investigation to determine the cause of death. On 31 August and 1 September 2023, officials and state media released a flurry of statements and a propaganda video smearing him as a riot “leader” and a person with dependency on drugs in order to dehumanize him and evade any responsibility for his death. For example, on 1 September 2023, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting published a propaganda video which reported that, according to the medical clinic in Noshahr prison, Javad Rouhi had a history of using methadone prescribed by a doctor due to addiction.¹⁵⁵ Iranian authorities refused to conduct full, impartial and independent investigations into the causes and circumstances of his death in custody.

On 28 September 2023, human rights defender Atena Daemi published on X (formerly Twitter) handwritten notes that she said were written by Javad Rouhi from inside prison about the torture to which he was subjected in detention.¹⁵⁶ In the notes, he wrote:

“I was violently arrested at nine o'clock at night. I was beaten up until the morning. I had surgery on my back [last year] and was hospitalized...for four months...and under severe torture, including beatings, the wound from my surgery got opened up. Over the course of my detention, I spent 48 hours in hospital, the reason for which was torture and forced confessions. For three days and nights, they [agents] flogged the soles of my feet and beat them with batons. As a result of many blows to my feet, my right foot became paralyzed and numb.

Under torture, they forced a confession from me that I burned a Quran, insulted Islamic sanctities, and engaged in destruction, even though I did not do any of these things. The only reason I confessed to these things is because I felt forced to do so out of severe torture and fear for my life...Under this kind of severe torture, even the strongest and healthiest people in the world would be compelled to give a forced confession.”

Amnesty International has documented deaths in custody of scores of prisoners involving credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment, including the denial of access to healthcare, since 2010.¹⁵⁷

The organization documented the case of Baluchi protester **Ebrahim Narouie**, 26, whom interrogators subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, to extract forced “confessions”, according to a primary source.¹⁵⁸ Plainclothes agents arrested Ebrahim Narouie in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan province, on 3 October 2022 amid a wave of mass arrests in relation to the protests in Sistan and Baluchestan. The authorities refused to provide his family with any information about his fate and whereabouts for several weeks, despite their repeated requests, thereby subjecting him to enforced disappearance. He first called his family some three weeks after his arrest and told them he had been moved from an unknown location to Zahedan prison. While forcibly disappeared, his interrogators accused him of being a “leader” in the protests and of involvement in setting a bank on fire. According to a primary source, interrogators subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment, including through sticking needles into his genitals, to compel him to make forced “confessions” by signing and fingerprinting pre-written documents that incriminated him and reading the statements in front of a video camera. In December 2022, following a grossly unfair trial before a Revolutionary Court in Zahedan in which he was denied the right to legal representation, he was convicted of “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*) and sentenced to death. His

¹⁵⁴ Mizan Online News Agency, *جزئیات فوت جواد روحی در بیمارستان* [“The details of Javad Rouhi’s death in hospital”], 31 August 2023, <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4732291> (in Persian).

¹⁵⁵ Khabar Online, *گزارش جدید صداوسیما از ماجرای دستگیری، محاکمه و فوت جواد روحی* [“See the new report by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting on the arrest, trial and death of Javad Rouhi”], 1 September 2023, <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1808599/> (in Persian).

¹⁵⁶ Atena Daemi, X (formerly Twitter) post: *بخشی از نوشته های #جواد روحی درباره شکنجههایی که از لحظه بازداشت در جهت اخذ اعتراف اجباری از سوی مأموران* [“A part of #Javad_Rouhi’s writings in regard to the torture he endured by the Revolutionary Guards Agents, from the moment of arrest, in order for them to obtain a false confession”], 28 September 2023, <https://x.com/AtenaDaemi/status/1707290707059163480?s=20> (in Persian).

¹⁵⁷ Amnesty International, *Iran: In death’s waiting room: Deaths in custody following deliberate denial of medical care in Iran’s prisons* (Index: MDE 13/5447/2023), 12 April 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5447/2022/en/>.

¹⁵⁸ Amnesty International, “Iran: Four young Baluchi men at risk of execution” (Index: MDE 13/6524/2023), 13 March 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6524/2023/en/>.

conviction and sentence have since been overturned by the Supreme Court and sent back to a lower court for retrial. He was released on bail on 7 October 2023.

Amnesty International also documented the case of protester **Majid Kazemi**, who was arbitrarily executed on 17 May 2023 following a grossly unfair trial amid torture allegations including rape threats. He was executed along with two other men – Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi – after the three were sentenced to death in the same case. Majid Kazemi was arrested on 21 November 2022 in connection with the deaths of three members of the security forces Esfahan province, although he and the other two men were never charged with their deaths. The three men were put on trial before a Revolutionary Court in Esfahan province in December 2022 and January 2023. On 9 January 2023, the judiciary announced that they were sentenced to death on the charge of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) though “drawing a weapon”.¹⁵⁹

According to informed sources, the three men were subjected to torture while forcibly disappeared after arrest and forced to make incriminating statements, which formed the basis of the criminal case against them. An informed source told Amnesty International that interrogators suspended Majid Kazemi upside down and showed him a video of them torturing his brother, whom they had also detained to put pressure on him. They also subjected him to mock executions at least times by standing him on a chair and putting a rope around his neck, only to pull him down at the last moment.

In an audio message from inside prison that was published online on 13 January 2023, Majid Kazemi said that he had been forced to make “confessions” under torture and that interrogators had told him what to say during his trial. He said:

“They arrested and tortured me. I didn’t have a weapon, nor did I do anything. They kept beating me and saying ‘These weapons are yours’ and I said ‘Yes, these weapons are mine’. They beat me and told me I had to go and re-enact the crime scene and I said ‘I will do it’. They beat me and told me what to say in court and I said ‘I will do it’. I was constantly being tortured. I said all of this under torture.”¹⁶⁰

In another audio message from inside prison that was recorded in December 2022 and published online by a relative of Majid Kazemi, who is based outside Iran, on 14 May 2023, Majid Kazemi said that he was forced to make false self-incriminating statements after interrogators subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence and threats to harass his parents. He said:

“In court, I said I do not accept any of the charges against me. They gave me electric shocks in the car 100 times. I was constantly under torture. They threatened to hang me and two of my brothers – Hossein and Mehdi – together. They warned ‘Help your parents, otherwise we will not leave your mother alone.’ They tortured me psychologically and then they tortured me physically with electric shocks. They were killing me... They dislocated my shoulder and [put me on the ground, raised my legs in the air and flogged the soles of my feet].

They took me to a place without any cameras and said ‘Remove his trousers so we can rape him with batons’. I begged them not to do this to me. I said ‘I will take responsibility for whatever you say’.

I swear to God I didn’t do anything. They didn’t manage to capture the real culprit, so they got me instead. They asked me ‘Is this pistol and Kalashnikov yours?’ I said no. They beat me, so I said yes. They ordered me to say I had fired from this firearm. They beat me, so I said I fired from the firearm. They beat me again and told me what to say.

They threatened to execute my brothers Hossein and Mehdi... I told them I would say whatever they wanted, just please leave my family alone. I was under torture through all of this.

I’m a tradesman and have a coppersmith shop... I don’t have a criminal record either... There is CCTV and timestamps from that night. I was at work until 8:30pm... The day I was arrested I weighed 93 kilograms, the day I went to court I was 50 kilograms.

Who do I complaint to? Who should I tell what they have done to me?”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Mizan Online News Agency, *متهمان پرونده حادثه تروریستی محله خانه اصفهان صادر شد/ حکم اعدام برای 3 نفر از متهمان*, 9 January 2023, <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4586938> (in Persian).

¹⁶⁰ Instagram post, BBC Persian, 13 January 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CnXR-2i07H0>

¹⁶¹ Mohammad Hashemi, X (formerly Twitter) post: «برم به کی بگم؟ به کی شکایت کنم؟ به کی بگم باهام چیکار کردن؟» [“Who do I complain to? Who do I tell what they have done to me?”], 14 May 2023, <https://x.com/FreeMajidKazemi/status/1657698293068218368> (in Persian).

On 25 January 2023, in response to the publication of Majid Kazemi's first audio recording and the global criticism of the Iranian authorities' arbitrary execution of protesters, state media published a propaganda video showing Majid Kazemi re-enacting the crime scene and stating:

“They did not touch us. I have a problem with my stomach ache and they gave me a tablet. Their food was good. They looked after us well. There were no beatings. There was no torture.”¹⁶²

The Iranian authorities have a well-documented history of forcing torture victims and/or their families to repeat official state narratives under coercive conditions.¹⁶³

According to an informed source, after Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were sentenced to death, the authorities told the men's families that they would be pardoned and released due to lack of evidence. However, on 10 May 2023, despite due process violations, significant procedural flaws, lack of evidence, and torture allegations that were never investigated, the authorities announced that the convictions and sentences of Majid Kazemi and the other two men had been upheld by the Supreme Court.

In all of the death penalty cases documented by Amnesty International in this report, the charges carrying the death penalty involve no accusations of intentional killing and stem from acts which are either protected under the right to freedom of expression in international law or which are described as vandalism, destruction of public and/or private property, arson, stone-throwing, disturbing public order, or carrying a weapon. Imposing death sentences for such acts flagrantly violates the right to life under international law, which prohibits the death penalty for crimes that do not involve intentional killing.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution; because the death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

¹⁶² Fars News Agency, ماجرای شکنجه متهم حادثه تروریستی اصفهان چه بود؟, 25 January 2023, <https://www.farsnews.ir/media/14011105000483/> (in Persian).

¹⁶³ Amnesty International, *Iran: ‘They shot our children’: Killings of minors in Iran’s November 2019 protests* (Index: MDE 13/1894/2020), 4 March 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Leaked official documents ordering deadly crackdown highlight need for international action” (Index: MDE 13/6070/2022), 30 September 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6070/2022/en/>, p. 5.

9. LONG-TERM IMPACT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON SURVIVORS

“I feel destroyed. I have wanted to kill myself many times.”

Maryam, a survivor who was gang raped by Revolutionary Guards agents in detention.¹⁶⁴

For the past year, while the perpetrators who committed rape and other forms of sexual violence against the survivors whose cases Amnesty International documented in this report enjoyed total impunity, survivors have lived under the shadow of the crimes inflicted upon them and continue to suffer from deep and long-lasting impact of sexual violence on their mental and physical health.

Months after their horrific ordeals, all the women, men and child survivors reported that they continued to deal with the physical and psychological traumas of the rape and other forms of sexual violence they suffered at the hands of intelligence and security forces. The organization found that stigma and feelings of shame, as well as threats by intelligence and security forces to stay silent, stopped some survivors from speaking out to their families about the sexual violence they faced or from seeking medical treatment, including for injuries sustained from rape, exacerbating their physical and mental trauma.

9.1 LONG-TERM PHYSICAL IMPACT

In the course of its research for this report, Amnesty International found that intelligence and security forces routinely denied survivors medical care in detention for injuries and other physical harm sustained as a result of rape and/or other forms of sexual violence, including for lacerations to skin and genital areas, vaginal and rectal bleeding, and infections. This caused survivors immense and, in some cases, chronic physical pain, and has led to long-term physical problems requiring medical care. Survivors told Amnesty International that, months after their releases, they have continued to suffer from pain, bleeding, incontinence, digestive and intestinal problems.

In the days, weeks and months after their release from detention, some survivors were forced to seek medical care and treatment for injuries and other physical effects of rape and other forms of sexual violence including testing for sexually transmitted infections, treating kidney and urinary tract infections, prostate

¹⁶⁴ For further details about the case of Maryam, see section 5.2.1.

exams, surgeries for vaginal and anal tears, and hymen reconstruction surgeries for women. Some women were forced to take emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy.

Survivors told Amnesty International that they felt frightened and ashamed about seeking medical care. Fearing stigma and violence from others, including male family members, or reprisals from the authorities if discovered, some victims did not seek medical care at all, while others sought medical treatment in other provinces, far from their homes, or informal care from family friends who are medical professionals.

Female survivors traumatised by rape and other forms of sexual violence were forced to navigate the urgent and ongoing need for medical care alongside the social repercussions of revealing the sexual violence, which involved deep feelings of shame, humiliation, anxiety and stress. These stemmed from cultural expectations around virginity for unmarried girls and women and no relations outside of wedlock for married women, as well as pervasive harmful sexist views that blame women and girls rather than perpetrators for experiencing sexual violence.

Maryam¹⁶⁵ described to Amnesty International her serious health problems stemming from her gang rape by three Revolutionary Guards agents and the medical care she needed to her physical injuries:

“I feel destroyed. At first, I did not tell anyone, except my mother. I have a fiancé and I think if he found out, he would leave me. I have wanted to commit suicide many times to relieve myself from this torment, but I could not do it. I have suffered severe kidney and urinary tract infections. I have had surgeries to restore my hymen and repair tears in my vagina.”

Male survivors told Amnesty International that they found it difficult to reveal or discuss their experiences of rape and other forms of sexual violence because of harmful gendered stereotypes around masculinity that emphasize strength and dominance and stigmatize male vulnerability. Some also expressed fears that disclosing the sexual violence may lead to assumptions about their sexual orientation, fears which stem from widespread homophobic attitudes within Iranian society where being homosexual or being perceived as homosexual is stigmatized and same-sex sexual conduct is criminalized. As a result, male rape survivors who presented themselves for medical treatment did not disclose their rape and often did not return for diagnostic testing that was recommended by their doctors out of fear and shame.

Kamal, a protester who was raped with batons in detention, told Amnesty International of the ongoing physical consequences of his ordeal, which compound his emotional distress:

“Psychologically, I feel destroyed. I am working on improving my mental health. I stay home a lot. Physically, I have digestive and intestinal problems. As a result of rape, I have had diarrhoea for many months now. I cannot be too far away from my home or my workplace because I feel the pressure and I have to get myself to a toilet. I was scared, I was embarrassed. Even many months after the torture, I am still suffering.”¹⁶⁶

9.2 LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

Survivors, their families, and mental health professionals told Amnesty International that survivors have been left with post-traumatic stress disorder and have experienced severe fear, anxiety and depression. Survivors told Amnesty International that they suffer from nightmares, insomnia, flashbacks and panic attacks. Several survivors, particularly those subjected to rape, reported being too scared to leave their homes, fearing that they will be rearrested and subjected to further rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Survivors told the organization that they feared seeking health care for mental health concerns because they were afraid that health care providers would report them to the authorities which they were terrified would lead to their arrest. One rape survivor, Farzad, told the organization that he could not trust mental health providers in Iran because he feared that, among them, there could be informants working with the authorities, including members of the intelligence and security forces.

The reluctance to seeking mental health locally led some of the survivors to seek trauma therapy from professionals outside Iran.

¹⁶⁵ For details about the case of Maryam, see section 5.2.1.

¹⁶⁶ For details about the case of Kamal, see section 5.3.1.

Some survivors did seek mental health care inside Iran including Kambiz, who told the organization that he was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for weeks after his release because he was so traumatised by the crimes perpetrated against him.¹⁶⁷

The impact of rape and other forms of sexual violence has been particularly severe on children. The five child survivors whose cases Amnesty International documented have been unable to focus on their education, and one teenage girl, Zeynab, who was raped suffered from bed-wetting at night for months after.¹⁶⁸

Survivors told Amnesty International that they have had suicidal thoughts and they know of others who also have suicidal thoughts or have engaged in acts of self-harm or tried to commit suicide after their sexual violence.

A primary source told the organization that Mansour Dahmardeh,¹⁶⁹ who was subjected to sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment by Revolutionary Guards agents, attempted suicide twice in detention. The mother of Kian, a teenage schoolchild and protester, who was raped in Revolutionary Guards detention centre told the organization that he tried to take his own life on two occasions in detention.¹⁷⁰

Omid, a protester who was arrested by members of the paramilitary Basij force during protests and subjected to four hours of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, in a Basij base (*payegah-e basij*) told Amnesty International about the long-term psychological impact the torture had on him:

“Those four hours alone destroyed me so much mentally that I still cannot forget what happened. It is so difficult and, even explaining it now, is making my hands shake. But we still have not given up, we keep coming to the streets.

In Iran, we have no human rights ... We are not living in Iran. We are just existing. Our situation is extremely difficult. We are fighting with our hearts and lives. We are not equal to our enemy. They have everything. We have nothing.”

The traumatic ordeal of some women and girl survivors of rape has also, in some cases, been compounded by threats of violence from male relatives, underpinned by harmful patriarchal notions and stereotypes around women’s and girls’ “honour”. A mental health professional who treated teenage rape survivor, Zeynab, told Amnesty International:

“Even months after the rape, she is suffering from depression. She is afraid of everyone. She is even afraid to go to her grandmother’s house because she is terrified that, the moment she leaves her home, the same thing will happen to her again. She is even afraid of her father because he was very angry with her for being raped and threatened to kill her. This fear and anxiety are always with her.”

In another case documented by the organization, the husband of one rape survivor threatened to report her to the authorities for “adultery,” which is punishable by the death penalty for married persons under Iran’s Islamic Penal Code.

Omid, a protester who was subjected to sexual violence in a Basij base (*payegah-e basij*), told Amnesty International that his friend, who was detained in the same facility, was subjected to rape and underwent profound psychological changes as a result. He stated:

“After I was released I asked my friend who had also been arrested but remained [in the detention centre] after my release if there was any rape and he said ‘yes’. He told me he was raped. When I asked him how the rape took place, he told me not to question him about it because he did not want to remember. He said he has nightmares about it every night and wants to drive it out from his mind because he cannot relive it. The guy I used to know who was full of energy is now a mouse. He does not leave his house. He does not reply to my messages and calls. He has retreated into himself and is completely isolating himself from others.”

¹⁶⁷ For details of the case of Kambiz, see section 7.2.

¹⁶⁸ For details about the case of Zeynab, see section 5.3.4.

¹⁶⁹ For details about the case of Mansour Dahmardeh, see Chapter 8 “Sentenced to death and executed after sexual violence”.

¹⁷⁰ For details about the case of Omid, see section 5.5.

For many survivors, the physical and psychological impact of their traumas were intertwined. However, while some of the physical effects healed, the psychological wounds last longer, causing extreme anguish and distress.

“I HAVE NIGHTMARES EVERY NIGHT THAT I AM IN PRISON AND SOMEONE IS RAPING ME.”

Farzad,¹⁷¹ a protester who was gang raped by multiple plain-clothes agents suffered many months of physical pain as a result of the rape and other forms of torture to which he was subjected. He told the organization of his severe sense of distress, shame and disgust with himself and his body after what he endured and that he still experiences suicidal thoughts. Additionally, he revealed that a friend of his committed suicide just several days after being released from detention and said that he ruminates on whether he had also been tortured through rape or other forms of sexual violence and whether this was the reason he took his own life. Farzad said that these thoughts about his friend cause him great distress. He told Amnesty International:

“They hit my head so much with a baton that I get constant headaches now. I suffer with a lot of pain in my rectum and I still don’t know what’s wrong with me. It’s difficult for me to go to the toilet. For the past several months, I have been eating soup and rice pudding because of my teeth. Recently, I have been dreaming about being able to eat rice.

It is so difficult for a grown man. When I go to the toilet, I turn on the water so that I clean myself with the water and don’t have to touch myself to get clean. I haven’t touched myself since I was raped. I can feel the rape every day. I have nightmares every night that I am in prison and someone is raping me. When I wake up and realise I’m home, I feel relief. I take a heavy dose of sleeping pills so that I can sleep and forget what happened, but I can’t forget. I’m scared to go outside my home in case I’m arrested again. If the doorbell rings, I shake with fear and tell my family not to open the door. I have no life anymore. I can’t go to work anymore. I just want to sit home and cry.

I don’t like talking to people about this. People treat it as a joke and say ‘You’re not a girl so you shouldn’t feel ashamed about it, and nobody has found out you were raped, so your reputation is not ruined’. I tell them that it doesn’t matter that nobody has found out. I, myself, know I was raped.

Every time I walk past the mirror at home, I stand in front of it for a few minutes and wonder if this is me. I want to kill myself so I can be free. I don’t have what it takes to deal with what happened to me. What do I want this kind of life for? I just want to die. What kind of life is this? Sometimes I cry so much that I get a headache. I wanted to commit suicide last night but I felt sorry for my family.”

¹⁷¹ For further details about the case of Farzad, see section 5.2.3

10. CRISIS OF IMPUNITY

“You cannot take a complaint anywhere. When they [Revolutionary Guards] released me, they told me that if I went to court to complain...they would kill me. I told the prosecution official that I had been tortured. He paid no attention to this...The Revolutionary Guards ordered me to withdraw my complaint, otherwise they threatened they would kill me and harm my family.”

Kamal, who was subjected to rape and other torture and ill-treatment in a detention centre belonging to the Revolutionary guards.

A crisis of impunity has long prevailed in Iran. Consistent with their appalling long-standing record, the Iranian authorities have refused to conduct any prompt, independent and effective investigations, in line with the Istanbul Protocol, into crimes under international law and other gross human rights violations committed by intelligence and security forces against those detained during and in the aftermath of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising and to take any steps to hold suspects to account.¹⁷² As a result, not a single official has been investigated let alone tried and punished for sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment, even when complaints have been made by survivors.

The majority of survivors interviewed by Amnesty International for this report refrained from filing complaints after release, fearing further harm from the authorities and believing the judiciary to be a tool of repression rather than redress. Their fears were well justified as the judicial authorities have not only consistently dismissed or covered up evidence of torture, but also relied on torture-tainted “confessions” to unjustly prosecute and convict survivors.

Even when survivors filed complaints following their release, they were subjected to further human rights violations, instead of being granted justice, truth and reparation. Out of the 45 survivors whose cases were documented by Amnesty International, only three survivors raised formal complaints with the authorities after their release, namely with the police and prosecution authorities. Three survivors raised formal complaints, but were forced to withdraw or stopped pursuing them after repeated threats by security forces or months of

¹⁷² The Istanbul Protocol sets out international standards on how effective legal and medico-legal investigations into allegations of torture or ill-treatment should be conducted. The Istanbul Protocol contains a series of “Istanbul Principles”, which articulate minimum standards for State adherence to ensure the effective investigation and documentation of torture and other ill-treatment, which are further elaborated in the manual. The Istanbul Protocol and its Principles are routinely used as a point of reference for measuring the effectiveness of investigations into torture by the Committee against Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), 29 June 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/istanbul-protocol-manual-effective-0>

inaction by the prosecution. One of them was told by a high-ranking official that he mistook a body search for sexual violence.

As with many other past atrocities, the systemic impunity for the gross human rights violations committed in the context of the uprising has gone beyond a failure to investigate and ensure accountability. Indeed, the Iranian authorities have deliberately taken steps to cover up their crimes, including rape and other forms of sexual violence amounting to torture and other ill-treatment, perpetrated by state officials against detainees, and refused to cooperate with the UN Fact-Finding Mission's investigations into human rights violations committed in the context of the uprising, or grant its experts access to the country. They have also sought to deflect criticism and silence calls for accountability through the establishment of national non-judicial "fact-finding committees" that serve to facilitate the official campaign of denial, distortion and cover-up, providing a façade of legitimacy while effectively perpetuating a system of impunity.

10.1 PROSECUTION'S COMPLICITY IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER ACTS OF TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Prosecution authorities in Iran played a significant role in sustaining the machinery of torture and further entrenching the system of impunity. During the height of the repression between September and December 2022, when prosecution officials visited detention centres or questioned individuals arrested in the context of protests brought to prosecutors' offices from detention centres, they turned a blind eye to visible marks of torture, ignored detainees' complaints of torture, and refused to order investigations, thereby enabling the continuation of widespread torture. In the following months, the prosecutors became further complicit in the system's cycle of repression as they and judges used "confessions" which victims said were extracted through torture and other ill-treatment as evidence to secure unjust convictions and sentences.

A leaked official document¹⁷³ provides a further stark illustration of the prosecution authorities' active role in perpetuating impunity for sexual violence. The document, dated 13 October 2022, records that two young women made official complaints to the police that they were raped by two Revolutionary Guards agents who had arbitrarily arrested them during the height of the popular uprising in October 2022. The document shows that the agents admitted on record to engaging in sexual acts with the women, but claimed that the sexual acts were consensual and initiated by the two women in their custody. Despite this, the authorities deliberately decided not to register the women's complaints and engaged in cover-up. In the document, the Deputy Prosecutor of Tehran advised to classify the case as "completely secret" and suggested that it be gradually "closed over time by removing the suspects [from their positions] without mentioning the names of the law enforcement agencies involved."

10.1.1 DISMISSAL OF DETAINEES' COMPLAINTS

Amnesty International learned that complaints related to torture and other ill-treatment made by six survivors – a teenage boy named **Kian**, and five men named **Dariush**, **Farzad**, **Hesam**, **Kamal**, and **Teymour** – to prosecution authorities while they were in detention were summarily dismissed. Instead, prosecutorial officials systematically sided with intelligence and security bodies, failed to order investigations, prolonged detention orders, and, in two documented instance pertaining to Farzad and Teymour, subjected detainees to further ill-treatment, including death threats, directly, or were present as further torture was inflicted to extract forced "confessions".

In the case of schoolchild and protester, **Kian**, who was subjected to enforced disappearance and rape by agents in a Revolutionary Guards detention centre, a prosecution official ignored his complaint of torture, and claimed that there was no need for an investigation, citing his coerced "confessions". His mother told Amnesty International that her son courageously took the opportunity, while his torturers were not present, to tell a prosecution official that he was forced to make "confessions" under torture and other ill-treatment. She recounted how the official disregarded her son's complaint:

¹⁷³ Iran International, *معمور سیاه پاسداران به دو زن معترض بازداشتی*, [“Reporting on the rape of two detained female protestors by two Revolutionary Guard Agents”], 8 February 2023, <https://issuu.com/iranintnt/docs/805010496979> (in Persian).

“When my son was taken before a prosecutor, as there were no agents there at the time, he told the prosecutor that he made confessions under torture, but he didn’t tell him about the sexual torture. The prosecutor told him ‘You accepted the charge and said it was you’. He paid no attention to my son’s complaint.”¹⁷⁴

In the case of **Dariush**, who was subjected to sexual violence by agents from the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards, a prosecution official also dismissed his complaints of torture based on a document he was forced to sign under torture and other ill-treatment, declaring that he had not been harmed. Dariush told Amnesty International:

“After I was forced to sign a document prepared by the interrogators, the agents blindfolded me and took me to the office of the prosecutor. A prosecution official there told me to sign a document which contained the charges against me. I wrote on the document that I did not accept the charges and signed it. When he saw this, he got angry and told me I was going to be detained for another 10 days. I told him that I was violently arrested and beaten, which he dismissed, stating that I had signed a document saying I had not been harmed.”

In the case of **Farzad**, a protester who was gang raped by plainclothes agents, a prosecution official not only disregarded his complaint of torture, but also subjected him to further ill-treatment, including threats of execution, insults and shouting, to force him to sign documents. Farzad told Amnesty International that the abusive conduct of prosecution officials who visited a police station where he and other detainees were held was akin to the abusive behaviour of intelligence and security agents. He recounted:

“In the Agahi [detention centre belonging to the Investigation Unit of Iran’s police], they took me to a room before a prosecution official who was extremely rude, swore at me, and threatened that they would execute me. I was interrogated by a prosecution official and a plainclothes agent for 10 hours. They asked me questions like who I am affiliated with, where I get orders from, and whether Iran International [a UK-based Persian-language media outlet] coerced me to protest. They also asked me if I killed a member of the security forces and accused me of getting orders from outside Iran. They were shouting at me and the other detainees loudly during the interrogations and forced us to sign papers. I told the prosecution official that I had been tortured but he did not care at all.”¹⁷⁵

In the case of **Kamal**, a protester raped by the Revolutionary Guards, a prosecution official ignored visible marks of torture on his body when he removed his shirt to substantiate his complaint. In a flagrant violation of the duty to protect victims, the prosecution official permitted Revolutionary Guards agents to be present during questioning, and did not intervene when they ordered Kamal to cover up and told the official to disregard him. Kamal recounted the incident which took place when he was taken to the office of the prosecutor on the first night of his detention:

“They took us to the prosecutor’s office where I told a prosecution official that I had been tortured and that I was not physically well. I felt completely destroyed psychologically and I just wanted to die because of all the torture. I showed him my torture marks. I took off my top and told him I had been tortured, but the Revolutionary Guards agents demanded that I put my top back on and told the official not to pay any attention to me. The official showed no reaction to what I said about my torture. He just questioned me for an hour and then he ordered a month of detention in prison.”¹⁷⁶

In the case of **Hesam**, a prosecution official dismissed his complaint of being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, while in the custody of the Revolutionary Guards following his arbitrarily arrest in the context of protests, and told him that he deserved this treatment and further torture due to his participation in protests. Hesam told Amnesty International:

“I was arrested at night along with others with whom I had attended the protests several days earlier. The agents took me to a detention centre belonging to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards. There, agents severely tortured me, both physically and psychologically, through beatings, slapping, punching, kicking, and with batons and chains. They threatened to rape me and physically harm my family members. They did the same with the other detainees too, they beat all of us and threatened us all with rape.

¹⁷⁴ For further details about the case of Kian, see section 5.3.5.

¹⁷⁵ For further details about the case of Farzad, see section 5.2.3

¹⁷⁶ For further details about the case of Kamal, see 5.3.1.

That same night, they took me to the office of the prosecutor. I complained to the prosecution official and said that I had been tortured, but he showed no reaction. All he did was ask me questions about my participation in the protests and said ‘You disturbed the city and they [agents] should have tortured you even worse than this’.”

In the case of **Teymour**, a protester subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, while in the custody of the Ministry of Intelligence, prosecution officials ignored visible marks of torture that he brought to their attention and failed to act when he was tortured in front of them. Teymour told Amnesty International that when he was taken before a prosecution office on the second day of his detention, he showed the torture marks on his body to a prosecutorial official but said that the official reiterated claims of Ministry of Intelligence agents that the marks were sustained prior to his detention. He told the organization that a prosecution official questioned him at his second place of detention on three occasions in the presence of Ministry of Intelligence agents but failed to intervene as the agents tortured him through beatings and electric shocks to extract forced “confessions”. He recounted his ordeal to the organization:

“The next day after my arrest, two agents took me from the Ministry of Intelligence detention place inside the police station to the prosecutor’s office. On the way, the agents warned me that I was not allowed to speak to anyone there. The prosecution official ordered my detention in prison, and that I be kept in the custody of the Ministry of Intelligence. He asked me about what I had been accused of and I rejected the accusations. I showed him the torture marks on my body, but he said ‘No, these are not from last night. They are from an earlier time’. The agents there also told him that the marks were from earlier. The prosecution official told me what my charges were and ordered me to sign.

From the prosecutor’s office, I was transferred to the Ministry of Intelligence section of the prison. Every four or five days, a prosecution official would come to the prison and I had to sit in front of him and write what I had done. The agents tried to get a forced confession but because I didn’t write anything, they would give me electric shocks and beat me with batons right in front of the prosecution official. I saw the prosecution official three separate times. If I tried to look up to see him, the agents would beat me and give me electric shocks to my torso, head and neck.”¹⁷⁷

10.1.2 COVER UP OF RAPE COMPLAINTS

The prosecution authorities’ complicity in torture, including rape and other sexual violence, was not limited to denying justice to individuals still in detention but expanded to covering up formal complaints of survivors following their release. A leaked official document contains damning evidence indicating that prosecution authorities in Tehran covered up two formal complaints of rape made by two women survivors following their release from detention.¹⁷⁸

The eight-page document, dated 13 October 2022 and published by Iran International, a Persian-language media outlet based outside Iran, on 8 February 2023, was written by Mohammad Shahriari, the Deputy Prosecutor of Tehran and addressed to his superior, Ali Salehi, the Prosecutor of Tehran. In the document, Mohammad Shahriari informs Ali Salehi that two young women, aged 18 and 23, had reported to a police station in Tehran that two Revolutionary Guards agents raped them inside a van after arbitrarily arresting them in the context of the protests at 8pm on 3 October 2022. The document names the two agents as Alireza Hosseini Hagh, a captain (*sarvan*) and intelligence official (*masoul ettela’t*)¹⁷⁹ at the Imam Hassan Mojtaba Unit (*yegan*) of the Revolutionary Guards,¹⁸⁰ and Alireza Sadeghi, a Revolutionary Guards agent.

¹⁷⁷ For further details about the case of Teymour, see section 7.3.

¹⁷⁸ Iran International, *روایت تجاوز دو مأمور سپاه پاسداران به دو زن معترض بازداشتی*, 8 February 2023, <https://issuu.com/iranintl/docs/805010496979> (in Persian).

¹⁷⁹ The intelligence officials (*masoul ettela’t*) of Revolutionary Guards security units (*yegan-e amniati*) typically report to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards, which is a major security and intelligence entity in Iran operating alongside the Ministry of Intelligence. The head of the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards is appointed by the Revolutionary Guards’ Commander in Chief, with the approval of the Supreme Leader.

¹⁸⁰ According to official statements, the Imam Hassan Mojtaba Unit is among the Revolutionary Guards security units (*yegan-e amniati*) of Mohammad Rasoulollah Revolutionary Guards Corps in Tehran, which is responsible for ensuring “security” in the city of Greater Tehran. See Donya-e Eqtesad, *اشراف اطلاعاتی سپاه در سطح تهران* [“The Revolutionary Guards’ intelligence oversight in Tehran”], 25 May 2013, <https://donya-e-egtesad.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-62/2724697-%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%B7%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86> (in Persian); Tabnak, *در مورد سپاه محمد*, <https://www.tabnak.ir/fa/tags/263392/1/%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%84%E2%80%8C%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87> (in Persian).

The document starts with Mohammad Shahriari stating that according to a report received from the Intelligence Protection of the Law Enforcement Command of Greater Tehran (known by its Persian acronym *HEFA FATEB*)¹⁸¹, “two women went to police station stating that they were kidnapped by several individuals wearing security forces’ uniforms during recent riots.” The document further indicates, in its introductory paragraphs, that the women “were directed to the HEFA FATEB and no complaint was registered.” The document states that the matter was then brought before Mohammad Shahriari, but does not clarify the chain of events leading to this.

According to the document, one of the aforementioned individuals, Alireza Sadeghi, was subsequently identified and arrested at his home following “intelligence reviews” and given that “after committing rape inside the van, he saved the phone number of the complainant [name redacted] on his phone and called her the next day and the complainant recorded the accused’s voice”. The document indicates that the arrest was carried out by the “operational team” of HEFA FATEB pursuant to a “judicial order”. The document does not specify which authority issued the order. According to the document, Alireza Sadeghi was taken to a detention centre belonging to the Intelligence Protection Organization of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (*SAHEFA FARAJA*).¹⁸² The document adds that officials found and seized a significant amount of batons, ammunition, bulletproof vests, two-way radios, handcuffs, drugs, uniforms of the police, the Revolutionary Guards and the paramilitary Basij force, and identification documents for the police, Revolutionary Guards, the judiciary and others.

The document records statements made by the two agents in relation to the incidents.

As recorded in the document, Alireza Sadeghi stated that he and multiple teams of Revolutionary Guards security units (*yegan-e amniati*) stopped three “suspects” - two women and one man - in a petrol station and put them in a van. He did not specify the reasons for or nature of their initial suspicion. He said agents subsequently searched the phones of the two women, and after finding content that was “hostile to the Islamic Republic”, they transferred them, along with several other individuals arrested, “into the custody of the Revolutionary Guards of Tehran”. Subsequently, the Revolutionary Guards intelligence official in charge¹⁸³ said that admission of female detainees was not possible and instructed that they release them.¹⁸⁴ According to the document, Alireza Sadeghi said that while transferring the women detainees in the van to another part of Tehran to release them, one of the women “stated that she was not a virgin and made a suggestion of sexual relations to me. I got tempted and after performing a *sigheh* [temporary marriage], I engaged in a sexual act with her”. Alireza Sadeghi added that at the time of the transfer, he was accompanied by three individuals whom he names, and that “there is a possibility that one of the aforesaid individuals had become intimate with the other female accused [the woman complainant]”.

In the case of Alireza Hosseini Hagh, the document indicates that he made two statements. In his first statement, Ali Hosseini is recorded as “having denied committing rape”. He stated that security forces became “suspicious” of the women and, upon searching their phones, found “criminal” material related to their participation in the protests. He stated that the agents arrested the women and transferred them “into the custody of Revolutionary Guards”, but were told to release them by the Revolutionary Guards intelligence official in charge whom Alireza Sadeghi had named. He then said that he, along with Alireza Sadeghi and several other agents, ultimately released the women in an area of Tehran.

However, in his second statement, Alireza Hosseini Hagh altered his claims about the incident. As recorded in the document, he claimed that the women were arrested after social media posts, messages, and videos containing “criminal” material were discovered on their phones, which indicated that they “took part in and led several people to attend the protests” as well as “a video they filmed of themselves half naked late at

¹⁸¹ For each security and intelligence body in Iran, there typically exists an affiliated counter-intelligence organization which operates under the command of the Office of the Supreme Leader. This organization is tasked with supervising and controlling intelligence, communications and documents related to the activities of the respective security and intelligence body as well as preventing espionage and sabotage while gathering intelligence. In the case of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (*FARAJA*), which is the country’s police force, the formal title of its respective counter-intelligence organization is the Intelligence Protection Organization of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym *SAHEFA FARAJA*). This counter-intelligence organization has operation units in cities and provinces throughout the country. The operational unit in Greater Tehran is called the Intelligence Protection of the Law Enforcement Command of Greater Tehran (known by its Persian acronym *HEFA FATEB*).

¹⁸² For more information on this organization, see the information cited in the preceding footnote.

¹⁸³ In two places in the document, this intelligence official is introduced by the name “Yekta”.

¹⁸⁴ The document does not specify the precise nature and location of where the women were taken. However, the agent, Alireza Hosseini Hagh, at one point uses the term “base” (*padegan*) in reference to the instruction from the intelligence official to “abandon the women somewhere outside the base”.

night in which they insulted the Supreme Leader and security forces". He further stated that, while they were transferring the women to the Revolutionary Guards detention centre in the van, he witnessed Ali Sadeghi sitting next to one of the women and, at one point, "standing with the front of his trousers lowered and the woman..." The document does not record how the sentence finished nor does it indicate whether that was the end of the sentence. As noted above, when referring to the circumstances of Ali Sadeghi's arrest, the document states that he "committed rape". From the description of the scene, it appears that Alireza Sadeghi raped one of the detained women by forcing her to perform oral sex acts on him inside the van.

Next, the document records that Alireza Hosseini Hagh stated that the second woman detainee touched his upper thigh, begged him to release them and started to "stimulate" him. He said "Unfortunately, because I had not gone home for 16 days and had been on missions to combat rioters day and night, I got turned on and I gave her permission to undo the zip on my trousers and to..." In the document, the sentence abruptly ends at this point. As per the document, Alireza Hosseini Hagh then stated that, once the official in charge of the Revolutionary Guards detention centre told the agents that women could not be detained there and instructed them to release the women, he left while Alireza Sadeghi and two other agents put the women in the van and drove them elsewhere to release them. Alireza Hosseini Hagh adds that Alireza Sadeghi sat beside the two women in the van, while the other two agents occupied the front driver and passenger seats.

There are inconsistencies between the statements of Alireza Sadeghi and Alireza Hosseini Hagh regarding the timing of the reported incidents of sexual violence. Alireza Sadeghi mentions a single incident that took place after the instructions to release the women. In contrast, Alireza Hosseini Hagh mentions two incidents involving both himself and Alireza Sadeghi which occurred prior to transporting the women to the Revolutionary Guards detention centre where an official in charge ordered their release.

In an attempt to present the Revolutionary Guards agents as rogue actors and absolve official bodies of responsibility, in the outcome section of the document, Mohammad Shahriari stated that the agents had "formed a gang for extortion and kidnapping and carried out criminal acts". He added that "in discovered footage, they [are seen] as having established an independent detention centre and torturing people. Furthermore, they have subjected many individuals to extortion and have had extensive relationships with women and girls, aspects of which are under investigation".¹⁸⁵ The document indicates that the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards and the Intelligence Organization of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been assigned to carry out the investigation.

Shockingly, despite this conclusion as well as the two agents' acknowledgment of committing sexual acts which, in the case of at least one of the agents, Alireza Sadeghi, the Deputy Prosecutor referred to as "rape", Mohammad Shahriari requested at the end of his letter that "necessary orders" be issued to ensure that the case is filed away as "completely secret" to prevent its details from being leaked to the public. Furthermore, he advised taking action to eventually close the case without ensuring the rights of victims and the society as whole to truth and justice. He stated:

"Considering the sensitive nature of the case and the potential for information leakage to social media networks and the media, as well as for exploitation by hostile groups, it is recommended to issue the necessary orders to elevate the classification [of the case] to completely secret, and since there is no registered complaint, to close the case over time by removing the suspects [from their positions] without mentioning the names of the law enforcement agencies involved."

The document unequivocally shows how the Islamic Republic's suppression apparatus covers up complaints of rape and other forms of sexual violence by intelligence and security forces and refuses to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes, thus feeding into the machinery of systemic impunity.

There is no publicly available information on how the Prosecutor of Tehran responded to Mohammad Shahriari's letter and whether he adopted his recommendations or instructed an alternative course of action. Furthermore, it remains unclear if the agents were released from detention and whether they currently hold any positions in the security forces.

¹⁸⁵ Iran International, *روایت تجاوز دو مأمور سپاه پاسداران به دو زن معترض بازداشتی* ["Reporting on the rape of two detained female protestors by two Revolutionary Guard Agents"], 8 February 2023, <https://issuu.com/iranintl/docs/805010496979> (in Persian)

10.1.3 COMPLICITY IN REPRISALS AND FORCED WITHDRAWALS OF COMPLAINTS

According to international human rights law and standards, prosecution authorities are required to initiate, direct and supervise police investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment when information about such alleged crimes is available, even in the absence of formal complaints.¹⁸⁶ In Iran, however, prosecution authorities routinely dismiss or deny allegations of torture and other ill-treatment instead of investigating them. They take no action to protect survivors from reprisals by intelligence and security forces and instead, punish them for lodging complaints, which further entrenches impunity. They also permit reprisals to take place with impunity. When survivors consequently retract their complaints following reprisals, the prosecution authorities close the matter and presume that no crime has been committed.

The vast majority of survivors interviewed by Amnesty International for this report have been forced to stay silent and refrain from filing complaints after their release. Survivors told Amnesty International that they perceive the prosecution and judiciary as tools of repression rather than avenues for redress and fear that filing complaints could lead to further violations from the authorities.

Some of the 45 survivors whose cases were documented in detail by Amnesty International, said that they were explicitly threatened by intelligence and security forces while in detention. Agents warned them that if they revealed their ordeals to anyone and/or pursued truth, justice and reparation, the intelligence and security forces would kill or otherwise harm them and their loved ones.¹⁸⁷

The organization documented the cases of three survivors of sexual violence – two boys, **Afshin** and **Nader**, and a man, **Kamal** – who dared to seek justice following their release. None of the three complaints were promptly, independently and effectively investigated by the prosecution authorities and no officials were ever charged, let alone prosecuted.

Kamal, who survived rape, was ultimately forced to withdraw his complaint after Revolutionary Guards agents threatened to kill him and kidnap and forcibly disappear his family members.

In the case of Nader, instead of conducting independent criminal investigations into a formal complaint the family made in the days following his release, the prosecution authorities referred the complaint to an internal administrative investigation body within the police force that lacks independence and operates under the chief of police. The only action taken by the internal administrative investigation body was to reprimand the senior official from the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*), whom Nader identified as having perpetrated torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, against him. A senior police official¹⁸⁸ subsequently told Nader and his father that he mistook a body search for sexual assault. In violation of their right to privacy and the duty of the authorities to protect victims, they also failed to protect the identities of the complainants and safeguard them from reprisals.¹⁸⁹ This allowed the official whom Nader accused of subjecting him to sexual violence to confront his father in an intimidating when he arrived to collect his son's belongings and to question them about why they had filed a complaint. Nader and his family insisted on their right to justice through follow-ups with the prosecution authorities. However, they concluded that their search for justice from within the system was in vain after months of the prosecution authorities stalling the processing of Nader's complaint and refusing to answer any queries or provide any updates on the status of the complaint.

In the case of Afshin, his family lodged formal complaints with the police and sought a forensic examination from the authorities. No investigations are known to have taken place. Instead, the authorities attempted to absolve themselves of responsibility for Afshin's torture and blamed "rioters" whom they claimed were instigated by media outlets outside of Iran to carry out such acts. They also warned the family against "insulting" Basijis, which is how they characterized the complaint. Furthermore, they put the onus of investigating the complaint on the family, instructing them to gather the necessary evidence to identify the

¹⁸⁶ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), 29 June 2022, para. 138, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/istanbul-protocol-manual-effective-0>

¹⁸⁷ See the cases of Afshin in section 4.1, Dariush in section 6.3, Kamal in section 5.3.1, Kian, Farshad and Ahmad in section 5.3.5, Nader in section 5.5, Teymour in section 7.3, and Zeynab in section 5.3.4.

¹⁸⁸ The official's rank is on file with Amnesty International.

¹⁸⁹ According to the Istanbul Protocol, victims of torture or other ill-treatment and their families "must be protected from violence, threats of violence or any other form of intimidation or reprisals that may arise pursuant to the investigation. Those potentially implicated in torture or ill-treatment should be removed from any position of control or power, whether direct or indirect, over complainants, witnesses or their families, as well as those conducting the investigation." Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), 29 June 2022, para. 19, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/istanbul-protocol-manual-effective-0>

perpetrators themselves. Afshin's family members eventually lost hope and stopped pursuing the complaint, as the authorities refused to conduct investigations.

“THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS... ORDERED ME TO WITHDRAW MY COMPLAINT, OTHERWISE THEY THREATENED THAT THEY WOULD KILL ME.”

Kamal, a male rape survivor, who was arrested twice told Amnesty International that, after the second time he was released, he decided to lodge a verbal complaint at the office of the prosecutor about his torture and other ill-treatment, at the hands of Revolutionary Guards agents. He said that the prosecution official who registered his complaint appeared concerned and promised to follow up his case. However, shortly after, agents from the Revolutionary Guards contacted him and ordered him to withdraw his complaint, threatening to kill him and harm his family if he did not do so. He told the organization that he was ultimately forced to drop his complaint as a result. The prosecution authorities failed to keep his identity confidential, increasing his vulnerability to reprisals, to protect him from threats by security forces, and to act on information that he had shared about his torture. He told Amnesty International:

“After the second time I was detained, when the agents released me, they told me that if I went to court to complain or to hospital, they would kill me and that it would only cost 150,000 Iranian Rial (USD 0.30 cents) to have me killed. I live in a country where the price of life is 150,000 Iranian Rial (USD 0.30 cents).

You cannot take a complaint anywhere. I complained to the office of the prosecutor and said I was abducted. The authorities said they reviewed CCTV images, but the footage was corrupt. They destroyed the footage.

Following my complaint, the Revolutionary Guards called me and summoned me to the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards. They ordered me to withdraw my complaint, otherwise they threatened that they would kill me. They said, ‘We will not let you stay alive’. They made threats against my family, warning that they would kidnap them, and I would not see them again if I did not withdraw my complaint. I was forced to withdraw my complaint.”

“I STOPPED PURSUING THE COMPLAINT BECAUSE I REALISED THEY WERE JUST PLAYING WITH ME AND SENDING ME AROUND IN CIRCLES.”

Nader, a teenage schoolboy who was arbitrarily arrested in the context of the protests, and his father, recounted to Amnesty International their futile attempts to seek justice for the sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment to which he was subjected in a detention centre belonging to the Public Security Police (*police amniat- omoumi*). After months of follow-up insisting on his right to justice father and son realised that the authorities had no intention of properly investigating and holding those responsible to account.

Nader's father recounted how he and Nader were treated when they raised a complaint with the prosecution authorities:

“Nader was arrested by the Public Security Police (*police amniat-e omoumi*). Many people were arrested that night. When I went to the building of the Public Security Police, there were five or six vans in the area with detainees inside who had been arrested. The security forces had put the detainees' tops over their heads. I followed up with the police and explained that my son is under the care of a doctor and uses medication. They told me to go to the prosecutor's office the next morning. When I went to the prosecutor's office the next day, many other parents were also there... The officials there said that detainees were not being brought to the prosecutor's office and not to wait there.

I managed to learn the location of the police detention centre where my son was being held through a contact of mine and went there to give his medication. The authorities initially denied he was being held there. They eventually admitted he was there but threatened to keep him detained for a month and to open a case against me if I told anyone that he and other detainees were being held there. They took his medication but didn't give it to him. He was held there for two days and then called me in the middle of the night two days later to say he was coming home.

After my son was released, I went to the office of the prosecutor and registered a complaint about his arrest and torture in detention... The prosecutor wrote to the internal administrative investigation body of the police force and told me that the situation should be addressed within a week to 10 days and that I should return to him if the matter was not followed up by that time. I then went to the internal administrative investigation body myself where I also filed a copy of the complaint about the agent who sexually assaulted my son and talked to the official who was in charge.

When we went to get my son's belongings, which the authorities had confiscated upon arrest, my son saw the agent who sexually assaulted him and identified him to me. The agent had been informed of my name and the details of my complaint, so he confronted me in an intimidating manner and asked why I had made a complaint about him.

Next, a senior police official met with my son and tried to convince him that he had not been sexually assaulted. He told my son 'The agent didn't sexually assault you. He asked you to put your hands up and stand against a wall. He simply did a body search on you. You just mistakenly think that he sexually assaulted you'. My son said that wasn't the case and that he was sexually assaulted. They wanted to manipulate him.

Eventually, all the authorities did was to give the agent a verbal warning.

After months of trying further through the prosecution authorities, I stopped pursuing the complaint because I realised that they were just playing with me and sending me around in circles.

"THEY THREATENED THAT IF WE TOLD ANYONE ABOUT WHAT THEY DID TO US, THEY WOULD BRING US AGAIN AND DO EVEN WORSE TO US AND DELIVER OUR CORPSES TO OUR FAMILIES."

Afshin, a schoolboy, was arbitrarily detained alongside his friend by several members of the paramilitary Basij force. Afshin had bought crayons and spray paint and both boys were writing protest slogans including "Woman Life Freedom" on walls when they were arrested without any due process and taken to a warehouse in a remote location. There, the Basij agents subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment including sexual violence, through beating them with wooden sticks, batons and hosepipes. The agents took their home addresses, parents' phone numbers and other personal details, and threatened that if they told anyone about what happened, they would harm their parents and siblings. After nearly five hours of detention and beatings, the agents drove the boys to another remote location and abandoned them in an unconscious or semi-conscious state. Afshin recounted his ordeal to Amnesty International:

"The reason I decided to write slogans was because of the hardships faced by women and our society. When the Basij agents arrested us, my friend and I were writing slogans. I hadn't written very much. I wrote 'Woman Life Freedom'. Then, three agents came. Two of them were grabbing me, while the third one grabbed my friend. They were beating us on the head and telling us off. They swore at us by saying '*goh khordin*' [a violent derogatory colloquial term in Persian] and 'How dare you write slogans,' and accused us of setting fire to garbage bins.

In the car, they also hit me on the head. The agents who arrested me took me to a remote location, to a warehouse near a Basij base (*payegah-e Basij*). When they took us inside the warehouse, they interrogated us, confiscated our phones, gave us electric shocks, and beat us. They demanded to know our homes addresses, what school we attend, and threatened that if we told anyone about what they did to us, they would bring us again and do even worse to us and deliver our corpses to our parents. They beat me with batons on the soles of my feet, my feet and my back. My hands look crooked now when I look at them. They punched my legs with their hands. They hit my face with a gun and it was very painful. They hit my friend even worse than me. They hit him in his stomach with a baton. They forced us to keep our heads down and threatened to hit us if we opened our eyes.

When they put us in the car to take us to another deserted place, we were both lifeless. They told us to count to 100. I raised my head several times to try and find out where we were. I could hear what they were saying but I was semi-conscious, my head was spinning, and I was not feeling well. I had no idea where we were. After I counted to about 35, I told my friend to get up. I said they had dumped us in the middle of nowhere. My friend and I hugged each other and cried.

Since I was released, when it comes to studying and memorising things, I get headaches, my eyes burn, and I feel sick when I think too much.”

Afshin’s father told Amnesty International about the sexual violence perpetrated against his son. He also said that when he raised a complaint about his son’s arrest, torture and other ill-treatment with the police, they did nothing to investigate the complaint and, instead, sent him from pillar to post and told him to find the evidence needed to find the perpetrators himself. He recounted to the organization:

“When the agents arrested them and detained them in a warehouse in a remote area, they took forced confessions from them under torture with batons and electric shocks and threatened them. They forced them to give their home addresses.

After they beat them, they abandoned them in a remote area. They didn’t take them to a residential area where there is traffic and people are coming and going. They left them somewhere isolated. The agents had beaten them so much that they lost consciousness. His friend called his father and told him ‘I don’t know where we are.’ They walked around for an hour or two to find out where they were so they could give their location to his father.

When they arrived home, they were very dishevelled. When I saw Afshin, his face was bruised, and he couldn’t walk at all. They had beaten the soles of their feet so much with a baton that neither Afshin nor his friend could even stand. Someone had to hold them up so they could walk.

When Afshin was released, I asked him if rape had occurred. He said there was no rape but there was sexual assault. He said the agents touched their genitals and threatened them with rape. At one point, Afshin’s friend was bent over and his buttocks was showing a little, and one of the agent touched him and said ‘Do you want us to do something to you?’ The boys were both crying, pleading with them and saying ‘Please, no, don’t do this to us’.

I went to the police station and filed a complaint that Basijis had arrested and beaten them. They asked me if there were CCTV cameras in the area where the children were arrested. When I went to the area and saw CCTV cameras, I was able to see the footage from one of the shops there which showed several Basijis forcibly put these children into a car, but it didn’t show the number plate of the car. I asked another person from a nearby building which had CCTV camera if I could view the footage but he worked for the security forces and didn’t give me the right footage. He gave me footage from a different time of day. I wanted to take the CCTV footage to the police to show them the number plate so they could follow up.

He was from one of the government bodies. I looked for him a lot [referring to the man who had the camera footage]. But he didn’t cooperate and didn’t give [the tapes], and since I didn’t have the license plate number, the police didn’t follow up on my complaint either. I could not pursue my complaint. The police sent me to different people to get video footage from CCTV cameras in nearby buildings but the people didn’t give me the footage. I contacted the police many times, but they told me that I needed the car registration number.

I went to the police station several times and told the police that it was Basijis who did this to my child. I told them this is the work of Basijis, not the work of a private individual. They threatened me and told me ‘Don’t insult the Basijis.’ The police told me ‘This was not the work of the Basij. Satellite channels incite other people to do these things. Other people are rioting.’ I told them I won’t be fooled by this kind of talk.

They sent me here and there. All they did was give me the run around. If they were going to help, they could have investigated this themselves.

I also sought a forensic examination from the authorities, but the authorities kept telling me to come the next day and the next day. When I realised that they were not helping me, I went somewhere else to look for help. I went to try and find the CCTV footage myself.

The last time I visited the police station was two months ago.”

10.2 CAMPAIGN OF DENIAL, DISTORTION AND COVERUP

Since the establishment of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran by the UN Human Rights Council in November 2022, the Iranian authorities have intensified their efforts to divert international attention away from the crisis of systemic impunity that prevails for the crimes under international law and other gross human rights violations committed in the context of repressing the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, including rape and other sexual violence. On 28 November 2022, Nasser Kanani, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced that the authorities would not cooperate with the UN Fact Finding Mission.¹⁹⁰ On 30 May 2023, Ahmad Vahidi, the Minister of Interior, described the establishment of the UN Fact Finding Mission as “a serious war” waged by the “enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran”.¹⁹¹ Instead of cooperating with investigations by the UN Fact Finding Mission and granting it access to the country, Iranian authorities have announced the formation of various non-judicial “fact-finding committees”. These entities serve to facilitate the official campaign of denial, distortion and coverup, providing a façade of legitimacy while effectively perpetuating a system of impunity.

The authorities ramped up their efforts to prevent the creation of international investigative mechanisms and advance narratives that domestic investigations were underway ahead of the UN Human Rights Council Special Session on 24 November 2022 when a resolution for establishing a Fact-Finding Mission on Iran was being put to vote. Two days earlier, on 22 November 2022, Iran’s Minister of Interior, Ahmad Vahidi, announced that an Investigative committee consisting of representatives of government and non-government agencies, had been formed by the Ministry of Interior and mandated to “seriously pursue the rights of victims of recent incidents and disturbances”.¹⁹² This announcement was made against the backdrop of security and intelligence forces carrying out mass unlawful killings and arbitrary arrests to crackdown on popular protests at their peak in late November 2022. The statement did not clarify who is encompassed by “victims”, a notable omission considering the authorities’ long-standing practice of deeming state agents as victims when they are injured or killed while carrying out security operations.

On 4 December 2022, Ahmad Vahidi made a statement which raised further concerns about the flawed nature of investigations by the Investigative Committee, not meeting requirements of independence, impartiality, thoroughness and transparency.¹⁹³ In line with a consistent pattern by the authorities to equate protests with “riots” and protesters with “rioters”, he stated:

“Protesters do not have a specific representative. In addition, currently, we are dealing principally and mostly with riots rather than protests. In actual fact, rioters have not allowed anyone with a logical opinion to voice their logical opinion so, naturally, the rioters cannot have a special representative... This is a discussion about riots, and we have to find the roots, influential factors, and the actors involved”.

Thus, he also confirmed, contrary to international standards, that the Investigative Committee has not enabled the participation of victims in investigations.¹⁹⁴ While the Minister of Interior assured that the Investigative Committee’s findings would be made public, more than a year on, no report has been made public.

The announcement of this Ministry of Interior-led Investigative Committee drew some domestic criticism, including by some parliamentarians. For example, on 7 December 2022, Ahmad Alireza Beigi, a member of the Councils and Internal Affairs Commission of the parliament, argued that an investigative body should be established by a higher authority such as parliament and be independent of the Ministry of Interior. He said, “The Ministry of Interior has announced the formation of a fact-finding committee by this Ministry, while the Ministry of Interior itself should be accountable for some issues in these incidents.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Islamic Republic News Agency, “Iran will not cooperate with the fact-finding mission”, 28 November 2022, <https://www.irna.ir/news/84955465/> (in Persian).

¹⁹¹ Khabarban, “The establishment of the fact-finding mission by the enemy is a serious war against Iran”, 30 May 2023, <https://37867683.khabarban.com/> (in Persian).

¹⁹² Islamic Republic News Agency, “The Minister of Interior announced the formation of an Investigative Committee to investigate the recent unrest”, 22 November 2022, <https://www.irna.ir/news/84950764/> (in Persian).

¹⁹³ Khabar Online, “Interior Minister: the purpose of the ‘fact-finding committee’ is to identify the effective causes and actors of ‘riots’ but will not deal with the ‘protests’”, 4 December 2022, <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1702676/> (in Persian).

¹⁹⁴ Khabar Online, “Interior Minister: the purpose of the ‘fact-finding committee’ is to identify the effective causes and actors of ‘riots’ but will not deal with the ‘protests’”, 4 December 2022, <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/1702676/> (in Persian).

¹⁹⁵ BBC Persian, “Iran’s protests: Parliamentarian says that Ministry of Interior should not establish a fact-finding committee because ‘it is itself at fault’”, 6 December 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cqg24yk5npxo> (in Persian); Bahar News, “Interior Ministry must not establish a fact-finding committee because it is itself at fault”, 9 December 2022, <https://www.baharnews.ir/news/373700> (in Persian).

On 23 November 2022, parliamentarian Zohreh Elahian, who is a member of the parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Commission and the chair of the Commission's Human Rights Committee, separately also announced that efforts were underway to ensure that the heads of the three branches of government promptly formed a "fact-finding committee" with representatives from the government, parliament, the judiciary, and from public institutions to "examine recent events, riots and disturbances" in the country.¹⁹⁶ According to Fars News Agency, a semi-official media outlet affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards, Zohreh Elahian stressed that the formation of the "fact-finding committee" was necessary given the emphasis placed by Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, on "respecting public rights and the Islamic Republic of Iran's capacity to address deficiencies, compensate for damages, and, of course, punish the perpetrators and masterminds of this action against the people's security and the killing of innocent people".¹⁹⁷

On 7 May 2023, the office of the president, Ebrahim Raisi, announced that the president had ordered the formation of a committee to "carry out a comprehensive and thorough review of the various aspects of the riots".¹⁹⁸ The formal title of the committee is the Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022 (referred to hereafter as the Special Committee). The announcement noted that the Special Committee, reporting directly to the president, was tasked with "reviewing the complaints of those injured and harmed in the incidents or their families, following up on compensating the citizens who have suffered material damages or emotional harm during these incidents and unrests, pursuing the rights of the families of the martyrs and those who lost their lives during the incidents and unrest in competent domestic and judicial bodies, and examining the claims made regarding the violation of individuals' rights in the aforementioned events."¹⁹⁹ The Special Committee was also tasked with reviewing "loopholes in current laws and regulations governing peaceful assembly, ... and propose necessary changes".²⁰⁰ The announcement stated that the president had ordered the formation of the Special Committee after the Minister of Interior presented him with a report on the "unrest". It is unclear if this report was based on findings by the Investigative Committee that was established by the Ministry of Interior in November 2022.

While the Iranian authorities are not transparent, it appears that the Special Committee formed under the supervision of the presidential office in May 2023 is the same body to which parliamentarian Zohreh Elahian referred as the "fact-finding committee" in December 2022.

The Special Committee has four members, all of whom have been appointed by the president. Concerns about the impartiality of the Special Committee are heightened in light of statements made publicly by the head of the Committee – Hossein Mozaffar – and its other members – Zohreh Elahian, Kazem Gharibabadi, and Sakineh Sadat Pad – and their affiliation with state bodies that are complicit in condoning and perpetuating impunity for crimes under international law and serious human rights violations. All four members of the Special Committee have denied or disseminated misinformation about the human rights violations committed by the authorities in the context of the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising. Such cover-ups have not only robbed those directly affected and society at large of the right to truth, but also contributed to entrenching impunity and compounding the suffering of survivors and relatives.

Zohreh Elahian was one of 227 members of parliament who signed a statement on 6 November 2022 calling on the judiciary to "show no leniency" to protesters and urgently issue death sentences against them as "a lesson" to others.²⁰¹ On 8 January 2023, Zohreh Elahian described the uprising and the solidarity that protesters and victims received at the international level as "a hybrid war" with "human rights being used as a weapon of war against the Iranian nation". Zohreh Elahian stated:

"From the first days of the riots, the human rights dimension was used against us... A division of labour has been formed against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a budget of 3.8 million dollars has been approved to document

¹⁹⁶ Fars News, "Elahian: A Fact-finding committee will be established to investigate the country's recent incidents", 23 November 2023, <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010902000362/> (in Persian).

¹⁹⁷ Fars News, "Elahian: A Fact-finding committee will be established to investigate the country's recent incidents", 23 November 2023, <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010902000362/> (in Persian).

¹⁹⁸ The Special Committee to Investigate the Unrest of 1401, 7 May 2023, <https://en.specialcommittee.ir/>

¹⁹⁹ The Office of Iran's President, "The establishment of the Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022 with the president's decree", 7 May 2023, <https://president.ir/fa/143833> (In Persian).

²⁰⁰ Islamic Republic News Agency, "Iran's Raisi appoints committee to investigate last year's unrest", 7 May 2023, <https://en.irna.ir/news/85104420/Iran-s-Raisi-appoints-committee-to-investigate-last-year-s-unrest>

²⁰¹ Amnesty International, "Iran: Chilling use of the death penalty to further brutally quell popular uprising", 16 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/iran-chilling-use-of-the-death-penalty-to-further-brutally-quell-popular-uprising/>; Voice of America, "Parliamentarian who had called for the execution of protesters headed to New York", 12 November 2022, <https://ir.voanews.com/a/irans-hardliner-parliament-member-heads-to-the-un/6830841.html> (in Persian); Keyhan, "227 Members of Parliament Demanded that Criminal Rioters be Punished", 6 November 2022, <https://kayhan.ir/fa/news/253003/227> (in Persian).

lies concerning the commission of human rights violations in Iran, and for this purpose, a fact-finding committee was formed, which in reality, is a committee for documenting lies against the Iranian people.”²⁰²

Zohreh Elahian proceeded to add that “a meeting had been held under the order of the Minister of Interior to examine [the establishment of] an Iran fact-finding committee to investigate the role of foreigners in the riots and the damages and costs inflicted on the Iranian nation.”²⁰³

On 20 February 2023, the European Union imposed sanctions on 32 Iranian officials, including Zohreh Elahian, for serious human rights violations, particularly in relation to the uprising.²⁰⁴

Another member of the Special Committee is Kazem Gharibabadi, who is the Vice-President of the Judiciary for International Affairs and the Secretary-General of the High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is a body that sits within the judiciary. He has made numerous inflammatory statements covering up human rights violations before, during and in the aftermath of the uprising, including by calling the protests a “war against Iran”, denying that tens of thousands of people were arrested during the protests, and blaming the deaths of protesters and bystanders on “rioters”.²⁰⁵

On 12 November 2022, while the protests in Iran were ongoing, in a statement given to Iranian state media while Kazem Gharibabadi was in New York to attend the UN General Assembly Third Committee, he said, “It was decided that, according to an order given to [security forces], they would not to carry firearms during the protests” and that had security forces had shown “self-restraint” during the uprising. His statement was made amid the backdrop of security forces continuing to unlawfully kill hundreds of protesters and bystanders and arbitrarily arrest, forcibly disappear and torture thousands of others.²⁰⁶ On 4 July 2023, during a meeting with Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and members of the Friends of the UN Charter on Tuesday at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council, Kazem Gharibabadi stated that “There was a comprehensive war against Iran during the riots”.

In November 2022, before and after the adoption of the resolution for the UN Fact-Finding Mission in Geneva, the High Council for Human Rights, led by Kazem Gharibabadi, disseminated reports that were filled with misinformation to various states. These documents rejected the findings of UN experts and human rights organizations and propagated false narratives that absolved the authorities of responsibility for hundreds of unlawful killings.²⁰⁷

In response to a letter written from inside Tehran’s Evin prison in December 2022 by prominent human rights defender and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Narges Mohammadi, about sexual violence against female detainees during the protests,²⁰⁸ the High Council for Human Rights claimed, in a statement issued on 27 December 2022, that during a visit to Shahr-e Rey women’s prison (commonly known as Gharchak) in Varamin outside Tehran, Kazem Gharibabadi and his accompanying delegation “engaged in general discussions with recent detainees and also spoke separately with a number of detainees. In none of these conversations, any issue or complaint regarding sexual harassment were raised that would need to be followed up on”.²⁰⁹ The statement also chillingly referred to the possibility of reprisals, saying, “While recognizing the right to complain for those who believe they have been harassed, the High Council for Human Rights also acknowledges the right to lodge complaints against individuals who spread rumours without evidence, for the staff of the prison organization or law enforcement agents”.

The High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is not an independent human rights institution, has consistently functioned as a propaganda machine and the main state entity defending Iran’s appalling human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council and other international forums.

²⁰² Khabarban, “تتشکیل کمیته حقیقتیاب در ایران برای بررسی نقش کشورهای خارجی در اغتشاشات”, 18 January 2023, <https://36796283.khabarban.com/> (in Persian).

²⁰³ Khabarban, “تتشکیل کمیته حقیقتیاب در ایران برای بررسی نقش کشورهای خارجی در اغتشاشات”, 18 January 2023, <https://36796283.khabarban.com/> (in Persian).

²⁰⁴ Council of European Union, Council implementing regulation 2023/379 (implementing Regulation No 359/2011 concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons), 20 February 2023, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023R0379>

²⁰⁵ Mashregh News, “تحت بازداشت بودن ۱۴ هزار نفر در جریان اغتشاشات را رد می‌کنیم”, 12 November 2022, <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/1435050> (in Persian).

²⁰⁶ Mashregh News, “تحت بازداشت بودن ۱۴ هزار نفر در جریان اغتشاشات را رد می‌کنیم”, 12 November 2022, <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/1435050> (in Persian).

²⁰⁷ The High Council for Human Right of the Islamic Republic of Iran, “Some Examples of Widespread Violence by Rioters Against Ordinary Citizens & Law Enforcement Officers”, 21 November 2022, <https://bern.mfa.gov.ir/en/newsview/701658/>; The High Council for Human Right of the Islamic Republic of Iran, “Report No. 1 Pertaining Death of Mahsa Amini & Ensuing Events”, 13 October 2022, <https://indonesia.mfa.ir/en/newsview/696394/>; The High Council for Human Right of the Islamic Republic of Iran, “Report No. 2 Pertaining Death of Mahsa Amini & Ensuing Events”, 13 October 2022, <https://indonesia.mfa.ir/en/newsview/696395/>

²⁰⁸ Iran Wire, “Nargess Mohammadi’s Shocking Letter About Sexual Assault Against Prisoners”, 26 December 2022, <https://iranwire.com/en/politics/111879-nargess-mohammadis-shocking-letter-about-sexual-assault-against-prisoners/>

²⁰⁹ Islamic Republic News Agency, “سناد حقوق بشر: بازداشت شدگان زن مطبوعه درباره آزار جنسی مطرح نکردند”, 27 December 2022, <https://www.irna.ir/news/84981791/> (in Persian).

Throughout its history, the Council is not known to have taken any action to document and denounce widespread human rights violations in Iran and/or support victims, survivors and their families. The statements and reports on its website echo the state's official narratives of denials and distortions; dehumanize the victims of human rights violations; attack reports, statements and resolutions issued by UN human rights bodies about the situation of human rights in Iran; and exclusively emphasize human rights violations by states viewed as geopolitical adversaries by the Iranian authorities.²¹⁰

The third member of the Special Committee is Hossein Mozaffar, who is a member of the Expediency Council, whose members are appointed by Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader. He is also the Head of the Supervisory Council in the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, which works closely with intelligence and security officials to produce and broadcast countless torture-tainted "confessions" that have been systematically relied upon to issue prison sentences and to impose and carry out the death penalty.²¹¹ On 15 October 2022, during the height of repression of the uprising, Hossein Mozaffar described the protests as "an effort by the enemies of the Revolution and Iran to overthrow the system," saying:

"It is clear that, behind this scenario, are enemies: the global arrogance, the Americans, the Westerners, England, the Zionists, the reactionary Arab countries, and especially the Saudis. There are also sworn enemies who were previously inside the country, the royalists, the murderous hypocrites whose hands are stained with the blood of the people, and [members and supporters of] Komala [a Kurdish opposition group] Democrat [a reference to the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran] who showed no mercy even to the Kurds."²¹²

Hossein Mozaffar proceeded to call on the supporters of the Islamic Republic political and security establishment to intervene in support of quashing the protests and praised those who have participated in cracking down on successive waves of nationwide protests in the country:

"The experience of the people's presence, sacrifice, and martyrdom over the years in confronting enemies has shown that all these conspiracies cannot inflict any harm to the foundation and entity of the Islamic Revolution in the face of the massive tide of people who are committed to their Revolution and Imam [referring to Iran's first Supreme Leader Rouhollah Khomeini]... The wise people of Iran well understand that ... wherever protests become an excuse for overthrowing, they stand firm and enter the scene, setting aside internal complaints... The elites of society, groups, and parties must consider the interests of the country and the Revolution at these sensitive times and set aside minor differences. If they believe in Islam and the Revolution and see themselves as indebted to Imam Khomeini and follow his path, and take pride in this, they must come forward in these sensitive times and play their role for restoring calm in society".²¹³

The fourth member of the Special Committee, Sakineh Sadat Pad, is less well-known. On 25 February 2023, the president, Ebrahim Raisi, issued a vague decree appointing her as a person tasked with "pursuing social rights and freedoms" without giving any other details or her institutional affiliation.²¹⁴ In her recent posts from October and November 2023 on her X (formerly Twitter) account²¹⁵ and her Telegram account²¹⁶ she has referred to the uprising as "riots",²¹⁷ praised the current Head of the Judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje'i, for his "admirable concern about legitimate freedoms"²¹⁸ despite his appalling human rights record,²¹⁹ and

²¹⁰ The Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the High Council for Human Rights, <http://www.humanrights.ir/>

²¹¹ Amnesty International, *Iran: Broadcasting injustice, boasting of mass killing: A case study of August 2016 execution of 25 Sunni men in Iran* (Index: MDE 13/5079/2016), 17 November 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5079/2016/en/>

²¹² Farda News, هشدار حسین مظفر درباره سکوت خواص در اتفاقات اخیر ["Hossein Mozaffar's warning about the silence of elites during recent incidents"], <https://tinyurl.com/49a382zv> (in Persian).

²¹³ Farda News, هشدار حسین مظفر درباره سکوت خواص در اتفاقات اخیر ["Hossein Mozaffar's warning about the silence of elites during recent incidents"], <https://tinyurl.com/49a382zv> (in Persian).

²¹⁴ The Office of Iran's President, «سکینه سادات پاد» به عنوان مسئول «پیگیری حقوق و آزادی‌های اجتماعی», <https://www.president.ir/fa/142597> (in Persian).

²¹⁵ Sakineh Sadat Pad, X (formerly Twitter) post, <https://twitter.com/sakinesadatpaad> (in Persian).

²¹⁶ Telegram is an instant messaging service. It allows users to exchange messages, share media and files, and hold private and group voice or video calls, as well public livestreams. Sakineh Sadat Pad, Telegram post, <https://t.me/SRFreedoms> (in Persian).

²¹⁷ Sakineh Sadat Pad, X (formerly Twitter) post, حسب مأموریت محوله از سوی کمیته بررسی نازامی‌های ۱۴۰۱ به استان گیلان سفر کرده و با خانواده‌های سه تن از جانب‌اختگان اغتشاشات دیدار کردم. ["According to the mission assigned by the Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, I travelled to Gilan province and met with the families of three people who died in the riots"] 24 October 2023, <https://x.com/sakinesadatpaad/status/1716899881485525035> (in Persian).

²¹⁸ Sakineh Sadat Pad, Telegram post, دستیار رئیس جمهور در پیگیری حقوق و آزادی‌های اجتماعی؛ در دیدار با رئیس قوه قضائیه پیگیری حقوق مردم شدم. ["Assistant to the president in pursuit of social rights and freedoms; In a visit with the head of the judiciary, I pursued peoples' rights"] 14 November 2023, <https://t.me/SRFreedoms/548> (in Persian).

²¹⁹ Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei has been the Head of the Judiciary since 2021, during which time he has overseen a wide range of human rights violations, including the increasing use of the death penalty as a tool of political repression against protesters, dissents and ethnic minorities, and soaring execution numbers of individuals after unfair trials. See: Amnesty International, "Iran: Prisons turned into killing fields as drug-related executions almost triple this year", 2 June 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/06/iran-prisons-turned-into-killing-fields-as-drug-related-executions-almost-triple-this-year/>; Amnesty International, "Iran: Chilling use of the death penalty to further brutally quell popular uprising", 16 November 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/11/iran-chilling-use-of-the-death->

whitewashed widespread and systemic human rights violations against women and girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran, stating, “Within the authentic perspective of the Islamic Revolution, girls ... as citizens, hold a superior position with special privileges, compared to the opposite gender.”²²⁰

The English and Persian pages of the website of the Special Committee provide differing descriptions of what the website refers to as “Plan of Action”. The English version provides considerably more details on concrete measures, which yet again indicates that the Special Committee has been established as part of the authorities’ propaganda efforts at the international level. In Persian, the action plan refers to no concrete outputs and just contains the following seven vaguely-worded bullet points with no reference to reports of human rights violations: “Having a strong will and diligence to examine and follow up; maintaining the committee’s independence; discovering the truth and presenting an accurate and correct narrative of incidents; documenting reports and basing examinations on evidence and documents; identifying and examining the causes and factors of the unrests; avoiding prejudice, partiality and bias in the examinations and in the reporting; and upholding the rights of people and law enforcement forces who have been harmed.”²²¹

The English version, by contrast, describes the Plan of Action in two sections. Under a subsection entitled “Recommendations and Directions of the Special Committee”, the following points are listed: “Fully determined to discover the truth in order to realize the rights of the people, especially the innocent; documenting all reports and basing the review and preparation of reports on acceptable evidence and documentation; and paying attention to the complexity and dimensions of the riots and the aggravators, and providing a correct and accurate account of the events without prejudice or bias”.

Under a second subsection entitled “Necessary Programs and Measures”, 15 items are listed: “preparing a detailed and complete list of people arrested and detained during the riots including the time of arrest, the reason for the arrest, the duration of the arrest, and their status (nolle prosequi and release, release on bail, conviction, release following pardon, or still under custody); preparing a detailed and complete list of people injured and suffered physical injuries during the riots, mentioning the type of injury, the extent of injury, and the cause of injury, separately from law enforcement officers and citizens; preparing a detailed and complete list of people who lost their lives during the riots, mentioning the type, manner, and time of death, separately from law enforcement officers, ordinary citizens, and rioters; determining the material damages caused by the riots, including the damages caused to citizens and government agencies, by the type of damage and its extent, and specifying how to compensate them and follow up on it in the competent domestic and judicial authorities; meeting with the victims and their families, as the case may be, to listen to their opinions, obtain documents and evidence, and follow up on their demands; conducting a detailed examination of the role of external factors in turning the gatherings into violent protests and vandalism; determining the role of terrorist and takfiri groups, certain foreign media outlets, and their supporters; explaining the mechanism for receiving and following up on complaints lodged by people who claim that their rights have been violated, including law enforcement officers, citizens, and detainees); investigating and identifying the causes of riots and their different dimensions; evaluating the modus operandi of and equipment to deal with the riots; providing a correct and fair account of the riots taking place in the fall of 2022 on facts, documents, and witness testimony without bias and to prevent future reoccurrences; investigating legal deficiencies and loopholes in holding peaceful gatherings and providing suitable proposals, and pursuing their resolution in relevant bodies; providing regular and timely reports on the performance and actions of the Special Committee to the President; presenting documented and transparent periodic reports to the people; and investigating the claims raised regarding the alleged violation of the rights of children and women during the riots.”²²²

The length of the mandate and the dates by which the above tasks must be delivered are not specified. The website is also silent on the role of the Special Committee in identifying those responsible, including intelligence and security forces, the judiciary and other state institutions, in committing or enabling human rights violations.

From the website of the Special Committee, it is not clear if it has the power to compel officials to cooperate with its investigations. However, according to an article published on the website of the office of the

[penalty-to-further-brutally-quell-popular-uprising/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/iran-horrific-wave-of-executions-must-be-stopped/); Amnesty International, 27 July 2022, “Iran: Horrific wave of executions must be stopped”, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/iran-horrific-wave-of-executions-must-be-stopped/>

²²⁰ Sakineh Sadat Pad, X (formerly Twitter) post, دختران در نگرش اصیل انقلاب اسلامی، در مقام بندگی از جایگاه برابر و در مقام شهروندی، از موقعیت برتر با امتیازات ویژه نسبت به جنس مقابل برخوردارند [“Within the authentic perspective of the Islamic Revolution, girls have an equal status as a servant and as citizens hold a superior position with special privileges compared to the opposite gender”] 25 February 2023, <https://twitter.com/sakinesadatpaad/status/1712166232022004045> (in Persian).

²²¹ Islamic Republic of Iran, The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, سیاست ها و جهت گیری ها [“Policies and directions”], <https://www.specialcommittee.ir/portal/home/?235775/> (accessed on 23 November 2023).

²²² Islamic Republic of Iran, The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, “Plan of Action”, <https://en.specialcommittee.ir/portal/home/?246514/Action-Plan> (accessed on 23 November 2023).

presidency on 14 August 2023, the president stated during a meeting with members of the Special Committee that “all organs are obliged to cooperate with the committee.”²²³ Amnesty International has interviewed over 200 affected individuals since September 2022, including injured protesters, survivors of torture and other ill-treatment in detention, and relatives of those unlawfully killed during the protests, and to the organization’s knowledge, none of them had engaged with the Special Committee, which they saw as a tool of propaganda and cover-up. None of them said that they were contacted by officials of the Special Committee soliciting their testimonies or other information in relation to human rights violations they suffered.

An article on the website of the Special Committee, dated 14 November 2023 and consisting of just one short paragraph, stated that on 7 November 2023, “members of the Special Committee selected by the President met with a number of female prisoners in Evin Prison [held] in relation to the 2022 unrest. Their issues were heard, some ambiguities were addressed, and information was also provided to them.”²²⁴

Another article, also dated 14 November 2023 and consisting of just one short paragraph, states that on 31 October 2023, “members of the Special Committee selected by the President attended an exhibition entitled ‘Peak of Authority’ at the Ministry of Intelligence, which was about countering anti-security actions of terrorist grouplets and witnessed first-hand the discoveries and neutralization of several bombs and tactics of the grouplets, especially during the unrest of 2022.”²²⁵²²⁶

One other article on the website of the office of the presidency states that, on 14 August 2023, members of the Special Committee met with Ebrahim Raisi and reported on “the activities undertaken in line with the assigned missions, including examining the various aspects of the unrest, the mechanism for following up the complaints of those injured and harmed during accidents or their families, compensation for the damages of the citizens who suffered material losses or moral damages during these incidents and unrest, and securing the rights of the families of the martyrs and the dead”.²²⁷ However, the details of these activities of the Special Committee were not made public. According to the same article, during this meeting, the president said that “even if one person has been wronged, it should be addressed” without referring to the need for criminal accountability. He then proceeded to describe the protests as “riots” that were “orchestrated by the US, some European states, and enemies” to “oppress the Iranian nation... target the security, calm, occupations, and minds of the dear people” and praised the crackdown, saying “people, with their steadfastness, thwarted their [the enemies’] plans”.

These articles further expose the flawed nature of the Special Committee, which has not shared information publicly or, to Amnesty International’s knowledge, with survivors and relatives of victims on the Special Committee’s methods of working, steps taken in the course of its work, and the details of its findings and recommendations.

To Amnesty International’s knowledge, none of the committees established by the Iranian authorities have carried out genuine investigations into torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, by intelligence and security forces in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol).²²⁸

The aforementioned concerns regarding the failure to meet the basic requirements of impartiality, independence, transparency, and consultation with victims and other stakeholders, lead Amnesty International to conclude that its formation is simply another tactic by the Iranian authorities’ propaganda machine to deflect criticism from the international community and to appear as responding to the demands of victims’ families and survivors impacted by the crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by intelligence and security forces during the uprising.

²²³ Official Website of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, جمهوری اسلامی ایران، “The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022 met with the president”, 14 August 2023, <https://president.ir/fa/146022> (in Persian).

²²⁴ Islamic Republic of Iran, The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, ملاقات اعضای کمیته ویژه منتخب رئیس جمهور با تعدادی از بازداشتی های ناآرامی های سال ۱۴۰۱، 7 November 2023, <https://www.specialcommittee.ir/portal/home/?NEWS/235223/235383/246582/> (in Persian).

²²⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran, The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, بازدید اعضای کمیته ویژه منتخب، بازدید اعضای کمیته ویژه منتخب، “The visit of the members of the Special Committee selected by the president, visit to a Ministry of Intelligence exhibition”, 31 October 2023, <https://www.specialcommittee.ir/portal/home/?NEWS/235223/235383/246580/> (in Persian).

²²⁶ Islamic Republic of Iran, The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022, نوزدهمین جلسه کمیته ویژه بررسی ناآرامی های سال ۱۴۰۱، 19th meeting of the Special Committee for investigation of 2022 unrest”, 6 November 2022, <https://www.specialcommittee.ir/portal/home/?NEWS/235223/235383/246578/> (in Persian).

²²⁷ Official Website of the President of the Islamic Republic, جمهوری اسلامی ایران، “The Special Committee for Examining the Unrest of 2022 met with the president”, <https://president.ir/fa/146022> (in Persian); Official Website of the President of the Islamic Republic, “Meeting of the special committee to investigate last year’s unrest with the President”, 14 August 2023, <https://www.president.ir/en/146031>.

²²⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), 29 June 2002, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/istanbul-protocol-manual-effective-0>

10.3 STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO ACCOUNTABILITY

None of the committees set up by the Iranian authorities can be a substitute for independent criminal investigations and prosecutions. However, prospects for independent and impartial investigations are non-existent within the current political and legal framework in Iran, where the prosecution and judicial authorities fall under the authority of the Supreme Leader, who also controls the security and intelligence bodies responsible for the crimes under international law and human rights violations committed in the context of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran stated in his January 2022 report:

“[I]nstitutional impunity and the absence of a system for accountability for violations of human rights permeate the political and legal system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The absence of accountability derives from various deficiencies within State structures, including negation of the principles of rule of law and separation of powers... Conditions for ensuring accountability are missing at the legislative and executive levels, and the judiciary acts as a repressive organ instead of an independent body towards which individuals can seek recourse.”²²⁹

10.3.1 JUDICIARY AND SECURITY FORCES INTERTWINED

According to Article 156 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the judiciary is “an independent power, the protector of the rights of the individual and society, responsible for the implementation of justice”.²³⁰ This is reiterated in Article 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which states: “Judicial tribunals must, impartially and independently, investigate the charges against an individual”.

Despite these legal and constitutional guarantees, the method and criteria of appointment of Iran’s highest judicial and prosecutorial authorities severely undermines the independence of the judiciary, placing it under the control of the Supreme Leader, who is the highest political authority of the country and who has oversight over all three branches of the state – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.²³¹

The Supreme Leader appoints the Head of the Judiciary for a period of five years who in turn appoints the Prosecutor General and the Head of the Supreme Court for a period of five years.²³² This selection procedure, which is based on the unilateral decision of the head of state on the basis of highly subjective criteria, is particularly concerning given the scope of the powers granted to the Head of the Judiciary under Iranian law. The Head of the Judiciary is responsible for appointing and dismissing judges, defining their jobs, making promotions and transferring judges.²³³

The Supreme Leader is also the chief commander of all the security forces in the country, including those involved in protest crackdowns and mass arbitrary detentions. He appoints and dismisses the chief commander of the Revolutionary Guards as well as the top commanders of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA), which is the country’s police force.²³⁴

As such, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s political and legislative structures place the security forces, which carry out serious human rights violations, and the judiciary, which should, in principle, independently and impartially investigate, prosecute and punish such violations under the supervision of the same entity, in breach of the independence of the judiciary.

The intertwining of the security forces and the judiciary is further exemplified by the long-standing practice of appointing senior individuals in security and intelligence bodies to top judicial positions. For example, Iran’s current Head of the Judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje’i, was the Minister of Intelligence from 2005 to 2009. He subsequently became the country’s Prosecutor General from 2009 to 2014, the first Deputy of the Head of the Judiciary from 2014 and 2021, and the Head of the Judiciary since 2021.

Other examples of former senior security and intelligence officials progressing to top judicial positions include current and former top advisors to the Head of the Judiciary; namely, Mostafa Pour Mohammadi and

²²⁹ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Report, 13 January 2022, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/75, para. 50, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3957951?ln=en>

²³⁰ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 3.

²³¹ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 57.

²³² The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 162.

²³³ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 157 and 164.

²³⁴ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Article 110.

Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr. Mostafa Pour Mohammadi, who has been an advisor to the Head of the Judiciary since 2017, had held various senior positions in the Ministry of Intelligence, including Deputy Minister of Intelligence, and the Head of the External Affairs of the Ministry of Intelligence, between 1986 and 1999. Prior his appointment as an advisor to the Head of the Judiciary in 2010,²³⁵ Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr had been appointed by the Supreme Leader as the Deputy Head of Basij Affairs in the Headquarters of the Armed Forces in 2007.²³⁶

The close relationship between security forces and the judiciary is further facilitated by legal provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure that designate personnel from the security forces, including the paramilitary Basij, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Revolutionary Guards, as “special judicial officers” (*zabetan-e ghazai khas*), and authorize them to conduct arrests, detentions and investigations under the supervision of the Prosecutor.²³⁷

The Statute of the Revolutionary Guards states that the entity is mandated, among other things, to combat “agents or movements which intend to destroy or overthrow the Islamic Republic system or act against Iran’s Islamic Revolution”.²³⁸ The Revolutionary Guards also “co-operate with the police force, in necessary situations, in order to maintain order, security and rule of law in the country”.²³⁹ The Statute stipulates that the Revolutionary Guards shall act as “judicial officers” in undertaking this mandate.

The Law on Formation of the Ministry of Intelligence similarly defines the mandate of the entity as, among other things, “preventing the conspiracies of domestic and international enemies against the Islamic Revolution”.²⁴⁰

State officials have praised the close relationship between security forces and the judiciary. For instance, the Head of the Department of Justice of Lorestan province stated on 26 February 2021,

“There is a close spiritual connection between the Revolutionary Guards, the paramilitary Basij, and the judiciary throughout the justice system across the country... The Revolutionary Guards and the paramilitary Basij, assist the judicial system as special judicial officers in confronting thugs and criminals.”²⁴¹

For decades, UN human rights experts have consistently raised alarm over the lack of independence within Iran’s judiciary. Over two decades ago, in 2001, the then UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers expressed concern over the level of the Supreme Leader’s influence on Iran’s judiciary.²⁴²

In 2016, the then UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, the late Asma Janagir, stated:

“[I]n order to improve the human rights record in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Government will have to reform the judicial system with a view to ensuring its independence.”²⁴³

In 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran reiterated the same concerns stating,

“The principles of judicial independence and separation of powers are further impaired by Constitutional provisions related to the appointment of the Head of the Judiciary and judges.”²⁴⁴

²³⁵ Khabar Online, *ذوالقدر مشاور رئیس قوه قضائیه شد* [“Zolghadr was appointed as the advisor to the Head of the Judiciary”], 6 January 2010, <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/35067/> (in Persian).

²³⁶ Mehr News, *سردار ذوالقدر معاون ستاد کل نیروهای مسلح در امور بسیج شد* [“Commander Zolghadr was appointed as the deputy head of Basij Affairs in the General Headquarters of Armed Forces”], 11 December 2007, <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/602985/> (in Persian).

²³⁷ Amnesty International, *Iran: Flawed reforms: Iran’s new Code of Criminal Procedure* (MDE 13/2708/2016), 11 February 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2708/2016/en/>

²³⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, *اساسنامه سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی* [The Statute of the Revolutionary Guards Corps Forces], 6 September 1982, Article 2 (in Persian).

²³⁹ Islamic Republic of Iran, *اساسنامه سپاه پاسداران انقلاب اسلامی* [The Statute of the Revolutionary Guards Corps Forces], 6 September 1982, Article 5 (in Persian).

²⁴⁰ Islamic Republic of Iran, *قانون مربوط به تأسیس وزارت اطلاعات* [The Law on Formation of the Ministry of Intelligence], 18 August 1983, Article 1 (in Persian).

²⁴¹ Mizan Online News Agency, *ارتباط تنگاتنگ معنوی بین سپاه پاسداران، بسیج و قوه قضائیه وجود دارد*, 26 February 2021, <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/705164/%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B7-%D8%AA%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%86%DA%AF-%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%86%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AC-%D9%88-%D9%82%D9%88%D9%87-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%87-%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF> (in Persian).

²⁴² UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Report, 1 February 2001, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2001/65, para. 116, <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=E/CN.4/2001/65&Lang=E>

²⁴³ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Report, 14 August 2017, UN Doc. A/72/322, para. 112, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1302389?ln=en>

²⁴⁴ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Report, 13 January 2022, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/75, para. 53, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3957951?ln=en>

The Special Rapporteur concluded:

“It is clear that this system of governance establishes a particular relationship between individuals and the State, where the maintenance of the system of governance and the political ideology takes precedence over protecting and respecting the rights of individuals. Within this configuration, there is no meaningful way by which the population can freely participate in decision-making mechanisms, including legislative processes, or hold decision makers accountable.”²⁴⁵

10.3.2 ENTRENCHED HOSTILITY TOWARDS DISSENT

The legal criteria of eligibility for appointment to judicial and prosecutorial positions fails to guarantee the impartiality of judicial bodies by further entrenching institutional bias and hostility towards those who exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly or are perceived as dissidents.

According to the Constitution, the Head of the Judiciary, the Prosecutor General and the Head of the Supreme Court are all required to be a “mojtahed”, which refers to a cleric with the highest level of expertise in Shia’ Islamic jurisprudence.²⁴⁶

Judges are required to demonstrate “belief in and compliance in practice with Islam... the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the principle of *velayat-e faghih* [the rule of a Muslim jurist as a Supreme Leader]”.²⁴⁷ They must further lack “any affiliation or sympathy with illegal groups, parties and organizations.”²⁴⁸ Applicants with a bachelor’s degree in law, Islamic jurisprudence or theology as well as clerics who have graduated from religious seminaries at level two are eligible to apply to be a judge.²⁴⁹

Vetting processes for the appointment of judges require the exclusion of individuals whose political and religious beliefs are not aligned with the State ideology. These processes require an investigation into the applicants’ political and religious beliefs and their past and current political affiliations, including through submitting formal queries for information to the Intelligence Centre of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Intelligence.²⁵⁰

10.3.3 JUDICIAL PRAISE OF SECURITY FORCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF JOINT MISSION

Top judicial and prosecutorial authorities have repeatedly stated over the years, including during high level meetings with Revolutionary Guards and paramilitary Basij commanders, that their primary duty is to unconditionally obey the orders of the Supreme Leader and that they and the security forces operate as a unified entity in their mission to confront the “enemies” of the Islamic Republic system.²⁵¹

For example, the country’s Prosecutor General, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, stressed the “necessity of complete allegiance to the Supreme Leader” during a meeting with senior Basij commanders on 25 December 2017, stating:

²⁴⁵ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Report, 13 January 2022, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/75, para. 49, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3957951?ln=en>

²⁴⁶ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Articles 157 and 162

²⁴⁷ Islamic Republic of Iran, *آیین نامه نحوه جذب، گزینش و کارآموزی داوطلبان تصدی امر قضاء و استخدام قضات* [Executive By-law on Absorption, Selection and Traineeship of Judgeship Applicants and Recruitment of Judges], 18 May 2013, Article 13. (in Persian).

²⁴⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, *آیین نامه نحوه جذب، گزینش و کارآموزی داوطلبان تصدی امر قضاء و استخدام قضات* [Executive By-law on Absorption, Selection and Traineeship of Judgeship Applicants and Recruitment of Judges], 18 May 2013, Article 13 (in Persian).

²⁴⁹ Islamic Republic of Iran, *آیین نامه نحوه جذب، گزینش و کارآموزی داوطلبان تصدی امر قضاء و استخدام قضات* [Executive By-law on Absorption, Selection and Traineeship of Judgeship Applicants and Recruitment of Judges], 18 May 2013, Article 3 (in Persian).

²⁵⁰ Islamic Republic of Iran, *آیین نامه نحوه جذب، گزینش و کارآموزی داوطلبان تصدی امر قضاء و استخدام قضات* [Executive By-law on Absorption, Selection and Traineeship of Judgeship Applicants and Recruitment of Judges], 18 May 2013, Articles 14-16. and 16 (in Persian).

²⁵¹ Rasa News Agency, *“Judges spreading justice and Revolutionary Guards fighting oppression would be the two wings of advancement for the second leap”*, 30 September 2019, <https://rasanews.ir/fa/news/622395> (in Persian); Mizan Online News Agency, *ولایت پذیری و ولایت مداری ضامن رفع مشکلات کشور است*, 28 November 2021, <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/777689/> (in Persian); Hawzah News, *رئیس مرکز حفاظت و اطلاعات قوه قضائیه: ولایت پذیری مهمترین عامل از بین برنده توطئه دشمن است*, 6 July 2014 (in Persian); Fars News Agency, *امروز حوزه ریاست قوه قضائیه: امروز دشمن تفکر بسیجی را هدف قرار داده است*, 26 November 2023, <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14020905000728/> (in Persian).

“Certainly, allegiance to the Supreme Leader is not limited to words and speech; it must be manifested in action.”²⁵²

Mohammad Jafar Montazeri proceeded to praise the paramilitary Basij forces for “their absolute obedience to the Supreme Leader” and said they are best positioned to “reinforce this spirit within the judiciary”:

“Those who can best reinforce this spirit [of absolute obedience] within the judiciary and support it are the pure [members] of the Basij force; this is because being completely Revolutionary is what the Supreme Leader has stressed upon and demanded from the judiciary.”²⁵³

The former head of the judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi, who is Iran’s current president, said in a meeting with top Revolutionary Guards commanders on 30 September 2019:

“The flag of fighting against corruption is in the hands of the Supreme Leader, and we are all his soldiers.”²⁵⁴

He similarly praised the Revolutionary Guards for their “insight in identifying and combatting the enemy” and clarified that the judiciary shares their mission:

“The mighty march of the Revolutionary Guards has overwhelmed the enemy... Judges spreading justice and Revolutionary Guards fighting oppression would be the two wings of advancement.”²⁵⁵

The current head of the judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje’i, also praised the paramilitary Basij force in a meeting with senior Basij commanders on 26 November 2021, stating:

“Confronting the conspiracies of the enemy requires the insight, determination and spirit of the Basij... The Basij accomplishes great deeds by relying on and connecting with God.”²⁵⁶

On 31 February 2023, the head of the Intelligence Centre of the Judiciary, Ali Abdollahi, stated:

“All praise to the God, the judiciary is a highly healthy state, which primarily depends on its employees having sincerity, piety and allegiance to the leadership of the Supreme Leader [velayat paziri]”.²⁵⁷

10.3.4 APPOINTMENT OF TOP JUDICIAL OFFICIALS WITHOUT HUMAN RIGHTS VETTING

A grim manifestation of Iran’s crisis of systemic impunity is the appointment to top judicial positions of individuals who must themselves be investigated for crimes under international law or other serious human rights violations. Processes for the appointment of judges and prosecutors lack vetting mechanisms to exclude those reasonably suspected of involvement in crimes under international law or other serious human rights violations, facilitating the commission of further human rights violations and interference in investigations.

The former head of the judiciary, **Ebrahim Raisi**, who held the position from 2019 to 2021 before becoming Iran’s current president in 2021, should be investigated for crimes under international law, including past and ongoing crimes against humanity resulting from the mass extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances of thousands of political dissidents in Iran’s prisons in 1988.²⁵⁸

²⁵² Islamic Republic News Agency, “دادرستان کل کشور: باید به قوه قضائیه صدرصد انقلابی نزدیک شویم [“The country’s Prosecutor General: We should approach a 100% Revolutionary judiciary”], 25 December 2017, <https://www.irna.ir/news/82774990/> (in Persian).

²⁵³ Islamic Republic News Agency, “دادرستان کل کشور: باید به قوه قضائیه صدرصد انقلابی نزدیک شویم [“The country’s Prosecutor General: We should approach a 100% Revolutionary judiciary”], 25 December 2017, <https://www.irna.ir/news/82774990/> (in Persian).

²⁵⁴ Rasa News Agency, “قضات عدالت گستر و سپاهیان ظلم ستیز دو بال حرکت در گام دوم خواهند بود [“Judges spreading justice and Revolutionary Guards fighting oppression would be the two wings of advancement for the second leap”], 30 September 2019, <https://rasanews.ir/fa/news/622395> (in Persian).

²⁵⁵ Rasa News Agency, “قضات عدالت گستر و سپاهیان ظلم ستیز دو بال حرکت در گام دوم خواهند بود [“Judges spreading justice and Revolutionary Guards fighting oppression would be the two wings of advancement for the second leap”], 30 September 2019, <https://rasanews.ir/fa/news/622395> (in Persian).

²⁵⁶ Mehr News Agency, “The Basij of the Judiciary should help to reform and shorten processes”, 26 November 2021, <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5361116/> (in Persian).

²⁵⁷ Tasnim News Agency, “رئیس حفاظت و اطلاعات قوه قضائیه: عفو اخیر رهبری چهره رحمانی حکومت اسلامی را نشان داد [“The head of the Protection and Intelligence Centre of the Judiciary: The recent pardon[s] by the Supreme Leader showed the merciful face of the Islamic State”], 13 February 2023, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/11/24/2852753> (in Persian).

²⁵⁸ Amnesty International, “Iran: Ebrahim Raisi must be investigated for crimes against humanity”, 19 June 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/iran-ebrahim-raisi-must-be-investigated-for-crimes-against-humanity/>; Amnesty International, “Iran: Presidency of Ebrahim Raisi a grim reminder of the crisis of impunity” (Index: MDE 13/4314/2021), 19 June 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4314/2021/en/>

In a report issued in 2018, which documented past and ongoing crimes against humanity related to the mass extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances of thousands of political dissidents in 1988, Amnesty International identified Ebrahim Raisi as a member of the “death commission” which carried out the enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of several thousand political dissidents in Evin prison in Tehran and Gohardasht prison near Tehran between late July and early September 1988. Victims’ bodies were mostly buried in unmarked mass graves. The organization has repeatedly called for Ebrahim Raisi to be criminally investigated for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture in accordance with international law and standards, including by states that exercise universal jurisdiction.²⁵⁹

In the same report, Amnesty International also called for **Hossein Ali Nayyeri** and **Mostafa Pour Mohammadi** to be criminally investigated for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture in accordance with international law and standards. They were members of the “death commission” which carried out the enforced disappearance and extrajudicial executions of several thousand political dissidents in Evin and Gohardasht prisons between late July and early September 1988. Hossein Ali Nayyeri was appointed to the position of the Deputy Head of the Supreme Court in 1989 and remained in this post until September 2013. He was subsequently appointed as the head of the Supreme Disciplinary Court for Judges until November 2022 when he was appointed by Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje’i as a top advisor to the head of the judiciary.²⁶⁰ Mostafa Pour Mohammadi has also been a top advisor to the Head of the Judiciary since August 2017.

²⁵⁹ Amnesty International, *Blood-soaked secrets: Why Iran’s 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity* (Index: MDE 13/9421/2018), 4 December 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/9421/2018/en/>

²⁶⁰ Mizan Online News Agency, *حجت‌الاسلام والمسلمین نیری مشاور عالی رئیس دستگاه قضا شد* [“HojjatolIslam Valmoslemin Nayyeri was appointed as the top advisor to the head of the judiciary”], 29 November 2022, <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4535012/> (in Persian).

11. INTERNATIONAL LAW AND STANDARDS

Iran has ratified a number of international treaties which prohibit acts of torture and other ill-treatment and unlawful deprivation of liberty, and protect the rights to a fair trial, freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

However, Iran has failed to ratify other key international human rights treaties that guarantee core human rights principles, such as the right to life, the right to liberty, prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, as well as enforced disappearance. These include the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Likewise, Iran is not yet a state party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

11.1 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is provided for under Article 19 of the ICCPR. States must guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of one's choice.²⁶¹ It includes political discourse, commentary on public affairs, journalism, cultural expression and discussion of human rights.²⁶² Freedom of opinion and freedom of expression are indispensable conditions for the full development of the person and are essential for any society.²⁶³ Freedom of expression is a necessary condition for the realization of the principles of transparency and accountability which are essential for the promotion and protection of human rights.²⁶⁴ It forms the basis for the full enjoyment of a wide range of other human rights and may only be subject to restriction by governments if provided in law and be necessary for respect of the rights of others, or for the protection of national security

²⁶¹ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 37: The Right of peaceful assembly (Article 21), 17 September 2021, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 1.

²⁶² UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 34: Freedoms of opinion and expression (Article 19), 12 September 2022, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11.

²⁶³ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 34: Freedoms of opinion and expression (Article 19), 12 September 2022, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 2.

²⁶⁴ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 34: Freedoms of opinion and expression (Article 19), 12 September 2022, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 3.

or public order, or public health or morals,²⁶⁵ and, even then, they must conform to the strict tests of necessity and proportionality.²⁶⁶

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are protected in Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR. The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that the right to freedom of peaceful assembly “enables individuals to express themselves collectively and to participate in shaping their societies.” No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those prescribed by law and which are necessary and proportionate in the context of a society based on democracy, the rule of law, political pluralism and human rights for national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.²⁶⁷

States parties are not allowed to rely on vague definitions of “public order” and “national security” to justify over-broad restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly. According to the UN Human Rights Committee, “‘interests of national security’ may serve as a ground for restrictions if such restrictions are necessary to preserve the State’s capacity to protect the existence of the nation, its territorial integrity or political independence against a credible threat or use of force”. The Committee notes that this threshold will only exceptionally be met, adding: “Moreover, where the very reason that national security has deteriorated is the suppression of human rights, this cannot be used to justify further restrictions, including on the right of peaceful assembly.”²⁶⁸ The Committee further noted that “isolated acts of violence by some participants should not be attributed to others, the organizers or to the assembly as such”.²⁶⁹

States have a positive obligation to facilitate and protect these rights,²⁷⁰ which means ensuring that they are enjoyed by everyone without discrimination.²⁷¹ Violations of the rights to peaceful assembly and association may interfere with the enjoyment other human rights, including privacy and the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

11.2 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Enforced disappearance is a crime under international law that occurs when someone has been arrested, detained or abducted by state agents, or people acting with their authorization, support or acquiescence, followed by the refusal to acknowledge this or conceal the person’s fate or whereabouts, placing them outside the protection of the law.²⁷² An enforced disappearance is a cumulative violation because it may inflict a wide range of human rights violations, including of the right to life (as the person may be killed or his or her fate may be unknown), the right not to be subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, the right to be free from arbitrary detention, the right to legal personality, the right to fair trial and others.

People deprived of their liberty have a right to communicate with the outside world. The rights of detainees to communicate with the outside world and to receive visits are fundamental safeguards against human rights violations, including torture or other ill-treatment and enforced disappearance. The UN Human Rights Committee has emphasized that states must ensure that the right of individuals in custody and pre-trial detention to access family members, a lawyer and doctors is enshrined in law.²⁷³

Anyone who is arrested, detained or imprisoned has the right to inform, or have the authorities notify, someone in the outside world that they have been taken into custody and where they are being held. They

²⁶⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 19(3).

²⁶⁶ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 34: Freedoms of opinion and expression (Article 19), 12 September 2022, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 22.

²⁶⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Articles 21 and 22. See also UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 37: The Right of peaceful assembly (Article 21), 17 September 2021, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 40.

²⁶⁸ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 37: The Right of peaceful assembly (Article 21), 17 September 2021, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/37, paras 42-44.

²⁶⁹ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 37: The Right of peaceful assembly (Article 21), 17 September 2021, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 17.

²⁷⁰ UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Report, 16 May 2011, UN Doc. A/HRC/17/27, para. 66.

²⁷¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 2(1).

²⁷² International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Article 2.

²⁷³ UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations: Central African Republic, 27 July 2006, UN Doc. CCPR/C/CAF/CO/2, para. 14; UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observation: Sweden, 7 May 2009, UN Doc. CCPR/C/SWE/CO/6, para. 13.

also have the right to inform a third person if they are transferred to a different place of detention. The UN Human Rights Committee has clarified that the intentional failure of the authorities to disclose the fate of an arrested person for a prolonged period effectively places that person outside the protection of the law.²⁷⁴

In cases of enforced disappearance, the UN Human Rights Committee has concluded that such practices violate several rights, including the right to liberty and to be recognized as a person before the law, and places the life of the individual at serious and constant risk.²⁷⁵

An enforced disappearance is deemed continuous or permanent, as long as the fate or whereabouts of the person has not been determined.²⁷⁶ While the fate or whereabouts of the victim or the remains are not established, the crime of enforced disappearance continues to be committed.²⁷⁷

Victims of enforced disappearance are not only the disappeared persons, but “any individual who has suffered harm as the direct result of an enforced disappearance”.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, the mental anguish and suffering caused to the family of the disappeared person by the authorities’ refusal to reveal the truth about the fate or whereabouts of the victim constitutes a form of torture or other ill-treatment.

11.3 TORTURE OR CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

The absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment is recognized as a rule of customary international law,²⁷⁹ and it is also prohibited under Article 7 of the ICCPR to which Iran is a state party.²⁸⁰ Article 10 of the ICCPR also states that all persons deprived of their liberty must be treated “with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person”. Failure to do so may also constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted by, or at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or another person acting in an official capacity on a person for such purposes as obtaining from them or a third person information or a confession, punishing them for an act that they or a third person have committed or are suspected of having

²⁷⁴ UN Human Rights Committee, Views: *Grioua v Algeria*, adopted on 16 August 2007, UN Doc. CCPR/C/90/D/1327/2004, paras 7.8-7.9; UN Human Rights Committee, Views: *Fatma Zohra Berzig v. Algeria*, adopted on 18 January 2012, UN Doc. CCPR/C/103/D/1871/2008, para. 8.9; UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Report, 2 March 2012, UN Doc. A/HRC/19/58/Rev.1, para. 42.

²⁷⁵ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 36: Right to Life (Article 6), 3 September 2019, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 58.

²⁷⁶ Article 8.1(b) of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance recognizes the continuous nature of the crime. Article III of the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons establishes that the offence of enforced disappearance “shall be deemed continuous or permanent as long as the fate or whereabouts of the victim has not been determined”. See also UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, General Comment on Enforced Disappearance as a Continuous Crime, 26 January 2011, UN Doc. A/HRC/16/48, para. 39; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Velasquez Rodriguez v. Honduras*, Judgment of 29 July 1988, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_04_ing.pdf, para. 155; Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR), *Ticona Estrada et al. v. Bolivia*, Judgment of 27 November 2008, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_191_ing.pdf, para. 56; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Garcia and family members v. Guatemala*, Judgment of 29 November 2012, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/iachr/C/258-ing.html>, para. 95; UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Concluding Observations: Uruguay, 8 May 2013, UN Doc. CED/C/URY/CO/1, para. 14; UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Concluding Observations: Paraguay, 20 October 2014, UN Doc. CED/C/PRY/CO/1, para. 29; UN Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations: El Salvador, 9 December 2009, UN Doc. CAT/C/SLV/CO/2, para. 14.

²⁷⁷ The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has considered that when analysing a case of enforced disappearance, the deprivation of liberty must only be understood as the constitution of a complex violation that continues in time until the fate and whereabouts of the alleged victim is known. See, inter alia, IACtHR, *Ticona Estrada et al. v. Bolivia*, Judgment of 27 November 2008 (previously cited), para. 56; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Heliodoro Portugal v. Panama*, Judgment of 12 August 2008, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_186_ing.pdf, para. 112.

²⁷⁸ UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, General Comment on the Right to the Truth in Relation to Enforced Disappearances, 26 January 2011, UN Doc. A/HRC/16/48, para. 4; UN Human Rights Committee, *Maria del Carmen Almeida de Quinteros et al. v. Uruguay*, Communication No. 107/1981, 21 July 1983, UN Doc. CCPR/C/OP/2, para. 14.

²⁷⁹ See, for example, International Court of Justice: Questions Relating to the Obligation to Prosecute or Extradite (Belgium v. Senegal), judgment, 20 July 2012, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/144/144-20120720-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>, para. 99; Case Concerning Ahmadou Sadio Diallo (Republic of Guinea v Democratic Republic of the Congo), Judgment of 30 November 2010, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/103/103-20101130-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>, para. 87; UN General Assembly, Resolution 66/150: *Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*, adopted on 19 December 2011, UN Doc. A/RES/66/150, preambular para. 3; International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Prosecutor v. Anto Furundzija*, Case IT-95-17/1-T, Trial Judgment, 10 December 1998, <https://ucr.irmct.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/Judgement/NotIndexable/IT-95-17%231/JUD7R0000002181.doc>, paras 137-146.

²⁸⁰ Iran ratified the Convention on 24 June 1975. Iran’s ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights predates the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.

committed, or intimidating or coercing them or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind.²⁸¹

Statements elicited as a result of torture, ill-treatment or other forms of coercion must be excluded as evidence in criminal proceedings, except those brought against suspected perpetrators of such abuse (as evidence that the statement was made). These exclusionary rules are inherent in the prohibition against torture and other ill-treatment as well as the right of accused people not to be compelled to self-incriminate or confess guilt and the right to remain silent. Respect for these rights requires that the prosecution authorities prove their case without reliance on evidence obtained by torture or other ill-treatment, coercion or oppression.²⁸² These rules apply at all times, including during times of emergency, because the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment is non-derogable under human rights law and is a norm of customary international law.

The UN Committee against Torture has emphasized that torture is systematically practiced when “it is apparent that the torture cases reported have not occurred fortuitously in a particular place or at a particular time, but are seen to be habitual, widespread and deliberate in at least a considerable part of the country in question”.²⁸³

11.4 RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMOUNTING TO TORTURE OR ILL-TREATMENT

Rape and other forms of sexual violence constitute gender-based violence. Gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of violence, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, threats, abuse and coercion that are rooted in and reproduce gendered inequality, power asymmetry and harmful norms.

Gender-based violence has a disproportionate impact on women and girls but can also impact other people, including on the basis of their real and/or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression. With regard to a gender-sensitive definition of torture, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture has referred to the elements contained in the definition of the CAT and stated that “the purpose element is always fulfilled when it comes to gender-specific violence against women, in that such violence is inherently discriminatory and one of the possible purposes enumerated in the Convention [Against Torture] is discrimination.”²⁸⁴ Gender-based violence requires a comprehensive State response that puts survivors' rights at the centre and also addresses root causes.²⁸⁵

According to international human rights law and standards, a comprehensive definition of rape includes all non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object.²⁸⁶ Under international law, rape constitutes torture when it is carried out by, at the

²⁸¹ UN General Assembly, Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, UN Doc. A/RES/30/3452, Article 1(1).

²⁸² UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 32: Right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial (Article 14), 23 August 2007, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/32 paras 6, 41, 60; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Cabrera-García and Montiel Flores v. Mexico*, Judgment of 26 November 2010, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_220_ing.pdf, para. 165; European Court of Human Rights, *Gäfgen v. Germany*, Application 22978/05, Grand Chamber judgment, 1 June 2010, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tur?i=001-99015>, paras 165-168; European Court of Human Rights, *Othman v. United Kingdom*, Application 8139/09, judgment, 17 January 2012, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=001-108629&filename=001-108629.pdf>, paras 264-267.

²⁸³ See UN Committee Against Torture, Report, 15 November 1993, UN Doc. A/48/44/Add.1, para. 39; UN Committee Against Torture, Report, 12 October 2001, UN Doc. A/56/44, para. 163.

²⁸⁴ UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 15 January 2008, UN Doc. A/HRC/7/3, para. 68.

²⁸⁵ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation 35: Gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19, 26 July 2017, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC35, paras. 26, 28.

²⁸⁶ See Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), Article 36; See also Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court, Report: Part II Finalized draft text of the Elements of Crimes, 2 November 2000, UN Doc: PCNICC/2000/1/Add.2, Article 7(1)-(g)1(1). The International Criminal Court's Elements of Crimes further refer to such an invasion having been “committed by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.” See (Article 7(1)-(g)1(2)).

instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of public officials,²⁸⁷ including when it takes place outside of state facilities.²⁸⁸

Forms of sexual violence other than rape committed by state officials can also constitute torture or other ill-treatment. Such violence includes verbal sexual threats and mocking, fondling, groping sexual organs, beatings on sexual organs and unjustifiable bodily searches.²⁸⁹ Acts of sexual humiliation, for example depriving persons of clothes, parading naked individuals in front of others, forcing individuals to perform sexual acts, forcing persons to pose in sexually explicit positions, and using sexually explicit language are designed to degrade and humiliate an individual and induce feelings of shame and fear also constitute torture or other ill-treatment under international law.²⁹⁰

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture has stressed that rape and other forms of sexual violence by officials in the context of detention or control not only amount to torture or ill-treatment, but also constitute a particular egregious form of it, due to the stigmatization they carry.²⁹¹

Sexual violence violates essential values and aspects of an individual's private life, involves an intrusion in their sexual life and annuls their right to freely take decisions regarding with whom they have sexual relations, thus causing them to lose complete control over their most personal and intimate decisions, and over their basic bodily functions.²⁹²

²⁸⁷ The Convention Against Torture, Article 1(1) states "For the purposes of this Convention, the term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions." See also: UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 5 January 2016, UN Doc. A/HRC/31/57, para. 51; UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation 25: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures (Article 4, paragraph 1), 2004, para. 16; UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 15 January 2008 (previously cited), para. 26; UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 6 January 2016 (previously cited), para. 51.

²⁸⁸ See for instance: for instance: European Court of Human Rights, *Aydın v. Turkey*, Application 23178/94, Grand Chamber judgment, 25 September 1997, <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-58371>, para. 86; The Committee against Torture, Communication No. 279/2005 C.T. and K.M. v Sweden, decision, 7 December 2006, UN Doc. CAT/C/37/D/279/2005, para. 7.5; International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovac and Vukovic*, Case IT-96-23 & IT-96-23/1-A, 12 June 2002, para. 151; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Fernández Ortega et al. v. Mexico*, Judgment of 30 August 2010, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_215_ing.pdf; Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Rosendo Cantu et al v. Mexico*, Judgment of 31 August 2010, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_216_ing.pdf.

²⁸⁹ See UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 6 January 2016 (previously cited), paras. 19, 23, 45.

²⁹⁰ See for example: UN Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations: USA, 25 July 2006, UN Doc. CAT/C/USA/CO/2, para. 24; Antonio Taguba, *Article 15-6 Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade*, 19 October 2004, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/OathBetrayed/Taguba-Report.pdf>, p.16-17; Amnesty International, *USA: Human dignity denied – torture and accountability in the 'war on terror'* (Index: AMR 51/145/2004), 26 October 2005, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/145/2004/en/>, pp. 33, 36-39; UN Committee against Torture, Communication No. 402/2009 Nouar Abdelmalek v. Algeria, decision, 13 June 2014, UN Doc. CAT/C/52/D/402/2009, paras 11.2-11.3; UN Committee against Torture, Communication No. 291/2006 Saadia Ali v. Tunisia, decision, 26 November 2009, UN Doc. CAT/C/41/D/291/2006, paras 3.8 and 15.4. See also UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Report, 22 March 2016, UN Doc. CAT/OP/C/57/4, paras 63 and 66; UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Report: Visit to Maldives, 26 February 2006, UN Doc. CAT/OP/MDV/1, paras 194 and 201; UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 15 January 2008, UN Doc. A/HRC/7/3, para. 34; European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), *CPT Standards: Combating impunity Extract from the 14th General Report*, 2004, <https://rm.coe.int/16806cd08c>, para. 29; Council of Europe anti-torture Committee (CPT), *Report to the Ukrainian Government on the visit to Ukraine carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)*, 9 October 2002, <https://rm.coe.int/1680698393>, para. 21; Council of Europe anti-torture Committee (CPT), *Report to the Turkish Government on the visit to Turkey carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)*, 11 January 2007, <https://rm.coe.int/16806981ab>, para. 8; Council of Europe anti-torture Committee (CPT), *Report to the Czech Government on the visit to Czech Republic carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)*, 18 February 2014, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680695680>, para. 91; Council of Europe anti-torture Committee (CPT), *Report to the Czech Government on the visit to Czech Republic carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)*, 15 April 1999, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680695605>, para. 86; European Court of Human Rights, *Aydın v. Turkey*, Application 23178/94, Grand Chamber judgment, 25 September 1997, (previously cited), paras 77, 84; European Court of Human Rights, *Valašinas v. Lithuania*, Application 44558/98, judgment, 24 July 2001, paras 26, 114, 117; European Court of Human Rights, *Iwańczuk v. Poland*, Application 25196/94, 15 November 2001, paras 15, 18, 48, 58-9; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, *Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and Interights v Egypt* (323/06), 16 December 2011, paras 182, 184, 198, 201, 202, 208.

²⁹¹ UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Report, 15 January 2008, (previously cited), para. 69.

²⁹² Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Case Of Women Victims Of Sexual violence In Atenco v. Mexico*, Judgment of November 28, 2018, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_371_ing.pdf, para 179.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women deemed that the “right to a life free from gender-based violence is indivisible from and interdependent on other human rights, including the rights to life, health, liberty and security of the person, equality and equal protection within the family, freedom from torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and freedom of expression, movement, participation, assembly and association”.²⁹³

11.5 EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATIONS, PROSECUTION AND REDRESS FOR VICTIMS OF RAPE AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

States must conduct prompt, thorough, effective, independent and impartial investigations in relation to alleged human rights violations and bring those responsible to justice, notably in relation to violations that amount to crimes under international law, which include rape and other forms of torture, and enforced disappearances.²⁹⁴ An effective investigation must give due attention to the rights and needs of victims.²⁹⁵ Ensuring that survivors have access to justice is a vital component of states' obligations to provide effective remedies.²⁹⁶

All states have a duty under international law to investigate and, where sufficient evidence exists, prosecute these crimes.²⁹⁷ This duty includes the prosecution of superiors who ordered, aided or abetted, or were otherwise complicit in, the commission of such crimes, as well as superiors who knew or should have known that a subordinate was committing or about to commit a crime and did not take all the reasonable and necessary measures within their power to prevent, repress or punish the crime.²⁹⁸ Inappropriate defences such as invoking superior orders²⁹⁹ as a defence to such crimes must not be applied.

Beyond fulfilling the rights of survivors to effective remedies, bringing perpetrators to justice is essential if states are to uphold the rule of law and protect the human rights of all persons.

Survivors of human rights violations, including survivors of torture, have the right to full and effective reparation to address the harm they have suffered, regardless of whether those responsible have been identified and brought to justice. Reparation should include compensation, rehabilitation, and measures of satisfaction.³⁰⁰

Compensation from the state must afford adequate redress to the victim; reparations should be proportionate to the violations suffered.

Rehabilitation measures should include medical and psychological care as well as legal and social services to address physical and mental harm caused to victims.³⁰¹

Measures of satisfaction should include, where applicable, effective measures aimed at the cessation of continuing violations, verification of the facts and full and public disclosure of the truth, an official declaration

²⁹³ CEDAW, General Recommendation 35 (previously cited), para 15.

²⁹⁴ ICCPR, Article 2; UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment 31: Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on States Parties to the Covenant, 26 May 2004, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, para. 18.

²⁹⁵ UN General Assembly (UNGA), Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, UN Doc. A/RES/40/34.

²⁹⁶ UN General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 60/147: *Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law*, adopted on 16 December 2005, UN Doc. A/RES/60/147, Principle 12; UN Commission on Human Rights, Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity, 8 February 2005, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1, Principle 32; UNGA, Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (previously cited), Principle 5.

²⁹⁷ According to the Committee Against Torture, “States bear international responsibility for the acts and omissions of their officials and others, including agents, private contractors, and others acting in official capacity or acting on behalf of the State, in conjunction with the State, under its direction or control, or otherwise under colour of law.” The Committee has explicitly stated that states must adopt effective measures to ensure public authorities do not participate in acts of torture.

²⁹⁸ See, for example, UN Commission on Human Rights, Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity, 8 February 2005, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1, Principle 27(b).

²⁹⁹ See, for example, UN Commission on Human Rights, Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity (previously cited), Principle 27(a).

³⁰⁰ See, for example, UNGA, Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (previously cited), Principles 8-17; UN HRC, General Comment 31 (previously cited), para. 16; UNGA, Resolution 60/147 (previously cited), Principles 18-23; UN Commission on Human Rights, Updated Set of Principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity (previously cited), Principle 31.

³⁰¹ UNGA, Resolution 60/147 (previously cited), Principle 21.

of decision restoring the dignity of survivors, a public apology, judicial and administrative sanctions against perpetrators and commemorations and tributes to the victims.³⁰²

In determining such measures, authorities should consult with victims and their representatives to fully assess the harm they have suffered and to identify the most appropriate and effective measures to address it.³⁰³ Victims should be treated with humanity and respect for their dignity and human rights throughout the process.³⁰⁴

Reparation can be provided through judicial and administrative mechanisms.³⁰⁵ In situations where violations have been committed on a large-scale, the state should establish an accessible and effective national reparation programme.

Victims and their families, as well as other members of society, have the right to know the truth about human rights violations.³⁰⁶ According to Principle 24 of the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (Basic Principles): “victims and their representatives should be entitled to seek and obtain information on the causes leading to their victimization and on the causes and conditions pertaining to the gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law and to learn the truth in regard to these violations.”³⁰⁷

The right to truth has both an individual and a collective dimension. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has stated: “The right to know the truth is a collective right that ensures society access to information that is essential for the workings of democratic systems, and it is also a private right for relatives of the victims, which affords a form of compensation”.³⁰⁸ Both in its individual and collective dimensions, the right to truth is an inalienable and non-derogable right, which stands alone and should not be limited.³⁰⁹

In terms of how states fulfil their obligations to give effect to the right to truth, Principle 5 of the Updated Set of Principles to Combat Impunity states: “States must take appropriate action, including measures necessary to ensure the independent and effective operation of the judiciary, to give effect to the right to know. Appropriate measures to ensure this right may include non-judicial processes that complement the role of the judiciary. Societies that have experienced heinous crimes perpetrated on a massive or systematic basis may benefit in particular from the creation of a truth commission or other commission of inquiry to establish the facts surrounding those violations so that the truth may be ascertained and to prevent the disappearance of evidence.”³¹⁰

³⁰² UNGA, Resolution 60/147 (previously cited), Principle 22.

³⁰³ See, for example, UN Commission on Human Rights, for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity (previously cited), Principle 32.

³⁰⁴ See, for example, UNGA, Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (previously cited), Principle 4; UNGA, Resolution 60/147 (previously cited), Principle 10.

³⁰⁵ See, for example, UN Commission on Human Rights, for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity (previously cited), Principle 32.

³⁰⁶ Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report: Study on the right to the truth*, 8 February 2006, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2006/91.

³⁰⁷ UNGA, Resolution 60/147 (previously cited), Principle 24.

³⁰⁸ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Report No. 136/99, Case 10.488, Ignacio Ellacuría et al. (El Salvador), 22 December 1999, para. 224.

³⁰⁹ Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Study on the right to the truth* (previously cited), para. 38 and summary.

³¹⁰ UN Commission on Human Rights, Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity (previously cited), Principle 5.

12. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“I don’t think I will ever be the same person again. You will not find anything that will bring me back to myself, to return my soul to me...I hope that that my testimony will result in justice, and not just for me. It is best to tell these accounts so that maybe we can prevent similar bitter events from happening again in the future.”

Zahra, a protester who was raped after being arbitrarily arrested by Special Forces (*yegan-e vijeh*) agents during protests.³¹¹

The Iranian authorities unleashed a brutal militarized crackdown in response to the unprecedented “Woman Life Freedom” uprising which was sparked by the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa/Zhina Amini days after her arbitrary arrest by Iran’s “morality” police on 16 September 2022 and highlighted widespread popular outrage with a political system steeped in gender-based discrimination, repression and impunity.

The crackdown plunged the country, already mired in a protracted human rights crisis, into an abyss of violence and cruelty. The authorities extensively and unlawfully opened fire on unarmed protesters and bystanders using rifles, shotguns and handguns resulting in hundreds of unlawful killings and thousands of injuries and carried out tens of thousands of arbitrary arrests and widespread enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment. During and in the aftermath of the protests, which began to subside from late December 2022, they further ramped up their use of the death penalty as a weapon of political repression to suppress dissent and terrorize the population, executing eight people in relation to the protests between December 2022 and November 2023 and executing hundreds of others during that time. As people in Iran rallied against compulsory veiling, the most potent symbol of the Islamic Republic’s system of oppression against women and girls, with countless women and girls discarding their headscarves, the authorities also intensified the punishment of women and girls merely for asserting their bodily autonomy and their rights to non-discrimination and freedoms of expression and religion or belief.

Iran has been shaken by successive waves of anti-establishment protests since December 2017, each one building upon the simmering outrage of the previous. The response of the authorities has been one of increasing brutality.³¹² An entrenched pattern of impunity has emboldened the authorities to escalate violence and add further cruelties to their toolbox of repression, all without fear of consequences.

³¹¹ For the case details of Zahra, see section 5.3.3.

³¹² Amnesty International, “Iran: International action needed to break authorities’ cycle of protest bloodshed” (Index: MDE 13/3546/2021), 20 January 2021, [amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3546/2021/en](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3546/2021/en); Amnesty International, “Iran: Stop increasingly ruthless crackdown

A horrific manifestation of this escalation is the weaponization of rape and other forms of sexual violence to break the spirit of resistance of protesters during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising.

Testimonies gathered by Amnesty International from 45 individuals in 17 of Iran’s 31 provinces indicate that intelligence and security forces committed horrific acts of rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual violence, which amount to torture and other ill-treatment, against women, men and children arrested in connection with the uprising. The 45 individuals included 27 survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence who had been detained and released; five other former detainees who were released; 10 family members of survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence; and three mental health professionals who treated survivors.

Despite rape and other forms of sexual violence likely being widely under-reported, given the fear of reprisals by the authorities and stigma attached, this primary documentation from more than half of Iran’s provinces across the country, along with accounts from survivors and other former detainees about additional incidents of rape and other sexual violence against scores of detained protester, shows that the violations documented are not isolated incidents and are part of a wider pattern.

In the course of its long-term documentation of previous protest crackdowns in Iran, Amnesty International has consistently found widespread and systemic torture and other ill-treatment against protesters and others swept up in mass arrests. Unlike findings from investigations into the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, these did not, however, point to a wider pattern of sexual violence, raising the alarm that Iranian authorities have added rape and other sexual violence to their arsenal of weapons to humiliate, intimidate and punish protesters, extract forced “confessions”, and instil fear among the population.

Consistent with long-standing patterns of systemic impunity for crimes under international law and other gross human rights violations, not a single state official has been criminally investigated let alone tried and punished for sexual violence and other widespread forms of torture and ill-treatment perpetrated against those arbitrarily detained in the context of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, even when complaints have been made by survivors.

Instead of conducting investigations, prosecutorial authorities have actively contributed to the machinery of torture and further entrenched the system of impunity. During the height of the repression, when prosecution officials visited detention centres or when detainees were transferred out of detention centres and taken before the office of the prosecutor, they turned a blind eye to visible marks of torture, ignored detainees’ complaints of torture, and refused to order investigations, thereby enabling the continuation of widespread torture. In the following months, the prosecutors became further complicit in the system’s cycle of repression as they and judges used “confessions” which victims said were extracted through torture and other ill-treatment as evidence to secure unjust convictions and sentences. A leaked official document, reviewed by Amnesty International, also shows how in October 2022, the authorities covered up complaints of rape by two young women against two Revolutionary Guards agents who had arbitrarily arrested the women in the context of protests in Tehran.

There are serious structural obstacles, which make Iran’s judicial system unable and unwilling to investigate crimes under international law or other human rights violations committed by state agents. These include the lack of independence of the judiciary, the intertwining between the judiciary and the security forces, and the appointment of individuals to senior judicial and prosecutorial positions who are themselves suspected of committing human rights violations and as such must be under investigation.

Tackling these barriers to create a credible, effective and fair judicial system requires political will and fundamental constitutional, legislative and administrative reforms, which Amnesty International and various UN bodies, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran and the UN Human Rights Committee, have repeatedly called for, and which the Iranian authorities have demonstrated no will to implement.

Amnesty International has reiterated, in its recommendations to the Iranian authorities below, the fundamental measures that are urgently needed at the domestic level to ensure the rights of victims to truth, justice and reparation, and prevent the recurrence of further crimes under international law and serious human rights violations. However, the Iranian authorities have repeatedly demonstrated, through both their

and investigate deaths of protesters”, 4 January 2018, [amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/iran-stop-increasingly-ruthless-crackdown-and-investigate-deaths-of-protesters/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/01/iran-stop-increasingly-ruthless-crackdown-and-investigate-deaths-of-protesters/); Amnesty International, “Iran: Details of 321 deaths in crackdown on November 2019 protests” (Index: MDE 13/2308/2020), 29 July 2022, [amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2308/2020/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2308/2020/en/). This document was originally published on 20 May 2020 and was subsequently updated with new information on 16 November 2021 and, more recently, on 29 July 2022. See also Amnesty International, ‘They shot our children’: Killings of minors in Iran’s November 2019 protests (Index: MDE 13/1894/2020), 4 March 2020, [amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en/); Amnesty International, *A Web of Impunity: The killings Iran’s internet shutdown hid*, November 2020, [iran-shutdown.amnesty.org/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en/); Amnesty International, *They are shooting brazenly: Iran’s militarized response to May 2022 protests* (Index: MDE 13/5789/2022), 3 August 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5789/2022/en/>

rhetoric and actions, that they are resolute in their approach to use brute force to maintain their iron grip on power and to shield security and intelligence forces from any criminal prosecution for crimes under international law and other gross human rights violations emboldening them to resort to increasingly brutal means to quash successive waves of anti-establishment protests since late 2017.

Amid this crisis of systemic impunity, risks of further bloodshed remain alarmingly high. Given the authorities' refusal to address popular grievances which continue to smoulder beneath the surface, expressions of public outrage may explode into further rounds of popular protests, as witnessed by the occurrence of periodic nationwide protests since 2017.

A woman survivor of sexual violence, Mahtab, told Amnesty International:

“I don’t want the authorities to be able to kill, rape and torture people so easily... If I didn’t go to protest, I would not have been able to live with my own conscience. We can’t raise our voices outside the country, so I am grateful that you are amplifying our voices.”

Another woman who survived rape, Zahra, told Amnesty International:

“I ask whoever hears my voice, as a human, to offer a helping hand to the men and women who have endured this catastrophe. We are being persecuted in our country.”

There are measures that UN member states can and should take, individually and collectively, to heed the calls of survivors like Mahtab and Zahra for justice and protection. As outlined below, these include, most notably, supporting the extension of the mandate of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran by the UN Human Rights Council to ensure that an independent international mechanism continues to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyse evidence of the crimes under international law committed in Iran, and initiating adequately resourced criminal investigations under the principle of universal jurisdiction, with a view to issuing international arrest warrants.

Such actions are crucial both legally and morally. They signal to all those involved in atrocities in Iran that there will be consequences for their crimes, and reassure victims that they do not stand alone in their brave struggle for justice, dignity and freedom.

12.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IRANIAN AUTHORITIES

12.1.1 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

- Immediately and unconditionally release all protesters and others arbitrarily detained, including people sentenced to death, solely for the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising;
- Immediately drop any charges stemming from the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and quash all convictions and sentences issued against protesters and others on this basis;
- Repeal, with a view to ensuring compliance with international law, all vaguely worded provisions of the Islamic Penal Code that unduly restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

12.1.2 ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

- Immediately inform families of the fate, whereabouts and legal status of their detained relatives in state custody and put an end to the practice of enforced disappearance;
- Ensure that detainees have, by law and in practice, immediate and regular access to the outside world, in particular to their lawyers and families;
- Ensure that all cases of enforced disappearance are adequately investigated, that those suspected of ordering, planning, implementing, or otherwise assisting or facilitating the commission of such

crimes, as well as superiors who knew or should have known that a subordinate was committing or about to commit enforced disappearance but did not take all the reasonable and necessary measures within their power to prevent, repress or punish the crime, are prosecuted in proceedings that conform to international fair trial standards, and that victims receive adequate reparations;

- Enact legislation making enforced disappearance a crime in domestic legislation, in accordance with international law; and
- Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

12.1.3 PLACES OF DETENTION

- Impose, in law and practice, a prohibition on security detention facilities and secret unofficial detention places and ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are held in officially recognized places of detention and are registered in a centralized register of detainees accessible to their lawyers and families at all times upon request and without delay;
- Publish an up-to-date list of all officially recognized places of detention in a form that is readily accessible to lawyers and members of the public;
- Establish an independent, efficient and well-resourced body with supervisory and oversight powers over all prisons and detention centres and with access to all persons deprived of their liberty, and amend the laws and regulations related to the Prisons Organization to bring them in line with international standards. The established body must put in place gender-sensitive policies that recognize the heightened risk of women and girls who are deprived of their liberty of experiencing rape and other forms of sexual violence. The prevention of rape and other forms of sexual violence should be part of the overall efforts and mechanisms put in place to prevent torture and other ill-treatment in detention centres; and
- Allow unannounced, independent and unrestricted inspections by the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran and other independent monitors to all places where protesters and others detained in relation the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising are or were at any point deprived of their liberty.

12.1.4 TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

- Protect all protesters, and everyone in detention, from torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, by issuing urgent instructions to all law enforcement and prison authorities in this respect, and ensure that all perpetrators are held accountable in fair trials;
- Define torture and other ill-treatment as a crime in domestic legislation in line with international law and standards including the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ensuring that the definition of torture is not restricted to when it is carried out “for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information” as it currently is under the Constitution, and encompasses pain or suffering that is inflicted on an individual as a form of punishment or intimidation or coercion or for any reason based on discrimination;
- Uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and introduce the necessary safeguards, including access to a lawyer of one’s own choosing from the time of arrest and prompt access to medical examinations by an independent doctor upon being taken into custody, during transfers, and periodically during detention, to protect everyone deprived of their liberty;
- Ensure that all statements and other forms of evidence obtained as a result of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, are excluded from evidence in all proceedings, apart from cases against the alleged perpetrators;
- Guarantee that individuals in state custody have access to timely and adequate health care, including prevention, screening and treatment, free of charge and without discrimination, including for injuries sustained during protests and/or as a result of torture and other ill-treatment in detention, including rape and other forms of sexual violence;

- Urgently address cruel and inhuman conditions in Iran’s detention centres and prisoners to ensure international standards, including the Nelson Mandela rules and the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules) that set out a minimum level of humane treatment of all prisoners, are met. These include ensuring that all places where those deprived of their liberty are held are properly ventilated, kept clean at all times, and equipped with heating and cooling facilities suitable for the climate, and that every person deprived of their liberty is provided with adequate access to sanitary toilet and shower facilities, bedding, personal hygiene products, clean clothing suitable for the climate, food of adequate nutritional value for health and strength, and potable drinking water. Women and girls must be provided with facilities and materials required to meet their gender-specific hygiene needs, including sanitary and menstrual products provided free of charge;
- Ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol; and
- Ensure that the definition of rape and other forms of sexual violence in domestic criminal law is consistent with international human rights standards and is based on the absence of consent. Specifically, rape should be defined as engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any object or another part of the body.

12.1.5 FAIR TRIALS

- Uphold international standards of fairness in all trials, including by ensuring that detainees have access to a lawyer of their choosing from the time of arrest and throughout the investigation, trial, and appeal processes;
- Ensure that individuals deprived of their liberty are promptly informed of their rights, including the rights to notify a third person, access legal counsel, challenge the lawfulness of detention, and remain silent, and ensure that statements obtained in violation of the right to notification of rights are not admissible at trial;
- Provide all people accused of a criminal offence with adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence, including adequate facilities to communicate in confidence with their lawyer and timely access to all relevant information about the charges and court proceedings including the information on which the prosecution intends to rely;
- Guarantee the right of all persons charged with a criminal offence to an open hearing and ensure that any exceptions to this right are prescribed in law and narrowly defined;
- Ensure that all individuals charged with criminal offences have the right to be tried in their presence, and that all trial and appeal proceedings provide the accused with the right to an oral hearing where they can be present and be represented by counsel and may bring evidence and examine witnesses;
- Repeal the Note to Article 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which denies individuals charged with certain offences, including national security offences, the right to access an independent lawyer of their own choosing and allows them only to appoint lawyers approved by the head of the judiciary;
- Ensure that statements or confessions made by a person deprived of their liberty other than those made in the presence of a judge and with the assistance of a lawyer have no probative value in proceedings;
- Enact legislation to ensure that, in line with the principle of presumption of innocence, the burden of proof is on the prosecution to show, beyond reasonable doubt, that statements of the accused have been given voluntarily; and
- Require courts to issue public, reasoned judgements in all criminal cases, allowing the public to know the essential findings, evidence and legal reasoning relied upon to convict and impose sentences.

12.1.6 WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Repeal all laws that discriminate on grounds of gender and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including regulations that impose mandatory dress codes, and abolish all

regulations and procedures whereby women's dress or behaviour in public or private life are monitored or controlled by, at the instigation of or with the acquiescence of, State agencies;

- Introduce laws and policies to ensure full equality for women and girls in public affairs, including in employment and in personal and family laws, and introduce effective legislation and administrative policies to end violence against women and girls, including by repealing legislation that mitigates, or exonerates perpetrators of, gender-based violence; and
- Ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations and ensure that domestic laws and practices are in full compliance with this Convention and with other international obligations.

12.1.7 THE RIGHT TO TRUTH

- Publicly acknowledge and condemn that intelligence and security forces perpetrated rape and other forms of sexual violence against protesters detained in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising;
- Fully and effectively cooperate with the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran and independent human rights investigators, and allow them unfettered access to all of the country to thoroughly and independently investigate crimes under international law and other human rights violations committed in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, including rape and other sexual violence, establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the violations, and collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and preserve evidence, including in view of cooperation in any legal proceedings, with a view to establishing accountability;
- Develop a national protocol for the investigation of allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other sexual violence, that is in line with the Istanbul Protocol, recognizing that any independent and impartial investigation would preclude state agencies accused of involvement in alleged violations from investigating their own personnel or affiliates; and
- Dismantle the domestic “fact-finding” committees established since November 2022 for the apparent aims of distorting the truth and diverting international attention away from the crisis of impunity for crimes under international law committed in relation to the uprising. Instead, authorities should promptly establish, with the technical assistance of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other relevant UN bodies, a competent, independent, transparent, fair and impartial truth commission, commission of inquiry or other appropriate truth-recovery mechanism (which should not replace judicial proceedings) to establish the truth regarding all cases of human rights violations, including rape and other sexual violence, in relation to “Woman Life Freedom” uprising. At a minimum, any truth commission should encompass the following essential elements:
 - The establishment and functioning of the truth commission must respect, protect and promote human rights;
 - All those concerned, including national and international civil society organizations, victims, human rights defenders and persons belonging to minorities and marginalized groups should be fully involved in the discussions on the establishment, mandate and powers of the truth commission, as well as in the selection of its members;
 - Members of the truth commission should be selected on the basis of their competence in human rights and other relevant fields, proven independence and recognized impartiality. The composition of a truth commission should reflect a fair gender balance and pluralism in the society;
 - The truth commission should be mandated with the powers and authority to gather all information it considers relevant, including the power to compel the production of information and the attendance of persons as and when necessary;
 - As part of its work, the truth commission should gather information indicating individual criminal responsibility and forward such information (on a confidential basis) to competent, independent and impartial prosecution authorities for further investigation, with a view to bringing suspected perpetrators of crimes under international law to justice in fair proceedings before ordinary civilian courts and without recourse to death penalty;

- The truth commission should ensure the protection of victims and witnesses who may be at risk of reprisal as a result of their participation in the process;
- The truth commission should not have the power to recommend amnesties or similar measures of impunity with respect to crimes under international law or other human rights violations; and
- Throughout its operations, the truth commission should regularly disseminate information about its work, through a range of media, languages and formats to ensure the information is accessible to all interested sections of the public, and the results of the truth commission's investigations and its recommendations should be officially proclaimed, published and widely disseminated without undue delay.

12.1.8 THE RIGHT TO JUSTICE

- Immediately take steps to address the systematic failure in fulfilling obligations under international law to conduct prompt, thorough, independent and impartial criminal investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other sexual violence, against protesters and others targeted in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, and to prosecute all public officials against whom there is sufficient admissible evidence in fair trials;
- Undertake fundamental constitutional, legislative and administrative reforms to create an independent, impartial, transparent and effective judiciary capable of addressing impunity, including for crimes under international law committed since the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising began on 16 September 2022. This must include measures to:
 - Ensure that the selection criteria for judges, prosecutors and all others responsible for the functioning of the judiciary at all levels requires appropriate training and qualifications, integrity, fairness, impartiality, independence of personal or group interest, and that it embodies safeguards against appointments based on partiality, prejudice or any discrimination against a person on the grounds of sex, religion, political or other opinion, national, social or ethnic origin, or other status;
 - Suspend public officials and prevent the appointment to public positions of individuals allegedly responsible for violations of international human rights law until independent, impartial and effective investigations are conducted;
 - Restructure the Office of the Prosecutor to guarantee the autonomy of public prosecutors, and ensure prosecutors use their power to initiate investigations when information of the occurrence of a crime is available, including in the absence of complainants;
 - Incorporate crimes under international law into the Penal Code, including but not limited to genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture, rape and enforced disappearance, in line with definitions under international law, and include provisions on command responsibility and the non-applicability of amnesties and immunities;
 - Guarantee the right of survivors and witnesses to be protected against intimidation and reprisals, through all phases of investigation and prosecution, including through the implementation of adequate support in court, not having to meet the defendant when appearing in court, in camera proceedings and prohibition of introducing survivors' sexual history into proceedings;
 - Take all other legal and practical measures to ensure all individuals allegedly responsible for crimes under international law can be investigated, prosecuted and punished at the domestic level before independent, impartial and competent courts, in accordance with fair trial standards and without being subjected to the death penalty; and
 - Immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.
- Launch independent, transparent, effective, fair and impartial investigations into all allegations of rape, other forms of sexual violence, torture and other ill-treatment by intelligence and security forces, prosecute any public officials when admissible evidence warrants so and ensure that they are tried in fair trials that respect international human rights standards and without recourse to the death penalty. Investigations into sexual violence must be carried out in accordance with the Istanbul Protocol; and

- Ratify the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) and make a declaration under article 12(3) of the Rome Statute accepting the jurisdiction of the ICC for crimes committed in Iran since the entry into force of the Treaty in 2002.

12.1.9 THE RIGHT TO REPARATION

- Cease patterns of harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detentions against survivors, victims' families, and human rights defenders seeking truth, justice and reparation for the human rights violations committed in relation to the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising, including rape and other sexual violence;
- Establish a competent, independent and impartial reparation mechanism to ensure that survivors of torture and ill-treatment including rape and other forms of sexual violence, and other human rights violations committed in relation to the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising, access their right to reparation. Full reparations must include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. Reparative measures should be tailored to the needs of survivors and be proportionate to the gravity of the violations that they suffered; and
- Immediately provide survivors of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, access to appropriate, gender-specific and free health care, including both medical and psychological treatment and counselling.

12.1.10 CO-OPERATION WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

- Cooperate with the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran, including by granting them unfettered access to the country; and
- Extend invitations to and accept requests for visits from the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental Health; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, allow them unrestricted access to prisons and detention centres, survivors and their families, and human rights defenders, ensuring that no individuals face reprisals for communicating with UN human rights mechanisms, and their assistance in support of the above objectives.

12.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- Given the scale and gravity of the crimes committed since 16 September 2022 and the complete absence of prospects for independent and impartial domestic investigations and prosecutions, extend the mandate of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran to ensure that an independent international mechanism continues to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyse evidence of the crimes under international law committed in Iran, including in view of cooperation with any legal proceedings such as those pursued under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

12.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROSECUTION OFFICES OF INDIVIDUAL STATES

- Consider exercising universal and other extraterritorial jurisdiction in relation to crimes under international law committed by Iranian authorities, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, irrespective of the absence or presence of the accused in their territory. This includes initiating adequately resourced criminal investigations aimed at disclosing the truth about the crimes, identifying those suspected of responsibility, including commanders and other superiors, and issuing, when there is sufficient admissible evidence, international arrest warrants;
- Collaborate with the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran as well as local and international civil society organizations to initiate cases and identify perpetrators, victims, and witnesses; and
- Collaborate closely with immigration services in order to identify suspects.

12.4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL STATES

- Publicly condemn that intelligence and security forces in Iran perpetrated torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, against protesters detained in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, and stress that impunity for these crimes under international law must end;
- Press on the Iranian authorities to implement the recommendations outlined in this report publicly and through private diplomatic intervention, including, to:
 - Release all protesters and others arbitrarily detained, including people sentenced to death, solely for the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising;
 - Cease patterns of harassment and intimidation against survivors, victims’ families, and human rights defenders in reprisal for seeking truth, justice and reparation;
 - Cooperate with the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran and allow them unfettered access to the country to thoroughly and independently investigate crimes under international law and human rights violations committed in relation to the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising, including rape and other sexual violence;
- Integrate screening mechanisms within national asylum systems to identify survivors of torture or other ill-treatment, including rape or other forms of sexual violence, among refugees and asylum-seekers from Iran and ensure that they receive the medical and psychological treatment, as well as the social support, necessary for their rehabilitation;
- Provide funding for initiatives by independent civil society actors inside and outside of Iran providing medical treatment and psychological support, in person and online, to survivors of torture or other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, in Iran;
- End all deportations of Iranians to Iran or to third countries where they would be at risk of further transfer to Iran, on account of the serious human rights violations individuals would be exposed to upon return; and
- Open safe and legal pathways to ensure Iranians can reach safety, and offer humanitarian visas to those at risk. This comprises, among others, individuals in need of medical treatment for injuries sustained as a result of the Iranian security forces’ use of force and firearms during protests and survivors of torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, inflicted in detention settings.

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“THEY VIOLENTLY RAPED ME”

SEXUAL VIOLENCE WEAPONIZED TO CRUSH IRAN’S “WOMAN LIFE FREEDOM” UPRISING

Intelligence and security forces committed horrific acts of rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence against protesters arbitrarily detained during Iran’s “Woman Life Freedom” uprising between September and December 2022.

Sexual violence was used with impunity as a weapon of torture to punish women, men and children as young as 12 for challenging the political and security establishment and gender-based discrimination.

Amnesty International found Iran’s prosecutors and judges to be complicit in sexual violence by ignoring or covering up survivors’ complaints, and using torture-tainted “confessions” to prosecute and sentence survivors to imprisonment or death.

In the course of its investigations for this report, the organization documented 45 cases of rape and other sexual violence in detail, and gathered accounts about additional instances of sexual violence against scores of detainees, indicating that the documented violations are part of a wider pattern.

To date, not one Iranian official has been prosecuted for the instances of rape and other sexual violence documented in this report.

With no prospects for justice domestically, Amnesty International calls on states to initiate criminal investigations in their own countries against suspected perpetrators under the principle of universal jurisdiction, with a view to issuing international arrest warrants.