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MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA DETENTION

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Iran: Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown

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- **Thousands arrested including children as young as 15**
- **Detainees subjected to enforced disappearance and torture**
- **At least 304 people killed in protests according to credible sources**

Iran's authorities are carrying out a vicious crackdown following the outbreak of nationwide protests on 15 November, arresting thousands of protesters as well as journalists, human rights defenders and students to stop them from speaking out about Iran's ruthless repression, said Amnesty International today.

The organization has carried out interviews with dozens of people inside Iran who described how, in the days and weeks during and following the protests, the Iranian authorities have held detainees incommunicado and subjected them to enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment.

At least 304 people were killed and thousands were injured between 15 and 18 November as authorities crushed protests using lethal force, according to credible reports compiled by the organization. The Iranian authorities have refused to announce a figure for those killed.

“Harrowing testimony from eyewitnesses suggests that, almost immediately after the Iranian authorities massacred hundreds of those participating in nationwide protests, they went on to orchestrate a wide-scale clampdown designed to instil fear and prevent anyone from speaking out about what happened,” said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa Research Director at Amnesty International.

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Philip Luther, Amnesty International

Video footage verified by Amnesty’s Digital Verification Corps, backed up by witness testimony, shows Iranian security forces opening fire on unarmed protesters who did not pose any imminent risk. The majority of the deaths that the organization has recorded occurred as a result of gunshots to the head, heart, neck and other vital organs indicating that the security forces were shooting to kill.

The UN has [stated](#) that it has information suggesting that at least 12 children are among those killed. According to Amnesty International’s research, they include 15-year-old Mohammad Dastankhah, who was shot in the heart in Shiraz, Fars province, as he passed by the protests on his way home from school, and 17-year-old Alireza Nouri, who was killed in Shahriar, Tehran province.

“Instead of continuing with this brutal campaign of repression, the Iranian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release all those who have been arbitrarily detained,” said Philip Luther.

“The international community must take urgent action, including through the UN Human Rights Council holding a special session on Iran to mandate an inquiry into the unlawful killings of protesters, horrifying wave of arrests, enforced disappearances and torture of detainees, with a view to ensuring accountability.”

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Wave of mass arrests

On 17 November, the third day of protests, state media reported that more than 1,000 protesters had been arrested. On 26 November, Hossein Naghavi Hosseini, a spokesperson for Iran's parliamentary committee for national security and foreign policy, said 7,000 people had been arrested. The authorities have yet to provide an official figure.

Several sources independently told Amnesty International that security forces are still carrying out raids across the country to arrest people in their homes and places of work.

Children as young as 15 have been detained alongside adults, including in Fashafouyeh prison, Tehran province, which is notorious for torture and other ill-treatment. Other places where detainees have been held are military barracks and schools.

Various government officials, including the Supreme Leader and the head of the judiciary, have labelled protesters as "villains" and "rioters" and associated protesters with foreign powers. State media has called for the death penalty to be used against protest "leaders".

Also being targeted for arbitrary arrest and detention are journalists, students and human rights defenders, including minority rights and labour rights activists, and people from ethnic minority groups.

Journalist Mohammad Massa'ed was arrested on 23 November after posting a tweet about the near-total internet shutdown imposed by the authorities between 16 November and around 24 November. He was released on bail several days later.

Activist Soha Mortezaei was one of dozens of students arrested during a protest at Tehran University on 18 November. She has been detained without access to her lawyer or family since. Security officials based in the university had previously threatened to torture her with electric shocks and detain her in a mental hospital.

Minority rights activists arrested include Akbar Mohajeri, Ayoub Shiri, Davoud Shiri, Babak Hosseini Moghadam, Mohammad Mahmoudi, Shahin Barzegar and Yashar Piri who were all arrested in their places of work in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province.

Some prisons and detention centres are now reported to be experiencing severe overcrowding. On 25 November, the head of the city council of Rey in Tehran province expressed concern to reporters that Fashafouyeh prison is extremely overcrowded and has neither the capacity nor the facilities to accommodate such large numbers of detainees.

At least two people who participated in the protests told Amnesty International they are in hiding fearing for their lives and said many others are in a similar situation.

One person said: “I have been in hiding since I was seen and filmed by the security forces at the protests. They beat me with a baton before I escaped. I am now in hiding with a serious leg injury. I am not safe because they have gone to my house to arrest me. My situation right now is no different to being in prison.”

While some of those arrested have been released, many remain detained incommunicado, denied access to their families and lawyers. A number of families told Amnesty International they are deeply concerned about loved ones who require access to medical treatment, given the authorities’ appalling track record of [denying medical care](#) to people in prisons.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Eyewitness accounts and video evidence indicate that some detainees have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including through beatings and floggings. One person said that a family member who was released on bail emerged with bruises and cuts to his face and head and is so traumatized from his experience that he refuses to leave the house.

One [video](#) verified and geolocated by the Digital Verification Corps shows handcuffed detainees being taken into the grounds of Mali Abad police station in Shiraz, Fars province, and then beaten, punched and kicked by security forces.

“ Without urgent international pressure thousands will remain at risk of torture and other ill-treatment ”

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Credible sources have informed Amnesty International that in Raja’i Shahr prison in Karaj, Alborz province, hundreds of detainees, including children, were brought in trucks to the prison. They say that handcuffed and blindfolded detainees have been punched, kicked, flogged and beaten with batons by security forces on a daily basis.

Victims and eyewitnesses have also told Amnesty International that Iranian security forces have raided hospitals and medical centres across the country, arresting injured protesters and transferring them to detention centres, thereby denying them access to potentially life-saving medical care.

One source said that intelligence officials forced managers of a hospital in Khuzestan province to provide them with a list of names of newly admitted patients.

Another man described how he was arrested by plain-clothes officers [Open Graph](#) as he was about to be discharged from a hospital in Alborz province after being treated for a gunshot wound to the stomach. He said he saw “many other people with gunshot wounds and other injuries” at the detention centre.

“The authorities have an obligation to protect all detainees from torture and other ill-treatment. Given the systematic use of torture in Iran, it is crucial that the authorities provide UN officials, mandate holders, and other relevant experts immediate access to detention centres and prisons to conduct fact-finding investigations,” said Philip Luther.

“Without urgent international pressure thousands will remain at risk of torture and other [ill-treatment](#).”

Enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention

In dozens of cases reported to Amnesty International, detainees have had little or no contact with their families since their arrest and some have been held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance, which is a crime under international law.

Relatives have told the organization they have visited police stations, prosecution offices, Revolutionary Courts, prisons and other detention centres to search for loved ones who have been forcibly disappeared but the authorities are refusing to provide them with information.

The mothers of a group of minority rights activists who were arrested during raids in East Azerbaijan province and West Azerbaijan province said the authorities said they had “no intention” to provide them with information. “We can do whatever we want with your children. We can detain them for however long we want, even for 10 years... We will execute them and you will not be able to do anything about it,” one official said.

Those subjected to enforced disappearance include Kurdish labour rights activist Bakhtiar Rahimi, who was arrested at his place of work in Marivan, Kurdistan province, on 27 November. There has been no news of his fate or whereabouts since. This is especially worrying since he suffers from kidney and heart problems and needs daily medication and specialist health care.

“The world must not stand by in silence as the Iranian authorities continue to commit widespread human rights violations in their ruthless bid to crush dissent,” said Philip Luther.

To read the Persian language version of this press release please click [here](#)

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