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Iran: Tsunami of Arbitrary Arrests, Enforced Disappearances

Detainees Tortured; Face Secret, Arbitrary Executions; Families Search for Disappeared

- Iran's intelligence agencies and security forces have carried out mass, arbitrary, violent arrests and detentions of protesters, including children, since December 28, 2025. Tens of thousands are reported to have been arrested across the country. Waves of arrests have continued following the [countrywide massacres](#) of January 8 and 9, 2026.
- Authorities have subjected detainees to torture and other ill-treatment. Those detained are at serious risk of death in custody, grossly unfair trials, and secret, summary, and arbitrary executions. Authorities have systematically refused to provide any information about the fate and whereabouts of detainees, thus forcibly disappearing them.
- UN member states should demand Iranian authorities immediately release all those arbitrarily detained, disclose the fate and whereabouts of people forcibly disappeared, halt any planned executions, and allow independent international bodies and monitors, particularly the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran, unhindered access to the country, including to all prisons and detention facilities. Judicial authorities in other countries should act to open criminal investigations, including under the principle of universal jurisdiction. Governments with embassies in Iran should send high level observers to all capital trial proceedings and urgently request to visit all sections of detention facilities.

(Beirut) – [Iran](#)’s authorities have waged a brutal campaign to terrorize the population through mass arbitrary detentions, torture, and enforced disappearances in the aftermath [countrywide massacres](#) of protesters and bystanders by security forces on January 8 and 9, 2026, Human Rights Watch said today.

Evidence examined by Human Rights Watch shows that senior officials, Iran’s security and intelligence agencies including the police, known as FARAJA, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) and its intelligence organization, the Ministry of Intelligence, and prosecutorial and judicial officials have orchestrated a coordinated, brutal mass clampdown to quash further dissent and conceal their atrocities. In addition to mass arrests, they have held detainees in incommunicado detention including in unofficial facilities, broadcast [hundreds](#) of coerced “confessions,” including by [children](#), and carried out large-scale enforced disappearances while imposing severe restrictions resembling martial law in many cities.

“As a whole nation remains in shock, horror, and grief, and families still search for their loved ones in the aftermath of the massacres of January 8 and 9, authorities continue to terrorize the population. Arrests continue and detainees face torture, coerced “confessions,” and secret, summary, and arbitrary executions,” said [Bahar Saba](#), senior Iran researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Given the immense dangers those detained and forcibly disappeared face, international monitors should immediately be given unhindered access to all detention facilities and prisons.”

A prisoner whose voice recording was received by Human Rights Watch stressed the importance of maintaining international scrutiny, saying, “Do not forget the detainees... Be our voice, if you do not raise your voice, they will eliminate us all.”

Those forcibly disappeared include individuals arrested and may include cases of people who participated in the protests but never returned home. Some families have received calls informing them that their loved ones had been killed but have not had the bodies of their loved ones returned, or received any information about them despite repeated inquiries.

A January 26 [statement](#) by the IRGC’s Intelligence Organization indicated that at least 11,000 people had been summoned by intelligence and security forces as of that date. According to judiciary’s spokesperson, 10,538 individuals had been referred for prosecution and [8,843 indictments](#) were issued by February 17.

Human Rights Watch spoke with 23 people both inside and outside Iran, including detained protesters; relatives of people killed, detained, and/or forcibly disappeared; people participating in protests; lawyers; human rights defenders; medical professionals; and journalists. Sources provided

information about the situation in areas across the country, including the provinces of Alborz, Eastern Azerbaijan, Fars, Golestan, Hormozgan, Ilam, Kermanshah, Khouzestan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Mazandaran, Razavi Khorasan, and Tehran.

Human Rights Watch also analyzed videos of security forces violently arresting protesters and their heavy presence on the streets after the mass killings, including 139 videos of forced “confessions” broadcast by the state broadcaster—Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)—and state-affiliated media as of February 6. Human Rights Watch also reviewed official statements, reports, and publications by independent media and human rights organizations.

Authorities have repeatedly vowed “[speedy trials](#)” and a “harsh response” without “[any leniency](#),” while labelling protesters “[criminals](#),” “[enemies of God](#),” and “terrorists.” On February 3, a criminal court in Qom sentenced 19-year-old wrestling champion, Saleh Mohammadi, to death for alleged involvement in the death of a member of the security forces. Mohammadi was convicted after summary proceedings that did not even last a month and relied on forced “confessions” that he said were extracted under torture. The court has ruled that Mohammadi’s execution should be carried out in public.

On February 19, Amnesty International [reported](#) that [children](#) were also among 30 people facing the death penalty whose cases were documented by the organization. In a measure reminiscent of [sham trials](#) broadcast in 2022 that resulted in [arbitrary executions of several men](#), IRIB started broadcasting segments of trial proceedings, including against two children, for alleged offences in connection with the protests.

The exact number of those arrested since the start of the protests remains unknown, but human rights [groups](#) have [reported](#) the figures to be in the tens of thousands. As of February 13, the Volunteer Committee to Follow-Up on the Situation of Detainees, a network of activists outside Iran, had [published](#) the names and details of over 2,800 people arrested.

Those interviewed said that prosecutors and prison officials have systematically denied detainees access to their families and lawyers and refuse to provide information about detainees’ fate and whereabouts, thus subjecting them to enforced disappearance. Enforced disappearances are grave crimes under international law and are considered [ongoing](#) so long as the authorities refuse to acknowledge the fate or whereabouts of those disappeared.

A human rights defender who has spoken to several detainees’ relatives in the provinces of Ilam and Kermanshah said that officials responded to families’ requests with insults and profanities. Verified videos posted online and verified by Human Rights Watch show scores of concerned

families gathering outside prisons, prosecutors' offices, and police stations in search of their loved ones.

Human Rights Watch has also documented cases of torture and other ill-treatment, including severe beatings with batons; kicks and punches; sexual and gender-based violence; food deprivation; and psychological torture, such as threats of execution, and denial of medical care to those injured. These cases, which can also amount to serious international crimes, are believed to be a fraction of the true scale of gross detention violations given that many people remain in incommunicado detention.

Iran's authorities have imposed and maintained a heavy military presence applying severe restrictions against the population across numerous cities in the aftermath of the massacres. Several witnesses described measures resembling curfews and martial law, including checkpoints across cities and intra-city roads and armed agents routinely stopping vehicles and searching cars and passengers' mobile phones. These descriptions were corroborated in videos verified by Human Rights Watch.

Security and intelligence forces have continued to carry out arrests of real and perceived dissidents. Those targeted include protesters, [lawyers](#), medical professionals, human rights defenders, students, schoolchildren, athletes, [journalists](#), political activists, environmentalists, and members of [ethnic](#) and religious minorities including [Baha'is](#).

Since the start of the protests, the IRIB and media outlets affiliated with the IRGC have broadcast hundreds of protesters' coerced "confessions." They further heighten fears that people whose forced "confessions" have been aired will face the death penalty, and arbitrary executions.

Coerced television "confessions" violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, the rights to presumption of innocence, and to a fair trial. The Islamic Republic has a long [history](#) of using coerced "confessions" to quash dissent and in cases leading to death sentences and arbitrary executions after grossly unfair trials.

Fears of a wave of death sentences and arbitrary, summary, and secret executions are growing in light of official statements and the [execution spree](#) of recent years. Since the start of the protests, officials have vilified protesters, repeatedly [referring](#) to them as "criminals", and *mohareb*, an individual "waging war against God," which is a capital offense.

UN member states should demand that Iran's authorities immediately release all those arbitrarily detained, disclose the fate and whereabouts of people forcibly disappeared, halt any planned executions, and allow independent international bodies, such as the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran, unhindered country access, including to prisons and detention facilities, hospitals, morgues, and cemeteries.

Governments with embassies in Iran should send high level observers to all capital trial proceedings and urgently request to visit to all sections of detention facilities.

“Systematic impunity has enabled Iranian authorities to repeatedly commit crimes under international law,” Saba said. “Other countries’ judicial authorities should initiate criminal investigations of international crimes under the principle of universal jurisdiction and in accordance with national laws, with a view to prosecute those suspected of criminal responsibility.”

Mass Arbitrary and Violent Arrests, Unlawful Detentions

Officials and state-affiliated media in Iran have stated that authorities have arrested [thousands](#) of people across the country, but independent rights organizations have [reported](#) that there have been tens of thousands of arrests.

Several sources who had spoken to people in prisons across the country said that authorities had emptied prison wards to hold detainees together and in isolation from other prisoners, in an apparent attempt to stop the flow of information.

Protest detainees are also held in unofficial detention facilities run by security and intelligence bodies, and other unregistered and secret locations, placing them at heightened risk of torture and arbitrary, summary, and secret executions. Iranian authorities have a track record of using secret, unofficial, and makeshift detention facilities, in particular during protest crackdowns, to hold detainees without registration.

Security forces have continued to arrest protesters on the streets, at checkpoints, and in home raids. A spokesperson for the Volunteer Committee to Follow-Up on the Situation of Detainees told Human Rights Watch that many people were arrested at home, days after they had participated in protests.

In one case, based on credible information received, Revolutionary Guard forces conducted an early morning raid on the house of Milad Ebrahimi, an injured protester in Kamyaran, Kurdistan and arrested him on February 1. The source said Ebrahimi sustained a gunshot wound during the protests but did not seek medical care at a hospital fearing arrest. Security forces also arrested his brother, Hamed Ebrahimi, for objecting to the arrest.

Witness statements and state media reports indicate that security forces have used video footage from CCTV cameras, and drones to identify those

participating in protests.

Relatives of detainees and lawyers interviewed said that the authorities prohibited access to lawyers during the investigation phase, consistent with authorities' decades-long pattern of denying detainees access to legal representation, including independent lawyers of their choice.

Under Note to Article 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, individuals charged with certain offenses, including national security offenses, are denied the right to access an independent lawyer of their own choosing. Only lawyers approved by the head of the judiciary can be appointed to defend them. The [UN Fact-Finding Mission](#) on Iran and human rights organizations have documented a pattern of complicity by many judiciary-approved lawyers in grave human rights violations. As a result, families and detainees have said they do not trust them.

"Detainees have no access to lawyers," a lawyer said. "Families do not want to retain Article 48 lawyers. Independent lawyers who go to officials to take on protest detainees' cases are told by the authorities, 'Are you an Article 48 lawyer? No? Then leave, you cannot take the case.'"

In practice, even in cases with judiciary-approved lawyers, detainees are denied access to legal counsel during the investigation phase including during interrogations.

Witnesses said that, consistent with their track record, authorities have also harassed families of detainees, warning them not to speak up or publicize the situation of their loved ones.

Incommunicado Detention; Enforced Disappearances

The authorities have held those arrested during and after the protests in incommunicado detention. In many cases those detained are forcibly disappeared, as authorities have refused to provide families with any information about their fate and whereabouts.

In one case, authorities arrested Youresh Mehrali Beiglou, an Azerbaijani Turk activist, on January 4 in or around Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province, after releasing a video in which he spoke about the protests. After the arrest and for a period of over a month, he was allowed to make only one brief phone call to his family, and they were denied information about his whereabouts.

Another Azerbaijani Turk activist, Ali Babai, was arrested on January 14. Other than one brief phone call informing his family that he was in an intelligence ministry detention facility, the authorities have denied his relatives information about his fate and whereabouts.

In Karaj, Alborz province, security forces raided Jahangir Kazemi's home on January 14 and arrested him. His family received two brief phone calls from Kazemi, who is reportedly held in solitary confinement, but has been denied visits and information about his situation. Kazemi's wife, Fatemeh Golmohammadi, was arrested on January 27. The couple, who have young children, have been denied access to a lawyer.

A relative of a detainee in a northern province, described the response of prosecution officials to detainees' families:

"When we ask officials at the prosecutor's office [about our loved one], they tell us, 'They are criminals, if they weren't, we would not have arrested them,' 'When we ask what their crime is, they respond, 'You yourselves know better.'"

Families have been gathering outside prisons, police stations, and prosecutors and governors' offices. Human Rights Watch has reviewed four videos showing such gatherings.

Researchers geolocated videos showing these scenes outside the county courthouse in Karaj, Alborz province, Qazvin Central Prison, Qazvin province, and outside the governor's office in Yasuj, Kohgiluyeh, and Boyer-Ahmad province.

Verified videos analyzed by Human Rights Watch from the provinces of Alborz, Esfahan, Lorestan, and Razavi Khorasan corroborated these accounts. Collectively, the videos show large numbers of armed security forces patrolling cities on foot or in vehicles, including trucks mounted with heavy machine guns, discharging weapons and using megaphones to order people to stay indoors.

In one video published online on January 29, and reported to have been recorded outside a police station in Kerman, concerned families are seen speaking to an official from behind a closed door, repeatedly saying that their loved ones are missing. One man is heard saying, "Why is there no one to answer us... my child has disappeared for 24 hours, but no one answers... is there not a manager, a supervisor, someone to step outside? So many people are here worried for their children."

Those forcibly disappeared may also include people who participated in protests but never returned home.

An informed source said that two of their students, a young man and a young woman, had remained disappeared since January 8, when they took part in the protests in Tehran: "The family knows they were in the

protests and has since been to all police stations, hospitals, and morgues, but there is no trace of them. They do not know if they are dead or alive.”

An activist outside Iran who has been in touch with relatives of detainees and the missing in the provinces of Ilam and Lorestan said that he was aware of 12 people who didn’t return from the protests. Human rights defenders and journalists provided similar accounts from other provinces.

In some cases, families have spoken publicly about their search for their loved ones. On February 1, Sekhavat Salimi, a former political prisoner, published a [video](#) online in which he said that he had searched for his son, Mohammadi Ali Salimi, for days after the family received a call informing them that he had been killed and they should collect his body: “For 10 to 15 days, I searched everywhere in Tehran and Karaj. I went to Kahrizak [morgue], and to Behest-e Zahra and Behesht-e Sakineh [cemeteries]. I searched for my son everywhere but did not find him or his body... There is no trace of him, I do not know what to do.”

Torture and Ill-Treatment

Security forces including FARAJA, Revolutionary Guards, the Ministry of Intelligence, and plainclothes agents, have tortured protesters, including on the streets during arrests and after restraining them and in detention facilities. These ongoing gross violations and crimes under international law are consistent with Iranian authorities’ decades-long record of torture.

Witnesses described violent arrests of protesters. A protester from Tehran said they had seen security forces severely beat a man they had arrested and restrained: “They had handcuffed him, covered his eyes with a medical mask, and sat him on a motorbike. There, right before everyone’s eyes, they started beating this fully defenseless man. They repeatedly struck him on the head with a baton and beat him on his back and arms.

Another source said security forces severely beat their relative, a 16-year-old boy, while restrained in a city in Khuzestan province, breaking one of his ribs, then left him on the street. The child had started running when security forces ordered him to stop.

A woman who was detained in a city in Razavi Khorasan said several agents violently arrested her while subjecting her to sexualized insults and profanities: “Suddenly, around five or six members of security forces attacked me and started beating me on the back of my head and neck with batons and gunstock. I am a small sized woman and there were six of them, all men. They handcuffed me from the back and made me lie on my stomach, faced down. Then they took me to their vehicle while constantly swearing at me and put my face on the trunk of the car. When I objected

to my arrest telling them that I had not done anything, they hit me in the face with a shield, and I got a bloodied nose.”

Human Rights Watch also analyzed videos depicting violent arrests. One video analyzed, published online on January 2 and said to be recorded in Neishabour, Razavi Khorasan, shows several uniformed and plainclothes security forces’ members beating a woman and pushing her into a private car.

Human Rights Watch also received credible information about violent home arrests, with security forces beating the person arrested as well as other family members. The relative of a detainee in Kermanshah province said that security forces beat his brother during the arrest, adding, “This is no exception, all arrests I know of have been violent and carried out with beatings.”

Based on witness accounts, informed sources, and reports by other [human rights organizations](#), security and intelligence forces have committed torture and other ill-treatment in detention facilities.

A detainee who was held in solitary confinement in Razavi Khorasan province said she could hear other detainees being tortured and saw young people beaten with batons. Accounts from Kermanshah and Fars provinces described severe beatings resulting in injuries and sexual and gender-based violence.

“Everyone you see has been horribly tortured,” a prisoner in central Iran said in a voice recording. ... “All [confessions] are coerced, they [authorities] would write up what they want themselves or would dictate what to write... and if you did not accept to sign, they would hit you with a shocker [electric shock weapon] on the head. You are sitting there blindfolded, shackled, and in handcuffs, encircled by several men, you would accept anything.”

An informed source said security forces arrested and beat a 16-year-old boy at his home in a northern province, then transferred him to detention facilities run by intelligence bodies where he was severely tortured and was denied food for 5 days. Security forces repeatedly beat him to the point he lost consciousness on four occasions. Relatives who were able to visit him days later saw bruises on his face but were not able to see his body as they were only allowed to speak to him behind a glass barrier.

People interviewed said that many protest detainees had wounds from metal pellets, or other injuries such as broken ribs, but were denied medical care in prison.

Human Rights Watch received credible information that the authorities pressured the Nobel Peace Laureate Narges Mohammadi, arbitrarily [detained since December 12](#), to condemn the protests that started on

December 28. According to the information, Mohammadi was tortured and otherwise ill-treated at the time of her arrest, including being severely beaten with sticks and batons causing injury to her head and her genital area.

Security forces also dragged her by her hair and threatened her with further violence. On February 7, a revolutionary court in Mashhad [sentenced](#) Mohammadi to seven years and six months in prison for vaguely worded national security offenses and supplementary punishments, including a two-year travel ban.

Forced Televised Confessions; Death Penalty Risk

Since January, the IRIB and state-affiliated media have aired hundreds of coerced “confessions” by protest detainees. Human Rights Watch reviewed 139 clips aired as of February 6.

These videos systematically label detainees “rioters,” “terrorists,” and “agents” of foreign intelligence services, prior to any judicial proceedings and when detainees are denied access to lawyers. Some were taken during arrests, on the streets, in buses or vehicles used to transfer detainees, and in police stations. They depict women, men, and children, often blindfolded and in handcuffs, “confessing” to “collaboration with enemies” and various offenses including some that carry the death penalty.

In at least two videos reviewed, two girls aged 16 are coerced into making self-incriminating statements, including that they had received foreign support and instructions. Another video shows a 16-year-old boy, introduced as a “leader of riots” making a coerced “confession.”

Several other videos also depict people who appear to be under the age of 18 and therefore likely children. In one video, two men interrogate a visibly terrified young person in handcuffs on the street, accusing him of carrying stones in his cross-body bag with the intention of throwing them at security forces.

In some videos, detained protesters make statements about engaging in conduct that falls under the exercise of human rights, including chanting slogans, inviting others to take to the streets to protest, writing slogans on the walls, filming the security forces’ use of force against protesters, and sharing footage and images of protests with Persian speaking media outside Iran.

In one video, a man, identified as Rasoul Salehi, is accused of having committed a “grave crime” by attending a peaceful gathering outside a government building in Yazdanshahr in Esfahan province and inviting

people to protest if authorities did not release the detainees. A video of the gathering, in which Salehi is seen giving a speech and demanding the release of detainees, widely circulated online in early January.

Amid a [surge](#) in acts of [persecution](#) against members of the Baha'is religious minority, including an increase in arrests and detentions, on February 1, the IRIB aired coerced "confessions" of three young adults, including two members of the Baha'i community, Venus Hosseininejad, arrested on January 8, and Peyvand Niami, arrested on January 15 in Kerman.

Consistent with [the authorities' long-standing campaign](#) of spreading disinformation and inciting hatred and discrimination against Baha'is, the video clip sought to portray them, among other youth, as members of an "organized, violent, and foreign-backed network" with links to "Zionist networks" and "Satanism."

According to information the Baha'i International Community provided to Human Rights Watch, at least 50 members of the Baha'i religious minority have been arrested between January 8 and February 13.

On February 4, in a [letter](#) published by media outlets outside Iran, Hosseininejad's parents wrote that they were refused information about the intelligence body that had arrested their daughter for 15 days and had only received three brief phone calls from her. In one of the calls, they wrote, Hosseininejad said that she had agreed to "cooperate" under "severe physical and mental pressures" by giving false confessions because she was "promised" that she would be released.

Human Rights Watch also reviewed footage in which Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje'i, the judiciary head, interrogated detainees, including a woman, in front of a camera. The interrogations were [reported](#) by state media to have been carried out during a five-hour visit he made to a detention facility. Two other officials, including the Tehran prosecutor, are shown in these videos.

Iran's laws criminalize a wide range of conduct that fall under the exercise of human rights, including some that are subject to the death penalty. Capital offenses also include acts that do not meet the threshold of the "most serious crimes," limited only to intentional killing, as well as vaguely worded charges that contravene the principle of legality, such as "waging war on God" and "corruption on earth".

A new law to "[Intensify the Punishment of Spies and Collaborators with the Zionist Regime and Hostile States](#)," adopted in 2025, has further expanded the scope of the death penalty. The law imposes capital punishment for a range of vaguely worded offenses pertaining to collaboration and cooperation with "hostile states" and further criminalizes and subjects to long prison terms acts such as "sending

footage, images or information to [media] networks, citizen journalists or online foreign [social media] pages where [such acts] contravene national security."

The sheer number of coerced "confessions" that have been aired, official statements that routinely describe protesters as "those waging war on God," and the authorities' increasing use of the death penalty [as a tool of political repression](#) give rise to growing concerns about a wave of death sentences and arbitrary executions against protest detainees in the coming weeks and months. These include child detainees, some of whom have already been charged with capital offenses. In flagrant violation of the absolute prohibition on the use of the death penalty against people under age 18, Iran's authorities continue to impose and implement death sentences against children.

De Facto Martial Law and Militarized Clampdown

In the days that followed the massacres, the authorities imposed curfews and enforced martial law-like restrictions across many cities while carrying out waves of arrests of real and perceived dissidents.

One protester from Tehran told Human Rights Watch that, "from 8 p.m., there was effective martial law. You could not really go out."

Interviewees said that security forces had set up and maintained checkpoints in cities and intra-city roads including the in provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, and Khuzestan.

Human Rights Watch has analyzed videos from several provinces corroborating these accounts.

In one video published online on January 15, 11 armed members of the security forces both in uniforms and plain clothes are seen along with a vehicle passing through a residential alley. The person who posted the video online said it was taken in Karaj, Alborz province. Due to the lack of geographic information, Human Rights Watch could not confirm the location. The forces are heard repeatedly warning through a megaphone that "no one should be near the windows," ordering residents to "go inside" and "part ways with the rioters."

Another video published online on January 20, and geolocated by Human Rights Watch to a city in Esfahan province, shows dozens of armed forces in uniforms and plain clothes with their faces covered patrolling a large street. The video shows four tan vehicles consistent with those used by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps mounted with heavy machine guns and four white Toyota pickup trucks carrying at least four armed men in each vehicle. The forces repeatedly shout "go inside" then chant slogans vowing obedience to the Supreme Leader. A burst of automatic gunfire

and other solo gunshots can be heard. One uniformed man in the back of a white pickup truck fires five shots into the air.

A third video, initially geolocated by a GeoConfirmed member, [AndyNovy](#), and analyzed by Human Rights Watch shows more than 40 members of the security forces in vehicles, motorbikes, and on foot in several locations along the Hashemiye Boulevard, Kowsar Boulevard, and Vakil Abad Highway, in Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan. The video was filmed at night from a moving car. No pedestrians could be clearly seen in the video.

Another video from Boroujerd, Lorestan province, published online on January 17, and geolocated by [Zaryon OSINT](#), shows a row of at least 15 military vehicles, including six-wheeled green trucks, trucks with pedestal-mounted heavy machine guns, and at least 22 members of the security forces armed with rifles along Takhti Boulevard. Riot police at an assembly point with vans nearby appear prepared to detain or arrest people. The number of vehicles and personnel indicates that the police action was deliberately planned and organized.

In the ongoing clampdown, authorities have targeted lawyers and medical professionals and other groups such as journalists, medical, students, human rights defenders, and members of ethnic and religious minorities.

On January 31, the domestic newspaper Shargh reported cases of eight detained lawyers, six of them arrested in the city of Shiraz, Fars province alone. As of February 16, the Volunteer Committee to Follow-Up on the Situation of Detainees had recorded [the names of 20 lawyers](#) arrested across the country since January 16.

Lawyers have also been held incommunicado and without access to their families and legal counsel. In an interview with a domestic newspaper, the lawyer for Shima Ghousheh, one of the first lawyers arrested, [stated](#) that he did not have access to his client and was not given any information about the charges against her.

Two lawyers who spoke with Human Rights Watch said that the real number of lawyers arrested across the country was higher and that each was aware of other arrested lawyers whose cases had not become public.

Authorities have also targeted medical professionals including doctors and nurses who have provided medical care to injured protesters in hospitals and private clinics, arbitrarily arresting them and subjecting them to enforced disappearances. As of February 16, the Volunteer Committee to Follow-Up on the Situation of Detainees had [published](#) the names of 39 medical professionals arrested across the country in connection with the protests.

A lawyer and a journalist interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that, in addition to large-scale arrests, intelligence bodies have been routinely

summoning real and perceived dissidents, including student activists and lawyers, and coercing them to sign statements that they would not engage in any forms of activism.

Correction

February 24, 2026: This version of the news release corrects the spelling of Khouzestan province.

Associated documents

Document ID 2137252 Translation / language version

24 February 2026 | [HRW – Human Rights Watch](#) (Author)

Iran

Article on arbitrary mass arrests, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance of protesters by security forces since 28 December 2025

[Iran: Welle willkürlicher Verhaftungen und gewaltsamem Verschwindenlassen](#) (Appeal or News Release, German)

de

[ID 2137254](#)

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24 February 2026 | [HRW – Human Rights Watch](#) (Author)

Iran

Article on arbitrary mass arrests, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance of protesters by security forces since 28 December 2025

[Iran : Tsunami d'arrestations arbitraires et de disparitions forcées](#) (Appeal or News Release, French)

fr

[ID 2137255](#)

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