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**Joint Submission of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute and the
Coalition for Genocide Response to the 48th session of the Human Rights Council's
Universal Periodic Review Working Group**

January 2025, Geneva, Switzerland

Iran

Submission by:

Dr Ewelina Ochab

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Chancery House 53-64 Chancery Lane

London WC2A 1QS United Kingdom

Email: ewelina.ochab@int-bar.org

I. Introduction

1. This report, produced by the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the Coalition for Genocide Response, and an independent expert Dr Tatyana Eatwell, focuses on the situation of women and girls in Iran, the atrocities against religious minority groups in the country, attacks on the legal profession, and the issue of transnational repression perpetrated by the Iranian regime.
2. Established in 1947, the International Bar Association (IBA) is the world's leading international organisation of legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. The IBAHRI works with the global legal community to promote and protect human rights and the independence of the legal profession worldwide.
3. The Coalition for Genocide Response is a UK-based charity that works towards a comprehensive response to genocide and other international crimes, engaging the UK, regional and international actors. In 2024, the IBAHRI convened the Gender Apartheid Inquiry, an independent inquiry into the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iran. The full report is attached as **Annex A**.
4. Dr Tatyana Eatwell is a barrister, practising from Doughty Street Chambers, London, with expertise in international human rights law and public international law. She represents and advises individuals, groups, non-governmental organisations, and governments on the promotion and protection of civil and political rights, the implementation of human rights obligations and accountability, securing justice for victims of human rights violations, and on prevention of ongoing and future violations. She holds a PhD in Public International Law from the University of Cambridge.

II. The Situation of Women and Girls

5. The situation of women and girls in Iran has been of great concern for many years, showing hallmarks of what is being referred to as gender apartheid. Gender apartheid is defined as *'inhumane acts committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one gender group over any other gender group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.'*ⁱ
6. The suppression of women's rights in Iran became even more prominent after the death of Mahsa Amini. Mahsa Amini, 22, was arrested by Iran's morality police in September 2022. According to reports, she was severely beaten during her arrest and transferred to the Vozara Detention Centre.ⁱⁱ Mahsa Amini died in the hospital on 16 September 2022. Her death has sparked protests across Iran. Thousands of people have taken to the streets in cities throughout Iran. They have been calling for accountability for Mahsa Amini's death, an end to violence and discrimination against women in Iran, and an end to their compulsory veiling. These peaceful protests have been met with excessive and unlawful use of force, which resulted in several fatalities, including children and young women.

Furthermore, new laws and policies were introduced to exercise more pressure on women and to suppress any opposition.

7. In 2023, Iran ranked 143rd (out of 146 countries) on the Global Gender Gap Report 2023.ⁱⁱⁱ The segregation of women and girls in Iran is omnipresent. As emphasised by Gissou Nia, a human rights lawyer, in her testimony to the Gender Apartheid Inquiry, women in Iran have some rights, and these are often shown to the international community to counter any arguments of oppression. However, oppression remains an everyday language of women in Iran:

There are a lot of women in higher education, but there is also a lot of legal oppression still. Women cannot obtain a passport and travel abroad without their legal guardian's permission, which is exclusively in the hands of fathers for daughters and husbands for wives. This has resulted in female athletes not being able to leave the country and being excluded from significant sports tournaments. Although there are a lot of women in higher education in Iran, they are denied the right to study in certain university fields, such as aerospace engineering, so it is not equal for them. Testimony of a woman is worth half that of a man in a courtroom. Women cannot enter sports stadiums. There has been a lot of media about that. Women have been jailed for trying to just watch football. In Iran, men are allowed to have up to four wives, and they can engage in any number of temporary marriages that they want. The list goes on. But women are restricted, and almost always within the family, they're not equal to men in inheritance, divorce, marriage, or custody, they cannot ride a bike, and they cannot sing solo in public. There is a lot of inequality. (...) The reality is that the legal framework is incredibly oppressive.^{iv}

Inhumane Acts within the Context of Systematic Oppression

8. Rana Rahimpour, an Iranian-British journalist who worked for the BBC, told the Gender Apartheid Inquiry what it means to be a woman or girl in Iran:

From the moment you are born a girl in Iran, you become a second-class citizen, and you lose many of your rights as an individual. At the age of seven, when you go to school, you have to wear a headscarf, and the schools are segregated. Growing up, you cannot travel abroad without permission from either your father or later your husband, and you are not allowed to dance, you are not allowed to sing solo, are not allowed to ride a bicycle. You are not allowed to study certain subjects at [university]. There are so many rights that are automatically taken away from you, as a result of being a woman.^v

9. The Azadi Network, a non-governmental organisation based in the UK, submitted to the Inquiry that *'women and girls [in Iran] are treated as second-class citizens, including in*

relation to marriage, divorce, child custody, employment, inheritance and political office.^{vi} As they added, *‘Women are not allowed to ride bicycles or motorbikes, cannot enter stadiums to watch sports, cannot sing or dance. Women are excluded from public spaces such as having their own section on public transport, female-only sections in parks, separate canteens at universities etc. Women are not accepted in the military.*^{vii} Several laws contribute to this treatment of women and girls in Iran. Some of these laws and policies are discussed below.

Education

10. While in general, women and girls can access education, there are restrictions that require further attention. The Azadi Network submitted to the Inquiry that:

An Iranian educational policy implemented in 2012 restricted access to higher education for women in 30% of Iran’s public universities, mostly in sciences and engineering. Some universities have a cap on the number of female students they admit. These policies have had a negative impact on female labour force participation and employment and an impact on marrying at a young age. Iranian women make up over 50% of university students, but only 15% of these graduates become employed.^{viii}

Employment

11. Similarly, as in the case of education, employment opportunities are restricted. Azadi Network pointed out that, *‘Women are forbidden from having certain occupations in Iran: real estate agent, judge, president, oil industry, specific jobs in city hall, working in a boat, army, fire department and bike courier. (...) Men are preferred by employers for managerial positions. There is inadequate legal protection for sexual harassment in the workplace.*^{ix}
12. Leila Alikarami, an Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate, testified to the Inquiry that while there are women judges, their role is very limited:

Although women can indeed be appointed as judges, their authority may sometimes be limited compared to their male counterparts. For instance, in certain instances, such as in the Court of Appeal where a male judge holds the position of president, female judges can participate in decision-making processes, but the ultimate authority to sign the verdict rests with the president of the court, who is typically male. Similarly, in family courts, while women can serve as judges, they may not always have the power to sign the verdict; however, they can still contribute to shaping the final decision. Thus, despite progress in appointing women to judicial roles, disparities in authority between male and female judges persist.^x

13. Similarly, Leila Alikarami commented that although there are women parliamentarians, women are barred from becoming the President.^{xi} She further added that while women are prohibited from certain jobs, husbands can also restrict their wives from any employment opportunities.

Movement

14. Women and girls also suffer from restrictions to their movement. Among others, a husband has the right to forbid his wife from obtaining a passport to travel abroad and or even prevent her from travelling abroad if she already has a passport. As a result, women are often not considered for jobs where extensive travel is involved due to the uncertainty created by these challenges.^{xii}
15. Women can ‘gain’ various rights, including the right of movement, at the time of entering marriage. However, Rana Rahimpour provided testimony about the hurdles women experience, explaining that *‘We have reported that, at times, the registrar would encourage men not to give up these rights. You can only get it by negotiations at the time of marriage. Many women are not aware of these things, women who are not educated about it.’*^{xiii}
16. Furthermore, apart from having limited movement, women are also segregated and excluded from various places. Shadi Sadr, an Iranian lawyer, human rights advocate and journalist, produced for the Inquiry a non-exhaustive list of places where women and girls are segregated in Iran, including:
- Entrance to judicial complexes, some government offices, and some universities is separated for men and women. The main purpose of such segregation is to have agents check the hijab status of women entering the premises and prevent those who are improperly veiled.
 - Primary and high schools, whether public or private.
 - All sports complexes, swimming pools, and water parks. Thus, a family cannot enjoy a sports facility together. Mothers cannot see their sons swimming, and fathers cannot see their daughters.
 - Some universities, such as Tabriz Islamic Art University. In most universities, certain areas in libraries, restaurants, computer sites, etc., are designated separately for men and women.
 - Some public transport.
 - The lines for buying bread in some cities.
 - In parks in some religious cities, women and men are not allowed to collectively exercise together, and there are designated areas for each sex.
 - Some public libraries.
 - On any beach, there is a very small, completely curtained area designated for women who want to swim, while men can swim everywhere else.

- Marriage ceremonies and parties take place in restaurants or rented venues.
- All mosques and pilgrimages are strictly gender-segregated.^{xiv}

17. Shadi Sadr further commented that *‘women continually find themselves segregated into inferior and unsafe versions of services or locations enjoyed by their male counterparts, structural reinforcement of their position as second-class human beings. Persistent resistance against these exclusionary policies has exposed women to harassment, arbitrary arrests, and torture and ill-treatment by authorities.’*^{xv}

Expression, Assembly, Association

18. Recent months have seen how women’s rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association have been curtailed. Shadi Sadr submitted to the Inquiry how nationwide protests, under the unifying slogan ‘Woman, Life, Freedom,’ following the killing of Mahsa Amini, have been violently suppressed:

Security forces carried out a ruthless crackdown on the demonstrations. Protesters, especially those burning their scarves and mobilising the crowds, faced severe mistreatment during arrests, in detention centres, and even fatalities at the hands of state forces.^{xvi}

19. Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, told the Inquiry how the Iranian regime suppresses freedom of expression and media freedom more broadly, including by banning BBC Persian service, but also how it targets Iranian journalists and their families outside of Iran, as part of its practice of transnational repression.^{xvii} Rana Rahimpour testified to the attacks she faced in carrying out her work as a journalist covering the situation in Iran, even reaching transnationally when she was living in the UK. She recalled her conversations with her parents being recorded, and her parents’ passports confiscated for one year.^{xviii}

Access to Justice

20. Women’s access to justice is severely limited. Professor Javaid Rehman explained some of the issues in relation to access to justice:

In Iran, the age of criminal responsibility in Iran is nine lunar years for girls, whereas it is 15 for boys. The age of marriage for girls is 13 and even younger girls could be married. We have received cases of very young girls [being married], sometimes they're forced into marriages, and then they react. Instead of being recognised as victims, because of this age of criminal responsibility, they are regarded by the criminal justice system as criminals and they are then sometimes executed if charged and convicted of certain serious crimes. Tragically, Iran continues to execute children. We receive information on young girls who have reacted violently to domestic violence, and then they are executed.

The Iranian Penal Code states that the amount of blood money is still half of that of a male so women are effectively deprived of recognition of being equal even when they are killed. Iranian Penal Code exonerates perpetrators of honour killing and reduces their punishments. For example, there are exemptions for men who kill their children or grandchildren. There are exemptions for criminal liability and retribution in kind for a man who witnesses his wife committing adultery with a man and kills either or both of these parties. (...)

If you look at many civil proceedings, the evidence of women either does not count or is half of the evidentiary value. This is a great disadvantage to women in very important litigation. Women are deprived of half of their inheritance. (...).^{xix}

Other Restrictions

21. The hijab laws in Iran have resulted in a litany of challenges faced by women and girls in the country that go much further than 'just' being harassed, receiving a warning or fine, and have had deadly consequences for many women and girls. Professor Javaid Rehman indicated that:

Women have suffered for a very long time, because of this policy of enforced hijab. It is the policy where there has been no compromise that has been made since 1979. (...) we know the tragic story of Mahsa Amini. But Mahsa Amini was not the only woman or girl. There have been many other victims of this kind of violence and brutality that have been faced by these girls and women. Just to highlight - over 537 victims are there who have been killed by the state since the protest movement started last year, which has included over 70 children, many of them girls, and there has been no accountability for that. What the state instead has done - it has become a lot more ruthless in its approach. There is currently a bill in the Iranian parliament, which is much more oppressive and draconian in its effect. There is the likelihood of imprisonment, the likelihood of fines. There are other forms of punishment, for example, there will be travel bans, there will be confiscation of passports, there will be deprivation of citizens' rights, and all of that, just because girls and women who refuse to wear the enforced hijab, would be presented to courts and will be subjugated to this kind of humiliation and physical and financial and all forms of punishment. (...).^{xx}

22. Shadi Sadr commented in her written submission on research in relation to the enforcement of the hijab law:

Research conducted by the human rights organisation, Justice for Iran, examining official records and statements spanning from 2003 to 2013 confirms that more than 30,000 women in Iran were arrested by the morality police during this decade for either not wearing hijab or wearing it improperly.^{xxi} Official reports indicate the issuance of over 460,000 warnings to women, with 7,000 compelled

to pledge compliance with Islamic hijab laws while a minimum of 4,385 women faced charges and legal prosecution. In the same period, more than 460,000 women received verbal notifications from the morality police.^{xxii}

23. Shadi Sadr further commented on how technology is being used to persecute women, including in women-only spaces:

Increasingly, surveillance cameras in public spaces, particularly thoroughfares, are being utilised by the police in Iran to identify and penalise women who do not comply with the mandatory hijab rule. Advanced AI technology has amplified the state's surveillance capabilities, particularly with the proliferation of CCTV cameras in cities like Tehran. This heightened surveillance includes the use of traffic cameras to spot women driving without a headscarf, leading to harassment, the marking of their cars in records, and subsequent vulnerability to police stops, harassment, and arbitrary fines. This situation makes it challenging for individuals resisting mandatory hijab to lead a normal life, impacting their ability to sell their cars and exposing them to continuous scrutiny and control by authorities. Surveillance itself remains a key tool through which gender apartheid is maintained in Iran. Even in women-only spaces, women are under the watch of the state through plainclothes agents or supporters of the Islamic government who act on the state's behalf.^{xxiii}

24. Azam Jangravi, an Iranian Information Security Analyst at Citizen Lab, Toronto University, and a human rights advocate, once imprisoned in Iran for not wearing the hijab, testified concerning the Nazar system of surveillance implemented in Iran to monitor women through a system of cameras and systems that can detect women through facial recognition, utilising Chinese spyware.^{xxiv}

25. Rana Rahimpour raised the case of Roya Heshmati who was lashed 74 times in January 2023, as *'she posted a photo of herself on her Facebook account, which was just showing her from behind and she was wearing a red top and a long black skirt, which to many is a very modest outfit, but then she was arrested and detained for 11 days and [punished with] lashes.'*^{xxv}

Gender Persecution and Gender Apartheid

26. The treatment of women and girls in Iran meets the legal definition of gender persecution in Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, although, notably, Iran is not a party to the Rome Statute and as such, the International Criminal Court does not have the territorial jurisdiction over the situation in the country.
27. In 2023, a group of Iranian and Afghan women launched a campaign called 'End Gender Apartheid Today' to recognise the treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran as gender apartheid, and to codify gender apartheid as an international crime.^{xxvi} The

support for the campaign has been ever-growing with several states championing it at the UN, including by supporting the wording of gender apartheid to be included in the Draft Convention on Crimes against Humanity.^{xxvii}

III. The Suppression of Freedom of Speech and Media Freedom

28. In response to the protests that swiped across Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, several journalists were arrested. Female journalists faced particularly severe punishments as a result. For example, Niloufar Hamed and Elaheh Mohammadi were jailed for more than a year after they played a key role in breaking the story of Mahsa Amini.^{xxviii} By 2023, 44% of journalists detained in Iran were women, and since the Mahsa Amini protests began, five times more female journalists were detained than before the protests.^{xxix} As of January 2024, four women journalists were still imprisoned in Iran.^{xxx}

29. This worrying trend continues. More recently, on 11 June 2024, Saba Azarpeik and Yashar Soltani were imprisoned in Iran for their work reporting on corruption. They were sentenced for spreading ‘false information’ and ‘propaganda against the state.’ Azarpeik faces two years in prison and Soltani 13 months.^{xxxi}

30. As indicated by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Media Freedom, Iranian authorities use blasphemy laws to suppress freedom of speech, including journalists reporting on the situation in the country. As they reported:

In Iran, in response to the mass protests in 2022 following Mahsa Amini’s death in police custody, there has been a government crackdown on journalistic free speech. Around 95 journalists were arrested in the aftermath of the protest, in some cases under charges of blasphemy. One such case is that of sports journalist Ehsan Pirbornash who was arrested in October 2022 for openly supporting and reporting the protests that followed Mahsa Amini’s death via Twitter. He was arrested and convicted for (i) insulting Islam in a manner deemed blasphemous, (ii) inciting aggression against the Islamic Republic’s government, and (iii) spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic’s system. He was sentenced to 18 years’ imprisonment (of which eight years was suspended).^{xxxii}

31. Internet access, and as such, access to information, is severely limited in Iran. In 2022, Iranian authorities blocked social media apps such as WhatsApp and Instagram,^{xxxiii} following a long-term ban on Facebook and X (previously Twitter).^{xxxiv} Internet shutdowns were also used during the ‘Women, Life Freedom’ protests to limit access to information and the ability for protestors to mobilise and organise.^{xxxv}

32. Individuals in Iran also find their online activities monitored and criminalised. According to the UN Human Rights Council report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, state authorities arrest and prosecute persons in

connection with their online activities.^{xxxvi} Among others, in June 2024, Hossein Shanbehzadeh was targeted for his activities online- his arrest came after posting a period ‘.’ in response to a tweet by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei posing with the national volleyball team.^{xxxvii} He was arrested on charges including ‘espionage’ and blasphemy.^{xxxviii} Such arrests are part of a broader effort to impose internet censorship and could have a chilling effect on expression online and offline.

33. The surveillance of online spaces has a disproportionate effect on women, as they already face restrictions in accessing public space.^{xxxix} Online movements such as #me_too_Iran allowed women to share their experiences of sexual harassment or rape, topics considered to be taboo. Social media have also played a significant role in the protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini.^{xl} Internet shutdowns have a disproportionate impact on women, as many women have turned to online businesses^{xli} in the face of a worsening economic situation and opportunities.^{xlii}

IV. The Situation of Religious or Belief Minorities

34. The situation of religious or belief minorities in Iran is highly concerning. The Iranian penal code criminalises practices such as proselytising and any activities that may be seen as attempting to convert Muslims to other religions or beliefs. The punishment for these crimes is the death penalty. Similarly, the Iranian penal code criminalises blasphemy. As emphasised by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Media freedom, the law in Iran *‘punish[es] any disparaging remarks made against the Prophet by death under certain circumstances. The law does not require any specific intent on the part of the speaker, only that the words spoken “insult” the “sacred values of Islam”, “any of the imams” or the Prophet.’*^{xliii}
35. Laws also prohibit Muslim citizens from changing or renouncing their religious beliefs. Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, excluding converts from Islam, are the only recognised religious minorities. They are permitted to worship and form religious societies, but only within the limits of the law. The only recognised conversion is to Islam. Conversion from Islam is considered apostasy, and as such, punishable by death.
36. Article 499 of the Islamic Penal Code states that *‘anyone who insults Iranian ethnicities or divine religions or Islamic schools of thought recognised under the Constitutions with the intent to cause violence or tensions in the society or with the knowledge that such [consequences] will follow’* will be subjected to punishments between two and five years and/or a monetary fine, where violence, and between six months and two years and/or a monetary fine if no violence is involved. Article 499, which is a blasphemy provision, will add to the challenges faced by religious minorities by adding a significant threat of criminal charges for ‘insult.’ Such provisions are destined to be abused against religious minorities.

37. Article 500 states that *'any deviant educational or proselytising activity that contradicts or interferes with the sacred law of Islam'* whether as part of a 'sect' or through the use of *'mind control methods and psychological indoctrination'* would face imprisonment between two and five years and/or a fine. Article 500 criminalises proselytising but also any form of educational activities. The wording is broad to curtail freedom of speech more broadly if the content of that speech *'contradicts or interferes with the sacred law of Islam.'* Again, this provision will affect religious minorities.
38. The above-identified provisions violate international standards on the right to freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, and also minority rights.
39. While Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, are recognised religious minorities, their right to practice their religion is limited by law. Other minorities may not engage in public religious expression, whether worshipping in a church or wearing religious symbols. However, it does not end there. For example, Baha'is, an unrecognised minority group, are barred from all government employment. They may not receive compensation for injury or crimes committed against them. They may not inherit property.
40. In Iran, bias against religious minorities can be seen across various educational materials. School textbooks are focused on the Shia-Muslim perspective and are silent on any other religions. This has an adverse effect on religious minorities. Children belonging to the Baha'i religion are denied access to schools and often access to higher education. Baha'i children who are lucky to be enrolled in schools are not free to learn or partake in their religious practices. According to a CSW report, a memorandum from the Iranian government stated that Baha'i children *'should be enrolled in schools which have a strong and imposing religious [Shi'a] ideology.'*^{xliv} The situation for children partaking in higher education is no better. According to Article 3 of the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council's student qualification regulations (1991), students are to be expelled if they are found to be Baha'i. Only Muslims or students belonging to recognised religions are allowed to take the national enrolment exam. The report further alleges that some Baha'i children have been subjected to physical abuse at schools.^{xlvi}
41. This discrimination continues throughout the lives of many Baha'is. According to Human Rights Watch, in the private sector, they may be denied professional licences, as the government policy established that *'belief in one of the official religions of the country'* was a precondition for such licences.^{xlvi} Human Rights Watch was also told that employers in the private sector may be put under pressure to fire Bahai.
42. Baha'i women face intersectional forms of discrimination on the basis of their gender and religious identity.^{xlvi} Human Rights Watch reports an increase in the targeting of Baha'i women.^{xlvi} Among others, as of 2024, two-thirds of all Baha'i prisoners in Iran are women, as part of a broader pattern of targeting women since 2022.^{xlvi}

43. Other religious minorities are also affected by this system. According to the Iran Prison Atlas, by the end of 2023, 115 people were held in prison for ‘religious practice’ including Baluch, Baha’i, Sunni, Christian, and some Shia practitioners.^l 166 Christians were detained last year, with detentions particularly concentrated around the Christmas period. There was also a targeting of Bible distributions, as over one-third of arrests of Christians were of individuals in possession of multiple copies.^{li}

V. Attacks on the Legal Profession

44. Lawyers in Iran are systematically subject to intimidation, harassment, threats and sometimes also arrests and detention because of their work. In April 2024, Iran International reported that *‘in [2023], 41 Iranian lawyers have been arrested amid ongoing government crackdowns on dissent.’*^{lii} Among others:

In December 2021, Amirsalar Davoudi, a prominent human rights lawyer who has been representing political prisoners and members of ethnic and religious minorities, was sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment on charges of ‘insulting the supreme leader,’ ‘agitating the public or officials’ consciousness’ and ‘forming a group with the purpose of disrupting national security’ because of his human rights work.^{liii} He remains in prison.

In January 2023, Amir-Afshar Nafaji was sentenced to 17 months in prison on charges of ‘propaganda against the regime’ and ‘spreading falsehood to disturb public order.’ He was also banned from practising law for two years and from leaving the country. He has since been released on bail.^{liv}

In October 2023, Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer and vocal critic of Iran’s judicial process, treatment of women and the death penalty, was arrested while attending the funeral of Armita Geravand, a 16-year-old girl who died following her arrest by the Tehran police. She was later released on bail on 15 November 2023.^{lv}

45. Over the years, several steps were taken to undermine the independence of the legal profession. Among others, in 2015, Article 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure was amended to limit the right to an attorney. In May 2019, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi announced that Appeal Courts in Iran could issue verdicts without the presence of the defendants and their lawyers.^{lvi} This directive was endorsed by Judiciary Spokesman Gholam-Hossein Esmaili in July 2019, who confirmed that the Appeals Court branches were no longer required to follow the procedures stipulated in Article 450 of the Criminal Procedures Regulations.^{lvii}
46. In June 2023, the Iranian Parliament voted to investigate the Iranian Bar Association in a motion entitled ‘The Request to Investigate the Operations of Bar Associations and their Union.’ This investigation gives the power to the judiciary chief, Gholam-Hossein

Mohseni Ejei and state security agencies to control the Bar Association's internal affairs by, *inter alia*, collecting bar association membership lists under the pretence of evaluating the lawyers' legal competence, examining the bar association's income and expenditure, and examine how elections are held for the board of directors of the bar association. They will also be empowered to review the legal qualifications of its members.^{lviii}

VI. Transnational Repression

47. Transnational repression is used to describe acts of political repression by a State against a person or persons outside of its territory, ordinarily but not exclusively against members of the diaspora or persons living in exile. Transnational repression, which includes violent attacks, constitutes a serious violation of international law and poses a grave threat to a number of individual rights and freedoms, including the right to life, freedom of expression and of opinion, liberty and security of the person, and, in circumstances where persons are subjected to ongoing targeting and harassment for prolonged periods, may constitute torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
48. The Iranian regime is responsible for perpetrating acts of transnational repression against members of the Iranian diaspora, including dissidents, human rights defenders, journalists, and their families. Iran has resorted to a litany of methods of transnational repression, including assassination, rendition, spyware, family intimidation, cyber harassment and threats, Interpol abuse, and the misuse of national security or counter-terrorism laws.^{lix} The threats to journalists escalated after the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' protests across Iran in 2022, as the media was blamed for fuelling discontent.^{lx}
49. Iran has, for many years, threatened the journalists and staff of Persian-language media organisations, including Iran International, BBC Persian, Deutsche Welle, Voice of America, IranWire and Radio Farda, in an attempt to silence them and prevent scrutiny of the Iranian government.^{lxi} As found by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran:

The state authorities harassed, threatened and intimidated journalists and other media employees working outside the country, including those working at the BBC Persian service, Iran International television, Voice of America, IranWire and Deutsche Welle. The Iranian authorities summoned, threatened, and in some cases arrested, detained and charged the family members of those journalists and media workers in an apparent effort to exert pressure on them and prevent them from reporting on the country... Journalists also received serious threats, including to their lives and personal safety, leading to the involvement of the police in some countries. Journalists, in particular women journalists, faced heightened online vilification, harassment and attacks.^{lxii}

50. In a survey for Reporters Without Borders, almost 93% of female Iranian journalists living in the UK said they had been subjected to online threats or harassment linked to their journalism, compared to almost 86% of men. Many women also described messages that were sexualised, misogynistic, and gendered, including rape threats, explicit images and besmirching.^{lxiii}
51. Reportedly, there have been at least 15 credible Iranian plots to kill or kidnap people in the United Kingdom since 2022.^{lxiv} These include a targeted assassination attempt in November 2022 against two news presenters working for Iran International in London. The plot appeared to be orchestrated by Iranian spies linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.^{lxv} In December 2023, Austrian national, Mogomed-Husejn Dovtaev, was convicted of acts preparatory to acts of terrorism. He was arrested in February 2023, after being detected outside of Iran International's facility in London. Because of the level of threat faced by Iran International, it was forced, in February 2023, to temporarily close its London studios and relocate its broadcasting operations to Washington DC until it resumed its UK-based operations in September 2023. On 29 March 2024, journalist Pouria Zeraati was violently attacked and stabbed outside his home in London.^{lxvi} In June 2024, Iran International's correspondent in Stockholm, Mehran Abbasian, was moved to a secure location following a serious and credible threat to his life.^{lxvii} Such acts are clearly aimed at repressing legitimate freedom of expression.^{lxviii}
52. Iran's acts of transnational repression are not limited to journalists. In February 2024, it was reported that, in 2021, Iranian agents plotted assassinations of Jewish people in Sweden.^{lxix} Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, has revealed that it has foiled multiple Iran-backed attacks against Israeli embassies in Europe, including in Belgium and Sweden.^{lxx} Iran is reportedly using organised criminal gangs to carry out violent attacks and assassinations on foreign soil.^{lxxi}

VI. Recommendations

53. In view of the above, the IBAHRI, the Coalition for Genocide Response, and Dr Tatyana Eatwell recommend the following to the Government of Iran:
- To ensure that women and girls enjoy all human rights, as per international standards in the ICCPR and the UDHR, among others;
 - To abstain from any practices that are discriminatory to women and girls;
 - To repeal all laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls because of their gender;
 - To ensure the full enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression and of opinion to all;
 - To repeal blasphemy laws and ensure that these are not used to stifle freedom of speech;

- To ensure protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief for all, including religious or belief minorities;
- To release all journalists who continue to be arbitrarily detained and unlawfully imprisoned for their work, including those imprisoned for reporting on the recent protests in Iran;
- To refrain from, and take immediate measures to prevent, the harassment, intimidation and targeting of journalists, lawyers, members of civil society, human rights defenders, and others in Iran and abroad.

ⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱ See: Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javaid Rehman (A/HRC/52/67). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>.

ⁱⁱⁱ See: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf.

^{iv} Gissou Nia, oral hearing.

^v Rana Rahimpour, oral hearing.

^{vi} Azadi Network, written submission.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Laila Alikarami, oral hearing.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} Azadi Network, written submission.

^{xiii} Rana Rahimpour, oral hearing.

^{xiv} Shadi Sadr, written submission.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Shadi Sadr, written submission.

^{xvii} Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, oral submission.

^{xviii} Rana Rahimpour, oral hearing.

^{xix} Javaid Rehman, oral hearing.

^{xx} Javaid Rehman, oral hearing.

^{xxi} Justice for Iran (JFI), 'Thirty-Five Years of Forced Hijab: The Widespread and Systematic Violation of Women's Rights in Iran', 23.

^{xxii} Shadi Sadr, written submission.

^{xxiii} Shadi Sadr, written submission.

^{xxiv} Azam Jangari, oral hearing.

^{xxv} Rana Rahimpour, oral hearing.

^{xxvi} See: <https://endgenderapartheid.today/>. See also: **Annex B: Legal Brief**.

^{xxvii} See: <https://www.justsecurity.org/96096/gender-apartheid-crimes-against-humanity-treaty/>.

^{xxviii} See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67975811#:~:text=Iran%20has%20freed%20two%20female,on%20bail%2C%20Iranian%20media%20reported>.

^{xxix} See: <https://rsf.org/en/unprecedented-number-women-journalists-are-now-detained-iran>.

^{xxx} See: <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-fears-two-newly-freed-iranian-women-journalists-could-be-jailed-again#:~:text=Four%20outspoken%20women%20journalists%20are,of%20her%20fellow%20women%20detainees>.

^{xxxi} See: <https://rsf.org/en/presidential-election-iran-ongoing-repression-journalists-must-end-now>.

^{xxxii} See: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HLP-Blasphemy-Laws-report-2023.pdf>. See also: <https://rsf.org/en/country/iran>.

- xxxiii See: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emmawoollacott/2022/09/22/iran-shuts-down-whatsapp-and-instagram-as-protests-spread/>. See also: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-restricts-access-instagram-netblocks-2022-09-21/>
- xxxiv See further: UN Human Rights Council detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/HRC/55/CRP.1). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>. See also: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/24/facebook-banned-iran>. Further sources: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202210268565>.
- xxxv Ibid.
- xxxvi Ibid.
- xxxvii See: <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-blogger-detained-period-ayatollah/32980810.html>.
- xxxviii See: <https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-hossein-shanbehzadeh-targeted-social-media-crackdown-continues/>.
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- xl See: <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/in-iran-women-deploy-social-media-in-the-fight-for-rights/>.
- xli See: <https://www.accessnow.org/how-internet-shutdowns-affect-women-in-iran/>.
- xlii See: UN Human Rights Council detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/HRC/55/CRP.1). Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>.
- xliii See: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HLP-Blasphemy-Laws-report-2023.pdf>.
- xliv See: <https://www.csw.org.uk/faithandafuture>.
- xlv Ibid.
- xlvi See: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2024/03/iran0424%20web.pdf.
- xlvi See: <https://www.bic.org/statements/joint-statement-members-parliament-and-senators-across-europe-situation-bahais-iran>.
- xlvi See: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/04/01/boot-my-neck/iranian-authorities-crime-persecution-against-bahais-iran#:~:text=Iranian%20authorities%20have%20intentionally%20and,community%20due%20to%20their%20faith>.
- xlvi See: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202405084820>.
- li See: <https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/>.
- li See: <https://articleeighteen.com/reports/14516/>.
- lii See: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202404024696>. See also: https://www.uyanet.org/sites/default/files/final_report_iran_del_2024.pdf. More in **Annex C**.
- lii See: https://www.uyanet.org/sites/default/files/final_report_iran_del_2024.pdf.
- lii Ibid.
- lii Ibid.
- lii See: <https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/11/rule-allowing-appeals-hearings-without-defendants-present-is-blattant-violation-of-law/>.
- lii Ibid. Article 250: ‘The Appeals Court should immediately set a time for a hearing and summon all sides whose presence is necessary for the case. All sides can be present in person or through their lawyer. The lawyer’s absence will not prevent the case from being adjudicated.’
- lii See: <https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/06/iran-states-investigation-of-bar-association-aims-to-crush-dissent/#:~:text=June%252028%252C%25202023%2520%25E2%2580%2593%2520Bolstering%2520a%2520state%2520campaign,facing%2520politically%2520motivated%2520charges%2520in%2520the%2520judicial%2520system>.
- lix See: <https://rsf.org/en/watch-out-because-we-re-coming-you-rsf-report-unprecedented-transnational-repression-iranian>.
- lx See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/violence-and-threats-against-journalists-reporting-iran-abroad-must-stop>.
- lxi Ibid.
- lxii See: A/HRC/55/67, §§83-84. See also: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2017/10/un-experts-call-iran-stop-intimidation-bbc-staff>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/03/iran-targeting-journalists-threatens-freedom-press-say-un-experts>.
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abroad-must-stop.

^{lxv} See: <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/united-kingdom-assassination-attempt-against-iran-internationals-sima-sabet>. See also: <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-12-20/iran-spy-plot-to-kill-two-news-presenters-in-london-uncovered-by-double-agent>, however has been denied by Iran officials, see <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-779355>. Further sources: <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-sanctions-iranian-officials-over-plot-kill-journalists-2024-01-29/>

^{lxvi} See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/violence-and-threats-against-journalists-reporting-iran-abroad-must-stop#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20are%20deeply%20alarmed%20that,2024%2C%E2%80%9D%20the%20experts%20said>.

^{lxvii} See: <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202406110015>.

^{lxviii} See: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/violence-and-threats-against-journalists-reporting-iran-abroad-must-stop>.

^{lxix} See <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/iran-suspected-of-murder-plot-against-swedish-jews>

^{lxx} See: <https://www.ft.com/content/179646b1-66aa-4b69-9e4f-0ed7a112eac7>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-uk-taking-action-against-network-that-targeted-iranian-dissidents-us-treasury-2024-01-29/>.

^{lxxi} Ibid.