



# TRAPPED BETWEEN UNLAWFUL ATTACKS BY THE USA/ISRAEL AND INTERNAL DEADLY REPRESSION

PEOPLE IN IRAN FACE DUAL ATROCITY RISKS

RESEARCH  
BRIEFING

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL 



# CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	CYCLES OF ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT PROTESTS MET WITH BLOODSHED	5
2.2	SYSTEMIC IMPUNITY	7
2.3	12-DAY WAR OF JUNE 2025	8
<b>3.</b>	<b>DUAL ATROCITY RISKS</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1	CIVILIAN HARM AND RISKS OF WAR CRIMES	9
3.2	DEADLY REPRESSION AND RISKS OF ATROCITY	10
	3.2.1 THREATS OF LETHAL FORCE AGAINST PROTESTERS AND DISSIDENTS	10
	3.2.2 FATAL SHOOTINGS AND ABUSIVE ARMED PATROLS AMID ONGOING INTERNET SHUTDOWN	11
	3.2.3 INTENSIFIED USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY AS A WEAPON OF REPRESSION	12
	3.2.4 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS DURING WARTIME	12
<b>4.</b>	<b>CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INCONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND STANDARDS</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1	FUSION OF JUDICIARY INTO SECURITY APPARATUS	13
4.2	DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGIOUS, GENDER AND POLITICAL GROUNDS	14
4.3	PROHIBITING ADVOCACY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE	15
<b>5.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>16</b>
5.1	TO IRANIAN AUTHORITIES REGARDING DOMESTIC REPRESSION	16
5.2	TO ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE ARMED CONFLICT	16
5.3	TO THE USA AND ISRAEL	16
5.4	TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY	17

*Top: Family members of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed by security forces during the protest massacres of January 2026 stand among scores of body bags as they try to find the bodies of loved ones in the overflowing morgue of the Kahrizak Legal Medicine Organization in Tehran. Bottom: Graves of children killed by an unlawful US air strike that targeted an elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province, on 28 February 2026, during the first day of the Israeli-US military attacks on Iran, killing 120 schoolchildren. © Amnesty International*

People in Iran are trapped between unlawful US and Israeli attacks and deadly domestic repression. This requires urgently combining international efforts to sustain a durable ceasefire, protect civilians, and deter war crimes by USA and Israel, with efforts to prevent atrocity crimes by the Iranian authorities, and support Iranian civil society calls for fundamental changes, including a rights-respecting constitution.

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People in Iran have been trapped between unlawful US and Israeli attacks and deadly domestic repression. Between 28 February 2026 and 7 April 2026, the USA and Israel launched an unlawful attack against Iran, in violation of the UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force, and carried out tens of thousands of air strikes on targets in Iran causing grave civilian harm. These attacks began while people in Iran were still reeling from the unprecedented massacres of thousands of protesters and bystanders during the January 2026 uprising. In this context, the risks of atrocity crimes against people in Iran have multiplied, both from the authorities inside the country and from external attacks by US and Israeli forces.

On the one hand, civilians have suffered grave harm amid relentless US and Israeli air strikes and remain at risk of further harm given the fragility of the ceasefire reached on 7 April 2026. The air strikes killed at least 3,375 people, including 383 children, and injured 25,000, according to official figures. In one egregious incident, an unlawful US strike on a school in Minab, Hormozgan province, killed 156 people, including 120 children. Amnesty International's investigation into the attack found that the school was directly hit with precision guided munitions and that US forces failed to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm.

US and Israeli attacks have also caused extensive destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure, including power plants, bridges, universities, schools, residential buildings, medical centres, steel factories, oil depots and petrochemical facilities, condemning the population to deepened economic hardship, harming the environment, and endangering the lives, health and livelihoods of millions of people. Just hours before the 7 April 2026 ceasefire was announced, US President Donald Trump issued apocalyptic threats of large-scale civilian devastation, warning that "a whole civilization will die tonight," amounting to a possible threat to commit genocide. On 23 April 2026, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz threatened to commit war crimes, saying "we are awaiting a green light from the United States ... to return Iran to the Dark Age and the Stone Age by destroying key energy and electricity facilities and dismantling its national economic infrastructure."

On the other hand, people in Iran have been subjected to decades of brutal repression by the authorities of the Islamic Republic with impunity and are at further risk of atrocity crimes.

Since February 2026, senior Iranian officials have openly boasted about their massacre of thousands of protesters in January 2026 and threatened to violently suppress any further attempted protests, warning that security forces have received "orders to shoot" and remain ready "with their fingers on the trigger." They have also threatened "a blow more severe than that on 8 January 2026," the day security forces unlawfully killed thousands of protesters, including children. In addition, the authorities have escalated their use of the death penalty as a tool of political repression, arbitrarily executing at least 17 protesters, dissidents, and other individuals accused of espionage for the USA and/or Israel since the armed conflict began on 28 February 2026.

The Iranian authorities' threats to carry out mass killings have been further made frighteningly real as armed security agents have intensified street patrols since the outbreak of hostilities, including through machine gun mounted pickup trucks. According to information gathered by Amnesty International, security forces have fatally shot, beaten, coercively interrogated or arbitrarily arrested individuals in cities across the country for engaging in any acts deemed critical of the Islamic Republic system.

Risks to people in Iran have been further heightened by the deliberate prolonged internet shutdown imposed by the Iranian authorities since 28 February 2026. The internet blackout, coupled with the authorities' persistent refusal to allow international human rights monitors, severely obstructs investigations into civilian harm caused by US and Israeli attacks as well as serious violations and crimes under international law committed by the Iranian authorities.

Against this backdrop, Amnesty International urges all states, as well as regional and international bodies, including the UN Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council's expert mechanisms and relevant atrocity prevention mechanisms, to recognize that Iran's human rights and impunity crisis, now compounded by armed conflict, requires a dual people-centred diplomatic approach.

This requires urgently combining efforts to establish a durable ceasefire, protect civilians, ensure respect for international humanitarian law and deter war crimes by all parties to the conflict, with robust efforts to prevent further atrocity crimes by the Iranian authorities against the people of Iran. This must include addressing structural conditions and root causes of Iran's human rights and impunity crisis, and supporting Iranian civil society-led calls for fundamental changes, including to the constitution, to ensure equality and respect for human rights including the right to take part in public affairs.

The atrocity-prone environment also urgently merits the activation of global, regional, and national atrocity prevention tools and mechanisms, including early warning, rapid action, political engagement, and structural prevention measures, alongside a concerted global diplomatic effort toward a transformative solution, grounded in international law, that places the protection of the human rights of Iran's people at its core.

## CEASEFIRE AND DURABLE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES

The fragile, temporary ceasefire between Israel, the USA and Iran, initially announced on 7 April 2026 and extended on 22 April 2026, must be replaced by an enduring, sustained, and comprehensive regional ceasefire that covers all affected counties to avoid further catastrophic civilian suffering.

The international community must also fully investigate the unlawful US and Israeli attacks on Iran in violation of the UN Charter and all other crimes under international law and ensure that states and individuals are held accountable.

The ceasefire must be accompanied by long-term solutions that safeguard human rights and address root causes to prevent atrocity crimes and to pave the way for justice, respect for international law and long-term human rights protection for all.

## **NEED FOR A RIGHTS-RESPECTING CONSTITUTION**

Cycles of protest bloodshed and escalating risks of further massacres targeting those demanding fundamental political change are rooted in Iran's constitutional structure that entrenches impunity and enables widespread crimes under international law and discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion and political affiliation, and denies people their rights including to participate in public affairs and to freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly.

The constitution in Iran fuses the judiciary into the security apparatus, placing both under the direct control of the Supreme Leader and commander-in-chief and, thereby, enabling serious violations of the right to an effective remedy and the right to a fair trial, among others.

The constitution also institutionalizes gender inequality by excluding women from senior political and judicial positions and requiring that all laws comply with the state's interpretation of Sharia law, which results in the discriminatory and degrading practice of compulsory veiling and denies women protection from gender-based violence and equal rights.

By mandating that the entire system of governance be led by a male Shia Islamic cleric, the constitution excludes women, religious minorities, and people from other professions, belief systems and faiths from the highest levels of public office, entrenching discrimination.

The constitution also enables violent protest dispersals and impermissibly limits the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

For these reasons, Iranian civil society actors have [long called](#) for a new, [rights-respecting constitution](#) and for international support to create the enabling conditions for civil society to pursue a transformative [constitution-making process](#). These [calls have intensified](#) following repeated protest bloodshed, most recently in January 2026, just weeks before the USA and Israel initiated another round of attacks on Iran, further galvanizing demands for the establishment of avenues through which people in Iran can meaningfully participate in public affairs and determine their political and economic destiny.

It is time for the international community to meaningfully address entrenched impunity in Iran and the constitutional drivers of crimes under international law, and to identify transformative, people-centred pathways grounded in international law, that would enable people in Iran to claim their rights safely.

This requires international engagement to actively support Iranian civil society calls for a rights-respecting constitution-making process as a core pathway to breaking the cycles of atrocity crimes and impunity in Iran.

The international community must respond to demands by survivors and relatives of victims, Iranian civil society and international organizations to confront systemic impunity in Iran for crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, including by mobilizing support for a UN Security Council referral of Iran's situation to the International Criminal Court, establishing an international justice mechanism, and advancing national-level criminal investigations and prosecutions under universal or other forms of extraterritorial jurisdiction.

## **2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **2.1 CYCLES OF ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT PROTESTS MET WITH BLOODSHED**

Since the nationwide protests of December 2017-January 2018, [protesters](#), civil society actors, dissidents and others have increasingly and [repeatedly spoken](#) out through [street protests](#), [written statements](#) and other peaceful acts against the systematic denial of their internationally protected rights including their rights to participate equally and without discrimination in public affairs.

For years, public discontent has been growing over the Islamic Republic of Iran's [domestic](#) and [foreign policies](#), including its [nuclear programme](#) and support of various [armed](#) actors in the region, policies seen as contributing to extensive [socio-economic decline](#), including through the impact of unilateral US and other sanctions, and leaving people struggling with high inflation, high unemployment, and low or unpaid wages. This context, [along with](#), chronic

mismanagement of resources, severe political repression, entrenched discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, ethnicity and political opinion, as well as entrenched impunity, has sparked successive cycles of weeks-long nationwide protests in [December 2017-January 2018](#), [November 2019](#), September-December 2022 and January 2026, demanding the downfall of the Islamic Republic system and the establishment of a new system of governance. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic has maintained an iron grip on power through an omnipresent and expansive security apparatus embedded in all aspects of public life from education, healthcare and media to the economy, telecommunications and digital infrastructure. The system is buttressed by a base among segments of the population, which includes individuals integrated within or connected to the vast security apparatus; however, the size of this base cannot be reliably estimated given the lack of independent polling and non-discriminatory electoral processes as well as suffocating restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and association.

The Iranian authorities have on every occasion sought to suppress these cycles of protests with bloodshed and increasing brutality and militarized measures to crush dissent. Entrenched impunity for crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, including those committed in the context of deadly protest crackdowns, have emboldened the authorities to escalate mass violence and add further cruelties to their toolbox of repression.

Amnesty International's extensive research into the authorities' responses to successive waves of protests since December 2017-January 2018 reveals a widespread pattern of security forces unlawfully using force and firearms, including intentional lethal force, without any regard for the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality and when protesters pose no imminent threat of death or serious injury to security forces or others warranting the use of firearms.

During the nationwide protests of December 2017-January 2018 when thousands of people in over 100 cities across Iran took to the streets to speak out against poverty, corruption, political repression and authoritarianism, security forces unlawfully [killed](#) dozens of protesters and bystanders, including children. The authorities also subjected protesters to arbitrary arrest and [detention](#), enforced disappearance, unjust prosecutions, unfair trials and imprisonment.

During the November 2019 nationwide protests, which were sparked by a sudden increase in the price of fuel amid deteriorating economic conditions but quickly evolved into calls for an overhaul of the political system, including an end to the Islamic Republic, the authorities escalated their unlawful use of [lethal force](#), [quashing](#) the protests in under five days. In parallel, the authorities implemented a near-total [internet shutdown](#). Under the cover of darkness, Iran's security forces used assault rifles, shotguns loaded with metal pellets, tear gas and water cannons against unarmed protesters and bystanders, leading to the unlawful killing of hundreds of men, women and [children](#), as well as injuries to thousands of others. Thousands more, including children, were arbitrarily [arrested](#) and [detained](#), forcibly disappeared, and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, and grossly unfair trials leading to imprisonment and death sentences.

Muted responses from the international community, combined with the impunity enjoyed by the Iranian authorities for their widespread unlawful killings during the nationwide protests of November 2019, facilitated the [lethal repression](#) of nationwide protests during the Woman Life Freedom uprising of September-December 2022. These protests erupted on 16 September 2022 after the death in custody of 22-year-old Kurdish woman [Zhina Mahsa Amini](#) at the hands of the country's "morality" police, which enforces discriminatory compulsory veiling laws. For the next three months, hundreds of thousands of people across the country peacefully rose up against decades of repression, discrimination and impunity.<sup>1</sup>

In response, the Iranian authorities unleashed a militarized crackdown characterized by the widespread and [systematic](#) commission of crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations and. The authorities extensively resorted to unlawful use of lethal force, deploying assault rifles, handguns and shotguns loaded with metal to disperse, intimidate and punish protesters and deter others from joining the protests. As a result, security forces [unlawfully killed](#) hundreds of protesters and bystanders, including dozens of [children](#), across the country and inflicted serious injuries amounting to torture or other ill-treatment on thousands more.

In addition, the authorities arbitrarily arrested tens of thousands of protesters and others showing real or perceived support for the protests and subjected detainees, including children, to widespread and systematic patterns of enforced disappearance, incommunicado detention, [torture and other ill-treatment](#), including rape and other forms of [sexual violence](#); imposed unjust prison sentences and [death sentences](#) following [grossly unfair sham trials](#) that bore no

---

<sup>1</sup> The majority of protesters were peaceful while some engaged in non-peaceful acts, such as stone throwing or vandalism. Amnesty International emphasizes that an assembly is considered "peaceful" unless serious violence is manifestly widespread within the assembly. Isolated acts of violence by some participants are insufficient to render an entire assembly "non-peaceful". It is important to recall that even when a protester engages in non-peaceful conduct falling outside the protective scope of the right of peaceful assembly, they retain their other human rights, including the rights to life, and to freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, which must be respected. Furthermore, under international law and standards, even if some protesters commit violent acts, members of security forces must ensure that those who remain peaceful can continue protesting without undue interference or intimidation.

resemblance to legitimate judicial [proceedings](#); and carried out [arbitrary executions](#). In parallel to the deadly crackdown, the authorities sought to demonize and dehumanize protesters to justify their repression.

As an additional punitive measure to deter, intimidate and protect impunity, during these crackdowns, the authorities also systematically [subjected](#) the [families](#) of those killed to a wide range of human rights violations, including pressure to accept false narratives about the causes and circumstances of their loved ones' deaths and coercion to comply with severe restrictions on funerals and memorial ceremonies. Compliance was enforced through surveillance and threats, while defiance was punished with arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and the unlawful use of force and firearms during funeral processions and memorial ceremonies.

In late December 2025, mass protests once again erupted across the country following a sharp currency collapse amid soaring inflation and chronic state mismanagement of essential services. Protests quickly spread nationwide, evolving into large-scale street demonstrations calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic system. In response, the authorities once again subjected protesters to mass atrocities under the cover of [digital darkness](#), this time on an even more [devastating](#) scale. On the evenings of 8 and 9 January 2026, the authorities carried out protest [massacres](#) on an unprecedented scale, unlawfully killing [thousands](#) of protesters and bystanders and injuring tens of thousands. By the [authorities'](#) own [admission](#), over 3,000 people were killed. The UN [Special Rapporteur](#) on Iran estimated that more than 5,000 women, men and children were killed, noting that according to information she received from medical sources inside Iran, the death toll might be as high as 20,000.

According to evidence gathered by Amnesty International, security forces positioned on the streets and rooftops, including of residential buildings, mosques and police stations, repeatedly fired assault rifles and shotguns loaded with metal pellets, targeting unarmed protesters frequently in their heads and torsos. Medical facilities were overwhelmed with the injured while distraught families searched for their missing loved ones among body bags near overflowing morgues and witnessed bodies piled up in pickup trucks, freight containers or warehouses. In the aftermath of the unprecedented protest massacres, the authorities imposed a militarized [clampdown](#), marked by sweeping arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, bans on gatherings and attacks to silence families of victims.

## 2.2 SYSTEMIC IMPUNITY

Consistent with long-standing patterns of systemic impunity, the Iranian authorities have refused to conduct any effective, independent, transparent and thorough investigations into the crimes under international law and other grave human rights violations that have been committed in the context of cycles of protest bloodshed.

To sustain this impunity, Iranian authorities have constructed a machinery of denial and state cover-up that activates as soon as reports of unlawful killings or torture emerge. The authorities praised security forces for swiftly ending successive protests, smearing protesters as “rioters” and counter-Revolutionaries,” and propagating false narratives and propaganda videos to deny or distort the truth about the nature and scale of violations committed by security forces against protesters and bystanders.

This state cover-up is subsequently reinforced by a judiciary structured to collaborate with security forces in silencing dissent, rather than delivering truth, justice or accountability.

At the constitutional level, the justice system suffers from a complete lack of independence and impartiality, with a set of provisions and appointment procedures designed to integrate the judiciary into the security apparatus and place the judiciary under the control of the Supreme Leader and commander-in-chief.

At the legislative level, the architecture of impunity is founded on a set of harmful laws that further entrench the entwinement of the judiciary and security forces; criminalize the exercise of the rights to freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly; authorize the use of firearms to disperse protests; exempt security forces from criminal liability for unlawful killings resulting from such use of force; and grant jurisdiction over serious human rights violations by security forces to military prosecutors and courts.

This situation has produced a decades-long crisis of impunity for successive cycles of lethal protest crackdowns. The entrenched impunity has also enabled the recurrence of ongoing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations in Iran, including widespread torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, the systemic denial of fair trial rights, and hundreds of arbitrary executions every year. The impunity also extends to past and ongoing crimes against humanity stemming from the mass [extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances](#) of thousands of political dissidents in the 1980s.

UN experts and bodies have consistently documented patterns of structural impunity in Iran.

In a [report](#) published in January 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran characterized Iran's “institutional legal and political apparatus, which in itself is not compliant with the State's obligations under international law,” as an impediment to accountability, concluding that within this “system of governance, it is clear that obtaining accountability for human rights violations becomes arbitrary at best and impossible at worst.”

In a [report](#) issued in October 2023, the UN Secretary-General stated that “[d]omestic avenues for accountability remain weak and ineffective, particularly in addressing violations in the context of recent protests.”

In its detailed [findings](#) published in March 2024, the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran stated:

**“There has been long-standing impunity with respect to human rights violations committed against protesters. Most notably, no senior official has ever been held to account in Iran for the gross human rights violations committed in the context of the protests that have taken place in Iran over the last 45 years, feeding into the cycle of impunity.”**

The mission further [referred](#) to “historic impunity for gross human rights violations in Iran systematically documented and reported by human rights mechanisms.” The mission [found](#) “no evidence of effective domestic remedies for victims of human rights violations.”

## 2.3 12-DAY WAR OF JUNE 2025

Since June 2025, armed hostilities between Israel-USA and the Islamic Republic of Iran have erupted twice, marking the most dangerous phase in their long running confrontation.

Between 13 and 24 June 2025, Israeli authorities [launched](#) air and drone strikes against Iranian territory. Israeli officials announced that they launched the operation to target the nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and decapitate their military leadership. The Israeli strikes began as the Islamic Republic of Iran and the USA were in the process of negotiating a new deal to limit the Islamic Republic’s nuclear programme and enrichment activities in exchange for sanctions relief. Iranian authorities retaliated by launching hundreds of missiles and drones against Israeli territory, as well as [cluster munitions](#) in violation of international humanitarian law.

On 22 June 2025, the USA directly joined the hostilities by launching air strikes against key nuclear facilities in Iran, including enrichment sites.

During the June 2025 armed conflict, at least 1,100 people were [killed](#) in Iran, including 132 women and 45 children, as a result of attacks by Israel, according to Iran’s Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans Affairs.

On 23 June 2025, Israeli air strikes deliberately struck multiple locations over 500 metres apart inside Tehran’s Evin prison, destroying or damaging numerous buildings and other structures within the prison complex, as well as nearby residential buildings outside the complex. Amnesty International’s in-depth [investigation](#) concluded that Israel’s deliberate air strikes on Evin prison constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law and must be criminally investigated as a war crime. According to the Iranian authorities, at least 80 civilians – 79 men and women and a five-year-old boy – were killed.

Attacks by Iran [killed](#) at least 29 people in Israel, including women and children, according to the Israeli Health Ministry. In one of the deadliest incidents, four members of the same family – three women and one child – were killed by an Iranian missile that hit the Palestinian town of Tamra in northern Israel on 14 June 2025.

On 24 June 2025, the direct hostilities between the USA, Israel and Iran ended.

## 3. DUAL ATROCITY RISKS

People in Iran have faced dual risks caused by the unlawful attacks by Israel and USA on the one hand, and explicit threats of further deadly repression by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the other.

The attacks in violation of the UN Charter by the USA and Israel in February 2026 began less than a year after the 12-day armed conflict of June 2025, and just weeks after the January 2026 unprecedented massacres of thousands of protesters, including children.

Tens of thousands of air strikes by the USA and Israel led to significant civilian harm to people in Iran, with a reported death toll of at least [3,375](#), including 383 children, extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure including power plants, universities, school and medical centre, as well as environmental damage due to attacks on petrochemical and energy facilities. In April, the US president made explicit threats to commit war crimes and genocide.

In parallel, since the start of the US-Israeli attack on Iran on 28 February 2026, senior Iranian officials have repeatedly made statements equating any form of dissent with siding with the “enemy” and openly threatened further mass killings of anyone expressing dissent or peacefully advocating for the downfall of the Islamic Republic system.

People in Iran are at risk of crimes under international law across two overlapping fronts: (1) multiple eruptions of international armed conflict exposing civilians to violations of international humanitarian law, possible war crimes, and

humanitarian crisis; and (2) repeated and escalating cycles of protest massacres and other grave human rights violations that the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran has concluded amount to crimes against humanity.

Illustrating the dual risks facing people in Iran, a women's rights activist from Esfahan stated in an account shared with Amnesty International:

**“People are afraid of both bombardment and the Islamic Republic [system]”.**

A political activist from Rasht, Gilan province, said:

**“Each time a commander or a prominent figure is killed, people celebrate. But the war itself is terrifying... A large part of society is also gripped by fear about how they will survive under the Islamic Republic once the war ends.”**

### 3.1 CIVILIAN HARM AND RISKS OF WAR CRIMES

Between 28 February and 7 April 2026, US and Israeli forces carried out thousands of air strikes across Iran, including in densely populated areas. The attacks led to the killing of over [3,375 people](#), including 383 children, according to official figures, which do not specify the number civilians killed, and endangered the lives, health and livelihoods of millions of civilians.

Civilians bore the brunt of the armed conflict from the outset. Less than one hour after the unlawful US-Israeli operations began on 28 February 2026, at approximately 9:45am local time, an unlawful US strike on an elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province, killed 156 people, including 120 children. Amnesty International's [investigation](#) into the attack found that the school was directly hit with precision-guided munitions and that the USA failed to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm, particularly to do everything feasible to verify that the intended target was a military objective.

Air strikes [near prisons](#) and the targeting of security facilities where detainees are held also put prisoners in danger of death or serious harm. The Iranian authorities refused to release all those arbitrarily detained and grant humanitarian release to others imprisoned. Amnesty International reiterated its call for the release of all those arbitrarily detained.

On 7 March 2026, Israeli-US air strikes targeted multiple [fuel storage and distribution facilities](#) in Iran, including in the neighbourhoods of Shahr-e Rey, Sohanak and Kouhak in Tehran and the city of Shahr-e Rey in Tehran province and Fardis in Alborz province.

Video footage of the aftermath of the 7 March 2026 Israeli-US attacks on the fuel depots in Tehran shows a huge amount of flames and plumes of thick black smoke rising, as well as large uncontrolled fires in residential areas. Eyewitnesses also described to Amnesty International scenes of oil-tainted rainfall, which according to medical warnings, were a result of the release of hazardous materials and toxic substances into the air, putting millions of people at risk of serious health complications, including cancer, lung and respiratory diseases and skin burns.

On 21 March 2026, US President Donald Trump [issued](#) a 48-hour ultimatum to the authorities in Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, warning that the USA would “obliterate” Iranian power plants, “starting with the biggest one first”, if the Iranian authorities failed to comply. The authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran said they would retaliate by targeting the “power plants of the occupying regime [Israel] and the power plants of regional countries that supply electricity to US bases, as well as the economic, industrial, and energy infrastructure in which Americans hold shares” if Trump follows through with his threat.

On 23 March 2026, Donald Trump stated on social media that discussions with Iranian officials had taken place aimed at de-escalating hostilities across the Middle East. He added that he had ordered a five-day postponement of any planned military strikes against Iranian power facilities.

Amnesty International [urged](#) Donald Trump to retract his threats to commit war crimes, given that destroying power plants would unleash catastrophic harm on millions of civilians in Iran and that the USA is obligated under international humanitarian law to avoid civilian harm. The organization [warned](#) that by threatening such strikes, the USA was effectively indicating its willingness to plunge an entire country into darkness, and to potentially deprive its people of their human rights to life, water, food, healthcare and adequate standard of living, and to subject them to severe pain and suffering.

In late March and early April 2026, Israeli and US forces escalated attacks on civilian infrastructure, including residential buildings, power plants, bridges, health facilities, universities, steel factories and petrochemical facilities, killing and injuring more civilians, condemning the population to years, if not decades, of deepened economic hardship, damaging the environment, and leaving long-lasting harm to civilians' lives, health and livelihoods.

On 7 April 2026, US President Trump [issued apocalyptic threats](#), warning that “a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again” in relation to Iran. The very act of making such threats, could amount to a threat to commit genocide, a crime defined by the Genocide Convention and by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal

Court as committing one or more defined acts “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such,” and shreds core rules of international humanitarian law, with potentially catastrophic consequences for over 90 million people.

On 23 April 2026, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz threatened to commit war crimes, saying “we are awaiting a green light from the United States ... to return Iran to the Dark Age and the Stone Age by destroying key energy and electricity facilities and dismantling its national economic infrastructure.”

## 3.2 DEADLY REPRESSION AND RISKS OF ATROCITY

### 3.2.1 THREATS OF LETHAL FORCE AGAINST PROTESTERS AND DISSIDENTS

Amid widespread outrage, trauma and grief after the unprecedented protest massacres of January 2026, and following the onset of US and Israeli attacks on 28 February 2026, Iranian officials have issued explicit threats to kill or otherwise harm protesters and others demanding fundamental change, in an apparent effort to deter further protests.

Senior officials and state media in Iran have made chilling statements dehumanizing protesters and dissidents seeking transition to a new rights-respecting system of governance as “internal enemies”, “neo-Islamic State [armed group] members” and “terrorists”, and issued explicit threats to kill anyone who takes the streets to protest or expresses dissent.

These harrowing threats came against the backdrop of calls by dissidents outside Iran for protesters inside the country to pour into the streets once the repressive security apparatus was weakened by US and Israeli air strikes.

Calls to rise up against the authorities made by [US President Donald Trump](#) and [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) were seized upon by officials and state media as a pretext to justify threats to commit atrocity crimes and were instrumentalized to demonize protesters and dissidents. This is in line with long-standing patterns of Iranian authorities portraying protesters, human rights defenders and dissidents as “foreign” agents, denying their legitimate grievances and aspirations for dignity, human rights and freedom. Iranian authorities have long criminalized and conflated peaceful expressions of dissent, including chanting and criticizing human rights violations through civil society activism or social media posts, with “treason” and spurious allegations of acting on behalf of the USA, Israel and other so-called “hostile foreign powers”.

On 10 March 2026, the General Commander of Iran’s police force (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA), Ahmadreza Radan, issued an [explicit threat](#) in a state media interview broadcast on state television:

**“If someone takes to the street [to protest] at the enemy’s request, we will not see them as a protester; we will see them as an enemy and will deal with [them] the way we deal with an enemy. All our forces are ready with their fingers on the trigger to defend their Revolution... Our forces are stationed in the streets day and night. The Basij and our [police] forces have joined hands because the enemy tries after every attack to have its agents, especially in the capital, stir unrest. All streets, alleys, neighbourhoods and squares are now under the control of the police, Special Cohorts [of FARAJA] and the Basij.”**

On 13 March 2026, in a [statement addressed](#) “to the people of Iran”, the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC warned:

**“A blow [even] more severe than that on 8 January [2026] awaits members of the Neo-Islamic State [protesters and dissidents].**

The reference to 8 January 2026 relates to the unprecedented massacres that security forces unleashed that evening after imposing an internet shutdown, killing thousands of protesters and bystanders, including children, within less than 48 hours, raising serious fears the authorities are threatening to commit even worse massacres.

Members of Iran’s parliament have also made similar threatening [statements](#) that protesters will be met with lethal force. For example, on 5 March 2026, Salar Velayatmadar, member of the parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Commission and former commander of the IRGC provincial corps of Ghazvin province, issued a warning on state television addressed to the parents of protesters:

**“Fathers and mothers, be aware. If your son, daughter or anyone today on Iranian soil utters a single word that harmonizes with the enemy... order to shoot them has been already issued.”**

In parallel, state media has echoed dehumanizing language about protesters and dissidents and amplified official threats. On 11 March 2026, Reza Mollaei, a presenter on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, [warned viewers:](#)

**“We are waiting. When the dust of this sedition has settled, we will grab every single one of you. It’s already happening. We will make your mothers mourn you.”**

On 15 March 2026, another state TV presenter [warned](#):

**“Under wartime conditions, anyone who engages in conduct [deemed] in favour of the enemy is considered an enemy and will be treated as such and dealt with in the same manner as the enemy is dealt with.”**

### **3.2.2 FATAL SHOOTINGS AND ABUSIVE ARMED PATROLS AMID ONGOING INTERNET SHUTDOWN**

From the start of the US and Israeli attacks on 28 February 2026 through the time of publication, armed security agents on motorcycles and machine gun-mounted pickup trucks have been roaming residential areas, central streets and main squares across Iran, clamping down on any acts deemed as expressing opposition to the Islamic Republic system and visibly and frighteningly illustrating the authorities’ preparedness to carry out their threats of using lethal force.

Security forces have fired at, beaten, coercively interrogated or arbitrarily arrested individuals in cities across the country for chanting against the Islamic Republic system, for appearing to celebrate the US and Israeli attacks targeting the country’s security apparatus or officials long responsible for deadly repression, or for possessing images or videos related to such attacks and celebrations.

Amnesty International is investigating reports that security forces unlawfully killed several individuals, including children, who were peacefully celebrating the 28 February 2026 killing of the late Supreme Leader and commander-in-chief, Ali Khamenei.

On 28 February 2026, 15-year-old boy **Ahmadreza Feizi** and his 19-year-old brother **Amirhossein Feizi** were shot and killed by security forces in Fardis, Alborz province, while celebrating the death of Ali Khamenei, according to a journalist who spoke to an informed source in Iran. The journalist told Amnesty International that the teenage brothers were travelling in a car with their father and sounding their horn when security forces opened fire on their vehicle. The organization reviewed the victims’ burial certificates, which cite the cause of death as being shot with lethal ammunition in the torso.

The same day, **Kowsar (Nahal) Aho Ghalandari** was also shot and killed in Khorramabad, Lorestan province. According to information provided to Amnesty International by a Kurdish human rights defender who spoke to an informed source in Iran, security forces at a checkpoint opened fire on the car in which she and several friends were travelling while celebrating Ali Khamenei’s death.

Amnesty International analysed six verified videos published online on 17 March 2026, which capture armed [security forces](#) moving into a residential estate in the [Chitgar](#) neighbourhood of Tehran to intimidate and [disperse](#) people during [Chaharshanbeh Suri](#) celebrations, used by some as an opportunity to express dissent. One [video](#) shows an agent in plain clothes raising a firearm towards off-screen targets and shooting amid chants of “Down with the dictator” from people inside high-rise apartment blocks.

In March 2026, the organization also obtained seven eyewitness accounts from five cities – Esfahan, Ghaemshahr, Karaj, Rasht and Tehran – and analysed nine videos from three cities – Karaj, Shiraz and Tehran – related to security forces intimidating people at security checkpoints; roaming streets in pickup trucks on top of which machine guns are mounted; and deploying armoured vehicles and armed agents.

In residential areas and central squares and streets, security agents have been heard making threatening statements through megaphones or from mosques housing Basij bases. According to eyewitness accounts, one chant echoing prominently is “Heydar Heydar”, a slogan used in an intimidating way by security forces since the 1980s in the context of mobilizing for the deployment of security forces to crackdown on dissidents and protesters.

A journalist in Tehran told Amnesty International in March 2026:

**“Security forces including plain clothes agents are everywhere in the city. Most are carrying AK-47 rifles and have their faces covered. They block roads, tell us to lower our car windows, and shine lights inside the car just to intimidate us. Missiles are falling on people’s heads, and yet they treat us like this... At night, security forces including Basiji agents and the Special Cohorts of the police repeatedly shout ‘Heydar Heydar’. Mosques [housing Basij bases] broadcast chants attacking people who came out into the streets [during the January 2026 uprising]. The situation is truly exhausting and overwhelming.”**

The same journalist said that, according to an informed source in Shiraz, Fars province, on 3 March 2026, security forces fired an assault rifle into the air after a resident chanted “Down with the dictator” through their home window.

Another journalist from Tehran stated in an account shared with the organization:

**“Never before have the streets been so fully dominated by agents standing up for the Islamic Republic... Every night, the chants of Heydar Heydar echo until morning. At checkpoints, security forces arrest and beat people. For a single photo found on your phone, they interrogate and question you in the worst possible way. Passing through the checkpoint is terrifying, both because of the agents’ intimidating behaviour and because of the drones overhead [that have attacked security forces at checkpoints].”**

The use of firearms to suppress and punish dissent is unlawful under international human rights law, which restricts the use of firearms by law enforcement officials only to situations involving an imminent threat of death or serious injury. Any deaths resulting from the unlawful use of firearms constitute unlawful killings, and thus a violation of the right to life.

### **3.2.3 INTENSIFIED USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY AS A WEAPON OF REPRESSION**

Since the 2022 Woman Life Freedom uprising, the Iranian authorities have increasingly used the death penalty as a tool of political repression to intensify fear and deter any further mobilization by those demanding fundamental change, arbitrarily executing thousands after grossly unfair trials. The [pace of executions accelerated](#) further following the 12-day war in June 2025 and by the end of 2025, [executions reached a scale](#) not seen in over four decades.

Since the US and Israeli attacks on 28 February 2026, the authorities have arbitrarily executed at least 19 individuals for politically motivated reasons, including eight protesters, nine dissidents, and two other individuals accused of espionage for the USA and/or Israel, following grossly unfair [trials](#). Amnesty International had documented the cases of 13 of the men. Prior to their executions, the 13 men had been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in detention, including beatings, floggings, prolonged solitary confinement, and death threats at gunpoint before being convicted in grossly unfair trials that relied on forced “confessions” and lasted only a few hours.

The [eight protesters](#) who were executed had been all sentenced to death just weeks after their arrests in January 2026. Saleh Mohammadi, Mehdi Ghasemi and Saeed Davoudi, who were sentenced in the same case, were executed on 19 March 2026. Amirhossein Hatami, Mohammad Amin Biglari, Ali Fahim, and Shahin Vahedparast Kolo, who were sentenced to death together in another case, were executed between 2 and 6 April 2026. Another protester Amir Ali Mir Jafari was executed on 21 April 2026.

The nine dissidents executed were all targeted based on their real or alleged affiliation with the banned opposition group, the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran. Six of them – Vahid Bani Amerian, Abolhassan Montazer, Babak Alipour, Pouya Ghobadi, Akbar Daneshvarkar and Mohammad Taghavi Sangdehi – were [sentenced](#) to death in the same case in October 2024. They were executed between 30 March 2026 and 4 April 2026. The authorities carried out the arbitrary executions of these six dissidents in secret without providing them or their families and lawyers advance notice or allowing them to say their final goodbyes. Following the secret executions, the authorities refused to return the victims’ bodies to their families and concealed their whereabouts, leaving families in distressing uncertainty and amounting to enforced disappearance. Mohammad Masoum Shahi and Hamed Validi were executed on 20 April 2026, while Soltanali Shirzadi was executed on 23 April 2026.

### **3.2.4 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS DURING WARTIME**

States remain bound by their obligations under international human rights law at all times, including during situations of armed conflict. As per Article 4 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party, in narrowly defined and exceptional circumstances, a state may seek to derogate from certain treaty obligations by declaring a state of emergency. However, as the UN Human Rights Committee has stated in its [General Comment No. 29](#), any such derogation is subject to strict conditions. A state of emergency must be officially proclaimed, limited to measures that are strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, consistent with other obligations under international law, nondiscriminatory, and formally notified to other states parties.

Under the framework for derogations, a number of rights, including the rights to life, to non-discrimination and equality, to freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, and to fair trial, [cannot be derogated](#) from in any context, including a state of emergency. Accordingly, even during armed conflict, measures taken in relation to crowd control and the regulation of protests remain subject to the normal rules and standards concerning the use of force and firearms in law enforcement settings.

Firearms are not an appropriate weapon for the policing of public gatherings. Law enforcement officials may only resort to the use of a firearm when there is an imminent threat to life. This very high threshold is established in [UN Basic Principle 9 on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials](#). It is an expression of the principle of proportionality, that law enforcement officials should not cause greater harm than the harm they seek to prevent. It starts from the premise that in view of its design as a weapon intended to kill, any use of a “firearm” puts life at risk and that this can only be accepted if there is a risk of similar gravity, meaning a risk to life.

Some other rights such as the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association may be derogated from, but any derogation must only be to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation and must remain consistent with the state's other obligations under international law. In making this assessment, the principle of strict necessity must be applied in an objective manner: each measure introduced must be shown to be connected to an actual, clear, present, or imminent danger. Moreover, the assessment of the national authorities is not conclusive in this regard, and the lawfulness of derogations remains subject to scrutiny by the UN Human Rights Committee.

Absent formal derogations, the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly may not be restricted other than as provided by law, and any restrictions must be necessary in a democratic society and proportionate to one or more of the grounds exhaustively prescribed in articles 19, 21 and 22 of the ICCPR.

Following the outbreak of armed conflict on 28 February 2026, the Iranian authorities did not declare a state of emergency or seek to justify violations of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly or association as temporary emergency measures. Such violations reflect entrenched and structural non-compliance with international human rights obligations.

Further, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, for decades, systematically violated the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Iran's domestic legal and constitutional framework does not adequately recognize, respect or protect these rights and instead embeds broad restrictions that criminalize peaceful dissent, independent organizing, and participation in public affairs, in violation of international human rights law, including the ICCPR. Moreover, Iran's legal framework does not provide for lawful restrictions or derogations but rather normalizes severe limitations and repression outside the bounds imposed by international human rights law.

## **4. CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INCONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND STANDARDS**

The recurrence of atrocities in Iran is rooted in a constitutional structure that impermissibly restricts human rights, entrenches discrimination, including on grounds of sex, religion, ethnicity and political opinion, enables the entrenchment of impunity for systemic and widespread crimes under international law and other human rights violations, and deprives people of access to justice and effective remedies. It also leaves no space for people to pursue their demands for human rights, dignity and fundamental political change.

The current constitution excludes from or severely limits participation in political life of women, religious minorities, political dissidents and all others who oppose a system based on the absolute rule of the Supreme Leader or the authorities' interpretation of Shia Islam.

The constitution institutionalizes gender inequality by excluding women from senior political positions and requiring that all laws comply with the state's interpretation of Sharia, resulting in the discriminatory and degrading practice of compulsory veiling and denying women protection from gender-based violence and equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody and political participation.

By mandating that the entire system of governance be led by a male Shia Islamic cleric, the constitution excludes women, religious minorities, and people from other professions, belief systems and faiths from the highest levels of public office, entrenching discrimination.

The constitution also enables violent protest dispersals by limiting the right to peaceful assembly to gatherings that do not disrupt "Islamic principles". It fuses the judiciary into the security apparatus, placing both under the direct control of one person – the Supreme Leader and commander-in-chief – thereby undermining the rule of law and enabling serious violations of the rights to a fair trial and an effective remedy, amongst others.

### **4.1 FUSION OF JUDICIARY INTO SECURITY APPARATUS**

Article 156 of the constitution describes the judiciary as "an independent power, the protector of the rights of the individual and society, responsible for the implementation of justice". Despite this general constitutional provision affirming judicial independence, the constitutional framework governing the appointment of Iran's judicial and prosecutorial authorities severely undermines that independence and is entirely inconsistent with the principles of checks and balances and the rule of law.

Under this framework, the judiciary and prosecution services fall under the control of the Supreme Leader, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, who exercises ultimate control over all three branches of the state – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, thereby undermining the principle of separation of powers, encouraging arbitrary exercise of powers, eroding the rule of law and ultimately leading to human rights violations.

According to Article 157 of the constitution, the Supreme Leader appoints the head of the judiciary for a period of five years. Article 110 of the constitution allows the Supreme Leader to dismiss the head of the judiciary at any time. These appointment and dismissal processes lack clear procedures and exclude any involvement from independent judicial councils or commissions that are typically established to ensure impartial, merit-based appointments. Nor does it grant any role to the legislature, which in many systems plays a key part in confirming or overseeing judicial appointments.

According to Article 158(3) of the constitution, the head of the judiciary holds extensive powers, including the authority to appoint and dismiss judges, define their roles, and manage their promotions and transfers.

According to Article 162 of the constitution, the head of the judiciary also holds the authority to appoint the head of the Supreme Court and the national prosecutor general, as well as all provincial and county prosecutors. This erodes the separation that must exist between judicial and prosecutorial functions and reinforces the subordination of both institutions to the Supreme Leader and commander-in-chief.

The constitutional fusion of political, judicial and security powers under the authority of the Supreme Leader ensures that the judiciary, prosecution services and security forces operate not as independent and impartial institutions but as instruments of power and repression. This makes it impossible for the judiciary to play any independent oversight role, or to hold to account members of the executive. This centralized power structure thereby promotes impunity for perpetrators, denies victims access to justice or effective remedy, which in turn facilitates the commission of crimes under international law.

## 4.2 DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGIOUS, GENDER AND POLITICAL GROUNDS

The preamble to Iran's current constitution explicitly grounds the "cultural, social, political and economic order of Iran in Islamic principles". The preamble further vests ultimate authority in a Shia Islamic cleric charged with ensuring that all state institutions "do not deviate from their essential Islamic duties." In doing so, the constitution binds a particular religious identity and ideology to the foundation of state authority and entrenches discrimination against non-Muslims, religious minorities, and individuals with dissenting beliefs or secular worldviews.

This foundational structure is reinforced throughout the constitution by various provisions that, in the name of protecting "Islamic principles", impose religious conformity, disregard and undermine the rights to freedom of religion or belief, and restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

For example, Article 2 provides that "the Islamic Republic is a system founded on belief in one God and... obligation of submission to His commands... divine revelation and its foundational role in defining laws... continuous religious leadership, and its fundamental role in sustaining the Islamic Revolution."

Article 4 provides that "all civil, criminal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic principles."

Examples of provisions that restrict the rights to freedom of expression include Article 24, which states that "publications and the press are free to express views except where such expression is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam".

The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly are similarly limited. Article 26 states that "political parties, groups, associations... trade unions, and recognized religious minorities are free [to operate], provided that they do not violate... Islamic principles, or the foundations of the Islamic Republic" while Article 27 states "public gatherings and marches may be freely held... provided that they are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam."

The constitution mandates for entire state institutions to be led by male Shia Islamic clerics, excluding women, religious minorities, and people from other professions, belief systems and faiths from the high levels of public office, entrenching discrimination.

Articles 5, 109 and 110 empower a leading Shia Islamic cleric (*faghih*) with supreme authority over the state and leadership of the people, who are constitutionally defined as a Muslim *ummah* (collective).

Articles 157 and 162 require that the head of the judiciary and the national prosecutor general both be a *mojtahed* (a person learned in Islamic law). This requirement entrenches discrimination on the grounds of religion and political opinion, excluding non-Muslims, individuals with differing interpretations of Islam and those who uphold secular principles such as the separation of religion and judicial authority. Moreover, since the status of *mojtahed* has, in practice, been restricted to men, this requirement has also resulted in the exclusion of women from these judicial positions. This discriminatory foundation is further entrenched by laws that bar women from being appointed as judges with the authority to render verdicts.

Article 4 stipulates that "all civil, criminal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic principles" and assigns responsibility for enforcing this requirement to six Shia Islamic clerics on the Guardian Council, who are appointed by the Supreme Leader.

Further, by requiring that all laws comply with the state's interpretation of Sharia, the constitution also institutionalizes gender inequality, excluding women from senior political positions, facilitating the discriminatory and degrading practice of compulsory veiling, and denying women protection from gender-based violence and equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody and political participation.

### 4.3 PROHIBITING ADVOCACY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Peaceful advocacy for constitutional change to ensure human rights are respected or for the adoption of a new rights-respecting constitution is protected conduct under international human rights law and may not be criminalized, suppressed, or treated as a threat to national security simply because it challenges existing institutions and the status quo.

Such advocacy falls squarely within the protected exercise of the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs and is intrinsically linked to the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Where calls for constitutional transformation seek to challenge discriminatory religious or ideological frameworks imposed by the state, they are also protected under the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and belief.

As noted in section 3.2.4, states remain bound by their obligations under international human rights law during times of armed conflict, and any derogation of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association must follow an official proclamation of a state of emergency, be limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, and must remain consistent with the state's other obligations under international law. Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental principles of international human rights law that are, in core aspects, non-derogable. Moreover, no such state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Iranian authorities.

Iran's constitutional structure leaves no avenue for people to peacefully express themselves about the institutions of their own government and to seek changes. Only the Supreme Leader can trigger the process of introducing amendments to the constitution, and its central discriminatory tenets are explicitly shielded from revision, effectively foreclosing meaningful constitutional change.

Article 177 stipulates:

**“The contents of the principles relating to the Islamic character of the system, the requirement that all laws and regulations be based on Islamic criteria and on the foundational beliefs and objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran... and the guardianship of the Islamic jurist (Supreme Leader) are unchangeable.”**

The article states that the process of constitutional revision can only be initiated through a decree issued by the Supreme Leader directing the president to convene a “revision council”, the majority of whose members would be appointed by the Supreme Leader directly or indirectly. The article adds that any proposals made by this council must also be approved by the Supreme Leader.

In his January 2022 report to the UN Human Rights Council, the then UN Special Rapporteur on Iran concluded that Iran's constitutional framework systematically subordinates human rights to the preservation of an ideological religious system, leaving people without meaningful avenues to participate in public affairs or to hold those in power accountable. He stated:

**“The Constitution ... entrenches an Islamic political ideology as both the foundation for and the aim of governance... The ideology of the State features as a precondition for any form of political participation, is foundational for the policies of the State and its various bodies, and is further used for the interpretation of individual rights. It is clear that this system of governance establishes a particular relationship between individuals and the State, where the maintenance of the system of governance and the political ideology takes precedence over protecting and respecting the rights of individuals. Within this configuration, there is no meaningful way by which the population can freely participate in decision-making mechanisms, including legislative processes, or hold decision makers accountable.”**

Amnesty International advocates for changes necessary to ensure human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled without discrimination, including through fundamental constitutional changes when required to guarantee human rights and uphold independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. The organization believes this is precisely required in Iran, where many crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations are facilitated by the country's constitution.

The organization therefore urges all states and international and regional bodies address the structural drivers and root causes of crimes under international law rather than only their symptoms through constitutional analysis; and support the space for Iranian civil society to call for the adoption of a rights-respecting constitution.

Anything short of this is bound to leave people in Iran repeatedly exposed to massacres by state authorities who refuse to recognize legitimate demands for human rights, dignity and democracy, and instead rely on mass unlawful killings, torture and other crimes under international law and grave human rights violations to eradicate dissent. People in Iran

must not be abandoned to face the risk of repeated massacres simply for seeking to enjoy their internationally guaranteed human rights.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 TO IRANIAN AUTHORITIES REGARDING DOMESTIC REPRESSION**

- Issue clear instructions to all security forces to immediately cease and desist from the unlawful use of force and firearms, including intentional lethal force, against protesters and dissidents, and to respect international law and standards governing the use of force and firearms. Firearms should not be used in the policing of assemblies and their use must be limited to targeted individuals in exceptional circumstances where it is strictly necessary to confront an imminent threat of death or serious injury.
- Restore full access to the internet immediately.
- Immediately cease all forms of incitement to violence and atrocities against protesters, dissidents, activists, or others expressing dissent in Iran, including through state-controlled media, and ensure that official communications and broadcasts comply with international human rights standards prohibiting advocacy of hatred and incitement to violence.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all protesters, dissidents, human rights defenders and others arbitrarily detained, including people sentenced to death, solely for the exercise of their human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and remove, to the extent feasible, all other prisoners from military objectives or their vicinity.
- Immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty and commute all existing death sentences.
- Cease the use of the death penalty as a weapon of repression against protesters and dissidents, and quash all convictions and death sentences imposed after grossly unfair trials. If charged with internationally recognizable offences, defendants must be granted fair retrials, excluding torture-tainted and/or coerced “confessions” and other unlawfully obtained “evidence,” without resort to the death penalty.
- Stop criminalizing public debate on constitutional change, and immediately end the harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and prosecution of individuals or groups advocating for peaceful, rights-based constitutional change and for a new system of governance.
- Allow unimpeded access to independent international human rights monitors to investigate alleged violations, including experts of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Iran and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran.
- Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

### **5.2 TO ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE ARMED CONFLICT**

- Implement an enduring, sustained and comprehensive ceasefire; and pending this, ensure the following:
- Prioritize the protection of civilians and ensure that all feasible precautions are taken to minimize harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- Cease unlawful attacks including direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, indiscriminate attacks, and disproportionate attacks. Objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including essential civilian infrastructure, must not be attacked, destroyed, or rendered inoperable.

### **5.3 TO THE USA AND ISRAEL**

- Refrain from targeting prisons and other facilities holding detainees in Iran.
- Repudiate all threats to commit war crimes and other crimes under international law and commit publicly to full respect for international humanitarian law, particularly the prohibition of directing attacks at civilians and civilian objects.
- US authorities must ensure that the investigation they announced into the unlawful strike on Minab school is impartial, independent and transparent. Investigations into the strike must consider the intelligence gathering and assessments, targeting decisions and precautions taken, as well as whether artificial intelligence was

employed in each of these steps, to evaluate how targeting decisions were made. The results of the investigation should be made public. Where sufficient evidence exists, competent authorities should prosecute any person suspected of criminal responsibility. Victims and their families have the right to truth and justice and should receive full reparation, including restitution, rehabilitation and compensation for civilian harm.

- US authorities must ensure prompt, effective, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by US forces and US officials. Demand publication of findings and ensure cases with potential criminal wrongdoing are referred to the Department of Justice. Anyone against whom there is sufficient admissible evidence of criminal responsibility should be prosecuted in fair trials without the possibility of the death penalty.
- US authorities must continue to fund and expand efforts within the Department of Defence to mitigate civilian harm, to investigate and respond to reports of civilian harm, to provide repair and amends and to recommend efforts to ensure non-repetition. They must fully fund and demand transparency on the staffing of offices aimed at mitigating and responding to civilian harm. They must also require designation of officials at every operational combatant command and Joint Staff tasked with civilian harm mitigation and response.

## 5.4 TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Combine efforts to sustain a durable ceasefire, protect civilians, ensure respect for international humanitarian law and deter war crimes by all parties to the conflict, with robust efforts to prevent the commission of atrocity crimes by the Iranian authorities, address structural drivers and root causes of repeated cycles of crimes under international law in Iran, including in the context of protest crackdowns, and support Iranian civil society-led calls for fundamental changes, including constitutional changes to ensure respect for human rights and an end to discrimination in Iran.
- Call on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Iran to the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Explore options for internationalized justice mechanisms to tackle the crisis of systemic impunity in Iran and advance effective criminal investigations and prosecutions of crimes under international law committed in Iran, in line with international fair trial standards.
- Undertake criminal investigations, based on the principle of universal and other form of extraterritorial jurisdiction, against Iranian officials allegedly responsible for crimes under international law and, where sufficient evidence exists, prosecute those suspected of individual criminal responsibility.
- Open structural investigations into crimes under international law committed in Iran, especially where victims may be present on the territory of third states, with a view to establishing command and decision-making structures and identifying and grouping potential perpetrators for pursuing criminal accountability.
- Work towards establishing joint investigation teams to investigate crimes under international law linked to repeated cycles of nationwide protests in Iran.
- Call on the Iranian authorities to recognize that international human rights law protects peaceful advocacy for a new constitution-making process and for institutions of government that are consistent with the rule of law and international human rights including the rights to non-discrimination and equality, freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and participation in public affairs.
- Fully investigate the unlawful US and Israeli attacks on Iran in violation of the UN Charter and other crimes under international law, and ensure that states and individuals are held responsible.

**Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.**

## Contact



info@amnesty.org



facebook.com/  
AmnestyGlobal



@Amnesty



amnesty.org



Amnesty International  
Peter Benenson House  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW, UK

Except where otherwise noted, content in this document is licensed under a Creative Commons (attribution, non-commercial, no derivatives, international 4.0) licence (see [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode)).

Where material is attributed to a copyright owner other than Amnesty International, this material is not covered by the Creative Commons licence.

For more information, visit the [permissions page](#) on Amnesty International's website.

Index: **MDE 13/0883/2026**

Publication: **April 2026**

Original language: **English**

© Amnesty International 2026