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Iran's human rights situation spiraled further into crisis in 2025, with the highest number of known executions in decades and authorities' mass and arbitrary arrests. Authorities continued to persecute women, ethnic, and religious minorities and real or perceived dissidents.

In yet another cycle of bloodshed, authorities unleashed a lethal crackdown on protests that erupted across the country in late December, killing and injuring protesters and conducting mass arbitrary arrests.

On June 13, Israel carried out attacks on Iran that continued until a June 25 ceasefire, including a June 23 attack on Tehran's Evin [prison](#) that was an apparent war crime. In response, Iran launched ballistic missile [attacks](#) against Israel, some of which were also likely war crimes. Iranian authorities ill-treated and forcibly disappeared Evin prison [detainees](#) after the Israeli attack and doubled down on their domestic crackdown under the guise of national security.

In March, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran (FFMI) concluded in its [second report](#) that authorities continued to commit [crimes against humanity](#) in connection with the 2022 protests. In April, the UN Human Rights Council [renewed](#) the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Iran and [broadened](#) the FFMI's mandate.

Death Penalty

Iran carries out the most executions except for China, which is believed to execute the most people globally. Authorities systematically imposed the death penalty after grossly unfair trials for acts not amounting to the "[most serious crimes](#)" such as [drug-related](#) offenses and for vaguely worded national security crimes. Scores of people [remained](#) on death row for crimes committed as children.

By the end of 2025, authorities had carried out over 2,000 executions, according to the [Abdollahian Boroumand Center](#) for Human Rights in Iran, the highest number of known executions since the late 1980s. Over half were for drug-related offenses, violating international law. In October, the FFMI expressed concerns about this surge stating, "If executions form part of a widespread and systematic attack against a civilian population, as a matter of government policy, then those responsible – including the judges who impose capital punishment – may be held accountable for crimes against humanity."

Authorities' use of the death penalty [for political repression](#) continued. On June 11 and September 6, respectively, authorities executed [Mojahed Kourkouri](#) and [Merhan Bahramian](#) in connection with the Woman, Life, Freedom protests.

At least 13 men, including [three Kurdish men](#), were executed on accusations of espionage, collaboration, or connections with Israel, the majority of them following the June Israel-Iran conflict.

Authorities escalated their use of the death penalty, including for politically motivated charges, against women. In October, a Revolutionary Court [sentenced](#) Zahra Shahbaz Tabari to death on the vaguely worded charge of "armed rebellion" through membership in the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, an outlawed opposition group. In an [open letter](#) from prison, Tabari said her trial lasted no more than ten minutes.

In September, a court [sentenced](#) a Baluchi woman, Nasimeh Eslamzahi, to death on the charge of "enmity against God" for alleged affiliation with the Islamic State (ISIS).

[Pakhshan Azizi](#), a Kurdish activist, remained on death row after a grossly unfair trial on vague charges. In December, the Supreme Court [overturned](#) the death sentence against another Kurdish activist, [Warisha Moradi](#), and ordered a retrial by the same Revolutionary Court branch that had sentenced her to death after a grossly unfair trial.

The death penalty disproportionately impacted marginalized communities and minorities, in particular Ahwazi Arab, Kurdish, Baluchi, and Afghan people.

On October 15, President Masoud Pezeshkian [signed into law](#) emergency legislation introduced following the June conflict, further expanding the use of the death penalty for vaguely worded national security charges.

Arbitrary Detention and Unfair Trials

A crisis of arbitrary arrests and detentions continued, with at least hundreds arrested for exercising their human rights, including expressions of political opinions.

On August 12, a police spokesperson [announced](#) that about 21,000 people had been arrested in the context of June hostilities, including for online expressions of “support” for or “happiness” about Israel’s attacks.

Courts systematically convicted individuals following grossly unfair trials, based on confessions extracted under torture and in the absence of lawyers and failed to investigate allegations in line with international law.

Freedom of Expression, Association, and Assembly

Laws, including the Islamic Penal Code, continued to criminalize the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly and authorities relied on them to persecute [journalists](#), human rights defenders, dissidents, and others.

On December 28, protests erupted and spread across the country. Security forces unlawfully used rifles, shotguns loaded with metal pellets, tear gas, water cannons, and beatings to disperse, intimidate, and punish protesters resulting in killings and grave injuries. Authorities demonized protesters as “rioters,” threatened them with a “firm” response, conducted mass arbitrary arrests, and subjected many to enforced disappearance.

[On December 12, authorities arbitrarily arrested 39 people](#), including human rights defenders Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi, Sepideh Gholian, Hasti Amiri, Pooran Nazemi, Ali Adinehzadeh, and Alieh Motalebzadeh in Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan province. The arrests took place with violence during a memorial ceremony held for human rights lawyer Khosrwo Alikordi, who was [found dead in his office under suspicious circumstances](#) earlier in the month.

Based on information reviewed by Human Rights Watch, Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi received threats to her life and safety in June and July. Authorities previously [threatened to return](#) her to prison to serve the remainder of her unjust sentence.

Authorities continued to [censor media](#), block or filter mobile apps and social media platforms, and impose internet shutdowns.

Iranian authorities’ [transnational repression](#) of [dissidents abroad](#) escalated. In August, UN experts [warned](#) of Iran’s “intensifying repression of Iran International journalists worldwide... [and] the growing intimidation of their family members living in Iran...”

Rights of Women and Girls

Women and girls continued to face severe forms of discrimination and violence, including due to laws that deny them equal rights to men including in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody, and relegate them to second-class citizens.

Authorities maintained and enforced laws and policies imposing compulsory hijab. They prosecuted women and girls defying compulsory hijab, impounded vehicles, closed businesses, and [implemented digital surveillance](#) including through the use of traffic cameras. The [Hijab and Chastity law](#) was suspended but authorities did not repeal it. The reported retreat from violent arbitrary arrests in connection with compulsory hijab in some larger cities, amid women's courageous resistance was, [as officials admitted](#), motivated by authorities' focus on what they deemed to be issues of national security instead of their recognition of women's rights. A torrent of official statements in November and December confirmed this, signalling a renewed wave of crackdown. In December, the head of the judiciary [announced](#) instructions for the police, intelligence bodies, and prosecutors to confront non-adherence to compulsory hijab.

Authorities failed to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and domestic laws and state policies enabled them. They did not criminalize domestic violence and marital rape. Child marriage, with no absolute minimum age if permitted by a judge, remained lawful; about 17 percent of girls marry before age 18, according to UNICEF.

Torture and Other Ill-Treatment and Enforced Disappearances

Torture and other ill-treatment remained systematic and widespread and committed with impunity. Authorities retained punishments such as flogging and amputations that constitute torture under international law and imposed and implemented them.

On March 5, authorities [carried out](#) the flogging sentence of 74 lashes against singer Mehdi Yarrahi for his song commemorating the first anniversary of the Woman, Life, Freedom protests.

On July 30, authorities [amputated fingers](#) of three detained men convicted of theft [after grossly unfair trials](#): Hadi Rostami, Mehdi Sharifian, and Mehdi Shahivand.

Human Rights Watch documented cases of enforced [disappearances](#), including in the aftermath of the Israeli attack on Evin prison. Authorities forcibly disappeared Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian death row prisoner, for months, sparking serious concerns of secret execution.

Prisoners were held in cruel and inhuman conditions. Following the Israeli attack on Evin prison, authorities transferred prisoners to facilities with [abysmal conditions](#), such as filthy, insect-infested and overcrowded rooms, lacking potable water and basic hygiene facilities.

Authorities continued to deliberately deny prisoners adequate and timely medical care in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Among the scores of political prisoners denied medical care were: [Taheer Naghavi](#), [Fateme Sepehri](#), [Zeynab Jalalian](#), [Warisha Moradi](#), [Motaleb Ahmadian](#), [Maryam Akbari Monfared](#), and [Raheleh Rahemi-Pour](#). In September, three women [died](#) in Qarchak prison in Tehran province after being denied adequate medical care.

Persecution of Religious and Ethnic Minorities

The authorities' [crime against humanity of persecution against Baha'is](#) continued, with arbitrary detentions, unfair trials, and property confiscations [escalating](#) after Israel-Iran hostilities.

Ethnic minorities including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds, and Turkmen faced widespread and entrenched discrimination.

Security forces continued to use unlawful lethal force against Kurdish cross-border couriers (Kulbar) and Baluchi fuel porters (soukhtbar).

In January, an appeal court [upheld](#) harsh prison sentences against 10 Azerbaijani Turk activists on vaguely worded national security charges. Authorities cited their past activities and professional work as “evidence.”

Religious minorities including Baha’is, Christians, Gonabadi Dervishes, Jews, Sunni Muslims, and Yaresan faced discrimination in law and practice, with Baha’i, Jewish and Christian communities [facing a wave of arrests](#) over accusations of connection with Israel after the June conflict.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual relations remained criminalized, with punishments ranging from flogging to the death penalty. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people were subjected to discrimination and violence.

Authorities [refused to release information](#) about the fate and whereabouts of transgender prisoners held in the damaged quarantine section of Evin prison following the June 23 Israeli attack.

Repression Targeting Dual and Foreign Nationals and Refugees and Migrants

Authorities continued to arbitrarily detain foreign and dual nationals.

On August 12, a police spokesperson [announced](#) the arrest of 2,774 “unauthorized nationals”— a discriminatory term used to refer to Afghans – for “filming and taking images from heights and of important sites and sending locations.”

Following the June conflict authorities scaled up the mass forced deportation of Afghans. In a July 18 [statement](#), UN experts stated that over 1.5 million Afghans had been deported from Iran in 2025.

Armed Conflict with Israel

According to Iran’s authorities, [700](#) civilians, 38 of whom children, were killed. Israel’s Foreign Affairs Ministry reported that 30 civilians, including four children, were killed in Israel.

Israeli forces unlawfully attacked Evin prison in Tehran on June 23, absent any evident military target, killing and injuring scores of civilians, in an apparent war [crime](#). The strikes, during visiting hours, significantly damaged multiple buildings, including in prison areas known to hold many activists and dissidents.

Human Rights Watch also [investigated](#) five Iranian ballistic missile strikes that struck populated areas in Israel, killing 20 civilians and found them to also be likely war crimes.likely war crimes.

On June 18, Iranian authorities imposed a near-total nationwide internet shutdown, severely limiting access to lifesaving information.

In the conflict’s aftermath, Iranian authorities waged a brutal campaign of crackdown under the guise of national security by carrying out mass arrests, executions, and unlawfully using lethal

force.

Impunity

In March, a [video](#) footage emerged showing Hamid Nouri, a former official [convicted](#) of war crimes in connection with the [1988 prison massacres](#) in Sweden under the principle of universal jurisdiction, walking around a Tehran cemetery praising mass executions and threatening political dissidents with a similar fate. The area is [believed to contain the remains of dissidents arbitrarily executed](#) in the 1980s. Nouri's return to Iran in 2024 following a prisoner swap deal with Sweden and his statements were stark reminders of authorities' long-standing impunity for crimes under international law.

Structural and systematic [impunity](#) for the prison massacres and other gross violations and crimes under international law prevailed and authorities continued to [persecute](#) victims' families and others seeking truth and justice.