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World Report 2025 - Iran

In May, Ebrahim Raeesi, the former Iranian president, was killed in a helicopter crash in Iran's East Azerbaijan province, which led to an early election in June that put Masoud Pezeshkian as the new President of Iran in office. Iranian authorities continued to repress all forms of peaceful dissent and political protest. The crackdown targeted women human rights defenders, members of ethnic and religious minorities, and family [members](#) of some of those arrested or killed in the 2022 anti-government protests. Additionally, there was an alarming increase in [executions](#).

A report by Human Rights Watch found that Iranian authorities are [carrying](#) out the crime against humanity of persecution against Baha'is in Iran. Authorities expanded penalties for women violating the country's discriminatory dress [codes](#), trials remain unfair, and impunity for serious human rights abuses endures.

Amidst an escalation of hostilities in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon, Iran and Israel launched tit-for-tat attacks, apparently against military targets.

Executions

Iran [remains](#) one of the world's top practitioners of the death penalty, applying it to individuals convicted of crimes committed as children, in cases of individuals charged with vague national security charges, and has sometimes used it for non-violent offenses.

Iran was among the five [countries](#) with the highest number of executions in 2023 and the number of executions has [remained](#) high in 2024. A UN statement [said](#) that in the first half of the 2024 alone, Iranian authorities executed more than 400 people. On August 7, the authorities [carried](#) out mass executions of 29 prisoners at two prisons; 26 people were executed at Ghezel Hesar prison and 3 people at Karaj Central prison. Those executed included 17 people sentenced for "premeditated murder," 7 convicted on drug-related charges, and 2 Afghan nationals sentenced for rape.

On August 6, Iranian authorities also executed Reza (Gholamreza) [Rasaei](#), a Kurdish protester of the Yarsani faith, at Dizelabad prison in Kermanshah province, without giving prior notice to his family or allowing Rasaei a final meeting with them. Security forces [arrested](#) Rasaei in November 2022, during protests in Shahriar, Tehran. He was sentenced to death for his alleged role in the "premeditated murder" of Nader Birami, the former head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization in Sahneh.

On July 4, Iran's revolutionary courts informed the husband of Sharifeh Mohammadi, a labor activist, that Mohammadi had been sentenced to [death](#) on the charge of "armed rebellion against the state," based on an allegation of membership in an opposition group. She had [reportedly](#) been a member of the Association of Labor Organizations until 2013.

On July 23, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court [reportedly](#) sentenced Pakhshan Azizi, a Kurdish political prisoner in Evin prison, to death on charges of "armed rebellion against the state." Her trial took place on May 28. Authorities [denied](#) her access to a lawyer and family visits during four months of interrogation. Azizi had previously been arrested in 2009 and released on bail after four months.

Freedom of Assembly and Expression, Right to Participate in the Conduct of Public Affairs

Iranian authorities continue to severely restrict freedoms of assembly and expression. In 2024, security forces arrested [dozens](#) of [activists](#), [lawyers](#), and [students](#). The authorities also [targeted](#) outspoken family members of those killed or executed during the 2022 protests who were demanding accountability for violations against their loved ones.

University administrators continued their crackdown on students' free expression. Human Rights Watch compiled cases of at least 30 university students subjected to university disciplinary measures at universities across the country in the last year for peaceful speech. The actual number is most likely higher.

On August 29, Shargh Daily [reported](#) that President Pezeshkian, who was elected in July, asked Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi, the Minister of Health and Medical Education, to review the cases of all professors dismissed or whose contracts were terminated and to reinstate dismissed students expelled from universities after the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests. On September 16, Zafarghandi, [ordered](#) the suspension of all rulings against students suspended in the last two years.

On April 4, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) voted to [extend](#) the mandate of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran to "thoroughly and independently investigate alleged human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022, especially with respect to women and children." The fact-finding mission [published](#) its full report in March 2024 before the renewal of its mandate. On April 4, the HRC also voted for the [continuation](#) of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran.

Rape, Torture, Persecution, and Lethal Force against Ethnic and Religious Minorities

The cumulative impact of authorities' decades-long systematic repression against Baha'is is an intentional and severe deprivation of their fundamental rights and amounts to the crime against humanity of [persecution](#). Iranian authorities have targeted Baha'i women and, in 2024, two-thirds of [imprisoned](#) Baha'is were women, according to the Baha'i International Community (BIC), which represents the Baha'i community worldwide. Dozens of Baha'is were [arrested](#), put on [trial](#), and [sentenced](#) to prison on charges such as "propaganda against the state" and "participation in conducting misleading propaganda and educational activities contrary to the sacred laws of Islam."

Human Rights Watch documented the rape, torture, and sexual assault of ten [detainees](#), both female and male, from Kurdish, Baluch, and Azeri minority regions that occurred between September and November 2022 during the nationwide protests. Detainees described being raped by security forces and some said they witnessed security forces raping other detainees. In seven of the cases, detainees said that security forces had tortured them to coerce them into making confessions.

The Iranian government also discriminates against some religious minorities, including Sunni Muslims, and [restricts](#) cultural and political activities among the country's [Azeri](#), [Kurdish](#), Arab, and Baluch ethnic minorities.

Human Rights Watch [documented](#) the authorities' use of excessive and lethal force against predominantly Kurdish border couriers, known as Kulbars, who transport goods between Iran and Iraq over rugged terrain. Driven by poverty, [border couriers](#) confront constant dangers. The couriers have limited access to justice or remedy for violations, and Iranian authorities have mistreated those they have detained.

Women's and Girl's Rights

Iranian authorities have intensified efforts to enforce compulsory hijab laws. They [prosecuted](#) women and girls, including celebrities, for not wearing the hijab in public; issued traffic citations to

passengers without hijab; and closed businesses that did not comply with hijab laws.

On September 21, 2023, the Iranian parliament approved a draft “Hijab and Chastity” bill and agreed to a three-year pilot implementation. The Guardian Council [approved](#) the bill in September 2024. The bill has 71 articles that propose additional penalties, including fines, increased prison terms, and restrictions on job and educational opportunities for hijab violations. The law also expands the authority of intelligence and law enforcement agencies in enforcing compulsory hijab.

Women face deep discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and decisions relating to children. Under the [civil code](#), a husband has the right to choose the family’s place of living and can bar his wife from certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.” Under the [Passports Law](#), a married woman may not obtain a passport or travel outside the country without the written permission of her husband, who can revoke such permission at any time. The civil code allows girls to marry at age 13 and boys at age 15, and at younger ages if authorized by a judge.

Cases of [femicide](#) are increasingly being reported in the media and social media, and Iran has no law on domestic violence to prevent abuse and protect survivors. [Reports](#) show that between March 20 and June 20, at least 35 women and girls have been killed by their male family members in different cities in Iran, five of whom were in Tehran. In the first half of 2024, Stop Femicide Iran (SFI) [documented](#) 93 acts of femicide in Iran compared to 55 acts during the same period in 2023, a near 60 percent increase.

Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Activists

Scores of human rights defenders, many of them women, remain behind bars while authorities continue to harass, arrest, and prosecute those seeking accountability and justice. Iranian authorities have intensified their [crackdown](#) on women activists and human rights defenders, employing [harsher](#) measures and issuing severe sentences to [suppress](#) dissent and silence opposition voices. This includes [sentencing](#) 11 women's rights and political activists to prison terms on March 27.

On September 16, Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) [reported](#) that Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced eight defendants to over 42 years in prison, flogging, and exile, on charges including “destruction of public property with the intent to disrupt public order and security,” “opposition to the Islamic government,” and “assembly and collusion.” Niloufar Hamed and Elaheh Mohammadi, two journalists from *Shargh* and *Ham-Mihan* Iranian newspapers who were among the first journalists who [reported](#) on Amini’s death, were arrested in September 2022. On August 11, their lawyers [announced](#) that the Tehran court of appeals sentenced each to six years in prison. Previously, they had received a combined sentence of 25 years in prison in the first instance court.

Due Process Rights, Fair Trial Standards, and Prison Conditions

Iranian courts, and particularly revolutionary courts, regularly fall far short of providing fair trials and use confessions likely obtained under torture as evidence. Authorities have failed to meaningfully investigate numerous allegations of rape and torture against detainees and routinely restrict detainees’ access to legal counsel, particularly during the initial investigation period.

Iranian authorities’ violations of due process [rights](#) and fair trial standards, as well as [torture](#) and ill-treatment of detainees, have been systemic features of the government’s crackdown on anti-government protests. Revolutionary court judges have persistently failed to consider allegations of torture and ill-treatment, including in trials where defendants were sentenced to the death penalty.

On August 29, HRANA [reported](#) that political prisoner Mahmoud Sadeghi attempted suicide by cutting his wrist in Adelabad prison in Shiraz. A source told HRANA that Sadeghi attempted suicide because of harsh conditions in solitary confinement. After receiving treatment, he was placed alongside violent offenders, disregarding the principle of separating prisoners by crime.

Treatment of Refugees and Migrants

Afghans in Iran are facing increasing pressure as their presence in the country is politicized and used as a scapegoat for social tensions. Many Afghans who fled to Iran after the Taliban regained power in Afghanistan do not have legal residency, making them vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and deportation.

On August 11, the proposal to add five clauses to Article 16 of the Law on the Entry and Residence of Foreign Nationals in Iran was [introduced](#) in the Iranian parliament. This proposal includes measures for deporting unauthorized foreign nationals and regulating their population distribution, limiting it to 3 percent of local population. The proposal mandates a 10 percent annual reduction in foreign residents as well as imposing fines for hiring unauthorized foreign nationals or employing them in unauthorized jobs. The proposal is under review and will be implemented once approved by the relevant bodies.

In September, Ahmadreza Radan, the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian National Police, [said](#) that “nearly two million individuals are expected to be expelled from the country this year.”

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Under Iranian law, same-sex conduct is punishable by flogging and, for men, the death penalty. Although Iran permits and subsidizes sex reassignment surgery for transgender people, no law prohibits discrimination against them.