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2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Islamic Republic of Iran's already severe restrictions on human rights worsened in a number of areas during the year. The government executed hundreds of prisoners, including many who confessed under torture and faced unfair trials. There were new cases of violent enforcement of women's dress code restrictions. While some political prisoners, including persons detained in connection with protests related to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, were released from prison, other participants in the protests were arrested, sentenced to prison and death, subjected to torture, or executed during the year. Restrictions on religious freedom were severe during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious abuses in a conflict; unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict by the government for its own use and use by terrorist groups throughout the region such as Iran-aligned militia groups in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and the former government of then President Bashar Assad in Syria; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence and threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; restrictions of religious freedom; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1.

Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. These included executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of “most serious crimes” or for crimes committed by juvenile offenders, as well as executions after trials without due process.

Media and human rights groups documented allegations of deaths in custody due to actions by security forces. In January, the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) reported law enforcement officials in Kermanshah tortured Kurdish-Iranian citizen Payam Abdi to death. KHRN reported police notified Abdi’s family of his death several days after his arrest.

Although many individuals were reportedly executed during the year for homicide, the law also provided for the death penalty in cases of conviction for attempts against the security of the state, outrage against high-ranking officials, *moharebeh* (which had a variety of broad interpretations, including “waging war against God”), and *fisad fil-arz* (“corruption on earth,” including apostasy or heresy, rape, adultery, recidivist alcohol use, consensual same-sex sexual conduct, working to undermine the Islamic establishment, cooperating with foreign agents or entities, or insults against the memory of Imam Ruhollah Khomeini or against the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic). Prosecutors frequently charged political dissidents and journalists with the capital offense of “waging war against God” and accused them of struggling against the precepts of Islam or struggling against the state upholding those precepts.

The government sometimes punished those found guilty of minor or nonviolent drug-related charges with death. The Abdorrahman Boroumand Center reported 58 percent of executions carried out between January and mid-August were for drug-related offenses. In April, NGO Amnesty International reported drug-related executions, often carried out in secret with no prior notification given to the family, made up more than half of the 853 executions in 2023. The Baluch minority accounted for 29 percent of drug-related executions despite being only approximately 5 percent of the population.

In August, authorities executed Reza Rasaei, who belonged to the Kurdish and Yaresan ethnic and religious minorities, according to *IranWire* and other media outlets. Following his initial arrest, Rasaei was denied legal counsel and subjected to beatings, electric shocks, suffocation, and sexual violence. He gave a forced confession regarding his supposed participation in the killing of an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officer at a Woman, Life, Freedom protest, according to Amnesty International.

Members of marginalized ethnic communities, in particular the Baluch minority, were overrepresented among those executed. Of the 364 individuals the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center reported were executed between January and mid-August, minorities made up 27 percent. Nearly 10 percent of those executed were from the Baluch ethnic group. NGOs noted the real number of persons executed during the year was likely much higher than the government publicly acknowledged. Even for executions the government made public, officials often did not release information such as names, dates, or the crimes for which individuals had been executed.

Islamic law, as interpreted and applied by the country's judicial system, allowed for the execution of juvenile offenders, starting at the legal age of "maturity" (age nine for girls and 13 for boys). In September, the NGO Iran Human Rights reported the country executed 71 child offenders since 2010.

According to human rights organizations and media reports, the government carried out some executions by cruel and inhuman practices, including public execution and hanging by cranes, in which prisoners were lifted from the ground by their necks and died slowly by asphyxiation. Iran Human Rights reported two unnamed men were publicly hanged in September for armed robbery. Adultery remained punishable by stoning to death, although the head of the judiciary instructed judges to impose a moratorium on stoning in 2002 and no stoning sentences were carried out since 2010.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion.

The law directed authorities to prioritize population growth. These policies included measures such as outlawing voluntary sterilization and banning the free distribution of contraceptives by the public health-care system. The law also stipulated that content on family planning in university textbooks should be replaced with materials on an "Islamic-Iranian lifestyle," with a framework drawn up in cooperation with religious seminaries and the Islamic Propaganda Organization.

c. War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Evidence of Acts that May Constitute Genocide, or Conflict-Related Abuses

In its March report, the UN's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran concluded that many of the government's actions in response to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement amounted to crimes against humanity. The UN's Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran published a report in July that characterized the government's actions in the 1980s as crimes against humanity and genocide, the latter committed against religious minority groups, in particular members of the Baha'i Faith. The U.S. government had not determined that crimes against humanity or genocide have occurred.

Section 2.

Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, except when deemed "detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public." According to the law, engaging in "any type of propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran or in support of opposition groups and associations" was punishable by three months to one year of imprisonment.

The nonbinding Charter on Citizens' Rights – signed in 2016 by then President Hassan Rouhani – acknowledged the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression, including the right to seek, receive, publish, and communicate views and information, using any means of communication. The charter was not implemented as of year's end.

The government largely controlled the country's media. According to NGO Reporters Without Borders, the constitution protected press freedom but the 1986 press law enabled authorities to prevent journalists from "endangering the Islamic Republic" or "offending the clergy and the supreme leader."

The law provided for prosecution of persons accused of instigating crimes against the state, crimes against national security, or insulting Islam. Blasphemy was a criminal offense. The government severely restricted freedom of speech and of the press. Authorities used the law to intimidate or prosecute persons who directly criticized the government, raised human rights concerns, or questioned the government's enforcement of the morality code.

Authorities did not permit individuals to publicly criticize the country's system of government, supreme leader, or official religion. Security forces and the judiciary punished those who violated these restrictions, as well as those who publicly criticized the president, supreme leader, cabinet, or parliament.

The government monitored meetings, movements, and communications of its citizens and threatened individuals with arrest or punishment for the expression of ideas or images the authorities viewed as violations of the morality code.

In February, security forces raided the newsroom of the *Farda-e-Eghtesad* economic newspaper and prevented some journalists from leaving for days, according to NGO Reporters without Borders and other human rights organizations. Multiple journalists were subsequently arrested and then released, including Deputy Editor Ali Tasnimi. Police did not provide any information about why the newsroom was raided. The government-sponsored media outlet *Mizan* issued a statement that the raid and arrests were “not related to their journalistic and media activities.”

In March, a Tehran court sentenced political prisoner Shahriar Bayat to public hanging for “insulting the prophet,” according to human rights organizations and news outlets. Human rights organization Hengaw reported Bayat was initially arrested in 2022 in connection with his support for the Woman, Life, Freedom protests. Hengaw further reported police interrogators attributed several “incriminating” social media posts and images to Bayat, although Bayat denied any connection to the content.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

The government and its agents harassed, detained, abused, and prosecuted publishers, editors, and journalists and members of their families, including those involved in internet-based media, for their reporting on topics considered sensitive by the government.

In February, a court sentenced journalist Saba Azarpeik to two years in prison and a ban on social media activities for publishing “falsehoods, defamation, and threats,” following complaints from government officials regarding her reporting on the financial misconduct of government officials, according to reporting by Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), *IranWire*, and *Iran International*.

According to an April report by the NGO Defending Free Flow of Information, authorities prosecuted at least 91 journalists from January to March, sentencing 24 to a cumulative 14 years and seven months in prison, with fines totaling more than \$15 million. The most common

accusation against journalists was “publishing lies to disturb public opinion.”

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

The government's Press Supervisory Board regulated media content and publication, including the issuance of press licenses. The board sometimes revoked or did not renew press licenses in response to articles critical of the government or for those who were incarcerated for political reasons.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance reviewed all potential publications, including foreign printed materials, prior to their domestic release and could deem books unpublishable, remove text, or require edits. Independent print media companies existed, but the government severely limited their operations. During the year, the government banned, blocked, closed, or censored publications deemed critical of officials. According to a report by the Tehran Electronic Trade Association, many of the most popular websites available via the global internet were inaccessible due to filtering or blocking by authorities. Many websites of popular international news outlets, the political opposition, ethnic and religious minority groups, and human rights organizations were inaccessible.

The government controlled cinema, music, theater, and art exhibits, and censored those productions it deemed to transgress Islamic values. According to the NGO Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), the nine-member film review council of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance – consisting of clerics, former directors, former parliamentarians, and academics – had to approve the content of every film before production and again before public presentation. Films could be barred arbitrarily from presentation even if all appropriate permits were received in advance. The government censored or banned films deemed to promote secularism and those containing what the government deemed to be un-Islamic ideas concerning women's rights, unethical behavior, drug abuse, violence, or alcohol.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance was required to approve song lyrics, music, and album covers to ensure they complied with the country's moral values, although many underground musicians released albums without seeking such permission.

In April, a court in Esfahan sentenced rapper Toomaj Salehi to death on charges of “spreading corruption on earth,” according to media reports. Salehi was initially arrested in 2022 after releasing lyrics that criticized the government for a “year of colossal failure” and sharing videos on his Instagram account in support of public protests. He was released on bail in November 2023 but was rearrested after releasing a video describing

how he was tortured while in custody. His death sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court in June, charges against him were dropped in August, and he was released from detention in December.

In July, courts summoned 100 individuals in connection with cases against two Telegram channels and 500 Instagram accounts accused of promoting the boycott of the July presidential elections, according to media reports. The judiciary also filed charges against media outlets *Hashiye News* and *Bamdad-e-No* for “spreading false news” as part of their election coverage.

Private broadcasting was severely restricted since it required obtaining a rarely granted permit. The government maintained an effective monopoly over all television and radio broadcasting facilities through Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, a government agency. Radio and television programming, the principal source of news for many citizens, particularly in rural areas with limited internet access, reflected the government’s political and socioreligious ideology.

The government jammed satellite broadcasts, a continuous practice since at least 2003. Satellite dishes were illegal but ubiquitous. Those who distributed, used, or repaired satellite dishes were subject to fines.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance severely limited and controlled foreign media organizations’ ability to work in the country. Before granting visas, the ministry required foreign correspondents to provide detailed travel plans and topics of proposed stories. The ministry limited the ability of foreign correspondents to travel within the country and forced them to work with a local “minder.”

The government censored publications that criticized official actions or contradicted official views or versions of events. The official Islamic Republic News Agency determined the main topics and types of news to be covered, and distributed topics required for reporting directly to various media outlets, according to the IHRDC. Categories of information that authorities singled out for censorship included discussions of women’s rights, the situation of minorities, reports of government corruption, and references to mistreatment of detainees. Authorities also banned national and international media outlets from covering demonstrations.

Through arrests and imprisonments, officials routinely intimidated journalists into practicing self-censorship. Public officials often filed criminal complaints against newspapers, and the Press Supervisory Board referred such complaints to the Press Court for further action including possible closure, suspension, and fines. The judicial system and other government entities often overtly censored journalists who had been imprisoned in the past.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law allowed workers to form and join independent unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct legal strikes, but did not prohibit antiunion discrimination. The law stated workers could establish an Islamic labor council or a guild at any workplace, but the rights and responsibilities of these organizations fell significantly short of international standards for trade unions.

The government did not effectively enforce all applicable labor laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers. While labor unions were not explicitly forbidden by law, registration as a civil society organization was typically denied for independent labor unions.

The law required prior authorization for organizing and concluding collective agreements and for conducting strikes. In practice, the Ministry of Interior did not provide permits for conducting strikes, rendering them illegal. Private-sector workers could conduct “peaceful” campaigns within the workplace. The law did not apply to establishments with fewer than 10 employees.

The government severely restricted freedom of association and interfered in worker attempts to organize by arresting and jailing individuals for union activities, and restricted workers’ right to collective bargaining. The law did not prohibit antiunion discrimination and did not require reinstatement of workers fired for union activity.

Penalties for violations of laws protecting freedom of association and the right to strike were less than those under other laws involving denials of civil rights. Penalties were rarely applied against violators. Courts often labeled strikes and labor protests as security threats.

The government harassed trade union leaders, labor rights activists, and journalists during crackdowns on protests and strikes. According to NGO and media reports, several trade unionists, including members of teachers’ unions, petroleum industry workers’ unions, and bus drivers’ unions, were imprisoned or detained for their peaceful activism. Independent trade unionists were subjected to arbitrary arrest, tortured, and if convicted, subjected to lengthy prison sentences.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), a court sentenced labor activist Sharifeh Mohammadi to death for “armed rebellion against the state” following her December 2023 arrest. The arrest was communicated to Mohammedi’s husband on July 4.

According to CHRI, labor councils, which consisted of representatives of workers and a representative of management, were essentially management-run unions that undermined worker efforts to maintain independent unions. The councils, nevertheless, sometimes could block layoffs and dismissals. There was no representative worker organization for noncitizen workers.

According to international media reports, security forces responded with threats, arbitrary arrests, and violence when workers attempted to organize or conduct strikes. Strikes and worker protests occurred across the country throughout the year, often prompting a heavy police response.

According to Zamaneh Media, security forces arrested dozens of union activists and members of labor organizations in the run-up to the May 1 International Workers Day. Despite threats from security officials that these prisoners could face new charges for engaging in activities for International Workers Day, 12 prisoners in Evin Prison issued a joint letter on labor rights.

Security forces attacked and arrested teachers who participated in rallies in several cities to mark Teachers' Day on May 2, according to human rights groups.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law provided for a national minimum wage for all sectors of the economy. According to a January report by *Iran International*, the poverty line for Tehran residents was approximately 300 million rials (\$600) per month, while the monthly minimum wage was only 115 million rials (\$230). In March, the government announced a 35 percent increase in the minimum wage. Labor representatives criticized the small scale of the increase, as official statistics estimated annual inflation at 42.5 percent. Labor groups reported that even with the increase, the minimum wage was less than half of what would be required to support a family in Tehran.

The law established a maximum six-day, 44-hour workweek with a weekly rest day, at least 12 days of paid annual leave, and several paid public holidays. Any hours worked above that total entitled a worker to overtime pay. The law mandated a payment above the hourly wage to employees for any accrued overtime and stipulated that overtime work was not

compulsory. The law did not cover workers in workplaces with fewer than 10 workers, nor did it apply to noncitizens.

Employers sometimes subjected migrant workers, most often Afghans, to abusive working conditions, including salaries below minimum wage, nonpayment of wages, and compulsory overtime. Migrant workers were vulnerable to summary deportation.

According to media reports, many workers continued to be employed on temporary contracts, under which they lacked protections available to full-time, noncontract workers. These workers were ineligible for benefits or insurance and could be dismissed at will. By law, the length of employment contracts for all legally residing foreigners was set at one year, with the potential for extension.

Low wages, nonpayment of wages, and lack of job security due to contracting practices continued to contribute to strikes and protests, which occurred throughout the year, particularly among workers on temporary contracts.

Despite mandatory overtime being illegal, the government subjected nurses to mandatory overtime, leading to an increase in depression, suicide, and sudden death, according to a human rights organization. Security forces used excessive force to crack down on nurses who protested working conditions, according to media reports.

Occupational Safety and Health

Little information was available regarding labor inspections and related law enforcement activity. While the law provided for occupational safety and health (OSH) standards, the government did not effectively enforce the standards. The law stated inspections could be done day or night, without prior notice, and that sanctions could be initiated. Inspections of family businesses required written permission of the local prosecutor. Inspectors could report violations to the labor department and issue a notice of violation to the violating enterprise. The law did not provide workers the right to remove themselves from a hazardous workplace without jeopardizing their employment.

Labor organizations reported hazardous work environments resulted in the deaths of hundreds of workers annually. Work-related incidents were most common in the construction sector, followed by heavy industry, mining, the service sector, small workshops, municipal services, agriculture, and animal husbandry.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

Information was unavailable on whether penalties for OSH, wage, and hour violations were commensurate with those for similar crimes such as fraud or negligence. The government did not effectively enforce minimum

wage, overtime, and OSH laws, and there were no reports of penalties being applied against violators. Responsibility for identifying unsafe situations rested with the technical protection and occupational health committee of workplaces designated by the Ministry of Labor. The number of labor inspectors was insufficient to enforce compliance.

In 2020, the Iranian National Tax Administration estimated the informal economy to have reached 37.7 percent of GDP. The government claimed to enforce labor laws in the informal sector, while some NGOs reported it did not.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were numerous reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. Plainclothes officials seized lawyers, journalists, and activists without warning, and government officials refused to acknowledge custody or provide information on them. In most cases, the government made no efforts to prevent, investigate, or punish such acts.

Political activist Ebrahim Babaei remained forcibly disappeared since 2021. According to media reports and NGOs, multiple persons disappeared during the protests in the fall of 2022 following the death of Mahsa Zhina Amini in the custody of the “morality police.” According to the NGO United for Iran, the whereabouts of Iman Valadbeigi and Reza Abbasi were unknown since they disappeared in 2023.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

Although the constitution prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention, the government generally did not observe these requirements. Detainees could appeal their detention in court but were not entitled to compensation for arbitrary detention.

The government used house arrest without due process to restrict movement and communication. At year’s end, former presidential candidates Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, as well as Mousavi’s wife, Zahra Rahnavard, remained without formal charges under house arrest imposed in 2011. While some media reports indicated President Masoud Pezeshkian had negotiated Karroubi’s release, Karroubi reportedly remained under house arrest at year’s end. Security forces restricted their access to visitors and information.

Authorities commonly used arbitrary arrests to impede alleged antigovernment activities. Plainclothes officers arrived unannounced at homes or offices, conducted raids, arrested persons, and confiscated private documents, passports, computers, electronic media, and other personal items without warrants or assurances of due process.

In July, mandatory hijab opponent Sepideh Rashnu was summoned to begin a prison sentence of three years and seven months in connection with her refusal to cover her head while riding a public bus in 2022, according to CHRI. CHRI reported Rashnu was charged on fabricated national security charges.

International media and human rights organizations documented dual nationals enduring arbitrary and prolonged detention on politically motivated charges. Dual nationals, like other citizens, faced a variety of violations of fair trial guarantees and other human rights abuses, including lack of prompt access to a lawyer of their choosing, summary trials during which they were not allowed to defend themselves, and denial of timely medical treatment.

In July, Amnesty International reported Swedish-Iranian academic Ahmadreza Djalali was at grave risk of execution after exhausting all legal options to overturn his death sentence. Djalali was arrested and charged with espionage, a claim he denied, when he arrived in the country to deliver a lecture at the University of Tehran in 2016. Amnesty International characterized his trial as grossly unfair.

Pretrial detention was often arbitrarily lengthy, particularly in cases involving alleged violations of national security laws. Instances of unjust and arbitrary pretrial detention were commonplace and well documented throughout the year. According to HRW, a judge could prolong detention at his discretion, and pretrial detentions often lasted for months. In May, *IranWire* reported two women held in Evin Prison, Varisheh Moradi and Pakshian Azizi, went on hunger strikes to protest their detention without trial. The women were initially arrested in August 2023. Moradi was arrested on charges of “armed rebellion,” while Azizi was accused of “membership in antiregime groups.” Aziz was tried and sentenced to death in August.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State’s annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State’s annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3.

Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the constitution prohibited all forms of torture “for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information,” use of physical and mental torture to coerce confessions was prevalent, especially during pretrial detention, including in cases of detained protesters. NGOs and international media reported security forces and prison personnel tortured, beat, raped, and abused detainees and prisoners throughout the year.

Commonly reported methods of torture and abuse in prisons included threats of execution, rape, and sexual assault; threats of rape of prisoners or their family members; forced vaginal and anal examinations; sleep deprivation; waterboarding; suspension; forced ingestion of chemical substances; deliberate deprivation of medical care; electroshock, including the shocking of genitals; burnings; the use of pressure positions; and severe and repeated beatings.

Authorities deliberately misled condemned prisoners and their loved ones into believing release was imminent, only to then carry out executions, according to human rights organizations.

Courts imposed corporal punishments, including flogging. Blinding, stoning, and amputation were legal means of punishment. At least 148 crimes were punishable by flogging, while 20 could carry the penalty of amputation.

In January, Kurdish-Iranian woman Roya Heshmati announced on Facebook that she had been lashed 74 times on January 3 following her conviction and sentencing for posting a picture on social media in which she was shown without a hijab, according to media reports. Heshmati reported officers flogged her shoulders, back, buttocks, and legs, and a woman officer forcibly placed a scarf on Heshmati’s head during the punishment.

Human rights organizations frequently cited several prison facilities for their use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents, including Evin Prison in Tehran, Rajai Prison in Karaj, Greater Tehran Penitentiary, Qarchak Prison, Adel Abad Prison, Vakilabad Prison, Zahedan Prison, Esfahan Central Prison (Dastgerd), and Orumiyeh Prison. Wards 209 and Two of Evin Prison, reportedly controlled by the IRGC, were particularly cited. Authorities also allegedly maintained informal secret prisons and detention centers outside the national prison system, where abuse reportedly occurred.

Human rights groups accused regular and paramilitary security forces such as the Basij of committing numerous human rights abuses, including torture, forced disappearances, and acts of violence against protesters and bystanders at public demonstrations. The government generally viewed protesters, critical journalists, and human rights activists as

engaged in efforts to undermine the 1979 revolution and consequently rarely punished security forces for abuses against those persons, even when the abuses violated domestic law.

NGOs reported widespread police abuse of Afghans, especially undocumented migrants. According to some NGO reports, police frequently rounded up Afghan migrants at their workplaces and detained them for days or months, in some cases beating them or coercing them to hand over cash or belongings. In August, police detained a hearing-impaired Afghan boy, age 15, and pinned him to the ground, causing injuries that required medical treatment, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).

Impunity remained a widespread problem throughout all security forces. The attorney general was responsible for investigating and punishing security force abuses, but investigations often lacked transparency, and there were few reports of government actions to discipline abusers.

According to *IranWire* and human rights NGOs, guards beat prisoners during raids on wards, performed nude body searches in front of other prisoners, and threatened prisoners' families. Media and NGOs reported deaths in custody and prisoner-on-prisoner violence, which authorities sometimes failed to control.

There were reports security forces incited, perpetrated, or condoned sex-based violence. There were numerous reports of sexual abuse, rape, and threats of rape against prisoners and detainees. According to a July 15 statement by the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, six imprisoned women activists were arrested, threatened with rape and death, and tortured during interrogations. In May, a court upheld the prison sentences of the women: Forough Saminia, Shiva Shahsiah, Negin Rezaei, Azadeh Chavoshian, Matin Yazdani, and Jelveh Javaheri.

NGO PEN America reported 2023 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Narges Mohammadi collapsed and fainted after security forces repeatedly punched her in the chest following a prison yard protest against executions in August. She was subsequently denied timely medical treatment. After surgery to remove a suspected cancerous growth on her leg in November, Mohammadi was granted a 21-day release in early December, well short of the three-month home recovery time urged by her doctors. For a year prior to this release, Mohammadi had been denied contact with her family. At year's end, Mohammadi remained on medical release.

In most cases, authorities did not conduct credible investigations into allegations of inhuman conditions or suspicious deaths in custody.

There was no explicit law against female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). FGM/C was most prevalent in the provinces of Kurdistan, Hormozgan, West Azerbaijan, and Kermanshah, according to Radio Zamaneh. Equality Now estimated FGM/C prevalence was 30-50 percent in some communities. In a 2016 academic survey of women in one community in West Azerbaijan Province, more than 70 percent reported being victims of FGM/C. Activists said nongovernmental public awareness campaigns reduced the rate of FGM/C, but authorities had not supported these efforts.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

The law did not prohibit all of the worst forms of child labor and authorities did not effectively enforce the prohibitions that did exist. The labor law prohibited the employment of children aged 15 and younger. By law, teenagers ages 16 to 19 could be employed if they were evaluated by the government's Social Security Organization and found medically fit for work.

Labor laws limited working hours to 44 hours per week and required that children ages 15 to 18 work half an hour less per day than adults. Children working in the informal sector were not protected by labor laws. There were no reports of violators of child labor laws being held accountable. There was limited information on whether penalties were commensurate with or less than those for analogous crimes.

Laws lacked clarity regarding the following: forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale of children or child sex trafficking; debt bondage and serfdom; forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring, or offering of a child for commercial sex, for the production of pornography, or for pornographic purposes; and the use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs.

Children's rights activists estimated there were approximately three million working children.

Child Soldiers

The U.S. Secretary of State determined Iran had governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces and government-supported armed groups that recruited or used child soldiers during the period of April 2023 to March 2024. See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Child Marriage

The legal minimum age of marriage was 13 for girls and 15 for boys, but girls as young as age nine could be married with permission from a court and their fathers. The law considered sex within marriage consensual by definition, including in cases of forced marriage. *IranWire* reported in May that the incidence of child marriage had been rising since 2019. According to HRANA, the Statistical Center of Iran reported in 2023 that at least 27,000 girls under the age of 15 were married in the prior year. According to the government's Registration Organization, in April 2022, there were 1,474 babies born to mothers ages 10 to 14. According to human rights organizations, the increase in child marriage was due in part to a government "marriage loan" program providing financial relief to poor families who wanted to marry off their girls.

c. Protection to Refugees

While the government cooperated with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in providing protection and assistance to refugees, it lacked an effective screening system to identify refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR reported in July that according to information available to the United Nations, as of 2022, the government recognized 761,000 Afghan refugees under a system known as *Amayesh*, through which authorities provided refugees with cards identifying them as de facto refugees. The country also recognized 12,000 Iraqi refugees under a similar system known as *Hoviat*. A survey by the Ministry of Interior in 2022, locally called a "head count," registered 2.6 million undocumented Afghan nationals in the country. These "head-counted" Afghans received slips that provided them a form of protection against refoulement, and UNHCR considered these individuals to be in "refugee-like" status.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for providing protection to refugees. The right to seek political asylum was incorporated into the 1979 constitution, based on the 1963 "Regulation Relating to Refugees." The regulation specified that asylum should be granted if the application had not been made in bad faith and the purpose of the application was not to seek employment.

The Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs, an agency under the Ministry of Interior, held legal responsibility for registering asylum seekers, processing asylum applications, and issuing refugee identification cards. In practice, during the reporting period, the National Organization for Migration (NOM) oversaw these procedures, despite the fact that the legislation formally creating NOM remained pending at the end of the year.

Amayesh cards enabled refugees to access basic services, facilitated the issuance of conditional work permits, and served as a relative safeguard against arrest and deportation. NGO sources reported Amayesh cards, which were valid for only one year, were increasingly difficult to renew and could be prohibitively expensive for refugees to maintain, due to high annual renewal fees and reports of demanded bribes. Furthermore, NGO sources reported it was almost impossible during the year for newly arrived Afghans to apply for Amayesh status, even if they had valid protection concerns.

Resettlement

By law, refugees could obtain Iranian nationality if they had reached the age of 18, had resided five years in the country (continuously or intermittently), were not deserters from military service, and had not been convicted in any country of nonpolitical major misdemeanors or felonies. Additionally, refugees could naturalize through marriage to an Iranian national, although for male refugees this process was not automatic. In August, UNHCR reported that in 2023 it worked with the government to resettle 3,274 refugees to third countries and facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 460 Afghan individuals.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

The law recognized Jews as a religious minority and provided for their representation in parliament. According to the Tehran Jewish Committee, the country's population included an estimated 9,000 Jews.

Members of the Jewish community were reportedly subjected to government restrictions and discrimination. Government officials, including the supreme leader, president, and other top officials, routinely engaged in egregious antisemitic rhetoric and Holocaust denial and distortion. Supreme Leader Khamenei's social media accounts repeatedly contained antisemitic attacks and tropes. State-run media routinely claimed "Zionists" influenced Western nations on topics affecting Iran and blamed "Zionists," among others, for fomenting unrest in the country.

The government remained a major source of funding and support for Hamas, Hizballah, and the Houthis, all of which espoused antisemitic ideologies, including explicit calls for the killing of Jews.

According to NGO reports, school textbooks included content that incited hatred against Jews as part of the state curricula for history, religion, and social studies.

For further information on incidents of antisemitism in the country, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief,

see the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

The government was alleged to have killed or kidnapped persons and used violence and threats of violence against individuals in other countries to force their return to Iran and for other purposes of politically motivated reprisal.

Extraterritorial Killing, Kidnapping, or Violence or Threats of Violence

Several Iranian journalists living and working in Europe reported violence or threats of violence directed by the Iranian government. In March, unknown assailants stabbed United Kingdom-based *Iran International* journalist Pouria Zeraati near his home in London, according to media reports. *Iran International* reported its journalists had faced threats from the Iranian government since 2022, including its Sweden-based journalist Mehran Abbasian, who was relocated to a safehouse after Swedish police identified "serious" threats against him in June. Abbasian told *Iran International* the Iranian government had ordered a criminal group to assassinate him and a colleague.

In October, authorities announced the execution of German-Iranian dissident Jamshid Sharmahd. Following German government condemnation, Iran backtracked and claimed Sharmahd died before the execution was carried out. Iranian authorities kidnapped Sharmahd in Dubai in 2020 and forcibly took him to Iran, according to media reports. CHRI reported Sharmahd was subjected to torture and prolonged solitary confinement prior to his execution.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion

The government employed a range of tactics to exert pressure on or exact reprisal against individuals located outside the country, including harassment, intimidation, and surveillance, according to multiple NGO sources. The government frequently threatened the Iran-based parents, siblings, and other relatives of individuals living outside the country.

In January, *IranWire* reported senior Iranian officials issued kidnapping and death threats against exiled Iranian soccer player Ali Karimi. Karimi, who lived in the United Arab Emirates, publicly supported the Woman, Life, Freedom protests. Reza Naqipour, who was head of the Office of Ceremonies at the Iranian Presidential Office and previously chief of security for the Iranian Football Federation, wrote on Instagram: "One day you [Karimi] will return the way that we like, not the way you like." Naqipour also used the hashtag "RuhollahZam," alluding to an Iranian journalist who was kidnapped in Iraq, brought to Iran, and executed.

Efforts to Control Mobility

The government denied consular services, including passport renewal, to Iranian citizens living outside the country who were deemed to be opponents of the government. In February, *IranWire* reported Iranian embassies in Spain and Czechia refused to renew the passports of Iranians who participated in protests critical of the Iranian government or worked for foreign media organizations.

Bilateral Pressure

Iran reportedly sought the cooperation of Iraqi and Turkish authorities in securing the extradition of individuals considered hostile to the government, according to human rights activists. According to KHRN, in September, police forces affiliated with the Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan political party handed over Iranian-Kurdish asylum seeker Behzad Khosravi to Iranian authorities. Khosravi's family said Iraqi Kurdistan authorities informed them of the handover. The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran confirmed that Khosravi was a member and claimed he had been extradited by authorities in Sulaymaniya.

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