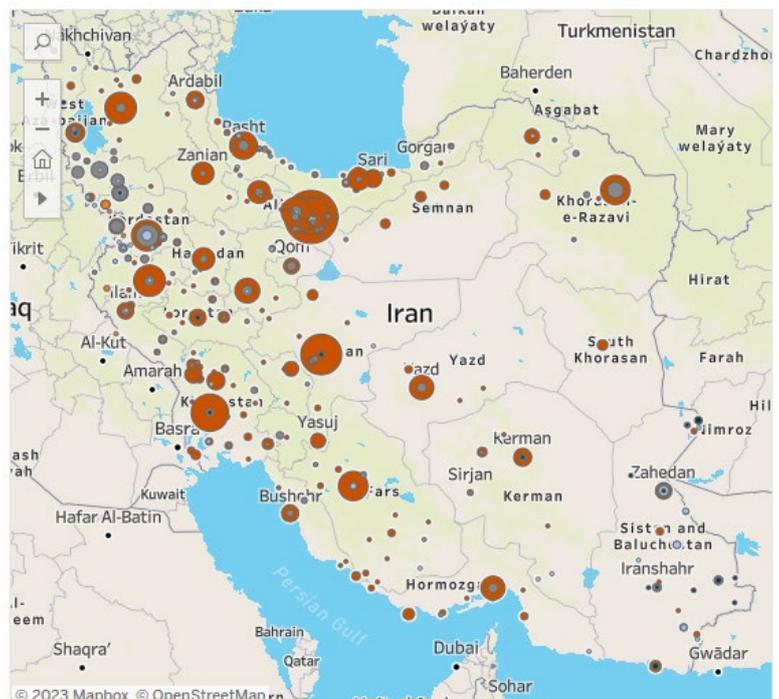


Iran

Protests 2022-2023



Ministry of Immigration
and Integration

The Danish
Immigration Service

This brief report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The brief report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this brief report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The brief report is a synthesis of information gathered from different sources, and it brings together condensed information in a relevant manner for the reader's COI needs and it organises information together thematically to form a coherent whole of the topic in question, instead of listing or quoting information source by source.

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Executive summary

On 16 September 2022, the 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa (Jina) Amini died in the custody of Iran's morality police for not wearing hijab properly, which sparked nationwide protests that spread to at least 130 cities in the following weeks and months.

Iranian security forces struggled to suppress the protests across the country shortly after their eruption, resulting in 530 reported deaths, thousands of arrested individuals, tortures and sexual assaults in detention – including children under the age of 18 – forced confessions, violations of the legal procedures and breaches of constitutional rights.

Journalists, human rights activists, students, artists, academics, lawyers, medical staff treating the protesters, minors and persons involved in anti-government online activities have been among the targeted groups. Families of the targeted groups have also been harassed and threatened.

An unknown number of individuals among the targeted groups have been convicted of “spreading propaganda”, “colluding to commit crimes and acting against national security” or “waging war against God” and “corruption on earth”, which all bear heavy punishments in the Revolutionary Courts of Iran.

In the Kurdish and Baluch areas, the protests have been larger than in other provinces at times and the authorities' reactions have seemingly been more violent in these two areas.

Digital activism, online surveillance and consequences for disobeying the mandatory hijab laws in public spaces have also been addressed in the report.

There has been no reported change in the entry procedures for Iranians entering Iran after the protests erupted in September 2022. It cannot be ruled out that online activities of individuals would be examined upon entry. This was, however, also the case before September 2022.

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Introduction

The purpose of this brief report is to provide updated background information for use in processing asylum cases.

The brief report focuses on the countrywide protests in Iran, which began in September 2022, including a description of the protests, the reaction of the Iranian authorities to the protests as well as the groups targeted. In addition, the report briefly deals with changes in the treatment of returnees in the wake of the protests. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are included in Annex 2.

The EUAA COI Report Methodology has been applied in the writing process.¹

The brief report is based on a synthesis of the information from publicly available open sources, interviews with two sources with expertise on the topics, as well as a hearing statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

The data was gathered and composed simultaneously with the unfolding events in Iran during the 2022-2023 protests, and includes information on the events up to 1 March 2023. Most of the sources applied stem from news outlets that have based many of their articles on citizen journalism,² or statements revealed by the families of the detainees and deceased. For more information, see [Access to information](#). The Danish Immigration Services' (DIS) definition of "targeted groups" in the brief report is centred on the individuals, whom the Iranian authorities have deliberately pursued.

The two consulted sources were briefed about the purpose of the brief report and that their statements would be included as an annex in the brief report. Minutes were written for each interview and forwarded to the sources for approval. This gave the sources the possibility to amend, comment or correct their statements. Both sources approved their statements, which can be found in Annex 1. The Danish Immigration Service (DIS) has put an effort in presenting the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible.

The sources were consulted on how they prefer to be referenced in this brief report, and thus are referenced according to their own request.

Care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

For the sake of transparency, accuracy and reader-friendliness, the paragraphs in the minutes of the interviews in Annex 1 have consecutive numbers, which are used in the footnotes when referring to the statements of the sources.

The brief report does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. During the interview, the sources may have highlighted issues not addressed in the ToR. Since these issues could be relevant to refugee status determination, they are included in Appendix 1, but they are not addressed in the report itself.

¹ EUAA, *EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2023, [url](#)

² Britannica describes citizen journalism as people who disseminate information on social media, but who are not professional journalists, n.d., [url](#)

At the time of writing, protests were still taking place in Iran. Given the changeable situation in Iran, the information provided may quickly become outdated. The research and editing was finalised on 15 March 2023.

The brief report has been externally peer reviewed by the Norwegian COI unit, Landinfo, in accordance with the EUAA COI Report Methodology.³

The brief report is available on the website of the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) <https://us.dk/>, and thus is available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the public.

Access to information

A university-employed researcher working on minorities believed that the phenomenon of *relative journalism* during the 2022-2023 protests is a result of the undermining of the rule of law and the legal system in Iran. In previous popular uprisings in the Islamic Republic of Iran, lawyers used to be the link between the media and the relatives of the arrested protesters. The situation has though transformed during the 2022-2023 protests, as lawyers have been put under pressure and in many instances have been arrested or threatened. While lawyers have become more careful in speaking to international media, relatives of arrested individuals have become their representatives through information sharing, and for generating awareness about their situation. The same source further noted that a growing number of relatives are likely willing to speak to international media out of desperation.⁴

Consequently, as users of such sources, DIS reflects on certain reservations when it comes to merit: family members could be speaking out of desperation, or the Iranian authorities could have tricked them. According to the university-employed researcher working on minorities, Iranian authorities have previously manipulated communication to confuse family members, who could potentially speak to international media about their relatives' situation.⁵

Independent media are not allowed to report from inside Iran. Therefore, as pointed out by BBC, the verification of Iranian state media reports is challenging.⁶ Iranian media are subjected to control, censorship and self-censorship. Editorial offices in Iran are subjected to closures by the state if they do not stay within certain boundaries. Some journalists attempt to report closer to the boundaries, e.g. journalists covering the death of Mahsa Amini and the following protests. Such journalists often end up in jail or detention along with their editors.⁷

BBC, for example, uses different techniques to verify accounts from Iran by searching in official archives, websites and social media as well as speaking to relatives, activists and human rights groups to crosscheck the information they find. However, in some parts of Iran, verification processes are challenged by feeble

³ EUAA, *EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2023, [url](#)

⁴ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 5, 7

⁵ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 8

⁶ BBC, *Iran: A really simple guide to the protests*, 26 October 2022, [url](#)

⁷ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 2

internet access.⁸ Persian-language media outside Iran, such as Radio Farda and Radio Zamaneh, have important contacts within civil society in Iran, e.g. unions, human rights organisations, feminist groups, and ethnic minority groups.⁹

⁸ BBC, *Iran protests: BBC identifies many more people killed in demonstrations after Mahsa Amini's death*, 6 December 2022, [url](#)

⁹ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 3

Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
CHRI	Center for Human Rights in Iran
COI	Country of Origin Information
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CTP	Critical Threats Project
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
HRANA	Human Rights Activists' News Agency
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISNA	Iranian Students News Agency
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RFE/RL	RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty
USDOS	U.S. Department of State
VOA	Voice of America

1. The protests

On 16 September 2022, the 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa (Jina) Amini died in the custody of Iran's morality police. Morality police officers arrested Amini because she allegedly did not wear her hijab in a, according to the authorities, proper manner. Eyewitnesses said that morality police officers hit Amini in the head. She later fell into a coma and subsequently died in the custody of the authorities. Iranian authorities, however, denied this and claimed that Amini died of a heart attack.¹⁰

The death of Mahsa Amini sparked mass protests across Iran.¹¹ While Iranian citizens have the right to take part in protests¹², security forces have been deploying tear gas, water cannons, clubs and firearms against protesters¹³, and arbitrarily arrested and killed demonstrators.¹⁴

1.1 Development of protests since September 2022

Following the death of Mahsa Amini, protests erupted in Tehran outside the hospital where she died. During Amini's funeral the following day, protests spread to the city of Saqqez, the hometown of Amini, in the Kurdistan province. In the course of the following weeks, protests continued in other parts of the Kurdish areas and eventually spread to all of Iran's 31 provinces.¹⁵ The protests have mainly consisted of scattered, simultaneous demonstrations with up to a few hundred participants. In connection with commemorations and funerals for protesters, several thousand participants have been reported.¹⁶ Calls for protests and communication between protesters have in particular been taking place on social media.¹⁷

While women and young people have been the front figures, the protests have been joined by other parts of the Iranian society across gender, class, religion and ethnicity.¹⁸

Across Iran, authorities partly shut down access to the internet during the heights of the protests, while security forces clashed with protesters and prosecuted detained demonstrators.¹⁹ Friday 30 September 2022, which has come to be known as "Bloody Friday", was one of the deadliest days since the beginning of the protests. In the city of Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchestan province, security forces fired live ammunition at

¹⁰ Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 1; BBC, *Fury in Iran as young woman dies following morality police arrest*, 16 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Iranian Medical Official Says Amini's Death Caused By Head Injury, Rejects Official Version*, 20 September 2022, [url](#)

¹¹ ICG, *Iranian Leaders Should Call Off Their Campaign of Repression*, 23 September 2022, [url](#)

¹² Leila Alikarami: 8; Zamaneh Media, *Iranian Law and Judicial Practice towards Protestors from the 'Women, Life, Freedom' Movement*, 20 February 2023, [url](#); Article 19, *Iran: Protect constitutional right to protest*, 3 January 2018, [url](#)

¹³ WSJ, *Who is Mahsa Amini, and Why Did Her Death Spark Protests in Iran?*, 23 September 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *Mahsa Amini's death sparks anger towards Iran's morality police*, 23 September 2022, [url](#); Reuters, *Iran security forces clash with protesters over Amini's death*, 27 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴ Leila Alikarami: 8

¹⁵ Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 1; The Guardian, *Mapping Iran's unrest: how Mahsa Amini's death led to nationwide protests*, 31 October 2022, [url](#); The Guardian, *Protests spread in Iran as President Raisi vows to crack down*, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶ Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁷ DW, *Iranians use social media to keep protest movement alive*, 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸ University of Stavanger, *Questions and answers about the situation in Iran*, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹ Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 2

protesters, worshippers and spectators from rooftops in the city. It is estimated that 66 individuals were killed that day.²⁰

In September 2022, the UN Human Rights Council voted to establish a fact-finding mission to Iran. The purpose of the fact-finding mission is to investigate alleged human rights violations committed during the 2022-2023 protests. The vote came after the UN Human Rights Council stated that Iranian security forces showed disregard of international rules by employing live ammunition, birdshot and other metal pellets, tear gas and batons against unarmed protesters and onlookers.²¹

As of 19 February 2023, the total number of deaths of protesters since 17 September 2022 had reached 530, according to Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), an independent human rights NGO.²²

As of March 2023, protests still took place in Iran, albeit to a smaller degree than in the beginning of the protests.²³ Iranians continued to show dissent in different ways such as women walking outside without the mandatory hijab.²⁴ For more information, see section [2.8 Women who do not observe the mandatory hijab](#).

²⁰ Al, *Iran: At least 82 Baluchi protesters and bystanders killed in bloody crackdown*, 6 October 2022, [url](#); Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 5

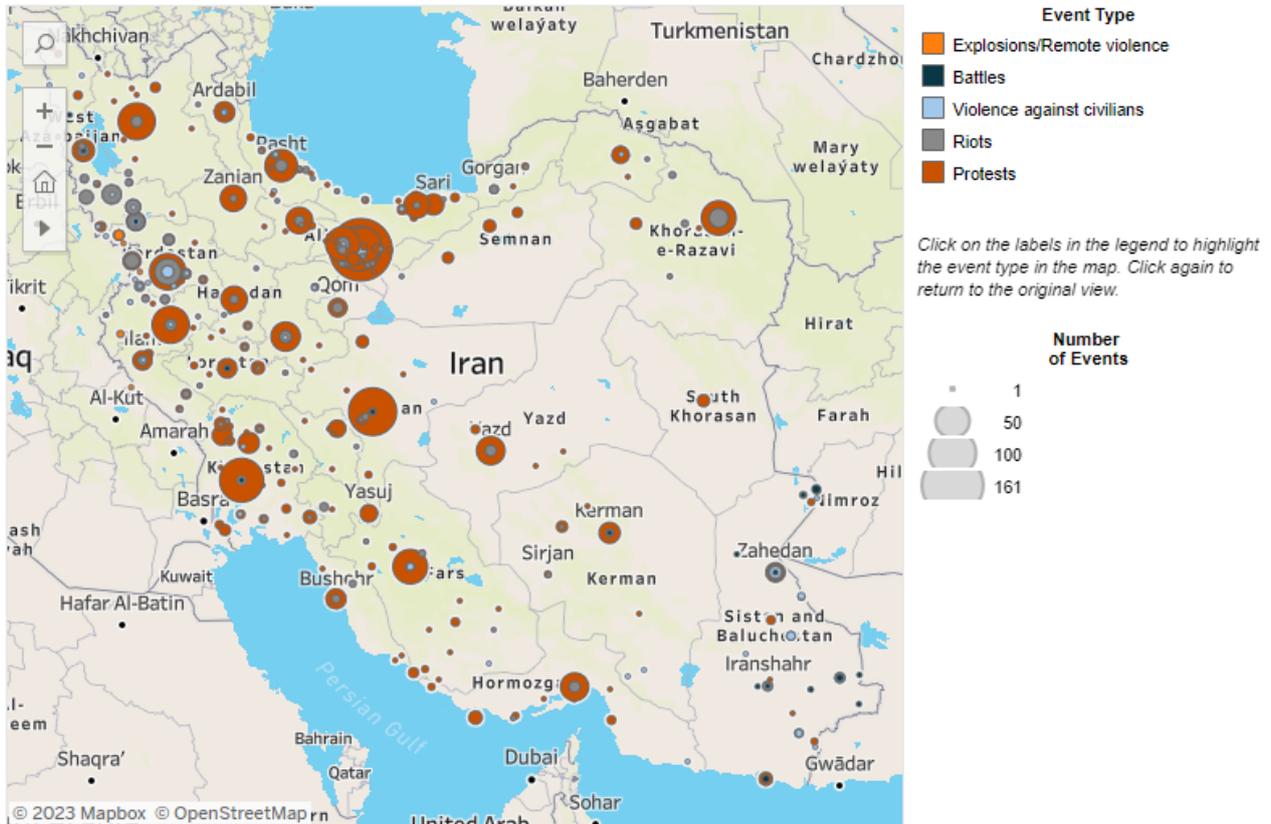
²¹ BBC, *Iran protests: UN fact-finding mission to investigate crackdown*, 24 November 2022, [url](#)

²² Facebook (Hrana), *Iran Protests – Daily Update*, 19 February 2023, [url](#)

²³ The Guardian, *Iran protests flare in several cities amid continuing unrest*, 17 February 2023, [url](#); The Christian Science Monitor, *Iran has largely crushed protests, but a spirit of defiance still burns*, 10 February 2023, [url](#)

²⁴ WSJ, *Iran's Deadly Street Protests Are Replaced by Quiet Acts of Rebellion*, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

1.2 Map of protests



ACLED, events overview from 9 December 2022 and the previous six months.²⁵

1.3 State actors

This section introduces the main actors within the Iranian security forces that have responded to the political and social protests in Iran since September 2022.

Iran has two different types of military. One is the regular military (*artesh*), and the other is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Sepâh-e Pâsdârân-e Enqelâb-e Eslâmi* or IRGC). The main tasks of the regular military is the defence of Iran’s territory, while the IRGC safeguards Iran’s territory as well its theocratic system as an Islamic Republic. The IRGC and the regular military cooperate during war times.²⁶

The *Basij* (Persian word for mobilisation) is a volunteer paramilitary militia that falls under the IRGC. The Basij has branches across Iran. The main tasks of the militia is internal security, law enforcement as well as moral policing.²⁷

²⁵ ACLED, *Regional Overview: Middle East 5-11 November 2022*, 17 November 2022, [url](#); The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) collects data from secondary sources about conflicts in a number of countries and collects them in a publicly available database. Data should be read with the reservation that exact figures may be inaccurate

²⁶ Ostovar, A., *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards*, 2016, [url](#), p. 5

²⁷ The Iran Primer, *The Basij Resistance Force*, 6 October 2010, [url](#)

The Iranian guidance patrols (*Gasht-e Ershâd*), commonly known as the morality police, is a unit under Iran's Law Enforcement Forces. There has been reports of the abolishment of the morality police during the protests. These reports have, however, been denied by Iranian state media.²⁸ The morality police patrols the streets and enforces laws concerning Islamic dress code in the public sphere. The morality police can detain Iranians not obeying the Islamic dress code. Detained individuals receive a notice or, in some instances, are transported to so-called "lecture centres" and taught about the mandatory hijab and Islamic principles.²⁹ The morality police often consists of members of the Basij.³⁰

The Iranian judiciary is under the authority of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,³¹ and includes ordinary civil, criminal and military courts as well as Islamic Revolutionary Courts.³² In all types of courts, the judge acts as prosecutor. In Iranian courts, there are no juries,³³ and prosecution in the Revolutionary Courts mainly involves actions against national security, drug smuggling and espionage.³⁴ Trials at the Revolutionary Courts are renowned for their disregard of procedural law.³⁵

1.4 The authorities' reaction to the protests

Iranian authorities have accused Iran's foreign enemies of being terrorists and of stoking unrest across Iran with the goal of inciting a civil war.³⁶

According to the Iranian Constitution, Article 27, public gatherings are allowed.³⁷ However, security forces have deployed tear gas, water cannons, clubs and firearms against protesters, and arbitrarily arrested and killed protesters.³⁸ Security forces have used shotguns, assault rifles and handguns against protesters, sometimes shooting at people running away.³⁹

As of 18 January 2023, Iran has executed four men. According to human rights groups, the convictions were based on unfair trials.⁴⁰ In February 2023, it was reported that at least 40 individuals had received death sentences, while more than 100 individuals had been charged with crimes, which could lead to a death sentence.⁴¹

²⁸ Independent, *Iranian state media rejects claim regime is abolishing morality police in face of ongoing protests*, 4 December 2022, [url](#)

²⁹ USDOS, *Designating Iran's Morality Police and Seven Officials for Human Rights Abuses in Iran*, 22 September 2022, [url](#); DW, *Who are Iran's 'morality police'?*, 4 December 2022, [url](#)

³⁰ VOA, *Iran's Basij Force: Specialists in Cracking Down on Dissent*, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

³¹ The Iran Primer, *The Islamic Judiciary*, 1 August 2015, [url](#)

³² BBC, *Jason Rezaian trial: What are Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Courts?*, 26 May 2015, [url](#); The Iran Primer, *The Islamic Judiciary*, 1 August 2015, [url](#)

³³ BBC, *Jason Rezaian trial: What are Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Courts?*, 26 May 2015, [url](#)

³⁴ The Iran Primer, *The Islamic Judiciary*, 1 August 2015, [url](#)

³⁵ Leila Alikarami: 21

³⁶ RFE/RL, *The Farda Briefing: Iranian Officials Claim Foreign Enemies Are Plotting A Civil War; Analysts Say Tehran Is To Blame*, 23 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁷ Leila Alikarami: 8; *Constitute, Iran (Islamic Republic of)'s Constitution of 1979 with Amendments through 1989*, n.d., [url](#)

³⁸ WSJ, *Who is Mahsa Amini, and Why Did Her Death Spark Protests in Iran?*, 23 September 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *Mahsa Amini's death sparks anger towards Iran's morality police*, 23 September 2022, [url](#); Reuters, *Iran security forces clash with protesters over Amini's death*, 27 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁹ HRW, *Iran: Security Forces Fire On, Kill Protesters*, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰ BBC, *Iran protests: 15 minutes to defend yourself against the death penalty*, 18 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹ CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

One of the convicted protesters, 35-year-old Javad Ruhi, received three death sentences after being arrested in the city of Nowshahr in northern Iran. Ruhi was sentenced with “waging war against God”, “corruption on Earth”, and apostasy.⁴² Family members stated that Ruhi suffered from a mental health illness.⁴³

As of 20 February 2023, Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) estimated that 799 Iranians who participated in the protests had been tried and convicted.⁴⁴

According to Iran’s Islamic Criminal Code approved in 2012, armed uprising against the government or the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran is criminalised and falls under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts, and is penalised with the death penalty and imprisonment.⁴⁵

In February 2023, Iranian state media announced that Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, approved pardons and reductions in jail sentences, which according to the New York Times allegedly comprised tens of thousands of prisoners, including individuals arrested during the 2022-2023 protests. Profiles excluded from the pardon included:

- Individuals with dual nationality;
- Individuals accused of “corruption on earth”;
- Individuals charged with “spying for foreign agencies”;
- Individuals “affiliated with groups hostile to the Islamic Republic”;
- Individuals charged with murder;
- Individuals charged with destruction of state property;⁴⁶
- Individuals convicted of armed action;
- Individuals convicted of being “an enemy of God”.⁴⁷

As a requirement to obtain a pardon, the prisoner had to write a letter expressing regret for their actions as well as a pledge to refrain from participating in protests or other activities that could undermine the state.⁴⁸ According to the consulted lawyer, this can be considered an example of a forced confession.⁴⁹ For more information, see section [3.2 Treatment of detainees](#).

According to HRANA, a mass scale of detainees were released from prisons across Iran in February 2023, most likely in connection with the announced pardons.⁵⁰ It is unclear how many of the released were detainees arrested during the protests.

⁴² HRW, *Accounts of Torture and Summary Trial of Javad Rouhi*, 1 February 2023, [url](#); The Guardian, *Iran to execute mentally ill man for allegedly burning Qur’an during protest*, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴³ The Guardian, *Iran to execute mentally ill man for allegedly burning Qur’an during protest*, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Facebook (Hrana), *Iran Protests – Daily Update*, 20 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁵ BBC, *برگزار شد «خانه اصفهان» برگزار شد* [The second court session of Amir Nasr-Azadani and the defendants of “Isfahan House” was held], 29 December 2022, [url](#); IHR, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020, 2021*, [url](#), p. 33; Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, *English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, Article 287*, 4 April 2014, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Reuters, *Iran’s supreme leader issues pardon for ‘tens of thousands’ of prisoners*, 5 February 2023, [url](#); BBC, *Iran protests: Protesters among prisoners pardoned by leader*, 6 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁷ The New York Times, *Iran Announces Amnesty, but It May Not Spare Many Protesters*, 5 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁸ BBC, *Iran protests: Protesters among prisoners pardoned by leader*, 6 February 2023, [url](#); CHRI, *Analysis: Khamenei’s “Pardon” Is a Public Relations Stunt That Cedes No Ground to the Protesters*, 8 February 2023, [url](#); The Iran Primer, *Supreme Leader Issues Thousands of Pardons*, 8 February 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁹ Leila Alikarami: 11

⁵⁰ HRANA, *Report on Mass Release of Prisoners in the Past 24 Hours*, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

1.4.1 State surveillance and individuals involved in online activities

The 2022-2023 protest movement has been active on digital platforms. Protesters have been mobilising both directly and indirectly on social media, while Iranian authorities have blocked many online services and partially shut down the internet.⁵¹ Since September 2022, millions of Iranians have experienced disruptions or blockages in online activities, such as WhatsApp and Instagram.⁵²

In several instances, detainees have received punishments based on their social media content on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, such as pictures or posts critical of the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader and the situation throughout the 2022-2023 protests.⁵³ Punishment of online activities has legal basis in Iranian law.⁵⁴

An engaged celebrity couple on Instagram, in their early 20's, were arrested on 30 October 2022, after a video went viral of them dancing romantically in front of the capital's Azadi (Freedom) Tower.⁵⁵ A Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced them each to five years in prison, as well as bans on using the internet and leaving Iran, on charges of: "colluding against national security" and "propaganda against the establishment".⁵⁶

In January 2023, Iranian media reported that the parliament was planning to introduce a new article to the Islamic Criminal Code. The article reportedly criminalises expressions of opinion on social media. The proposed legislation could sentence influential individuals to prison, if they post comments critical of the official line of the Islamic Republic, and if such posts disrupt public order.⁵⁷

Two sources describe that Iranian authorities have accessed or hacked social media accounts of detainees to incriminate them.⁵⁸ In several cases, detainees have been sentenced to punishments based on social media content on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, such as pictures or written posts against the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader, or critical posts or poems about the situation during the 2022-2023 protests.⁵⁹

⁵¹ MRG, *Protests, discrimination and the future of minorities in Iran*, November 2022, [url](#), p. 4; Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁵² Al Jazeera, *Iran restricts WhatsApp, Instagram as Mahsa Amini protests grow*, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵³ Leila Alikarami: 16

⁵⁴ Islamic Parliament Research Center of The Islamic Republic of Iran, *قانون الحاق دو ماده به کتاب پنجم قانون مجازات اسلامی (تعزیرات و مجازات-های بازدارنده) [Two new additional provisions to Iran's Islamic Penal Code]*, 15 February 2021, [url](#)

⁵⁵ CNN, *Iranian couple handed prison sentence for dancing in the streets*, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Mizan News, *[Special account of enmity on Astyage Haghghi and Amir Mohammad Ahmadi/ Moandan doubled the sentence of 5 years of imprisonment/ The reason for the conviction is the repeated and numerous propaganda of anti-Iranian calls]* حساب ویژه / معاندان روی آستیاژ حقیقی و امیر محمد احمدی/ معاندین حکم ۵ سال حبس را دو برابر کردند/ دلیل محکومیت تبلیغ مکرر و متعدد فراخوان‌های ضد ایرانی است, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁷ Etemad Online, *امراقب اظهارنظرهایتان باشید؛ برخلاف قرائت رسمی باشد مجازات می‌شوید [Watch your mouth, you might be punished if what you say is different from the official reading!]*, 26 January 2023, [url](#); IranWire, *Islamic Republic Of Iran To Criminalize Comments On Social Networks*, 31 January 2023, [url](#); MEMO, *Iran may criminalise social media comments*, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Leila Alikarami: 16; CNN, *Iran's government accesses the social media accounts of those it detains. Tech companies appear ill-equipped to stop it*, 19 December 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Leila Alikarami: 16

2. Targeted Groups

2.1 Journalists

Nilofar Hamedi, a journalist at Shargh Daily, and Elaheh Mohammadi, a journalist at Ham-mihan Daily, were among the first to report on Mahsa Amini's hospitalisation and later death in September 2022.⁶⁰ Both female reporters were arrested in the following days for their reporting.⁶¹ In a statement from 28 October 2022, authorities in Iran accused both detained journalists of being spies for the CIA and of being the "primary sources of news for foreign media".⁶² According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an NGO that promotes press freedom worldwide, Hamedi and Mohammadi can face the death penalty if formally charged and convicted of espionage. Iranian authorities have kept Hamedi and Mohammadi in Iran's Evin prison since late September 2022.⁶³

At least 95 journalists have been arrested since the start of the protests for covering the protests.⁶⁴ Some of them had their devices seized, and at least 46 have been released on bail.⁶⁵ On 11 January 2023, CPJ quoted sources familiar with 88 of the cases, and noted that Iranian authorities had charged nearly all the 88 journalists with "spreading propaganda against the ruling system" and "colluding and acting against national security."⁶⁶ CPJ added:

"Under the Iranian penal code, convictions for that propaganda offense carry prison terms of up to one year, and the collusion charge can carry up to five years. However, at least five journalists have received sentences in excess of those legal maximums, including extra prison time, lashes from a whip, bans on working or leaving the country, or mandatory community service."⁶⁷

The harshest sentence on any Iranian journalist since nationwide protests broke out in September 2022 was passed to Ehsan Pirbornash on 28 October 2022, for openly supporting the protests. He received 18 years in prison and according to Reporters Without Borders, Pirbornash was convicted by a Revolutionary Court in the city of Sari.⁶⁸

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in October 2022, where it listed BBC Persian and Deutsche Welle among individuals and organisations sanctioned by the Iranian authorities for deliberate actions in support of terrorism, and inciting violence and hate speech as well as human rights abuses.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ CPJ, *In an Iran roiled by protests, journalists face a war of attrition*, 13 December 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹ DW, *Iran: Jailed female journalists face regime's smear tactics*, 26 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶² ISNA, *بیانیه مشترک وزارت اطلاعات و سازمان اطلاعات سپاه* [Joint statement of the Ministry of Information and the IRGC Intelligence Organization], 28 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶³ CPJ, *CPJ renews call for Iran to release all jailed journalists amid anti-government protests*, 1 November 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴ CPJ, *Iran's seizure of detained journalists' devices raises fears of fresh arrests, convictions*, 16 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁵ CPJ, *Names of journalists arrested in Iran's anti-state protests*, 13 February 2023, [url](#)

⁶⁶ CPJ, *Iranian journalists face long prison terms, lashes, and harsh restrictions over protest coverage*, 11 January, [url](#)

⁶⁷ CPJ, *Iranian journalists face long prison terms, lashes, and harsh restrictions over protest coverage*, 11 January, [url](#)

⁶⁸ RSF, *Iranian journalist gets long jail term for satirical comments about mullah regime*, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁹ BBC Persian, *Why reporting on Iran comes at a heavy price*, 12 January 2023, [url](#); Frankfurter Allgemeine, *Iran bedroht Mitarbeiter der Deutschen Welle* [Iran threatens employees of Deutsche Welle], 28 November 2022, [url](#)

2.2 Human rights activists

Several human rights defenders have been imprisoned or detained since the 2022-2023 protests broke out.⁷⁰

A leading human rights activist, Farhad Maysami, has been imprisoned since 2018 accused of possessing badges stating: “I am against the compulsory hijab”.⁷¹ He went on weeks of hunger strike in jail since 7 October 2022, in protest of the killings of demonstrators.⁷² Maysami was pardoned and released on 10 February 2023, after photos of his physical circumstances went viral.⁷³

Faezeh Hashemi, who has been a vocal critic of the Islamic Republic, was handed down a five-year sentence after backing the 2022-2023 protests.⁷⁴ Hashemi is the daughter of Iran’s former president, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997), and she has previously served prison sentences during prior protests.⁷⁵ Faezeh Hashemi was arrested for “inciting rioters” in September 2022, days after the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died in police custody and sparked nationwide unrest.⁷⁶

2.3 Artists and athletes

Iran’s Minister of Interior, Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, has demanded a reaction towards sports stars and artists supporting the nationwide protests. On January 16, Vahidi asked governmental institutions to “implement the necessary reprimands or punishments” towards these individuals.⁷⁷

On 10 January 2023, a popular Iranian football player was sentenced to 26 years in prison (16 years mandatory), on the charge of “assisting in waging war” during street protests – and accused of killing two Basij paramilitary members and a police officer.⁷⁸

Other athletes have been either threatened or pressured by the Iranian authorities to publicly apologise for their support for the protests.⁷⁹

In the fall of 2022, House of Theater and Music in Iran compiled a list with the names of 100 artists, who had either been arrested, banned from working or banned from leaving the country. Most of the detained were arrested for protesting online, while others were arrested in the streets. Some of them have been released and reunited with their families, according to a member of the Legal and Judicial Support Committee for Artists.⁸⁰

⁷⁰ UNHR, *Iran must immediately release critically ill human rights defender Arash Sadeghi: UN experts*, 2 December 2022, [url](#); CHRI, *Children’s Rights Advocates, Mainly Women, Targeted in Crackdown on Anti-State Protests in Iran*, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷¹ The Guardian, *Iranian activist jailed over hijab protests goes on hunger strike*, 29 August 2018, [url](#)

⁷² Iran International, *World Outraged By Shocking Photos Of Hunger-Striking Political Prisoner*, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷³ Reuters, *Iran releases emaciated dissident after long hunger strike*, 10 February 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Bloomberg, *Iran Ex-Leader’s Daughter Sentenced to Prison Over Protests*, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁵ CNN, *Iran sentences daughter of former president to five years in prison*, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Bloomberg, *Iran Ex-Leader’s Daughter Sentenced to Prison Over Protests*, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁷ BBC, *وزیر کشور ایران خواستار برخورد با ستاره‌های ورزشی و هنری حامی اعتراضات شد*, [Iran’s interior minister demanded dealing with sports and art stars supporting the protests], 16 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁸ CHRI, *Iranian Athletes Killed, Tortured, Sentenced to Death for Supporting Protests (Updated)*, 4 January 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Radio Free Europe, *Iranian Wrestler Seeks Asylum In Germany After Enduring ‘Constant Threats’ For Backing Protests*, 27 January 2023, [url](#); Danmarks Radio, *Irsk skakspiller ‘beordret af regeringen’ til at optage video-undskyldning*, 2 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁰ Shargh Daily, *بازداشتی‌ها و ممنوع الخروجی های هنرمندان*, [Artists who have been arrested or banned from leaving Iran], 14 November 2022, [url](#)

Hossein Mohammadi is an Iranian actor among four other protesters who were handed death sentences by the Revolutionary Court.⁸¹ Mohammadi was accused of killing of a Basij militia member during street protests.⁸²

Reyhaneh Taravati, a female photographer, was sentenced to six years in prison in for her actions in "designing targeted activities in line with the women's movement in Iran" and "creating false needs in women through the promotion of the MeToo movement".⁸³

2.4 Students and academics

Mass protests at more than 144 universities across Iran and in some high schools have led to the arrest of at least 713 students.⁸⁴ Numerous students have faced prison sentences, and four students from Allameh University of Tehran have been sentenced to nine years in prison by the Revolutionary Court. Other sentences issued to students from the same university include prison, exit ban and lashings.⁸⁵

There are several reports of university professors suspended, dismissed and threatened for showing support for the protests – and at least nine professors at Tehran Central University have been forced into early retirement.⁸⁶

On 13 February 2023, Saeed Madani, a renowned sociologist and writer, received nine years in prison.⁸⁷

2.5 Lawyers

Since the beginning of the protests in September 2022, more than 60 lawyers have been arrested, and in some cases, lawyers have faced security related charges, and have been convicted for charges similar to those of their clients.⁸⁸

Negin Kiani, a lawyer and member of the East Azerbaijan Bar Association, was sentenced to one year in prison and banned from leaving the country. Security forces arrested Kiani and jailed her in Tabriz Prison. On November 13, she was released on a high bail.⁸⁹

Attorney at law Amir-Afshar Najafi, member of the Qazvin Bar Association, was sentenced to 17 months in prison. In addition, he received an exit ban preventing him from leaving the country and was banned from

⁸¹ Radio Farda, *Iranian Actor Mohammadi Among Five Handed Death Sentences*, 21 December 2021, [url](#)

⁸² Amnesty International, *Iran: list of individuals at risk of execution in connection with nationwide protests*, 2022, [url](#)

⁸³ Radio Farda, *Rehaneh Taravati, an activist, was sentenced to six years in prison*, به شش سال زندان محکوم شد, 21 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Radio Farda, *Issuance of heavy prison sentences for students: Issuance of 9-year prison sentences for four students of Allameh University*, صدور احکام سنگین زندان برای دانشجویان: صدور حکم ۹ سال حبس برای چهار دانشجوی دانشگاه علامه, 21 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Radio Farda, *Issuance of heavy prison sentences for students: Issuance of 9-year prison sentences for four students of Allameh University*, صدور احکام سنگین زندان برای دانشجویان: صدور حکم ۹ سال حبس برای چهار دانشجوی دانشگاه علامه, 21 January 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Radio Farda, *Ministry of Science claims: No professor has been dismissed due to political issues, they were scientifically incompetent*, هیچ استادی به دلیل مسائل سیاسی اخراج شده است، از نظر علمی ناتوان بودند, 14 February 2023, [url](#); Iran International, *The new wave of dismissal and forced retirement of university professors in Iran*, جدید بازنشستگی اجباری و اخراج استادان دانشگاه در ایران, 30 January 2023, [url](#); BBC Persian, *The new wave of dismissal and forced retirement of university lecturers in Iran*, موج تازه اخراج و بازنشستگی اجباری مدرسان دانشگاه ها در ایران, 13 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Iran International, *Confirmation of Saeed Madani's 9-year prison sentence*, تایید حکم ۹ سال زندان سعید مدنی, 15 February 2023, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Leila Alikarami: 7

⁸⁹ HRANA, *Lawyer Negin Kiani Sentenced to One Year in Prison*, 2 December 2022, [url](#)

practising law for two years. The court also ordered the seizure of his cell phone. Najafi received a one year prison sentence.⁹⁰

Ebrahim Parsamehr, a lawyer, was allegedly severely beaten, because he intended to defend a number of protesters in the cities of Izeh and Baghmalek.⁹¹

2.6 Ethnic minorities

DIS consulted a university-employed researcher working on minorities on the role of ethnic minorities in the 2022-2023 protests in Iran. The source did not believe that ethnicity has played a decisive role, when it comes to reactions from the authorities towards the protesters. However, certain ethnic groups, such as Kurds and the Baluchi people are more rebellious due to their history of being in conflict with the IRGC.⁹²

Leila Alikarami, a consulted lawyer and human rights advocate, noted that in provinces such as Baluchistan and Kurdistan, courts handed down heavier sentences. The simplest forms of ethnic rights activism carried out by minorities, are often deliberately construed by the authorities as a threat to national security, or conflated with militant separatism. Alikarami added that activists are usually presented with vaguely-worded broad charges, drawn from Iran's Criminal Code. The most notorious of these charges include "waging war against God" (*mohārebeh*) and "corruption on earth" (*efsād fel-arz*). Both can entail death penalty, depending on the interpretation of the court. Alikarami opined that punishments in some ethnic regions are harsher compared to Tehran or other larger cities.⁹³

The protesters in Baluchistan and Kurdistan were shot with real ammunition, unlike protesters in other parts of Iran, who were shot with rubber bullets.⁹⁴ In both areas, the IRGC are present: In the Kurdish areas as intelligence services and a paramilitary force,⁹⁵ and in the Sistan-Baluchestan province, as the governor.⁹⁶

2.6.1 Kurdish cities

Several cities in the Kurdish areas have been the focal points during the protests - cities such as: Sanandaj, Saqqez, Kermanshah,⁹⁷ Javanrud and Mahabad.⁹⁸ On 14 November 2022, Iran launched ballistic missiles and drone attacks across the border targeting the Kurdish Iranian opposition bases in Iraq, and blaming the group for fuelling the protests inside Iran.⁹⁹

According to a CNN investigation published in February 2023, dozen black sites have been identified in the Kurdish area as undeclared jails. Places such as warehouses, empty rooms in buildings or even the basements of mosques have been used to detain and torture protesters. Dozens of similar locations have been identified across Iran in the same investigation in cities such as, Tehran, Tabriz, Mashhad and the city of Zahedan in Sistan-Baluchestan province.¹⁰⁰ For more information, see section [3.2 Treatment of detainees](#).

⁹⁰ HRANA, *Lawyer Amir-Afshar Najafi Sentenced to Imprisonment and Social Deprivations*, 24 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹¹ BBC Persian, "مورد حمله قرار گرفت", *وکیل که قصد داشت از معترضان اینده و باغملک دفع کند*, 16 January 2023, [url](#)

⁹² University-employed researcher working on minorities: 9-10

⁹³ Leila Alikarami: 10

⁹⁴ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 12

⁹⁵ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 11

⁹⁶ IRNA, *Iran appoints new governor for Sistan and Baluchestan province*, 26 December 2023, [url](#)

⁹⁷ RFE/RL, *Iran's Kurdish Region Becomes Epicenter Of Protests, Deadly Government Crackdown*, 13 October 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸ NBC News, *Iran's violent crackdown against protesters escalates in parts of the country*, 26 November 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁹ NYT, *Iran Attacks Opposition Bases in Iraq's Kurdistan Region*, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

2.6.2 Baluch cities

The large protests in the border province of Sistan-Baluchestan, over the alleged rape of a teenage girl by a police officer, was retaliated with an “unprecedented” crackdown in Zahedan in September 2022.¹⁰¹ At least 82 people were killed in the “Bloody Friday” crackdown, Amnesty International noted. Same source stated that on 4 November 2022, 18 protesters and bystanders, including two children, were killed, while more people were injured during peaceful protests in the city of Khash, Sistan-Baluchestan province.¹⁰²

2.7 Family members to targeted groups

Many families of detainees have avoided speaking publicly about their situation and concerns to avoid being targeted by the authorities.¹⁰³

According to CHRI, many families of detained and killed protesters have been beaten, fired from their jobs and warned that their injured relatives will not receive medical treatment, to prevent families in pursuing public attention.¹⁰⁴ There were reports of detainees being subjected to verbal harassment and beatings in front of their family members.¹⁰⁵

In the case of a 17-year old, who was shot during protests in October 2022, the family was put under pressure to publicly declare that their son was a member of the Basij force, which in fact was one of the state forces involved in the violent crackdown on the protests.¹⁰⁶ For more information, see section [1.3 State actors](#).

In several cases reported by family members, the Iranian authorities had removed the bodies of killed protesters from hospitals and morgues in order to prevent families from holding funerals.¹⁰⁷

The families of Iran’s national football team were reportedly threatened with imprisonment and torture if the players expressed support to the protests during the 2022 World Cup.¹⁰⁸

2.7.1 Family members in Iran to targeted groups residing outside of the country

In an audio file published on social media by VOA Farsi, an alleged agent of the Ministry of Intelligence in Iran threatened an Iranian individual residing in France. The agent reportedly said that if the individual in question did not withstand from acting against the Islamic Republic in connection with the 2022-2023 protests, Iranian authorities would imprison her parents and family members in Iran. Furthermore, the individual had to refrain from posting content on social media that would encourage Iranians to participate in anti-government activities.¹⁰⁹

In addition, BBC Persian journalists’ family members in Iran have also reported increased and severe harassment, including being summoned for interrogations and being threatened because their family members

¹⁰¹ Financial Times, *Iran’s protests fuel ethnic tensions*, 6 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰² AI, *Iran: urgent international action needed to stop mass killings of Baluchi protesters*, 10 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Radio Farda, *Fifteen Iranian Women Launch Hunger Strike In Prison Over Conditions*, 5 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ CHRI, *Iran: Families of Detained and Killed Protesters Beaten, Threatened to Stay Silent*, 25 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Radio Farda, *دختر عبدالکریم سروش: هرگز نمی‌بخشمت بازجو* [Abdul Karim Soroush’s daughter: I will never forgive you, interrogator!], 29 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ BBC, *Abolfazl Adinezadeh: Teenage protester shot dead by security forces – sources*, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ ABC News, *Iran accused of stealing bodies of slain protesters as families rush to reclaim loved ones*, 3 December 2023, [url](#); Iran International, *وکیل خانواده کریمی: حتی اجازه ندادند مراسم محمد مهدی کریمی در خانه برپا شود* [Karmi’s family lawyer: They didn’t even allow Mohammad Mahdi Karmi’s ceremony to be held at home], 25 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ CNN, *Iran threatened families of national soccer team, according to security source*, 29 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ Iran International, *Iranian Regime Agents Threaten Dissident Expats In Europe*, 7 January 2023, [url](#)

continue to work for the BBC.¹¹⁰ Moreover, family members of Iranian journalists employed by Deutsche Welle have received threats from Iranian authorities.¹¹¹

2.8 Women who do not observe the mandatory hijab

Article 638 of the Iranian Criminal Code states that women, who remove their Islamic hijab (headscarves) in public places and roads, can be sentenced from 10 days to two months' imprisonment or fined.¹¹²

The government spends a considerable amount of money each year to enforce the Islamic dress code. In order to reduce the number of criminal cases, offenders are let off with a warning in many cases. However, some women participating in on- and offline anti-hijab campaigns have been charged with security crimes for not wearing proper hijab in public.¹¹³

Since 2020, Iranian authorities have been sending out text messages to women spotted in their vehicles without the mandatory hijab. At times, warnings of legal actions were included if the woman in question repeated the violation of dress code.¹¹⁴ Posts on social media of women not observing the mandatory hijab have been used as evidence in court cases as well.¹¹⁵ For more information, see section [2.11 State surveillance and individuals involved in online activities](#).

On 10 January 2023, the office of Iran's prosecutor general introduced new measures for not observing the mandatory hijab. In a statement, the police was ordered to act decisively against women who do not obey the country's rules regarding hijab. This includes arresting women who publicly remove their hijab and handing them over to the judiciary. Furthermore, women found guilty of encouraging other women to wear their hijab in a more lax form could face up to 10 years in prison for "moral corruption".¹¹⁶

In at least two cases, Iranian authorities have closed pharmacies in the city of Amol and Shahr-e Rey after supporters of mandatory hijab complained and tried to enforce the hijab. Beside the closure of both pharmacies, the authorities announced that legal cases have been prepared against the violators of the mandatory hijab, which will be dealt with within the framework of the law.¹¹⁷

In January 2023, following the release of a video on social media allegedly showing a fight between two young women in the city of Bushehr and another woman warning them to wear hijab, the police chief of Bushehr announced that the young women had been identified and summoned to court, where a case was filed against them. Furthermore, their car had been impounded.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ BBC, *Why reporting on Iran comes at a heavy price*, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

¹¹¹ Frankfurter Allgemeine, *Iran bedroht Mitarbeiter der Deutschen Welle [Iran threatens employees of Deutsche Welle]*, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

¹¹² Iran HRDC, *Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book Five*, 15 July 2013, [url](#), article 638; Leila Alikarami: 18

¹¹³ Leila Alikarami: 19

¹¹⁴ VOA, *Iran Issues Warning on Mandatory Headscarf in Cars*, 2 January 2023, [url](#); Iran International, *Iranian Police Still Send SMS Warnings To Women Over Hijab*, 28 January 2023, [url](#); Radio Farda, *Police In Iran Use Texting To Summon Women Who Violate Hijab In Cars*, 26 April 2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Leila Alikarami: 17

¹¹⁶ Al-Monitor, *Iran doubles down, rolls out tougher hijab punishments*, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ RFE/RL, *Iranian Pharmacist, Cleric Square Off Over Hijab, Authorities Close Her Shop*, 30 January 2023, [url](#); IranWire, *Restaurant, Pharmacy Closed Down In Iran After Women Transgress Islamic Republic's Codes*, 31 January 2023, [url](#); BBC Persian, *پلمپ داروخانه در شهر ری پس از انتشار تصاویر بدون روسری [Pharmacy sealed in the city of Rey after video was published of a woman without hijab]*, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Instagram (@bbcpersian), *تشکیل پرونده قضایی برای دختران بوشهری بعد از درگیری بر سر تذکر حجاب [Filing a court case against Bushehri girls after a conflict over hijab warning]*, 16 January 2023, [url](#)

In August 2022, it was announced that women posting pictures of themselves online without the mandatory hijab would be deprived of certain social services lasting six months to one year.¹¹⁹ According to Shargh Daily, the national ID card of the woman in question would initially be blocked until she paid a fine. If she refused to pay the fine, the authorities would then take away social services.¹²⁰ Moreover, women employed by government agencies would be fired if their photos on social media were not adapted to Islamic laws.¹²¹

In September 2022, the secretary of Iran's Headquarters for Promoting Virtue and Preventing Vice declared that Iranian authorities were planning to deploy surveillance technology in public transportation to identify women not conforming to Islamic dress codes.¹²² To identify women, surveillance photos would be compared to the database of women's national ID cards. Afterwards, a fine would be sent to the woman in question.¹²³

At the time of writing, an actress and a filmmaker were among individuals awaiting trial on national security charges for their participation in a video against mandatory hijab.¹²⁴

2.9 Medical staff treating injured protesters

According to activists and human rights groups, Iranian doctors and other medical staff have received death threats and have been subject to arrests, interrogations and torture for treating the protesters who were injured during demonstrations.¹²⁵ According to a CNN investigation, Dr Mohsen Sohrabi, a public hospital physician, was detained at an unknown location in Kurdish city of Sanandaj for refusing to report injured protesters to the police.¹²⁶

Doctors have allegedly been forced by the Iranian government into falsifying death certificates and recording incorrect causes of injuries of dead or hurt protesters in medical records, as well as to notify authorities when injured protesters were brought to the hospitals.¹²⁷

2.10 Minors

Young boys and girls have been key actors in protests and encounters with security forces in the streets as well as at high schools across Iran.¹²⁸ Ali Fadavi, deputy commander of the IRGC, reported in October 2022 that the average age of arrested protesters is 15.¹²⁹

Iran is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is obligated to protect the right to life of all children under the age of 18, children's right to freedom of expression, privacy and peaceful assembly.¹³⁰ It

¹¹⁹ RFE/RL, *Iranian President Signs Decree Further Restricting How Women Can Dress*, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Shargh Daily, *کارت ملی بی‌حجاب‌ها، مسدود می‌شود* [The national card of the unveiled will be blocked], 1 February 2023, [url](#)

¹²¹ RFE/RL, *Iranian President Signs Decree Further Restricting How Women Can Dress*, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²² The Guardian, *Iranian authorities plan to use facial recognition to enforce new hijab law*, 5 September 2022, [url](#); Iran International, *Iran To Use Subway Cameras To Catch Women With Loose Hijab*, 30 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²³ Iran International, *Iran To Use Subway Cameras To Catch Women With Loose Hijab*, 30 August 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴ CHRI, *Iran: Death Sentences and Imprisonment Used to Crush Dissent in Film and Theatre Industries*, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵ CHRI, *Iran Protests: Doctors Treating Wounded Protesters Face Deadly State Violence*, 31 October 2022, [url](#); France24, *Iranian medical staff face death threats, arrest and interrogation for treating injured protesters*, 18 January 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, *'They Deserve To Die': Iranian Doctors Who Treated Wounded Protesters 'Arrested, Tortured'*, 2 February 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁶ CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

¹²⁷ The New York Times, *Iran Cracks Down as Protests Show No Sign of Easing*, 15 November 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁸ Landinfo, *Iran: Protestbevegelsen per 15. desember 2022 [Iran: The Protest Movement as of 15 December 2022]*, 17 December 2022, [url](#), p. 4; The New York Times, *Stymied by Protests, Iran Unleashes Its Wrath on Its Youth*, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁹ Al-Monitor, *Iran says average age of arrested protesters is 15*, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁰ OHCHR, *Iran protests: Reports of child deaths, detentions are deeply worrying*, 18 October 2022, [url](#); UNICEF, *UNICEF calls for the protection of children against all forms of violence in Iran amid public unrest*, 27 November 2022, [url](#)

is necessary to note that, pursuant to Iranian law, the age of criminal responsibility is the same as the age of maturity, which is 9 lunar years for girls (8 years and 9 months) and 15 lunar years for boys (14 years and 7 months).¹³¹

By December 2022, Amnesty International recorded the killings of at least 44 minors during the protests. According to AI, security forces killed most of the 44 children with live ammunition fired at their head, heart or other vital organs. Others died from injuries sustained by fatal beatings and metal pellets fired at close range.¹³² Out of the recorded 44 killed children, 18 belonged to the Baluchi minority and were killed in the province of Sistan and Baluchestan. 10 children belonged to the Kurdish minority and were killed in the Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan and Kermanshah provinces. 16 children were killed in the provinces of Tehran, Khuzestan, Alborz, Mazandaran, Khorasan-Razavi and Zanjan.¹³³

As of 20 February 2023, 71 children had been killed in the protests, according to Human Rights Activists' News Agency (HRANA).¹³⁴

Plainclothes security forces reportedly killed a 9-year-old boy when he and his family were driving past crowds of protesters in the city of Izeh in southwest Iran. When their car went by a group of security officers, the officers opened fire resulting in the death of the boy. Iran's authorities denied the responsibility.¹³⁵

Minors have been beaten and detained by security forces,¹³⁶ while minors accused of showing support for the protests have been tortured in police custody and in schools.¹³⁷ In September 2022, security forces allegedly beat a teenage girl in the eastern city of Iranshahr after she removed pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini from her textbook. The girl later died of her injuries.¹³⁸

On 11 October 2022, Iran's Minister of Education and Training, Yousef Nouri, stated that the police detained high school students in "psychological counselling centres", and that no students had been jailed. Nouri further commented that the purpose of the counselling centres was rehabilitation of the students.¹³⁹ Children refusing to receive counselling were allegedly prescribed psychiatric medicines.¹⁴⁰

The consulted lawyer noted that minors detained during the protests should be placed in youth prisons.¹⁴¹ However, in some cases, minors have been mixed with adult detainees.¹⁴² The source further opined that

¹³¹ HRW, *Iran: Child Protection Law Positive, but Insufficient*, 6 June 2020, [url](#); Reuters, *U.N. panel rebukes Iran for allowing sex, execution at 9 years old*, 4 February 2016, [url](#); Leila Alikarami: 20

¹³² AI, *Iran: Killings of Children during Youthful Anti-Establishment Protests*, 9 December 2022, [url](#), p. 1; OHCHR, *Iran protests: Reports of child deaths, detentions are deeply worrying*, 18 October 2022, [url](#)

¹³³ AI, *Iran: Killings of Children during Youthful Anti-Establishment Protests*, 9 December 2022, [url](#), p. 3

¹³⁴ Facebook (Hrana), *Iran Protests – Daily Update*, 20 February 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁵ The Washington Post, *The killing of a 9-year-old boy further ignites Iran's anti-government protests*, 18 November 2022, [url](#); BBC, *Iran protests: Two boys shot dead by security forces, family sources say*, 17 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶ AI, *Iran: Authorities covering up their crimes of child killings by coercing families into silence*, 9 December 2022, [url](#); The New York Times, *Stymied by Protests, Iran Unleashes Its Wrath on Its Youth*, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷ CHRI, *Iran Protests: Children Killed and Tortured to Crush Dissent*, 13 December 2022, [url](#); UN News, *Killings and detentions of children in Iran must end, UN child rights committee urges*, 17 October 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸ IranWire, *Protest Crackdown In Iran Girls' Schools "Terrifies" Children*, 4 January 2023, [url](#)

¹³⁹ UN News, *Killings and detentions of children in Iran must end, UN child rights committee urges*, 17 October 2022, [url](#); MEMO, *Psychological counselling for detained students in Iran*, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ The New York Times, *Stymied by Protests, Iran Unleashes Its Wrath on Its Youth*, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Leila Alikarami: 21

¹⁴² UN News, *Killings and detentions of children in Iran must end, UN child rights committee urges*, 17 October 2022, [url](#); Leila Alikarami: 21; The New York Times, *Stymied by Protests, Iran Unleashes Its Wrath on Its Youth*, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

trials at the Revolutionary Courts are renowned for their disregard of procedural law. Thus, if a minor commits an offence with national security and/or political implication, it is likely that they will be tried in a Revolutionary Court, despite being a minor. However, article 315 of Iran's Criminal Code mandates that a special juvenile division within First Criminal Court should hear such cases.¹⁴³

By mid-November 2022, security forces and intelligence officers raided 23 high schools across Iran and interrogated, beat and searched students present.¹⁴⁴ In one case, a 16-year-old girl from the city of Dehlan allegedly fell into a coma after security forces beat her and several other students with batons, because of their participation in anti-government protests.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Leila Alikarami: 21

¹⁴⁴ The New York Times, *Stymied by Protests, Iran Unleashes Its Wrath on Its Youth*, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ RFE/RL, *Family Of Young Iranian Protester In Coma Reportedly Moved, Kept Incommunicado*, 18 January 2023, [url](#); VOA, *نامیدی از به هوش آمدن هستی حسین‌پناهی؛ شورای فرهنگیان: حضور مأموران در مدارس پایان باید* [Despair of Hasti Hossein Panahi coming to her senses; Council of educators: The presence of officers in schools should end], 16 January 2023, [url](#)

3. Treatment in detention

3.1 Access to legal representation

Pursuant to article 35 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, defendants are granted access to legal representation. Defendants have the right to choose a defence lawyer. If the defendants are unable to choose one, they must be granted legal counsel.¹⁴⁶ However, several sources report that arrested protesters have been denied access to either legal representation or a lawyer of their own choice during their trials.¹⁴⁷ When denied legal representation, the accused does not have access to their own case and has been disconnected from the procedures of investigation.¹⁴⁸

In some cases, the accused is provided with a judiciary-approved lawyer. These lawyers often do not present adequately prepared defences and act in the best interest of the state, and not their client's.¹⁴⁹

A university-employed researcher working on minorities opined that lawyers are put under pressure, and in many instances have been arrested or threatened. Therefore, it has been difficult for arrested protesters to find lawyers willing to take on their case.¹⁵⁰ In some parts of Iran, lawyers are not available.¹⁵¹

According to article 48 of the Iranian Code of Criminal Procedure, in cases of crimes against internal or external security of the country, judges can limit the individual's access to legal representation to a list of lawyers approved by the Head of the Judiciary.¹⁵² Most of the individuals arrested during the current protests have been charged with national security related charges, such as "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" as well as "spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic".¹⁵³

In January 2023, Iranian lawyers and law professors sent a letter to the head of the Iranian judiciary. The letter was a protest against the fact that Iranian authorities have denied lawyers' access to courtrooms, which subsequently prevented lawyers from defending their clients.¹⁵⁴

3.2 Treatment of detainees

The Iranian government has not allowed independent monitoring of treatment of detainees in prisons.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁶ Constitute, *Iran (Islamic Republic of)'s Constitution of 1979 with Amendments through 1989*, n.d., [url](#), p. 16

¹⁴⁷ OHCHR, *Respect lives, voices of Iranians and listen to grievances, pleads UN Human Rights Chief*, 10 January 2023, [url](#); IHR, *Protester Mohsen Shekari's Execution Must be Met with Serious Consequences*, 8 December 2022, [url](#); Leila Alikarami: 1, 4; AI, *Two Detained Baluchi Teenagers Tortured*, 29 November 2022, [url](#); BBC, *Iran protests: Jailed activist Sepideh Qolian describes brutality in letter*, 11 January 2023, [url](#); Iran International, *Jailed Iranian Protesters Not Allowed To Choose Own Lawyers*, 3 January 2023, [url](#); The Guardian, *Iran to execute mentally ill man for allegedly burning Qur'an during protest*, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Leila Alikarami: 4

¹⁴⁹ Leila Alikarami: 6; Zamaneh Media, *Iranian Law and Judicial Practice towards Protestors from the 'Women, Life, Freedom' Movement*, 20 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 5

¹⁵¹ University-employed researcher working on minorities: 7

¹⁵² Leila Alikarami: 5; Iran HRDC, *Amendments to the Islamic Republic of Iran's Code of Criminal Procedure — Part 1*, 7 August 2015, [url](#)

¹⁵³ Leila Alikarami: 5

¹⁵⁴ IranWire, *Iranian Lawyers Face "Arbitrary" Restrictions Amid Protest Crackdown*, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ USDOS, *2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Iran*, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

Arrested protesters in Iranian detention centres have reportedly been subjected to torture and other kinds of mistreatment.¹⁵⁶ In a resolution from 24 November 2022, the UN Human Rights Council expressed concern about “alleged arbitrary arrests and detentions, sexual and gender-based violence, excessive use of force, torture and other inhumane treatment and enforced disappearances [...]”.¹⁵⁷ Reports furthermore mention cases of detainees being denied access to medical treatment.¹⁵⁸

Committee for Monitoring Arrested Prisoners is an organisation founded by exiled Iranian human rights activists across the world. According to the organisation, the purpose of its work is to document arrests by Iranian security forces and monitor the status of detained protesters. In January 2023, the organisation stated that, based on research it had done, at least 16 of those arrested since September 2022 had been killed in different ways during their detention. The organisation claimed that it received numerous reports of physical and mental torture of detainees in prisons and detention centres across the country.¹⁵⁹ Similar cases of torture in the city of Sari was reported by Amnesty International.¹⁶⁰

According to human rights groups, unofficial detention centres have been used in Iran for many years. However, the use of them has reportedly increased since the outbreak of the 2022-2023 protests as well as the severity of torture methods.¹⁶¹ A CNN-report from February 2023 confirmed the existence of such detention centres in different cities and mistreatment of detainees in these centres. This included the cities of Tehran, Sanandaj, Kermanshah, Saqqez, Mashhad, Zahedan and Tabriz.¹⁶²

According to lawyers and eyewitnesses, in some cases, interrogators in clandestine detention centres injected detainees with sedative medicines, such as morphine and codeine.¹⁶³ Sources describe that some detainees have been forced to take unidentified types of drugs.¹⁶⁴ Other cases have been reported of detainees committing suicide after release due to severe pressure during detention.¹⁶⁵

In December 2022, Narges Mohammadi, an imprisoned Iranian human rights activist, described the conditions for women prisoners. The letter contained information about months to years in solitary confinement, tough interrogations and framing of crimes that had not been committed.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁶ HRW, *Accounts of Torture and Summary Trial of Javad Rouhi*, 1 February 2023, [url](#); CHRI, *Iran Protests: Detained University Students Subjected to Sexual Assault, Disappearances*, 6 December 2022, [url](#); CTP, *Iran Crisis Update, January 20, 2023*, 20 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁵⁷ UN HRC, *Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 24 November 2022. S-35/1. Deteriorating situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially with respect to women and children*, 24 November 2022, [url](#), p. 1

¹⁵⁸ Iran International, *Jailed Rights Activists Recounts Ordeal Of Women In Evin Prison*, 20 January 2023, [url](#); CHRI, *Iran Protests: Detained University Students Subjected to Sexual Assault, Disappearances*, 6 December 2022, [url](#); France24, *Iran: Protesters denied medical care and tortured to death in secret prisons*, 9 January 2023, [url](#); OHCHR, *Iran protests: Reports of child deaths, detentions are deeply worrying*, 18 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ BBC, «اعتراضات ایران؛ «دستکم ۱۶ نفر در دوران بازداشت توسط جمهوری اسلامی، کشته شده‌اند» [Iran's protests; "At least 16 people have been killed while in custody by the Islamic Republic"]», 4 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ AI, *Iran: Quash death sentences of young protesters subjected to gruesome torture*, 27 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶² CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶³ CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ Iran International, *Mysterious Deaths Of Iranian Prisoners Alarms Families*, 5 January 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, *Released Iranian Activist Claims Prison Drugging Prisoners To Control Them*, 16 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ Leila Alikarami: 14

¹⁶⁶ Iran International, *Jailed Rights Activists Recounts Ordeal Of Women In Evin Prison*, 20 January 2023, [url](#)

The arrests throughout the 2022-2023 protests have resulted in overcrowded prisons.¹⁶⁷ Economically, it is a heavy burden for the state to look after the detainees. Even though the number is quite high, there are no governmental nor official statistics on the exact number of detained individuals.¹⁶⁸ Several sources have reported of sexual assaults on male and female detainees, including cases of rape and sexual violence taking place in unofficial and clandestine detention centres across Iran.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, there are reports of cases of forced confessions from detained protesters. Iranian authorities record and broadcast forced confessions of detainees on the state-run media and TV-network¹⁷⁰ to show the public that such individuals, out of weakness, were deceived by the West or other actors into demonstrating.¹⁷¹ According to CNN, detained protesters at clandestine detention centres were almost always asked to sign forced confessions with charges carrying long-term imprisonment or death sentences.¹⁷² Two protesters were executed based on their forced confessions¹⁷³ allegedly obtained under torture and other forms of abuse.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Leila Alikarami: 9; CHRI, *Analysis: Khamenei's "Pardon" Is a Public Relations Stunt That Cedes No Ground to the Protesters*, 8 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ Leila Alikarami: 9

¹⁶⁹ CNN, *How Iran's security forces use rape to quell protests*, 21 November 2022, [url](#); CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#); Al, *Iran: Quash death sentences of young protesters subjected to gruesome torture*, 27 January 2023, [url](#); CHRI, *Iran Protests: Detained University Students Subjected to Sexual Assault, Disappearances*, 6 December 2022, [url](#); BBC, *Iran protests: Activist Narges Mohammadi details 'abuse' of detained women*, 24 December 2022, [url](#); Instagram (@bbcpersian), *انتشار نامه یکی از معترضان بازداشت شده در ایران درباره تجاوز و نماز جماعت بازجویان [Publication of the letter of one of the protesters arrested in Iran about the rape and congregational prayer of the interrogators]*, 16 January 2023, [url](#); The Guardian, *Iranian prosecutors concealed rape by Revolutionary Guards, document shows*, 8 February 2023, [url](#); Iran International, *Leak Reveals Inner Workings Of Rape Cover-Up By Iranian Regime*, 8 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ BBC, *Iran protests: Jailed activist Sepideh Qolian describes brutality in letter*, 11 January 2023, [url](#); VOA, *US Sanctions Iranian Broadcast Officials for Airing Forced Confessions*, 16 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Leila Alikarami: 13

¹⁷² CNN, *How Iran used a network of secret torture centers to crush an uprising*, 21 February 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷³ France24, *Iran executes two more men detained in connection with nationwide protests*, 7 January 2023, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ Article 19, *Iran: Two more executions as authorities' brutal crackdown continues*, 9 January 2023, [url](#)

4. Treatment of returnees from Europe in the wake of the protests

During the writing of this brief report, DIS found little information about changes in procedures at the land borders and the airports since the beginning of the protests in September 2022. Furthermore, DIS found little information on whether phones or social media activities of returnees are examined upon return, or whether enhanced interrogation has been enforced for returnees.

According to a hearing statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark (MFA) dated 24 January 2023, there has been no change in the entry procedures for Iranians entering Iran after the protests erupted in September 2022. The hearing statement included Iranians returning to Iran, e.g. after refusal of asylum in European countries. It could not be ruled out that individuals' phones and activities on social media would be examined upon entry. This was, however, also the case before September 2022.¹⁷⁵

Furthermore, cases of Iranians being pulled aside at passport control upon return had not been observed by MFA's sources. It could, however, not be ruled out that such instances occur for various reasons, both before and after September 2022. According to the mentioned MFA hearing statement, it is common knowledge that the Iranian intelligence service is very active in monitoring the social media belonging to a number of Iranian individuals.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ MFA of Denmark, *Information vedrørende evt. ændringer i procedurer for iranere, der returnerer til Iran [Information regarding possible changes in procedures for Iranians returning to Iran]*, 24 January 2023

¹⁷⁶ MFA of Denmark, *Information vedrørende evt. ændringer i procedurer for iranere, der returnerer til Iran [Information regarding possible changes in procedures for Iranians returning to Iran]*, 24 January 2023

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Annex 1: Meeting minutes

Meeting with Leila Alikarami, lawyer and human rights advocate, 8 February 2023

Legislation and access to lawyers

1. Courts rely on several articles of the Iranian Criminal Code to criminalise participation in demonstrations or gatherings, giving interviews to the media or criticising the policies and conduct of the state. However, based on the Iranian constitution, people are free to take part in demonstrations. Individuals taking to the streets during the current protests were met with harsh treatment from the government. In some cases, the families did not know the location of the arrested individual for several days. When they finally established contact with the arrested, in many instances they were not allowed to choose their own lawyers during the investigation. This is against Iran's Constitution and the criminal procedural law.
2. There are five types of punishments in Iran's Criminal Code: a) *Hudud*; b) *Qisas*; c) *Diyat*; d) *Ta'zirat*; e) Deterrent punishments. *Ta'zir* is a punishment whose amount and type are not specified in the Shari'a, and therefore it is up to the decision of the judge. These crimes are covered in Book 5 of the Criminal Code (articles 498-728). *Ta'zir* punishments are referred to as 'discretionary punishments' and can be in the form of imprisonment, fines, or flogging. *Ta'zir* punishments are imposed at the judge's discretion (based on codified law) in respect of its type and extent. Since 2013 and under the current criminal code, they are divided into eight degrees, where the first degree is the harshest and the eighth is the most lenient. *Hadd* is a punishment specified by, amount, quality and type in the Shari'a. *Hadd* punishments include the death penalty, stoning, crucifixion, flogging, amputation (of hand and foot), life imprisonment, and banishment. These crimes are covered in Book 2 of the Criminal Code (articles 63-203). The type and scope of *Hadd* punishments are determined by Islamic law, and regarded as being fixed by God, and therefore cannot be commuted or pardoned by a judge. *Hadd* crimes include fornication/adultery (*zenā*), sodomy (*levāt*), lesbian relationship (*mosāheqeh*), procuring of prostitution (*qavādī*), false accusation of sexual offences (*qazf*), defamation of the Prophet (*sabb-e nabī*), consumption of alcohol (*shorb-e-khamr*), robbery/theft, waging war against God (*mohārabeh bā khodā*), corruption on earth (*efsād fe-l-arz*) and rebellion (*baghy*).
3. Under certain circumstances, courts can increase or reduce punishments. Based on Article 131 of Iran's Criminal Code, in *Ta'zir* punishment, if a single behaviour has multiple criminal titles, the perpetrator will be sentenced to severe punishment. Article 23 of Iran's Criminal Code regulates complementary punishments. Courts can sentence defendants to complementary punishments in addition to a *hadd*-punishment, a *qesās*-punishment, or a *ta'zir*-punishment of degrees I-VI. Among these complementary punishments are e.g. (a) Compulsory residence in a specified place; Ban from residing in a specified place / or several specified places; Ban from practicing a specific profession

or pursuing a specific career; Ban from driving motor vehicles; Ban from leaving the country; Provision of public services; Ban from membership in a political party or social organization; Compulsory professional training; and Compulsory education.

4. Access to lawyers has been very limited during the current protests, albeit being one of the basic rights in fair trials. Most of the arrested individuals are not activists. They have no previous experience with being arrested and are not familiar with the procedures of the investigation. Because some are denied access to a lawyer of their own choice, a fair trial cannot take place. As a result, the accused will not have access to his/her own case and is disconnected from the procedures of the investigation.
5. According to article 48 of the Iranian Code of Criminal Procedure, in cases of crimes against internal or external security of the country, judges can limit the access of individuals to a list of lawyers approved by the Head of the Judiciary. Most of the people arrested for participating in the current protests have been charged with national security related charges including gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security and spreading propaganda against the system.
6. Often the accused ones are not granted the lawyers of their own choice but have a judiciary-approved lawyer allocated to their case. These lawyers often do not present an adequately prepared defence and always act in the best interest of the state not their clients. In political and security-related cases, security forces and judicial authorities routinely keep the accused in custody for long periods without granting them access to a lawyer. Investigating judges often only grant access to a lawyer after they have completed the preliminary investigations. This may be only days before a trial hearing starts.
7. Since September 2022, more than 60 lawyers have been arrested. In Iran, human rights defenders, student activists, members of the women's movement are regularly prosecuted for activities deemed to be contrary with the state's agenda. These individuals are charged and convicted with security offenses. Once arrested, the lawyers are often these activists' only line of defence. Yet the same lawyers that defend these activists have found themselves on the receiving end, of arrest and prosecution for the same security offenses their clients faced.

Arrests and forced confessions

8. While Iranian citizens have a right to take part in protests, Iranian authorities arbitrarily arrest, shoot and kill protesters to create fear among other protesters.
9. A trusted source has noted that there is not enough space in Iranian prisons for the number of arrested protesters, which some governmental agencies have also stated. Economically, it is a heavy burden for the state to look after detainees. However, there are no governmental nor official statistics on the exact number of detained people. Based on the evidence, the number of detainees is quite high.

10. Asked if ethnicity plays a role in the convictions, Alikarami noted that it depends on the specific case. We have witnessed that in provinces such as Baluchistan and Kurdistan, courts handed down heavier sentences. For minorities, the simplest forms of ethnic rights activism are often deliberately construed by the authorities as a threat to national security or conflated with militant separatism. Activists are usually presented with vaguely-worded and broad charges drawn from Iran's Criminal Code. The most notorious of these charges include "waging war against God" (*mohārebeh*) and "corruption on earth" (*efsād fel-arz*). Both can entail death penalty, depending on the interpretation of the court. The source opines that punishments for some ethnic minorities are harsher compared to Tehran or other larger cities.
11. Forced confessions have been taking place under threats, pressure and persuasion. Forced confessions can be defined as statements, both spoken and written, against a person's will. In Alikarami's point of view, forced confessions can also include the situation where an individual writes something against his/her will in the hope of a reduced punishment. The pardons of protesters by Ali Khamenei in February 2023, where written statements of regret were a condition for release, can also be considered an example of forced confessions.
12. With exception of the Supreme Leader, courts are the only authority with the competence to reduce, postpone, or suspend a sentence. However, not all categories of criminal punishments are eligible for this. According to article 47 Iran's Criminal Code, certain types of *ta'zīr* crimes are nevertheless excluded from a reduction or postponement of the sentence, for instance: Security-related crimes (incl. vandalism of public infrastructure); Organized crimes (incl. armed robbery, abductions and acid-attacks); Intimidation and harassment by knife or any other weapon; and Crimes against public chastity' (incl. prostitution and procuring).
13. Iranian authorities have filmed some detainees, and asked them to blame Western countries, media or specific organisations and institutions for their participation in the protests. The authorities want to show the public that such individuals, out of weakness, were deceived by the West or other actors into demonstrating.
14. In some cases, individuals have committed suicide after their release from prison. This shows the level of severe pressure during detention.
15. There is no state transparency. Therefore, all information regarding the situation in Iran comes from unofficial sources including news, citizen journalists, personal experiences of detainees or their families or lawyers involved in cases. We should also note that human rights activists, journalists and human rights organisations are documenting the cases of violation of human rights in Iran.
16. The source has been informed through lawyer colleagues in Iran who defend detainees, that Iranian authorities access the phones of detained individuals. Social media apps such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook are used as evidence to prove crimes. In several cases, detainees have been sentenced to punishments based on social media content, such as pictures or written posts against the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader, and critical posts or poems about the current situation.

The authorities can interpret such posts as against the values defined by the state and thus accuse persons based on expressed views on social media.

Women who refuse to observe the mandatory hijab

17. Posts on social media of women not observing the mandatory hijab also become evidence in court cases.
18. Article 638 in the Criminal Code criminalises the removal of hijab in public from 10 days to 2 months imprisonment or 50,000 to 500,000 Rials monetary fine. However, there are some directives concerning mandatory hijab that are against Iran's Constitution and the Criminal Code, such as bringing arrested women to morality classes as opposed to taking them to the court. In 2007, it was announced that women with improper appearance in the public would attend educational courses. This was the case with Mahsa Amini. Based on the criminal code, law enforcement officers should have arrested her and taken her to court, where the court would decide whether to sentence her to jail or a monetary fine. However, the practise of arbitrarily punishing women based on such directives (by teaching women about hijab and dress code and asking them to sign different forms or wear appropriate clothes), is not legal.
19. The government spends a lot of money each year to enforce the Islamic dress code. In order to reduce the number of these criminal cases, offenders are let off in many cases with a warning. However, some women participating in on- and offline anti-hijab campaigns have been charged with security crimes for not wearing proper hijab (bad-hijab) in public.

Minors

20. The age of criminal responsibility for girls is 9 years and 15 years for boys in Iran. This applies to cases from murder to participation in demonstrations and petty crimes.
21. Minors detained during the current protests should be placed in youth prisons. However, based on some reports, minors have been mixed with older detainees. Trials at the Revolutionary Courts are renowned for their disregard of procedural law. Thus, if a minor commits an offence with national security and/or political implication, it is likely that she/he will be tried in this type of court, despite being a minor. However, article 315 of Iran's Criminal Code mandates that a special juvenile division within First Criminal Court should hear such cases.

Meeting with a University-Employed Researcher working on minorities, 1 February 2023

Verification process of sources

1. The source works with two different methods when verifying sources inside Iran. One is research and the other is procurement and staying up to date. In connection with the current protests in Iran, the source stays updated through social media, citizen journalism, and individuals reporting on Twitter, Instagram and Telegram. The source furthermore follows Persian-language media from inside Iran, both official state media and independent media that is allowed to act within certain boundaries.
2. Iranian media is subjected to control, censorship and self-censorship. In editorial offices, agents of the state always play a role in one way or another. Editorial offices in Iran are subjected to closures by the state if they do not stay within certain boundaries. Some journalists attempt to report closer to the boundaries, e.g. journalists covering the death of Mahsa Amini and the following protests. Such journalists often end up in jail or detention along with their editors, while their lawyers often have been legally prosecuted.
3. The source also uses Persian-language media outside Iran, especially Radio Farda and Radio Zamaneh based in Czech Republic and the Netherlands respectively, which are relatively balanced in their coverage, albeit limited in resources. Journalists working in these news agencies have important contacts within civil society in Iran, such as unions, human rights organisations, feminist groups, and ethnic minority groups.
4. After surveying daily news on different platforms, the source looks into matters that may require further attention. This is conducted through social media and/or contacts in Iran, whom the source knows to have an expertise in a particular area. In some cases, the source reaches out to contacts in Iran to get their assessments of specific news. Often, these contacts are likewise not able to assess such news, in spite of their presence in Iran.
5. The lawyers used to be the link between the media and relatives of arrested protesters. This has altered, as lawyers are put under pressure, and in many instances have been arrested or threatened. Therefore, it has been difficult for arrested protesters to find lawyers who will take on their case. Lawyers have become more careful in talking to international media, whereas relatives of arrested individuals, out of desperation, share information with international media to generate awareness of their situation. The source believes that the phenomenon of *relative journalism* is a result of the fact that the remaining parts of the rule of law and the legal system in Iran have been completely undermined during these protests.
6. In many cases, family members of arrested protesters have turned the names of the arrested into Twitter hashtags, which journalists then use when reporting on the protests, as they lack direct access into the country.

7. Since 2019, popular uprisings in Iran have resulted in mass-arrests unlike what has previously been seen. During the protests in 2009, well-known lawyers accepted many cases, and communication with the media almost exclusively went via these lawyers. In the course of the 2022-2023 protests, with mass-arrests across the country, including parts of Iran where lawyers are either not available or afraid to take on a case, family members of arrested individuals have become their representatives. Iranians speaking to international media face a number of threats, such as accusations of being Israeli agents or charges of corruption on earth. The source noted that a growing number of relatives likely are willing to speak to international media out of desperation.
8. This tendency leads to ethical questions in terms of journalism. Thus, users of these kinds of sources have to make certain reservations when it comes to merit: family members could be speaking out of desperation, or they could have been tricked by the Iranian authorities. Deliberate manipulated miscommunication has previously been used by the Iranian authorities to confuse family members, who could potentially speak to international media about their relatives' situation.

Ethnic minorities

9. The source does not believe that ethnicity plays the decisive role, when it comes to reactions from the authorities towards the protesters. But certain ethnic groups are more rebellious due to their history, and the authorities have a specific approach to for instance the Baluchi people, the Arabs and the Kurds chiefly.
10. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the Kurds have been in conflict with the central authorities. A conflict that involves the civil society and has an armed conflict dimension at times - but has at all times throughout history had a securitized aspect. This is due to the Kurdish desire to establish an autonomous Kurdistan, which has been oppressed by the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) rather than the national police force. IRGC has been involved in political repression of Kurdish rebellions in more than 40 years.
11. The IRGC, the intelligent services, paramilitary forces and parts of the military are operating in Kurdish areas – while the police force, ordinary security forces and riot police are deployed to Persian-speaking areas. This is not new. But we have noticed the difference in the oppression during 2022-2023 protests because the revolt in the Kurdish areas has been extraordinary. And because citizens in Tehran and other parts of the country have recently noticed this difference and have started to care.
12. Baluchistan is for the rest of Iran even more unfamiliar than Kurdistan. Iranians had until recently no clue what went on in Baluchistan. Incidents such as the water crisis in Khuzestan and earthquakes in Kurdistan and Baluchistan mobilised the civil society and created awareness nationwide. For instance, crudely put, while protesters in Baluchistan and Kurdistan are shot with real ammunition, protesters in other parts of Iran are shot with rubber bullets.
13. These circumstances created awareness for a new and younger generation of Iranians who now realise that these ethnic minorities live under a double oppression: a) the oppression shared by Iranians

across the country, such as gender-based oppression, and b) the oppression linked to ethnic repression. Thus, Mahsa Amini was not killed because she was a Kurd, but because she was a woman. But from the Kurdish point of view, yet another Kurdish woman lost her life because of a state that has a hostile approach to Kurds. This is why protests in Kurdistan were extraordinary compared to rest of the country, which resulted in an extraordinary oppression from the authorities.

14. To the question on why more Kurds have proportionally been arrested, the source found it hard to determine whether one is more likely to be arrested because of ones Kurdish ethnicity, or because Kurdistan has produced larger demonstrations compared to rest of the country. These two factors enforce each other.
15. Parts of Kurdistan are primary Sunni, and smaller parts have anti-Shia sentiments. Other parts of Kurdistan have deep entrenched roots with political Kurdish parties, such as Komala, KDPI and PJAK, which have for years been viewed as a security issue by Iranian authorities. Saqqez, Mahsa Amini's home town, is a good example. So is the city of Bukan and Mahabad which have tried to establish an autonomous Kurdistan since 1946, and therefore have been accused of collaborating with foreign enemies such as Israel, U.S. and the former Soviet Union.
16. Ethnic discrimination imbues the security system, but the 2022-2023 protests revolved around many other issues as well. Many mothers who stood by the graves of their children in the Kurdish area have been politically active during the 1979 revolution, and derive from families with links to Komala and KDPI in a locally political active culture. For these people, the protests are not only about gender apartheid, but also about ethnic discrimination.
17. The source does not believe that the oppression in Kurdistan is primary a sectarian issue. Because many Kurds are very secular due to the historical presence of left-wing politics in this region. Baluchistan's history differs from Kurdistan, because of the absence of left-wing influence. The most important leaders in Baluchistan have been the tribal leaders and Sunni clerics.
18. Iranian authorities have perceived Baluchistan as ungovernable since the 1920's because they are a people divided between Iran and Pakistan. From the Baluchi perspective, they live in a poor and neglected area. A traditional people, divided by a border, under steady suspicion by the authorities in Tehran, while their region has been securitised and militarised – in addition to the fact that they roam over the main route of the narcotic traffic.
19. The protests in Baluchistan have been divided between minor groups of women activists, civil society activists, school teachers, and Sunni clerics, such as Molavi Abdolhamid. The reason why many in Baluchistan view these protests as sectarian is that they often start after the Friday prayer. And the city of Zahedan has the only large Sunni mosque in Iran. All in all, different factors play into why Baluchis feel oppressed as an ethnicity and as a religious minority.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Iran - Protests 2022-2023

1. Introduction to the conflict

- Introduction to state actors
- Conflict development since September 2022
- Map of protests

2. Targeted Groups

- Journalists
- HR activists
- Artists, academics, athletes
- Sympathisers
- Students
- Lawyers
- Ethnic Minorities
- Family members to targeted groups
 - Family members to targeted groups outside of Iran

3. Violations

- Legislation
- Reactions towards the targeted groups by the authorities
- Treatment of minors

4. Returnees from Europe

- General reactions from Iranian authorities towards Iranian returnees at the borders and airports.
 - Changes in procedures since September 2022
 - Information on whether phones or social media activities are examined upon return
 - Information on whether enhanced interrogation has been enforced for returnees