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**ALTERNATIVE REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (CERD)**

**REVIEW OF THE PERIODIC REPORT OF
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

**MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL
THE CENTRE FOR SUPPORTERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
THE MIAAN GROUP
and
HAALVSH**

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I. BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

1. The Islamic Republic of Iran has long faced scrutiny for its treatment of ethnic and religious minorities within its borders. These groups, including Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Azerbaidjani Turks, and religious minorities such as Bahá'ís, Christians, and Sunni Muslims, frequently encounter systemic discrimination and human rights abuses. Despite Iran's commitments and obligations under international human rights conventions, the state continues to perpetrate a range of violations against these marginalized communities, undermining their basic rights and freedoms.
2. This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the Islamic Republic of Iran's violations against minorities, focusing on key areas such as the right to life, security, and adequate protection; the use of the death penalty; indiscriminate killings by border security forces; landmine-related deaths; the right to peaceful assembly and protest; the right to a fair trial and effective remedy; the right to participate in public life; the right to equality and non-discrimination; the right to nationality; the right to an adequate standard of living; the right to employment; and the right to education. By examining these issues, the report highlights the pervasive nature of discrimination and neglect faced by minorities in Iran, and underscores the urgent need for reform and international intervention to protect their rights and dignity.
3. The findings of this report are based on a combination of primary sources, including testimonies from affected individuals and communities, as well as secondary sources such as reports from human rights organizations, academic studies, and media articles. Through this detailed examination, we aim to shed light on the severe and ongoing human rights violations in Iran and advocate for meaningful changes to ensure justice and equality for all in Iran.

II. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

A. Right to Life, Security and Adequate Protection (Articles 2(2) and 5(b) of the Convention)

Use of the Death Penalty

4. Iran has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. The Penal Code allows the use of the death penalty for more than 80 different offenses, many of which do not meet the threshold for 'most serious' crimes under international law, such as adultery, homosexual relations, drug possession and *moharebeh*¹. Furthermore, many of the offenses carrying the death penalty, such as drug-related offenses and *moharebeh*, are among the charges most commonly used to target and convict ethnic minorities. In the case of drug-related crimes, the overrepresentation of Baluchis and other ethnic groups is linked to the impoverishment and marginalization of their areas, as in the case of Sistan and Baluchistan province, where the drug trade has flourished across the province's porous borders with Afghanistan. In 2023, 56% of the total 853

¹ In Iranian law, the term "*moharebeh*" refers to a serious offense often translated as "enmity against God" or "waging war against God." This charge is typically applied to acts that are perceived as threatening national security or undermining the state, which includes certain types of political dissent.

executions recorded were carried out for drug-related offences.² The death sentence for *moharebeh* is also more likely to be applied to minorities, especially Arabs, Baluchis and Kurds.³

5. The death penalty is also used against individuals perceived as challenging the socio-political status quo of the Islamic Republic, including protestors and ethnic minorities suspected of affiliating with political groups deemed 'hostile' by the authorities. The aftermath of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising between September and December 2022, saw a particularly intensified use of the death penalty, as the state struggled to maintain control. In 2023, the Islamic Republic of Iran executed more than 853 individuals, marking a 48% increase compared to 2022. This surge positioned Iran as the country with the second highest number of executions globally, following China. Iran's Baluchi ethnic minority was disproportionately impacted by these executions. A total of 172 Baluchis (166 men and six women) were executed by the authorities, accounting for 20% of all executions while Baluchis only comprise an estimated 5% of Iran's population⁴. . Of the 172 Baluchi executions that year, 138 were for drug-related offences, comprising 29% of all drug-related executions (at least 471 people).⁵
6. Death sentences themselves are also carried out in an arbitrary and degrading manner. Inmates on death row are sometimes not told ahead of time of the date of their execution, and sentences are often carried out without notifying the family. For example, individuals executed for drug-related offences, including Iran's Baluchi minority, who accounted for 29% (138) of drug-related executions in 2023, were often cruelly put to death in secret without prior notice to their families and lawyers⁶. In 2023, 85% of all executions documented by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO), totaling 709, were not publicly announced by the authorities. Some executions were carried out in secrecy, without notifying the family or the lawyer of the condemned, while others were simply not reported by official media. This practice contravenes the Islamic Republic's own laws, which require that the defendant's lawyer be informed of the scheduled execution. Consequently, the actual number of executions is believed to be significantly higher. The trend of officially announced executions has been decreasing in recent years. In 2023, only 15% of the recorded executions were officially reported, a slight increase from 12% in 2022 but lower than 16.5% in 2021. This is a significant drop compared to the average of 33% between 2018 and 2020⁷.

Indiscriminate killings by Iranian border security

7. Minorities are regularly victims of indiscriminate killings by Iranian security forces, particularly in the border provinces, where many resort to harsh activities such as carrying goods and fuels across dangerous terrains due to the lack of viable employment alternatives. The Islamic Republic justifies such killings under the pretense that they are "smugglers". The Baloch Activists Campaign estimates that at least 100 people are killed every year in anti-smuggling operations in Sistan and Baluchistan province, some of whom are simply bystanders.⁸

² Amnesty International, *"Don't Let Them Kill Us": Iran's Relentless Execution Crisis since 2022 Uprising*, 2024, p. 3

³ Human Rights Watch, *Iran: UPR Submission*, March 2014, p. 2.

⁴ Amnesty International (2024) Death sentences and executions in 2023, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/7952/2024/en/>

⁵ Amnesty International, *"Don't Let Them Kill Us": Iran's Relentless Execution Crisis since 2022 Uprising*, 2024, p. 3; Iran Human Rights and ECPM (2024) "Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran" p. 11.

⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/iran-executes-853-people-in-eight-year-high-amid-relentless-repression-and-renewed-war-on-drugs/>

⁷ Iran Human Rights and ECPM (2024) "Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran" p.77.

⁸ Centre for Human Rights in Iran, 'Innocent Bystanders Killed in Anti-Smuggling Operations in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province,' 8 October 2017.

8. Similar tactics are used against *kulbars*, cross-border couriers who transport goods on their backs or the backs of mules as part of the informal economy in the impoverished Kurdish-majority border areas. Efforts by Iranian officials to tighten border security have resulted in hundreds of deaths or injuries to *kulbars* over the years, as border patrols have taken a ‘shoot first, ask questions later’ approach to enforcement. Rarely have these *kulbars* been found to have been carrying illicit goods. From January 2015 until March 2022, at least 1,042 *kulbars* were reportedly killed or injured in the mountainous border region between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan mainly as a result of excessive use of force by Iranian border guards⁹.
9. Based on the annual report from “Kolbar News,” in 2023 alone, 299 *Kulbars* in the border areas of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Kermanshah provinces lost their lives due to various factors. Among these, 267 incidents of death and injury were due to direct shootings by Iranian border forces.¹⁰
10. Over a one year period, between March 21, 2023 – March 19, 2024, at least 39 Kurdish *kulbars* lost their lives in the border regions of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Kermanshah provinces. Among these, 27 *kulbars*, including one child, were directly shot by the Islamic Republic of Iran’s military forces. Furthermore, a minimum of 356 *kulbars* in the border areas spanning West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Kermanshah provinces endured injuries and significant harm. Specifically, military forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran shot 311 individuals, including 15 children, while eight were subjected to assaults, six fell from heights during pursuits by these forces, and five were injured due to gunfire from Iraqi border guards¹¹. From 2015-2022, at least 72% of deaths and injuries involving *kulbars* were the direct result of shootings, with Iranian Border Guards implicated in 64% of these cases. As the state fails to announce official records on *kulbars* killed or injured, coupled with families’ concerns about repercussions, these numbers are most likely largely higher. What stands out in the verified available reports is the significant presence of children among the *kulbars*¹² who have been injured or lost their lives¹³. The data also underscores the worrying systematic nature of treatment of *kulbars* by the state.
11. In western Iran, border communities grapple with poverty and unemployment, leading residents to resort to *kulbari* for income and the untapped production potential of border villages, particularly in horticulture, remains neglected. A modest investment could significantly boost production capacity, with residents urging state support for cultivating black grape and walnut, alongside promoting animal husbandry¹⁴.
12. Regrettably, not only does the state fail to support these activities, but corruption also prevents the distribution of the annual budget approved by the parliament for residents of border areas. In 2017, a resolution mandated a monthly payment to border village residents, yet agents failed

⁹ <https://iranbarometer.org/topic/kulbars/>

¹⁰ <https://kolbarnews.com/%d8%af%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%b4-%d8%b3%d8%a7%d9%84-%db%b2%db%b0%db%b2%db%b3-%da%a9%d9%88%d9%84%d8%a8%d8%b1%d9%86%db%8c%a9%88%d8%b2/>

¹¹ Kurdistan Human Rights Network (2024) Iran border guards’ gunfire leaves kolbar severely injured, available at: <https://kurdistanhumanrights.org/en/news/2024/04/08/iran-border-guards-gunfire-leaves-kolbar-severely-injured/>

¹² <https://kolbarnews.com/%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%9B-%D8%B2%D8%AE%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B4%D8%AF%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%87-%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%AF%DA%A9-%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%B7%DB%8C-%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D9%85/>

¹³ <https://kolbarnews.com/%D9%BE%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D8%B2-%D8%AE%D9%88%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%86-%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%AF%DA%A9-%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%A1%D9%A8/>

¹⁴ <https://nournews.ir/Fa/News/154013/%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%8C-%D9%82%D8%A7%DA%86%D8%A7%D9%82%DA%86%DB%8C-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA>

to disburse 2.7 billion Tomans¹⁵. This unfulfilled budget, amounting to a substantial sum, holds significant importance as an allowance for families living in these perilous borders.

13. In November 2022, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched a series of missile attacks on the camps of opposition Kurdish parties in the deep areas of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, alongside the deployment of armed forces affiliated with this military organization to the borders, practically blocking the crossings and passageways used by *kulbars* (border couriers) at the borders of Baneh, Sardasht and Piranshahr. At the same time, the IRGC announced the ban on the movement of *kulbars* through the border areas by broadcasting a notice on local news channels in the border towns. According to traders and *kulbars* in the border bazaars, particularly at the borders of Paveh, Sardasht and Baneh, the IRGC has threatened the *kulbars* that their goods will be confiscated, and they will be shot if they attempt to cross the border. With longstanding economic neglect and a lack of infrastructure and investment, the state violates individuals' rights to safe and dignified occupations. Already in dire economic situation, individuals turn to kulbari as a last resort. The state is obligated to create sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economic infrastructure in the region on an urgent basis. In the meantime, it must safeguard kulbars' and their families' well-being.
14. Sookhtbars, a similar group to kulbars who carry fuel instead of goods between Sistan and Baluchistan and its neighbouring countries, such as Pakistan, as a way to make a living, are another group targeted by the state. In February 2021, Iran's Revolutionary Guards killed 10 sookhtbars belonging to the Baluch minority community at the border of Iran and Pakistan according to the Baluchi Activists Campaign.
15. According to the Baluchi Activists Campaign, IRGC officials stopped these *sookhtbars* near the border and held them for days. After their food and water ran out, they tried to continue across the border. IRGC's Border guards then allegedly opened fire and killed at least 10 and injured five of them.¹⁶ The next day, the deputy security chief of Sistan and Baluchistan province, Mohammad-Hadi Mar'ashi, announced that the shooting started from the Pakistan side of the border and confirmed the death of only two people.¹⁷
16. According to the Haalvsh, a Baluch human rights organization outside Iran, between March 2022 - March 2023 at least 366 Sookhtbars were killed by security border forces in Sistan and Baluchistan.¹⁸ In his February 2024 report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran stated, "[e]thnic and religious minorities, in particular the Baluchis and the Kurds, have been the targets of arbitrary deprivation of the right to life at the

¹⁵ <https://kolbarnews.com/%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%AA%DB%8C-%DB%B2%DB%B1%DB%B0-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%88/>

¹⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/25/iran-killings-near-pakistani-border>

¹⁷ MehrNews (2021) Explaining the Incident at the Saravan Border: From Rumor to Reality, available at: <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5154625/%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AD-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B4%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AA>

¹⁸ https://haalvsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/%E2%80%8E%E2%81%A8%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4_%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87_1402_%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86_%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82_%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%B1%DB%8C_%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84_%D9%88%D8%B4%E2%81%A9.pdf

hands of the State authorities, in particular the executions and extrajudicial killings of cross-border couriers, namely Kurdish Kolbars and Baluchi Sookhtbars.”¹⁹

17. It must be noted that despite such damning evidence on state violation against sookhtbars’ and kulbars’ fundamental human rights, the Islamic Republic of Iran is considering passing a law that would allow law enforcement agencies to use firearms in emergency situations. Back in 2023, the bill was formally transmitted to the parliamentary floor for the commencement of its legal processing. At the time of writing of this report, the bill remains pending. If passed, this bill would allow state agencies to use firearms more extensively with impunity.

Landmine-related deaths

18. Landmines continue to pose a critical threat to the right to life of minorities in Iran.²⁰ An estimated 20 million landmines were placed in Iran during the 1980-1988 war with Iraq and in the course of internal armed conflicts between the Islamic Republic and Kurdish non-state combatants in the 1980s. Western border provinces including West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Ilam, which have Kurdish majority populations, and Khuzestan, which has an Arab majority population, have continued to see the most deaths and serious injuries from landmine explosions.
19. According to the group Iran Without Landmines, Iran has seen 8,616 cases of landmine and other explosive remnants of war-related casualties between the end of Iran-Iraq war in 1988 until mid-2024, including at least 84 children. 2,591 of these people died and 6,023 sustained serious injuries, including loss of limbs²¹.
20. As is clear from the data, the state has failed to uphold its obligation to completely clear landmines and other explosive remnants of war and is suspected of planting new ones²². Civilians continue to pay the price for this negligence, children are no exception. On 23 February 2020, a 14-year-old teenager lost his life due to a landmine explosion he encountered while grazing his family’s livestock²³. On 2 March 2019, a 15-year-old girl was killed in an explosion in Dasht Abad, Dehloran, Ilam province.²⁴ On 20 November 2018, a 13-year-old boy went to play with five other children in the town of Shush, Khuzestan province. He touched an object near a barbed wire fence which turned out to be a landmine and exploded, injuring the boy’s hands, abdomen and face. He died in hospital due to the severity of injuries.²⁵ De-mining experts later identified the mine as anti-personnel (Number 4), the same type used by the Iranian army to protect a radar site during the war. In May 2017, an explosion seriously injured two Kurdish laborers in the town of Sarpol-e-Zahab in Kermanshah Province when

¹⁹ A/HRC/55/62, Paragraph 54.

²⁰ <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>

²¹ For two individuals, type of casualty is unknown; therefore, they have not been included in these numbers.

²² The-Monitor, ‘Iran: Mine Ban Policy’, Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor, <http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2019/iran/mine-ban-policy.aspx> (accessed 27 October 2021).

²³ Kurdpa News Agency, ‘A landmine explosion caused the death of a 14-year-old teenager in Qasr-e Shirin’, 23 February 2020, <https://kurdpa.net/fa/news/شد-قصرشیرین-در-ساله-نوجوان-یک-مرگ-موجب-مین-انفجار>

²⁴ Kurdpa News Agency, ‘Landmine explosion caused fatal injury for 15-year-old,’ 2 March 2019, <http://www.kurdpa.net/farsi/idame/76190>.

²⁵ Mehr News Agency. “Details of landmine exposure:13 year old boy killed”. <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4464812/> (20 November, 2019).

the shovel of their construction vehicle hit a landmine. Officials had declared this area ‘free from landmines’ in 2012 and the government even held a ceremony marking the occasion.²⁶

21. Rights groups point out that the state’s approach to demining has been insufficient and mismanaged.²⁷ Commander Mojtaba Shahbazian, in charge of mine-clearing operations, told state media in May 2017 that there was no guarantee that the areas which they announced “clear” were completely safe since flooding and other climate factors could move mines. Moreover, the military did not start using more accurate mechanical demining techniques till recently.²⁸ In October 2013, a parliamentarian stated that de-mining operations failed because authorities sub-contracted the task to companies that lacked competence and did not perform their jobs properly.²⁹ In January 2019, Shadmehr Kazemi, member of parliament for the mine-infested town of Dehlaran in Ilam Province, stated that 20 hectares of land in Ilam had not been demined. Further, he stated that Iranian demining efforts only reach a depth of 30 cm, but some landmines are planted deeper.³⁰
22. State support and rehabilitation of landmines victims has also been insufficient. A 1994 law, amended in 2010, mandates payment of salaries to those who have become disabled as a result of coming into contact with explosive materials. However, the process for determining a right to benefits is complicated, and bureaucratic. Hearings are conducted without the victims or their representatives present. Decisions can take years due to hurdles and bureaucracies in the system. Even in the case of a favorable decision, the assistance provided is minimal and not retroactive. Costs incurred between the moment an accident takes place and the date of the decision are not reimbursed. The burdens imposed by this process often cause victims with disabilities to forego their claims or not apply for benefits at all.³¹

B. Right to Peaceful Assembly and Protest (Articles 4(c) and 5 (ix) of the Convention)

23. Ethnic and religious minorities have been arbitrarily arrested and detained in connection with a range of peaceful activities such as advocating for linguistic rights, organizing or taking part in protests, being affiliated with oppositional parties, or campaigning against environmental degradation in their areas. For minorities, the simplest forms of ethnic rights activism are often deliberately construed by the authorities as a threat to national security or falsely conflated with separatism.
24. The Iranian authorities arrested thousands of people following the eruption of large-scale protests on 28 December 2017. Although the protests began in Mashhad, they quickly spread to include dozens of cities across Iran, including cities in minority-populated provinces such as Khuzestan, Eastern Azerbaijan, Western Azerbaijan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Ilam,

²⁶ “Landmine Explosion Wounded Two Kurdish Citizens in Sar-e-Pol-Zahab,” Kurdistan Human Rights Network, 23 April 2018, <http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/en/landmine-explosion-wounded-two-kurdish-citizens-in-sar-e-pol-zahab/> and “Two casualties at Sar-Pole-e-Zahab because of mine explosion” Kayhan Newspaper, 22 April

2018, <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/130546/%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%81%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%BE%D9%84-%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8>

²⁷ <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>

²⁸ ‘Iran is the second country with landmines, each mine is an enemy soldier,’ - Interview with Army Commander Mojtaba Shahbazian in charge of mine-clearing operations,’ Iran Online, 3 May 2017, <http://www.ion.ir/News/213288.html>.

²⁹ Impact Iran, *Children of Rights*. (Accessed on April 27, 2018).

³⁰ <http://www.icana.ir/Fa/News/415443/>

³¹ <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>

and Sistan and Baluchistan. The organization Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRAI) documented the arrests of 2,455 protestors, although a member of parliament reportedly cited higher numbers (3,700).³²

25. In June 2018, in the midst of a heatwave in Khuzestan province, peaceful protests broke out in the Arab-majority city of Khorramshahr decrying the lack of access to safe drinking water.³³ Authorities used excessive force against protesters, and dozens of people were arrested.³⁴ There were also allegations that some demonstrators were killed, which was denied by the governor of Khorramshahr.³⁵ The following month, in July 2018, police carried out another crackdown on demonstrators in Khorramshahr who were protesting against utility cuts, socioeconomic marginalization and Iran's foreign policy.³⁶ Videos from the protests show the use of guns by security forces.³⁷ Protestors were arrested and held on charges including separatism, militancy or being 'agents of Saudi Arabia'.³⁸
26. In the aftermath of the 24 September 2018 terrorist attack on a military parade in the city of Ahwaz, Khuzestan Province, which left 24 dead and 60 injured,³⁹ Iranian authorities carried out a wave of detentions in the province. Up to 600 Ahwazi Arabs were detained incommunicado, and community members claim at least 22 men were killed in secret.⁴⁰ While authorities claim those arrested were suspected of criminal responsibility for the attack, human rights organizations maintain that those detained included students, writers, human rights defenders, and political activists.⁴¹
27. In September 2018, at least 40 Kurdish shopkeepers were arrested in Sanandaj, Marivan, Piranshahr, Eshnavieh, Mahabad, and Paveh.⁴² The shopkeepers had been striking in protest to executions and in response to the 8 September Iranian missile attack on a base in northern Iraq belonging to the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, which killed at least 11 people and wounded 20-30 more.⁴³
28. In 2019, another major uprising occurred in Iran, with reports of over 1,500 protestors killed by security forces. In Mahshahr and other towns in Khuzestan province, people protesting the authorities harmful water policies were shot. The unrest continued into 2020 and 2021, with clashes in Khuzestan over water issues leading to further fatalities⁴⁴. In mid-July 2021 protests over water shortages went beyond Khuzestan and spread across the nation becoming known

³² Department of Statistics and Publications of Human Rights Activists in Iran, *Seven Days of Protests in Iran*, 9 January 2018.

³³ <https://unpo.org/article/20944> and <http://www.bbc.com/persian/44672124>

³⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1387562018ENGLISH.PDF>

³⁵ Rahmat Ghasem Beyglou, اعتراضات به بی‌آبی در آبادان و خرمشهر به خشونت کشیده شد, Radio France Internationale - Farsi, 2 July 2018, <http://fa.rfi.fr/iran/20180702-اعتراضات-به-بی-آبی-در-آبادان-و-خرمشهر-به-خشونت-کشیده-شد>

³⁶ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1296206/middle-east>

³⁷ <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/protest-in-khoramshahr/29329561.html>

³⁸ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1296206/middle-east>

³⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/iran-hundreds-arrested-in-vicious-crackdown-on-ahwazi-arabs/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/iran-fears-mounting-for-detained-ahwazi-arabs-amid-reports-of-secret-executions/>

⁴¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/iran-hundreds-arrested-in-vicious-crackdown-on-ahwazi-arabs/>

⁴² بازداشت بیش از ۴۰ شهروند کرد در جریان اعتصاب سراسری بازاریان و کسبه کردستان, Iran Human Rights Monitor, 15 September 2018, <https://fa.iran-hrm.com/بازداشت-بیش-از-۴۰-شهروند-کرد-در-جریان-اع>

⁴³ <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-iraq-iran/iran-attacks-iranian-kurdish-opposition-group-base-in-iraq-idUKKCN1LO0L3> and <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/09/12/Iranian-Kurdish-shopkeepers-strike-against-executions-missile-attacks.html>

⁴⁴ Atlantic Council (2024) A thirsty reality: Iran's dire water situation, available at:

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/iran-water-environment-us-policy/#:~:text=In%20Mahshahr%2C%20a%20town%20in%20further%20loss%20of%20lives.>

as the ‘Uprising of the Thirsty’. The protests, which began in over 20 cities in ethnic minority Khuzestan Province, subsequently extended to other areas including Isfahan, Lorestan, East Azerbaijan, Tehran and Karaj. Over 360 individuals were arrested and widespread use of unlawful force against protesters, many of whom belong to the Arab minority, was documented, including the killing of at least nine protestors, including a child.^{45 46}

29. Jina Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman was violently arrested for not wearing the *hijab* properly and died on 16 September 2022 whilst in custody of the ‘morality police’, sparking nationwide protests. Since the start of the September 2022 demonstrations, the Islamic Republic has used violent methods to suppress activism and reinstate ‘order’. According to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, between September 2022 and April 2023, at least 551 people have been killed by the security forces in the demonstrations.⁴⁷ Although men, women and many children have been killed across the country, a disproportionate number of the victims have been from the Baluch Sunni minority in Sistan and Baluchistan province. The most deaths, 134, were recorded in Sistan and Baluchistan, followed by 57 deaths in Kurdistan and 56 deaths in West Azerbaijan.⁴⁸
30. At the same time, the Islamic Republic security apparatuses have widely harassed and intimidated the families of protestors, victims, detainees and human rights defenders. Ahead of the September 2022 protest’s anniversary, authorities ramped up pressure on those connected to the demonstrations through threats, surveillance, arrests, prosecutions and violence against protestor’s families. Reports of violations have included the denial of peaceful gatherings at gravesites of the victims, desecration of their graves, and threats to exhume and rebury victims in undisclosed locations.⁴⁹
31. In June 2023 military helicopters were deployed over the Kurdish protest hot-spots, Sanandaj, Mahabad, and Sarvabad. IRGC reportedly established several new operating bases in border territories, and positioned further military personnel, armoured cars, and heavy weapons in Kurdish populated areas.⁵⁰ In the months and weeks leading up to the anniversary of Jina Mahsa Amini’s death, government forces carried out further intimidation tactics in Kurdish populated areas including setting up barricades on the roads to reportedly pre-empt protests in Sanandaj; conducting a government’s armed forces military parade in Sanandaj; and erecting iron fences to block the entrance to the cemetery where Jina Amini was buried.⁵¹ A group of UN Special Procedures also reported incidents of security forces opening fire against protestors in the Kurdish city of Mahabad wounding at least one person and the shooting of a 28-year-old man on 16 September 2023 near the city of Saqqez, near the cemetery where Jina Mahsa Amini is buried.⁵²

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch (2021) Iran: Deadly Repression of Khuzestan Protests, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/29/iran-deadly-repression-khuzestan-protests#:~:text=As%20of%20July%2028%2C%20human,in%20Khuzestan%20and%20Lorestan%20provinces.>

⁴⁶ <https://minorityrights.org/publications/iran-protests/>

⁴⁷ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/55/67 para.22>

⁴⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5795/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/7084/2023/en/>

⁵⁰ <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/06/latest-developments-on-the-ongoing-militarization-of-kurdish-cities-helicopters-surveillance-and-an-armed-confrontation-in-urmia>

⁵¹ <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/09/report-on-government-militarization-in-kurdistan-on-the-jin-jijan-azadi-movement-anniversary>

⁵² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/iran-un-experts-denounce-crackdown-public-commemoration-jina-mahsa-amini>

32. A particularly violent event was witnessed on September 30, 2022, also referred to as "Bloody Friday." On this day, Iranian security forces used severe violence to repress protesters in Zahedan, the provincial capital, and in the nearby city of Khash. Forces reportedly used live ammunition, metal pellets, and teargas against protesters, bystanders, and worshippers alike, leading to numerous casualties. As reported by the Haalvsh and Human Rights Watch, at least 85-97 people were killed in Zahedan⁵³ and 16 in Khash⁵⁴ on this day. The violence did not abate following the events of "Bloody Friday." Iranian authorities have since engaged in further acts of repression, including executions under dubious charges, arbitrary home raids, targeted activist arrests, and alleged torture of detainees

C. Right to a Fair Trial and Effective Remedy (Articles 5(a) and 6 of the Convention)

33. Detained ethnic minorities, and in particular ethnic minority rights activists, are usually presented with vaguely worded and extremely broad charges drawn from Iran's Penal Code. The most notorious of these charges include *moharebeh* ('waging war against God') and *efsad-e-fel-arz* (corruption on Earth), both of which can carry the death penalty. Other charges often used to prosecute activists include 'gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security' (Article 610), 'membership of a group with the purpose of disrupting national security' (Article 499), and 'spreading propaganda against the system' (Article 500).⁵⁵
34. Activists charged with national security crimes are usually tried in Revolutionary Courts, where proceedings are secretive in nature and rife with due process violations. Defendants are often denied the right to meet with a lawyer until shortly before trial, leaving insufficient time to prepare a defense.⁵⁶ Those charged with *moharebeh* are regularly prevented from meeting a lawyer in private, sometimes even at the trial stage. Moreover, legal proceedings are conducted entirely in Persian with no interpretation available, disadvantageous to ethnic minorities who do not speak Persian as a mother tongue.⁵⁷ Trials themselves often last for only a few minutes, with judges relying on 'confessions' extracted through torture or televised prior to trial as the main evidence on which to base convictions.⁵⁸ For example, on 7 August 2018, two detained Iranian Kurds were forced to appear on state television and 'confess' to taking part in an armed attack against a security base in Saqqez. Family members claim the men were not involved in violent activity and only agreed to 'confess' to end the torture they were undergoing in detention.⁵⁹
35. There were at least 1304 political prisoners detained in Iran as of 5 July 2024, of which at least 60 per cent were ethnic minorities.⁶⁰ Kurds alone represented at least 30% of known political prisoners, followed by Baluchis (10%) and Arabs (6%). While it is unclear how many of the political prisoners included in the figures may actually be guilty of armed activity, their cases are nonetheless political detentions made arbitrary with fair trial violations.
36. Throughout the 'woman, life, freedom' protests sparked by Jina Mahsa Amini's death in September 2022, minorities in Iran have also been targeted for arbitrary arrest, imprisonment

⁵³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/22/iran-bloody-friday-crackdown-years-deadliest>

⁵⁴ <https://t.me/haalvsh/6841>

⁵⁵ Amnesty International, *Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran's Human Rights Defenders under Attack*, London, August 2017, p. 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ UNPO, 'Situation of Iran's Minorities Raised at 6th World Congress Against the Death Penalty,' 27 June 2016.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* and Amnesty International, August 2017, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁵⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/9054/2018/en/>

⁶⁰ <https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/>

and execution on political and national security-related charges at disproportionately high rates. A May 2023 report asserts that 2129 Kurdish protestors have been detained by Iranian security forces since September 2022, including at least 300 women.⁶¹ Statistics collected by Hengaw Organization for Human Rights indicate that July 2023 arrests marked a 34% increase from the 168 arrests in June 2023.⁶² Comparatively, the number of Kurdish Iranians among these arrests increased by 70% between the months of June and July, indicating not only an increased crackdown on civil society, but a targeted and potentially systematic campaign against particular ethnic groups.⁶³

37. In August 2023 there was a 17% increase in arrests compared to July 2023,⁶⁴ while September 2023 – the month of the anniversary – saw an alarming 75% increase on arrests compared to the previous month⁶⁵. Hengaw asserts that at least 463 people were arrested in September 2023, including 51 women and 50 children.⁶⁶ Notably, a total of 70% of detainees were Kurdish and Baluchi (44% and 26% respectively).⁶⁷ Azerbaijani Turks, Lor and Bakhtiari, as well as Gilaki and Mazandarani are also ethnic minority communities that have been subjected to arrests and detentions and are reflected in the available data. Of the minors detained in September 2023, 74% belonged to the Baluchi community.⁶⁸
38. Reports indicate that at least 20 prisoners died during the first half of 2023, with torture or denial or delay of medical care being the alleged cause of death for at least 11 prisoners. 65% (13 detainees) of these prisoner deaths were Kurds, and 20% (4 detainees) were Baluchi.⁶⁹
39. Internet restrictions in Iran have also disproportionately affected ethnic minorities, exacerbating existing marginalization. During the "Women, Life, Freedom" protests, localized internet shutdowns and throttling were notably severe in Kurdish and Baluchi regions, aiming to suppress the significant unrest in these areas. In Zahedan, for instance, there was a localized shutdown every Friday for a year, coinciding with the Friday prayer sermons of a Sunni leader who was critical of the state.⁷⁰
40. An ongoing systematic crackdown on lawyers is severely impeding the rights of ethnic minorities seeking effective remedy. To apply judicial pressure on lawyers, the Intelligence Protection of the Judiciary is said to have prepared a list of the names of 170 lawyers who have accepted the cases of political and security prisoners and protest detainees. Since the beginning of the nationwide protests (September 2022) until May 2023, at least 177 lawyers have faced some sort of “judicial action”. This action has resulted in “detention” of at least 66 lawyers, sentencing of at least 11 lawyers, and summoning of at least 100 lawyers from various provinces to the Security Court of Tehran, having been asked to sign a “commitment letter” expressing

⁶¹ Data collected by Kurdistan Human Rights-Geneva (KMMK-G), [Summary Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran](#)

⁶² <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/08/225-citizens-arrested-by-the-iranian-government-forces-in-july-2023>

⁶³ <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/08/225-citizens-arrested-by-the-iranian-government-forces-in-july-2023>

⁶⁴ <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/09/the-apprehension-of-264-citizens-by-the-government-forces-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-transpired-in-august-2023>

⁶⁵ <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/10/463-arbitrary-detentions-by-iranian-government-forces-in-september-2023>

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ <https://hengaw.net/en/news/2023/07/hengaws-report-regarding-the-death-of-prisoners-inside-the-iranian-prisons-during-the-first-six-months-of-2023>

⁷⁰ <https://www.miaan.org/publication/the-crackdown-on-irans-people-of-sistan-and-baluchestan-through-targeted-internet-shutdowns-must-stop-now/>

“regret” for supporting the protests.^{71,72} The charges against many of these lawyers included ‘propaganda activity against the regime’ and ‘assembly and collusion with the intention of committing crimes against security’.⁷³ At the start of the demonstrations, some of these lawyers were arrested and were later pardoned by the state but have now been summoned once more⁷⁴. Amongst them, Jina Amini’s lawyer has been ordered to appear in Tehran’s Islamic Revolutionary Court after being charged with propaganda against the system, for his media interviews and criticism of official findings on the cause of Jina Amini’s death.⁷⁵

41. In addition to recent summonses and arrests, in 2023, five lawyers were murdered, 10 lawyers were targeted and injured in failed assassination attempts, a number of lawyers were suspended, and a number were targeted by car fires and financial threats and damages. Threat of prosecution and arrest, psychological threats, threats to dignity and jobs, economic and tax threats, killings, beating, humiliation, harassment, verbal and physical abuse, sexual and gender-based violence, threat of torture or arrest of family members, wiretapping, and criminal and judicial threats are all examples of dangers that threaten human rights lawyers defending ethnic minorities.^{76, 77}
42. Lawyers seeking to defend protestors and political prisoners, many of whom are ethnic minorities, are often blocked from doing so by judicial authorities. Although the Central Bar Association is the main authority for choosing an appointed counsel, the courts are relying on ‘Note to Article 48’ that mandates defendants in national security cases to be defended by a lawyer chosen among a limitative list of ‘approved’ lawyers and experts who belong to the Central Bar Association but are associated with and approved by the judiciary, to deal with the cases of defendants arrested in the ongoing protests. These defendants have not been permitted to access the lawyer of their own choosing, but to feign legitimacy, the judiciary offers them a choice from lawyers from its approved list. It must be noted that the lawyers on the list of Note to Article 48 are selected by the head of the judiciary and most of them are retired judges or lawyers from the families of “martyrs” and Basij fighters. These measures violate the entitlement of lawyers – including minority lawyers and those seeking to defend minorities – to be protected against undue interference in the free and independent exercise of the legal profession. It also undermines protestors’, including minorities’, right to call upon the assistance of a lawyer of their choice to protect and defend them in all stages of criminal proceedings.

D. Right to Participate in Public Life (Articles 2(2), 5(c), and 7 of the Convention)

43. Minorities in Iran are systematically excluded from high-level posts in the government, judiciary and military, and they are likewise underrepresented in senior and mid-level positions across many fields of employment. Ethnic and religious minorities are particularly underrepresented in high-level political positions within the Islamic Republic. According to the Iranian

⁷¹ Radio Farda (2023) The number of summoned lawyers to the Security Court of Tehran exceeded one hundred; pressure to sign the "commitment letter" continues, available at: <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32428635.html>

⁷² The Times (2024) We must stand with endangered colleagues, says Iranian lawyer, available at: <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/law/article/we-must-stand-with-endangered-colleagues-says-iranian-lawyer-l8z02lvd>

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-mahsa-amini-lawyer-order-court/32559269.html>

⁷⁶ The Times (2024) We must stand with endangered colleagues, says Iranian lawyer, available at:

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/law/article/we-must-stand-with-endangered-colleagues-says-iranian-lawyer-l8z02lvd>

⁷⁷ Iran International (2024) 41 Lawyers In Iran Arrested In Past Year Under Ongoing Suppression, available at: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202404024696>

Constitution, candidates for presidency must be adherents of the official religion of the country, which is Twelver Ja'afari Shi'a Islam. This requirement excludes ethno-religious minorities such as Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroasterians, and Baha'is from the presidential office. Furthermore, adherents of religions other than Twelver Shi'a Islam are barred from holding several other crucial positions of power. They cannot serve as the Supreme Leader or become members of the Assembly of Experts, the Guardian Council, or the Expediency Council, thus excluding the majority of Baluchis, Kurds, and other minorities who follow Sunni Islam or other faiths.⁷⁸ This restriction significantly limits the political influence and representation of these groups.

44. Many judicial positions are also inaccessible to non-Shi'a Iranians, reinforcing the systemic exclusion of minorities from the judiciary. This exclusion extends to women, who face additional barriers to obtaining high-ranking judicial roles, despite their significant presence in legal education and lower-level positions.⁷⁹
45. The pervasive underrepresentation of minorities and women in high-ranking governmental, military, and judicial positions reflects broader issues of discrimination and marginalization within Iranian society. While there are occasional token appointments of individuals from minority backgrounds, these are often symbolic and do not translate into substantial influence or policy changes that benefit minority communities.
46. Iran's latest cabinet, appointed by the now deceased ex-President Ebrahim Raisi, reflected a continuation of the longstanding trend of limited ethnic minority representation. The cabinet predominantly consisted of ethnic Persians, who held the majority of key ministerial positions. This composition underscores the centralist approach of the Iranian government, which often marginalizes ethnic minority groups such as Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, and Turkmen. The centralized control exercised by the Supreme Leader in Iran means that significant changes in ethnic minority representation are unlikely, regardless of who becomes president next and the president's identity. While the president can influence some aspects of domestic policy, the overarching power structure heavily limits substantial shifts in minority representation and policy. Therefore, the entrenched system of limited ethnic minority representation is expected to persist under the current political framework.
47. Underrepresentation of minorities is also a problem at the provincial and local government levels. In September 2017, protests erupted in Ahwaz after the results of municipal elections showed that only three out of 13 seats on the municipal council had been won by Arab candidates, which many suspected was the result of fraud.⁸⁰ The Baluchi, Kurdish and Turkmen minorities are also underrepresented in high- and medium-ranking political posts.⁸¹

E. Right to nationality (Article 5(d)(iii) of the Convention)

48. Recent cases of Iran's violation of the right to nationality of ethnic minorities often involve issues related to the denial of identity documents and statelessness. This issue has evolved into a security concern as the Islamic Republic of Iran has "stopped issuing birth certificates to

⁷⁸ Iranian Constitution, Articles 5, 91, 109, 111, and 115.

⁷⁹ Amnesty International, *Iran: Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, May 2012, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Al-Arabiya, 'Iran cracks down on mass protests in Ahwaz against municipal electoral fraud,' 23 May 2017 and Islamic Republic News Agency, 'Completion of Ahwaz City Council Election Count/Election Observation Mission (Persian),' 22 May 2017.

⁸¹ FIDH and LDDH, *Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the Second Periodic Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, April 2012.

citizens in Sistan [sic] and Baluchistan province in the wake of repeated and sometimes violent protests”.⁸² This issue has intensified since protests began more systematically since September 30, 2022, when nearly 100 people were killed by security forces in the nationwide demonstrations sparked by the death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini by the morality police. This issue is not limited to the Baluch minority. Other provinces such as Qom, Yazd, and Khorasan are also affected by this issue, which leaves children without access to proper education and families without access to healthcare, according to Ansieh Khazali, the vice president for women and family affairs⁸³.

49. The rules for acquiring and losing Iranian nationality are outlined in Articles 41 and 42 of the Iranian Constitution and detailed in the Iranian Civil Code, specifically in Book 2 on Nationality (Nationality Law). Articles 976-991 cover various aspects of nationality, including acquisition at birth (Articles 976-978), naturalisation (Articles 979-987), and renunciation (Article 988). In 2006, exceptions to the predominant paternal *jus sanguinis* regime were introduced via a single article and two notes added to Book 7 - On Marriage and Divorce. However, efforts to further reform the law in 2019 to address gender discrimination were unsuccessful.⁸⁴
50. Iran is obligated under international law to prevent statelessness and protect the human rights of stateless persons through several conventions to which it is a party. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. However, Iran is not party to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Additionally, Iran is not a party to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which advocates for equal nationality rights for women and men.⁸⁵
51. Iran’s nationality laws primarily use *paternal jus sanguinis*, granting nationality at birth to anyone born to an Iranian father, whether within or outside the country. While the law does not explicitly require the father’s marriage to be registered for a child to acquire nationality, a Supreme Court ruling in 1997 confirmed that a child born out of wedlock is legally recognized as the child of its biological parents, except for inheritance rights. Iranian women, however, cannot automatically pass their nationality to their children, making Iran one of the few countries with gender-discriminatory nationality laws. Although amendments in 2006 and 2019 have allowed children of Iranian mothers and foreign fathers to apply for nationality, these changes are limited and often subject to bureaucratic and security hurdles, particularly requiring approval from intelligence agencies. These barriers can prevent children, especially those born out of wedlock or in unregistered marriages, from obtaining nationality, highlighting the ongoing gender discrimination and procedural challenges within Iran’s nationality laws.⁸⁶
52. Iranian law falls short of international standards in preventing statelessness among children born on its territory. While Article 976(3) of the Nationality Law grants Iranian nationality to children born in Iran of unknown parentage, and Article 976(4) allows children born in Iran to foreign parents to acquire nationality if one parent was also born in Iran and both have

⁸² <https://iranwire.com/en/features/121918-officials-failing-forty-three-thousand-undocumented-children-in-iran/>

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ <https://statelessjourneys.org/wp-content/uploads/StatelessJourneys-Iran-final.pdf>

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

registered births, these provisions do not clearly extend to children born to stateless parents. Children born in Iran to stateless parents or foreign parents not born in Iran cannot acquire Iranian nationality, even if they would otherwise be stateless. This particularly affects second-generation Afghan refugee children. Additionally, the practical application of the double *jus soli* rule is hindered by difficulties in accessing civil registration, which is necessary to prove births in Iran.⁸⁷

53. Statelessness in the Sistan and Baluchistan province of Iran presents a significant humanitarian crisis, even though precise numbers are hard to pin down due to the absence of official data. Unofficial estimates in 2019 suggest that [upwards](#) of 80,000 to 100,000 Baluchis in Iran are stateless, lacking fundamental rights and services, subjected to numerous daily hardships, and often facing exploitative practices and arbitrary detentions.

F. Right to an Adequate Standard of Living (Article 5(e) of the Convention)

54. Sistan and Baluchistan, where the Baluchi ethnic group forms the majority of the population, is Iran's poorest province, with the majority of the population living below the poverty line – 64 per cent and 77 per cent in urban and rural areas respectively. The province performs poorly on many key development indicators: as well as having the highest illiteracy and infant mortality rates in the country, an estimated two thirds of the province lacks access to clean drinking water.⁸⁸ Despite the fact that the province is rich in gas, oil, gold and marine resources, the government's investments in economic development have not benefited local Baluchis.
55. In Khuzestan, the source of most of Iran's oil wealth, a vast number of Arabs live in informal housing settlements, often as a result of displacement, lacking functioning sewage systems, electricity, clinics, schools and other basic services.⁸⁹ Like Sistan and Baluchistan, the province suffers from low literacy rates and high rates of infant mortality and child malnutrition.⁹⁰ In June 2020, an Ahwazi worker committed suicide in the oil company field where he worked in the city of Hoveyzeh because of his deteriorating economic situation. His employer had failed to pay his salary and dues for months. This was only one of many suicide cases involving Ahwazi Arab youth who bore the brunt of the economic and social crises gripping Ahwazi society disproportionately.⁹¹ According to Dialogue Institute for Research and Studies, "[t]he dire economic and social situation in Ahwaz has led to frustration among youth, which in turn has led to a rise in rates of suicide. Iranian authorities have been inactive on the issue of suicide, which has seen significant spikes since 2005."⁹² Khuzestan is believed to have one of the highest suicide rates in the country due to poor social and economic conditions affecting the local population. Similarly, suicide rates in the province of Ilam are high, which is connected to the overall underdevelopment of Kurdish-majority provinces.⁹³ Poor living conditions in Kurdish

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Iran Labour News Agency '70 percent of Sistan-Baluchistan people are living under poverty line (Persian),' 15 November 2015.

⁸⁹ UNPO, Alternative Report Submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Consideration of the Second Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 49th Pre-Sessional Working Group, March 2012, p. 10 and written correspondence with Ahwaz Human Rights Organization, February 2018.

⁹⁰ European Ahwazi Human Rights Organization, *Plight of Ahwazi Arabs: Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 15 March 2013, p. 6.

⁹¹ Hamid, R., 'Local groups warn suicide is on the rise among Iran's impoverished Arab Ahwazi community,' *Global Voices*, 4 September 2017.

⁹² The Dialogue Institute for Research and Studies (2023) State neglect and ethnic oppression lead to rising suicide rate among young Ahwazis, available at: <https://astudies.org/2023/05/state-neglect-and-ethnic-oppression-lead-to-rising-suicide-rate-among-young-ahwazis/>

⁹³ MRG, 'Protests, discrimination and the future of minorities in Iran', 2022, p. 9

regions are underpinned by a history of forced resettlement and land confiscation, as well as inadequate reconstruction efforts following the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

56. Severe water shortages and other environmental and land related issues in Khuzestan, Isfahan and Sistan and Baluchestan pose a great risk to the minority population's right to health and adequate standards of living. What is more, the overall underdevelopment of minority areas means that many people are unable to access adequate healthcare services. For example, in Sistan and Baluchestan, the under-provision of health clinics in remote and rural areas has contributed to the province's below-average life expectancies. The province likewise has one of the highest under-five mortality rates in the country, surpassed only by Kurdistan. Making matters worse, these same provinces are marked by acute healthcare challenges, chief among which is air pollution. In 2011, the World Health Organization named Ahwaz as the most polluted city in the world, and it remains heavily polluted to this day.⁹⁴ The Kurdish cities of Sanandaj and Kermanshah were also listed among the most polluted in the world. According to environmentalists, the pollution in Khuzestan is linked to the Iranian government's long-term policies of river diversion, dam construction and drying of marshes for oil excavation, which have led to the rising incidence of toxic dust storms in the region. This in turn has led to an increase in respiratory illnesses and cancer.⁹⁵
57. In 2023, Greater Kurdistan experienced devastating earthquakes across its four regions: Bakur (Northern Kurdistan), Rojava (Western Kurdistan), Bashur (Southern Kurdistan), and Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan). Kurdistan's geographic location, overlapping the Eurasian and Arabian Plates, and its significant mountain ranges, the Zagros and Taurus, make it highly susceptible to natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods. The region's infrastructure is severely underdeveloped. Buildings often do not meet safety standards, and deep-rooted discrimination has left many Kurds in poverty, unable to afford proper construction materials. Consequently, earthquakes result in greater devastation and fatalities among the Kurdish population. The response from the state is often inadequate, exacerbating the long-term impact of these disasters. In Eastern Kurdistan's city of Khoy, the Islamic Republic's deliberate mismanagement of earthquake recovery efforts highlights their ongoing oppression of Kurds, using the natural disaster as a means to further subjugate them amid a broader revolutionary movement rooted in Kurdish areas under the slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi" (Women, Life, Freedom).⁹⁶
58. On January 28, 2023, an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.9 struck the city of Khoy in Eastern Kurdistan (West Azerbaijan). The earthquake caused significant damage in Khoy and nearby villages, and its tremors were felt in Urmia, Tabriz, Maku, as well as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Northern Kurdistan (southeast Turkey). The quake resulted in three deaths, over 1,200 injuries, and damaged more than 11,000 homes and structures. Additionally, carbon monoxide poisoning in tents claimed three more lives and hospitalized over 100 people. Another earthquake with a magnitude of 5.2 struck Khoy on March 16, 2023, but with no casualties.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ The Guardian (2023) Poison in the haze: documenting life under Ahwaz's oppressive orange skies, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/jan/06/poison-in-the-haze-documenting-life-under-ahwazs-oppressive-orange-skies-acc#:~:text=In%202011%20Ahvaz%20was%20ranked,a%20rise%20in%20cardiovascular%20diseases>

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ The Kurdish Center for Studies (2023) The earthquake in Khoy: Iran neglects the Kurds, available at: <https://nlka.net/eng/the-earthquakes-in-khoy-iran-neglects-the-kurds/>

⁹⁷ The Kurdish Center for Studies (2023) The earthquake in Khoy: Iran neglects the Kurds, available at: <https://nlka.net/eng/the-earthquakes-in-khoy-iran-neglects-the-kurds/>

59. The earthquakes left tens of thousands homeless, living in shelters with limited amenities. The state's response was largely ineffective, prompting residents from Urmia, Tabriz, and Sarpol Zahab to raise funds and gather supplies for the victims. However, locals reported that IRGC forces hindered aid from reaching Kurdish villages like Hisar and Kuchk, where many homes were destroyed. Instead, aid was diverted to Azeri-Turkish areas, highlighting the state's selective assistance based on geopolitical interests. The disparity in aid distribution exacerbated the suffering of Kurdish communities, who received little to no assistance from the state.⁹⁸

G. Right to Employment *Article 5(e)(i) ICERD*

60. In Iran, discrimination in access to employment is institutionalized through the practice of *gozinesh*, a mandatory screening process that anyone seeking employment in the public or para-statal sector must undergo.⁹⁹ *Gozinesh* involves assessing prospective employees' adherence to Islam and their loyalty to the Islamic Republic. Its basis is found in the 1995 Selection Law, Article 2. The *gozinesh* criteria not only bar adherents of non-recognized religions from seeking employment, but also disadvantage Sunnis and anyone who holds views contrary to the official values of the Islamic Republic.¹⁰⁰
61. According to state data, out of the top 20 Iranian cities with the highest unemployment rates, 18 are in Arab, Kurdish and Baluchi areas.¹⁰¹ In March 2019, Iran's most influential Sunni leader denounced discrimination against Sunnis in distribution of jobs and posts during a visit to the Sistan Region of Sistan and Baluchistan province, where the ethnic minority Baluchi population are primarily Sunni.¹⁰² In Khuzestan, oil and gas companies overwhelmingly hire employees from outside of the Ahwaz area instead of from the local Arab population, despite repeated demands to impose a quota on foreign companies compelling them to hire local labour. As a result, many Arabs are forced to make a living by working in the informal sector.¹⁰³ Large-scale development projects in Arab, Baluchi and Kurdish areas have involved land confiscation and forced evictions of the local population, and inward population transfers from outside the region.
62. The female economic participation rate in Iran is one of the lowest in the world. The province with the highest levels of female unemployment is Kermanshah, populated primarily by Iranian Kurds, where the unemployment rate for women is 29.5 per cent.¹⁰⁴

H. Right to Education (Article 5(e)(v) of the Convention)

63. In the case of Iran's ethnic minorities, especially Baluchis, Arabs and Kurds, challenges in accessing education are linked to the overall underdevelopment and impoverishment of their areas. Schools are few and far between in remote areas, and many families cannot afford the cost of transportation.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, many have no access to government offices in order to obtain official identification documents, which are required to register for schooling. According

⁹⁸ The Kurdish Center for Studies (2023) The earthquake in Khoy: Iran neglects the Kurds, available at: <https://nlka.net/eng/the-earthquakes-in-khoy-iran-neglects-the-kurds/>

⁹⁹ In addition to employment, *gozinesh* also applies to higher education and other forms of participation in civil life.

¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 4-5 and UNPO, 2012, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Ahwaz News, 'Poverty: Highest joblessness among Arabs, Baloch and Kurds,' *Ahwaz News*, 14 August 2013.

¹⁰² <https://abdolhamid.net/english/2019/03/1453/>

¹⁰³ Ahwaz News, 'Iran's Interior Minister admits Ahwaz's social crisis', 8 June 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Atlantic Council, 'COVID-19 depressed women's employment everywhere, and more so in Iran', 2021.

¹⁰⁵ UNPO, *Justice for Iran's Kurds*, Brussels, October 2015, p.17.

to a statement made by an MP from Sistan and Baluchistan in June 2017, official figures show that 25,000-30,000 children in the province did not receive an education that year, but actual figures could have been closer to 120,000.¹⁰⁶

64. The factors intimated above lead to high dropout rates and lagging educational attainment indicators. For example, data reported in 2016 indicates that the dropout rate among Ahwazi Arabs is 30 per cent at the elementary level, 50 per cent at the secondary level and 70 per cent for high school. In 2018 an Iranian MP stated that the Ahwaz region was ranked the lowest in the country in terms of educational growth, and over 12,000 Ahwazi children of primary school age had permanently left full-time education that year. More recent reports confirm that Ahwazi children are forced to drop out of full-time education, most of them before reaching a secondary level of education, often before they learn to read or write. Literacy rates are lower in Sistan and Baluchistan than in any other Iranian province. Notably, the literacy rate among women from rural areas is much lower than the literacy rate among women from urban areas – 72.8 per cent versus 88 per cent respectively. In addition, the gap between male and female literacy rates is much wider in rural areas – 11.1 percentage points, compared to 5.5 percentage points in urban areas – showing that gender discrimination, and not only economic factors, is also at play.¹⁰⁷
65. Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys, a problem compounded by the lack of female teachers, distances to schools, early marriage, participation in agricultural labor, and cultural and religious prejudice.¹⁰⁸ In a 2017 interview with Iranian state media, a Ministry of Education spokesperson said that only 40 to 50 per cent of girls complete their high school education in many border provinces.¹⁰⁹ In Sistan and Baluchistan, dropout rates for girls are reportedly 53 per cent before secondary school.¹¹⁰ Lack of access to mother tongue education, particularly at the early primary level, has also been shown to be a factor in the relatively low academic performance and high dropout rates of ethnic minority students compared to Persian students.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Centre for Human Rights in Iran, 'Impoverished children without identification documents deprived of education in Iran,' 22 July 2017.

¹⁰⁷ MRG, *op. cit.*, 2022, p. 10-11

¹⁰⁸ 'Half The Girls Living In Border Areas Drop Out Of School,' *Radio Farda*, 9 September 2017.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ MRG, *op. cit.*, 2022, p. 11

¹¹¹ Impact Iran, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

66. Accede to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons without any reservations and incorporate its principles into domestic law.
67. Accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness without any reservations and incorporate its principles into domestic law.
68. Become a party to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without any reservations and incorporate its principles into domestic law.
69. Facilitate unhindered access to Iran by UN Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, to enter the country for monitoring visits.
70. Repeal or amend vaguely worded articles in the Islamic Penal Code that address, in broad terms, national security and which restrict and unfairly criminalise or otherwise suppress peaceful expression, association and assembly.
71. Repeal or amend provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure in order to bring administration of justice in line with international standards.
72. Ratify the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment without any reservations and incorporate its principles into domestic law.
73. Implement an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty, particularly for non-violent offenses, and revise the legal framework to ensure that capital punishment is not applied in discriminatory ways.
74. Strengthen oversight and accountability mechanisms for border security forces to prevent indiscriminate killings. Ensure that any use of lethal force is strictly necessary and proportionate and investigate all allegations of unlawful killings promptly and impartially.
75. Accelerate efforts to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance, particularly in border areas and regions affected by conflict. Provide adequate support and rehabilitation services to landmine victims.
76. Ensure the right to peaceful assembly is respected and protected. Security forces should be trained in non-violent crowd control techniques and held accountable for any use of excessive force against demonstrators.
77. Amend laws and regulations to facilitate rather than restrict peaceful assembly, ensuring that any limitations on protests are necessary and proportionate.
78. Strengthen the independence and impartiality of the judiciary to guarantee fair trials. Judges and legal professionals should be free from political influence and corruption.
79. Ensure that all individuals have access to competent legal representation and that trials are conducted in a language the defendant understands, with adequate interpretation and translation services where necessary.

80. Establish effective mechanisms for victims of human rights violations to seek redress, including prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations and adequate reparations.
81. Promote the political participation of all ethnic and religious minorities by removing discriminatory barriers to candidacy and voting. Implement affirmative measures to increase minority representation in political institutions.
82. Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation to protect individuals from discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, and other protected characteristics. Ensure effective enforcement of these laws.
83. Implement measures to prevent and reduce statelessness, including ensuring that all children born in Iran, regardless of their parents' status, have the right to acquire Iranian nationality.
84. Invest in infrastructure and social services in marginalized areas to ensure access to clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and housing. Address the specific needs of minority communities.
85. Remove barriers to employment for minorities and women, and implement policies that promote equal opportunities in the labor market. Enforce anti-discrimination laws in employment practices.
86. Guarantee access to quality education for all children, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. Address disparities in educational resources and outcomes between different regions and communities.
87. Incorporate the languages and cultures of minority groups into the national education curriculum to promote inclusivity and respect for diversity.