

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls**

Ref.: UA IRN 23/2022  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

20 October 2022

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 50/17, 42/22, 45/3, 44/5, 43/4, 43/16, 49/24, 43/8, 43/20, 50/7 and 50/18.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **ongoing excessive, disproportionate and lethal force by Iranian security forces against protesters, demonstrating initially in response to the death of Mahsa Amini on 16 September 2022, who died after she was detained by the Gasht-e-Ershad (Guidance Patrol) for allegedly not complying with Iran's compulsory veiling laws, particularly the "Hijab and Chastity Law" recently decreed in August 2022. In addition, we are deeply concerned about reports of the continued crackdown on civil society by the Iranian authorities, within the context of the protests for demanding equality, an end to discrimination based on gender and sex and restrictions on their freedoms; the use of live ammunitions against protesters, including women and child protesters; arbitrary arrests; torture; extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings. In the current situation, protesters and their relatives, as well as human rights defenders, face an enhanced risk of being subjected to enforced disappearance. Further we are concerned over the disruption of the Internet in the context of the ongoing demonstrations, preventing access to and the sharing of information about the protests.**

In previous communications (IRN 11/2022, IRN 32/2021, IRN 9/2021, IRN 2/2020, IRN 17/2019 and IRN 16/2019) Special Procedures mandates raised concerns

regarding the unlawful and excessive use of force by law enforcement against protesters and the systemic impunity for human rights violations committed by the Iranian security forces in the Islamic Republic of Iran. We thank your Excellency's Government's for its response to IRN 11/2022, IRN 9/2021, IRN 17/2019 and IRN 16/2019, but regret that no response has been received to IRN 32/2021 and IRN 2/2020. We remain dismayed by the violations that appear to have continued. These concerns have also been the subject of numerous press releases, including those issued by Special Procedures on 22 November 2019<sup>1</sup> and on 22 September 2022<sup>2</sup>, by the Acting United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 20 September 2022<sup>3</sup>, and by the Spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 27 September 2022<sup>4</sup>.

We acknowledge the information provided by your Excellency's Government in documents transmitted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on 26 and 27 September 2022 and on 3, 10 and 17 October 2022 with reference to the death of Ms. Mahsa Amini and the following events.

In communication IRN 16/2021, the latest of a number of previous communications on the issues, Special Procedures expressed their grave concerns regarding the ongoing institutionalisation of violence against women and girls, gender-based inequality and discrimination in different spheres of life, including but not limited to the criminalisation of women protesting the compulsory veiling laws in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well gendered violence committed against women human rights defenders, including those who challenge State laws and policies that discriminate against women on the grounds of sex and gender. We remain deeply concerned about the reported ongoing criminalisation of women human rights defenders.

According to the information we have received:

***Death of Mahsa Amini sparked nationwide protests in Iran since 16 September 2022***

On 13 September 2022, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman belonging to the Kurdish minority, was arrested in Tehran by Iran's *Gasht-e-Ershad* (Guidance Patrol). The Guidance Patrol, which has the power and authority to target women and girls upon their perception of what constitutes an infringement of the prescribed behaviour and dress code, accused Ms. Amini of not complying with the country's veiling laws. Eyewitness testimonies and other evidence indicate that Ms. Amini was violently beaten while being forcibly transferred to Vozara detention centre in Tehran. Reports, including images of Ms. Amini in the intensive care unit, indicated a trace of blood

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/11/iran-experts-raise-alarm-arrests-and-reported-killings-internet-shutdown>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/iran-un-experts-demand-accountability-death-mahsa-amini-call-end-violence>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/mahsa-amini-acting-un-human-rights-chief-urges-impartial-probe-death-iran>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2022/09/concern-grows-over-violence-internet-restrictions-iran>

behind her neck and in the bottom of her skull, which suggest that she was assaulted on the head. Within hours of her arrest, Ms. Amini was transferred to Kasra Hospital having fallen into a coma. She was officially declared dead at Kasra Hospital on 16 September 2022.

On 16 September 2022, following news of the death of Ms. Amini, protests erupted in several parts of the country, including in Tehran, Ilam, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Mahabad, Saqez, Sanandaj, Sari, Tabriz, Yazd and Karaj. Thousands of protesters demanded accountability for the death of Ms. Amini, criticising the State's compulsory hijab laws and the ongoing repression of women and girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is not the first time women have protested the imposition of religiously motivated laws and the use of a combination of threats or actual use of violence, intimidation, punishment, particularly by the Guidance Patrol. The focus of the protests expanded from decrying the arbitrary killing of Ms. Amini and the imposition of a discriminatory dress code, to demanding an end to the systematic discrimination against women and girls in Iran, and the restoration of bodily autonomy and the freedoms of opinion, expression, religion and belief in connection with the right to decide on hijab observance.

Protesters chanted slogans against the political leadership. Women protesters cut their hair, removed their headscarves, or burnt them in protest. University students and Iranians across all walks of life and from all over the country also joined protesters. Reports indicate protests have been carried out in over 100 cities across all 31 provinces of Iran.

Upon their investigations, Iranian authorities declared Ms. Amini died of a heart attack, and claimed her death was due to natural causes. On 19 September 2022, the commander of the police forces in Tehran claimed that investigations conducted by himself and 'special teams' had shown that "there was not even the slightest misconduct or wrongdoings by the officers". However, the reported composition of the special investigation teams, including among others an investigation squad from the Ministry of Interior under the supervision of the Deputy Interior Minister for Security and Enforcement Affairs, a probe team assembled by the Tehran Prosecutor General, a Medical Committee consisting of the Minister for Treatment of the Ministry of Health, raises serious concern on the independence and impartiality of the investigation.

According to "Report No. 4 Pertaining Death of Ms. Mahsa Amini & Following Events" by the High Council for Human Rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran, transmitted to OHCHR on 10 October 2022 by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on 7 October 2022, the State Legal Medicine Organization released a statement about Ms. Amini's death, stating that her death "was not caused by blows to the head and vital organs and limbs of the body", and that her death was the result of the malfunction of thyroid medications. However, no credible evidence was provided to prove the purported underlying health conditions. The post mortem examination was conducted by the State Legal Medicine Organization which is under the

authority of the judiciary. Reportedly, a request for establishing a committee of independent doctors to investigate her death was not granted and family members were not granted access to her autopsy report, while recordings of Ms. Amini's arrest were not released.

***Excessive use of force against protesters, use of torture and other ill-treatments, extrajudicial killings, violence against women and arbitrary mass arrests***

Videos, reports and eyewitness testimonies have shown security forces (including the police, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Basij militia) violently cracking down on protesters, and revealed a widespread pattern of disproportionate use of force. Security forces were allegedly firing live ammunitions, birdshot and other metal pellets directly at unarmed and peaceful protesters who posed no imminent threat to life or serious injury, with the intention of dispersing, intimidating and attacking them for their participation in the assemblies.

As of 14 October 2022, due to the use of arbitrary and excessive force by security forces during the protests, it is reported that at least 144 protesters were killed, including women and 23 children. Hundreds were injured, across at least 16 provinces (Mazandaran, Western Azerbaijan, Gilan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Sistan and Balochestan, Alborz, Tehran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, Isfahan, Khorasan-Razavi, Zanjan, Semnan, Qazvin, Ilam, East Azerbaijan). Killings of protesters also reportedly took place during evening/nighttime protests. Most protesters were allegedly killed by security forces firing live ammunition and metal pellets, including birdshot, tear gas and water cannons. Families were forced to quietly bury their relatives at night and pressured against holding public funerals. Many families were threatened with legal charges if they publicised the deaths of their relatives killed in the context of the protests.

On 16 September 2022, security forces in Saqqez reportedly fired birdshot at a distance of about 10 metres at an 18-year-old man who lost sight in his right eye as a result; and likewise at a 22-year-old man, who consequently lost sight in both eyes.

On 19 September 2022, according to reports and testimonies, security forces injured hundreds of men, women, and children by repeatedly firing metal pellets at their heads and chests at a close range. This unlawful practice was reported in a number of cities populated by the Kurdish minority, including in Saqqez, Baneh, Dehgolan, Divandareh, Kamyaran, Mahabad, and Sanandaj.

During protests on 19 and 20 September 2022, in Saqqez, Urumieh and Kermanshah, eyewitnesses reported that at least four men and two women died from fatal injuries caused by metal pellets fired by the law enforcement.

On 20 September, Ms. [REDACTED], a 17-year-old girl went missing in Tehran after telling a friend she was being chased by police. Her death was

announced to her family nine days later and her body reportedly buried in a remote area, against the family's wishes. Tehran judiciary official Mohammad Shahriari reportedly indicated that a post-mortem examination showed █████ suffered "multiple fractures (...) in the pelvis, head, upper and lower limbs, arms and legs, which indicate that she was thrown from a height".

On 21 September, Hadis Najafi, a 22-year-old woman was reportedly shot by Security Forces around 8 p.m. while she was peacefully demonstrating on Eram Boulevard in Mehrshahr, Karaj. The family was informed by another demonstrator using Hadis's phone that she had been transported to Ghaem hospital. Her body and face reportedly revealed bullet wounds, including to her chest, neck and face. Her body was reportedly not handed over to her family until 23 September.

On the night of 21 September 2022, shootings by the security forces against protesters, including in Oshnavieh and in Balou, left reportedly at least 19 protesters dead, including at least three children, and hundreds injured. Many reportedly had wounds on their heads, chests and stomachs. According to eyewitness reports, security forces including the Islamic Revolutionary Guards agents, paramilitary *Basij* forces and plainclothes security officials fired live ammunition to disperse protesters.

For the nights of 22 September to 25 September 2022, reports have recorded eight victims, including at least two children allegedly killed by security forces in the provinces of Alborz, Esfahan, Kohgiluyeh and Bouyer Ahmadmad, Ghazvin and Tehran. On 22 September 2022, Islamic Revolutionary Guard agents reportedly shot at chanting protesters in Dehdasht, killing a 16-year-old bystander, and shot a man participating in protests in Ghazvin.

According to the information received, a 60-year-old man was killed while *Basij* agents raided his home to arrest his son for his participation in the protests. They allegedly shot him in the face in front of his wife and his two sons, and then arbitrarily arrested them.

On 28 September 2022, 13 people including a pregnant woman were allegedly killed as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps launched missiles and drone attacks at bases of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups located in Iraq's Kurdistan region. Iranian authorities accused Iranian-Kurdish separatists based in northern Iraq of involvement in the protests in Iran.

On 30 September 2022, at least 82 people were killed and hundreds were injured as the Security Forces fired live ammunition at protesters, bystanders and worshippers after Friday prayers in Zahedan. The protest in Zahedan broke out following the report of the rape of a 15-year-old girl by a police officer.

On 2 October 2022, following the outbreak of a demonstration in Sharif University in Tehran, the security forces and *Basij* militia, surrounded the university for several hours, fired metal pellets and tear gas at the students and

beat them using batons. At least 40 students were reportedly arrested.

According to witness testimonies, people seriously injured from security forces' gunshots in the context of the protests are being deterred from seeking medical treatment for fear of arrest. Security and intelligence officials have established a strong presence in hospitals, such as at Emam Khomeini Hospital in Dehdasht. This puts victims at risk of infection and other medical complications. It is reported that security forces have used ambulances to transfer their forces or the arrested people.

There are reports of women and girls being subject to excessive use of force by security forces, including physical violence and sexual assault by grabbing women's breasts, slapping women across the face, beating them with batons, dragging them on the ground and violently pulling them by the hair for removing their headscarves. Many women have shared on social media platforms their experience of violent treatment by State forces for rejecting the compulsory hijab and morality laws that undermine their bodily autonomy, dignity and equal rights, as well as the wider system of discrimination against women, including beating arrested women protesters inside police vans. A video recorded in Shiraz on 24 September 2022 shows a riot police officer repeatedly and violently pulling the hair of one woman who had removed her headscarf as an act of protest, sexually assaulting another woman who attempted to intervene by grabbing her breast and pushing her violently to the ground, causing her head to hit the cement curb.

Moreover, testimonies of eyewitnesses as well as videos of children in military clothes carrying batons and shields indicate that children have been employed to suppress the protesters.

Reports indicate arbitrary mass arrests and thousands detained in the context of the protests, including protesters, bystanders, human rights defenders, lawyers, civil society activists, women human rights defenders, members of ethnic minority groups, journalists, students and artists. At least 92 members of civil society were arrested at their homes or workplaces. At least 17 women human rights defenders have been arbitrarily arrested in the Kurdistan province. Detainees have reportedly been subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment to extort confessions. Reports also indicate that children are being arrested and placed in the same detention centers or facilities as adults. Reportedly, not all the deprivations of liberty are registered and not all persons detained are brought before a judicial authority promptly after detention. Moreover, those trying to obtain information on the detention of protesters and other persons – including their family members, their counsel or other persons having a legitimate interest in the information – are often denied access to such information. The situation described may amount to an enforced disappearance and, in general, suggests that protesters and human rights defenders face an enhanced risk of being forcibly disappeared.

### ***Internet disruptions, intimidation and detention of journalists during the protests***

During the time of the violent crackdown on the protests, Internet disruptions were reported, preventing access to information and causing delays in documenting the situation. The restrictions on access to the Internet and social media platforms have made it difficult both to share images about protests taking place in different parts of the country and also for citizens to communicate with the world outside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

On 21 September 2022, access to Instagram and WhatsApp, two of the few remaining social media platforms and messaging applications which were not blocked in the country, were restricted. On 22 September 2022, it was officially announced that the Iran National Security Council had banned Instagram and WhatsApp.

It is also reported that the Supreme National Security Council and the Ministry of Intelligence have warned media against reporting on the protests, including through meeting with media editors to set restrictions on how to cover the events.

As at 29 September 2022, at least 28 journalists, men and women, were allegedly arrested as they were covering the nationwide protests. Security forces used violence to prevent individuals from reporting the abuses against the protesters or talking to the media, especially to the Persian-language media based outside of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Videos shared through social media indicate that people who took photos or videos of the Security Forces, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Basij were shot or beaten by these forces. The same forces have allegedly raided journalists' homes, intimidating families and neighbors; taken journalists to solitary confinement in Evin prison, or held them in poor conditions in Qarchak Women's Prison.

### ***State accountability***

On 23 September 2022, Iran's Minister of Interior made statements defining four categories of people killed during the protests, without clarifying the causes and circumstances surrounding these killings.<sup>5</sup> He said the first category were "people from the west and northwest of Iran where anti-Revolutionary groups are active". Provinces in the west and northwest of Iran are populated by Kurdish and Azerbaijani Turkic minorities. The Minister of Interior described the other three categories as "innocent people who were beaten by rioters and sometimes killed by them"; "those who may have been killed while trying to enter sensitive places such as police stations and government buildings"; and "people who were killed in other places and whose bodies were transferred to protest sites". With respect to the last category, the Minister reportedly claimed, without providing additional details

---

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/MDE1360702022ENGLISH.pdf>

or evidence, that there were many examples of such incidents which were to “provoke public opinion and to keep the protests active”. He stated that some of those whose bodies had been brought to protest sites had been killed by individuals “settling personal disputes”. By this statement, the Iranian authorities, acknowledging the killings of a significant number of people in the context of the protests, did not provide any information on what steps the authorities will take to investigate these killings according to the State’s obligation to conduct a prompt, impartial, independent and thorough investigation and adequate to provide remedy to the victims and their families.

Iranian authorities have reportedly justified the use of firearms against the protesters as a proportionate and necessary response alleging that the protests were violent. In this regard, authorities have referred to the death of 11 security officials or Basiji agents between 21 and 24 September 2022, who allegedly died at the hands of protesters. However, according to the information received, four of these cases contained inaccuracies while the seven others were not investigated in a fair, timely and independent manner.

According to the information received, the families of those killed during the protests have been subjected to intimidation and harassment by the authorities, including being coerced to make video-recorded statements attributing the responsibility of the killings of their relatives to “rioters” or individuals working for “enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran”.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of the above-mentioned allegations, we are concerned at the alleged arbitrary arrest and subsequent death of Ms. Amini as well as the apparent lack of transparent, independent and prompt investigations into circumstances of her death in accordance with international standards and the scores of reported human rights violations in the context of the ongoing protests. Furthermore, we are concerned about the extensive reports of repression against unarmed protesters by State forces using excessive and lethal force. We deplore the high number of allegedly killed individuals, including children, women and elderly persons, during the ongoing protests. On the basis of the information available to us, these acts would amount in some instances to unlawful killings and extrajudicial executions of peaceful protesters, including women and children. In addition, we express concerns about the reported physical and sexual violence against women, during the protests and in detention, and the denial of their fundamental human rights and dignity when enforcing gender-discriminatory policies, including regarding the compulsory hijab. We are equally alarmed at the reported high number of alleged arbitrary arrests, some of which may amount to enforced disappearance of peaceful protesters in general, and women in particular. We are extremely worried by the credible reports on the arrest of children. We express alarm as well in relation to the disruption of the Internet and all types of media for the apparent purpose of preventing access to information and information sharing. We also express our concern at the enhanced risk faced by protesters, their families and human rights defenders of being subjected to enforced disappearance.

We would like to bring to your attention that article 5 of the 1993 Vienna Declaration of the Program of Action (VDPA) states that “while the significance of

national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The reported allegations would be in contravention of the rights of every individual to life, physical integrity, the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishment, and of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and the right to equal recognition before the law, as laid down, *inter alia*, in articles 3, 5, 6, 9 and 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as well as articles 6, 7, 9, 16, 17, 19, 24 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by your Excellency’s Government on 24 June 1975. We remind that the right to life, the right not to be subjected to torture and the prohibition of enforced disappearance are *jus cogens* norms, also enshrined in international customary law, from which no derogation is permitted, regardless of contexts of internal political instability or any other public emergency. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a State party to the ICCPR, is required to undertake all necessary measures to prevent arbitrary deprivation of life by law enforcement officials. The Human Rights Committee elaborated that such measures should include legislation controlling the use of lethal force by law enforcement officials, procedures to ensure law enforcement operations minimize risks to life, mandatory reporting and investigations of lethal and life-threatening incidents and providing officials responsible for crowd control with effective protective equipment and “less-lethal” means of force.

In relation to the alleged death in custody of Mahsa Amini, we recall that when the State detains an individual, it is held to a heightened level of diligence in protecting that individual’s rights. When an individual dies as a consequence of injuries sustained while in State custody, there is a presumption of State responsibility (See *Dermit Barbato v. Uruguay*, communication no. 84/1981 (21/10/1982), paragraph 9.2). Moreover, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions stated in a report on a gender-sensitive approach to arbitrary killings that “States have an obligation to protect the right to life of women when they exercise custody or control over women” (A/HRC/35/23, para. 38).

We are further alarmed at the alleged killings of minors which are afforded a special protection under article 24 of the ICCPR. The obligation to protect the right to life requires that States take special measures to protect persons who are in vulnerable situations and whose lives are particularly endangered by specific threats or pre-existing patterns of violence, including children (CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 23). We also refer to articles 6 and 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by Iran on 13 July 1994.

Law enforcement officials should also comply with other relevant international standards, including the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. The Committee has also stated that the use of force causing the death of demonstrators exercising the right to freedom of assembly amounts to arbitrary deprivation of life (see CCPR/C/GC/36, paras. 13 and 17). The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement

Officials outline that non-violent means are to be used as far as possible before resorting to the use of force, and any use of force must be limited to that which is proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved. In particular, the intentional lethal use of firearms may only occur in the last resort, when it is absolutely unavoidable to protect life. In this regard, Principle 9 of the Basic Principles makes clear that law enforcement shall not use firearms, except when strictly unavoidable to protect life or prevent serious injury from an imminent threat, including in context of assemblies<sup>6</sup>. Measures to be taken include a clear warning of the intended use of force, sufficient time to heed that warning and the targeting of non-vital parts of the body. Thus, we are concerned that international standards related to the use of force by law-enforcement officials, and particularly the fundamental principles of legality, precaution, necessity, non-discrimination, proportionality, and accountability, may have been violated. In this regard, we are concerned that this may have created an intimidatory environment for Iranians and other individuals who wish to protest peacefully in the country.

In light of the reported strong presence of security and intelligence officials at hospitals, which would lead to enhanced risk of infection and other medical complications, we underline that a State holds the obligation to protect the right to life by ensuring access to adequate and prompt medical care (CCPR/C/GC/36, para 26). Moreover, pursuant to principle 5(c) of the aforementioned Basic Principles of the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, law enforcement officials should ensure the provision of timely medical assistance to anyone injured as a result of the use of force or firearms.

According to the Human Rights Committee, the ICCPR requires States parties to ensure that individuals have accessible and effective remedies to vindicate their rights as provided under the Covenant and that there is a general obligation to investigate allegations of violations promptly, thoroughly and effectively through independent and impartial bodies (see CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, para. 15). Where investigations find human rights violations, States parties must ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. While we acknowledge the information received from the Iranian authorities concerning the death of Ms. Amini, we reaffirm State's obligation to carry out impartial, independent and effective investigations in a prompt and transparent manner, to ensure that her family has access to justice, truth and reparations. The requirement for an independent, impartial and transparent investigation in cases of excessive and lethal force is reaffirmed by international standards, such as the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. In light of the reported killings, we recall and underline the duty of state authorities to conduct thorough, prompt and impartial investigations into and prosecute, and punish all violations of the right to life in line with the Principles on Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (Prevention and Investigation Principles) and the Revised Version of the United Nations Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of a Potentially Unlawful Death (2016)).<sup>7</sup> Importantly, investigations should explore, inter alia, the legal responsibility of superior officials with regard to violations of the

---

<sup>6</sup> A/HRC/31/66, para. 60

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol.pdf>.

right to life committed by their subordinates. They must be aimed at ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice, at promoting accountability and preventing impunity, at avoiding denial of justice and at drawing necessary lessons for revising practices and policies with a view to avoiding repeated violations. Also, under international law, States have a duty to investigate acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment via prompt, independent, transparent and impartial investigations wherever there is a 'reasonable ground' to believe that an act of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment has been committed even in the absence of a formal complaint.

We are further troubled by reports of obstruction of the funeral arrangements of family members of protesters allegedly killed, in the context of widespread harassment and intimidation of those associated with the deceased. The dignified treatment of the dead is at the heart of all international human rights law and failures in this regard constitute a violation of the right to a family life.<sup>8</sup>

We remind your Excellency's Government of the legal obligations of States under international human rights law to respect, protect and fulfil women's rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to non-discrimination and equality set out in Article 3 and 26 of the ICCPR and Article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1975. We further would like to draw your attention to Human Rights Council resolution 31/32, in which States expressed particular concern about systemic and structural discrimination and violence faced by women human rights defenders. States should take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of women human rights defenders and to integrate a gender perspective into their efforts to create a safe and enabling environment for the defence of human rights. This should include the establishment of comprehensive, sustainable and gender-sensitive public policies and programmes that support and protect women defenders. Such policies and programmes should be developed with the participation of women defenders themselves.

We would also like to recall to your Excellency's Government that the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, in its report on participation in public life (A/HRC/23/50) stated that women human rights defenders are often the target of gender-specific violence such as intimidation, attacks, and death threats which are sometimes condoned or perpetrated by State actors. The Working Group has further called upon States to eliminate all forms of violence against women in order to fulfil women's human rights and to improve the enabling condition for women's participation in political and public life. In addition to these provisions, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government of the General Assembly resolution 68/181, on the protection of women human rights defenders. Specifically, we would like to refer to articles 7, 9 and 10, whereby States are called upon to, respectively, publicly acknowledge the important role played by women human rights defenders, take practical steps to prevent threats, harassment and violence against them and to combat impunity for such violations and abuses, and ensure that all legal provisions, administrative measures and policies affecting women human rights

---

<sup>8</sup> See *Staselovich v. Belarus* (CCPR/C/77/D/887/1999).

defenders are compatible with relevant provisions of international human rights law.

We would like to further recall to your Excellency's Government that the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls, in its report on Girls' and young women's activism (A/HRC/50/25) expressed that young women are mobilizing worldwide to demand and catalyse change on critical global issues. They are at the forefront of initiatives aimed at transforming societies towards social justice, gender equality and sustainability. The realization of girls' and young women's human right to participate in public and political life, including organizing and engaging actively with a variety of State and non-State actors, is essential for the protection of their human rights. The Working Group has called on States to ensure that mechanisms are in place to solicit the views of girls and young women in all matters of public interest affecting them directly or indirectly and to give due weight to those views.

We would also like to remind your Excellency's Government that article 9 of the ICCPR guarantees the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention, and that the prohibition of arbitrary detention is absolute. We also recall that the arrest or detention of an individual as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR, including the right to freedom of expression and opinion (art. 19), the right of peaceful assembly (art. 20), and the right to freedom of association (art. 21) is arbitrary (see CCPR/C/GC/35, para. 17 and the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention). In addition, as reiterated by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, a deprivation of liberty is arbitrary when it constitutes a violation of international law on the grounds of discrimination, including discrimination based on gender or political or other opinion.

The reported serious human rights violations and impunity for such violations during the ongoing protests indicate a reoccurring pattern of State practice. Past demonstrations have seen similar acts of repression and violence against protesters from the authorities, with an use of excessive force and exacerbated forms of gender-based violence, resulting in deaths and injuries of protesters, including women. In this regard, we are concerned that the lack of holding accountable State actors involved in the excessive lethal use of force and resulting arbitrary killings may create an enabling environment in which the violations outlined may be repeated.

We draw your Excellency's Government's attention to the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, which establishes that no State shall practice, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances. We further recall that the Declaration sets out the necessary guarantees to be offered by the State, in particular, its articles 3, 7 and 9 to 12. We also recall the General Comment on women affected by enforced disappearances which emphasizes that a gender perspective is crucial in explaining, understanding and dealing with unique disadvantages and obstacles that women face in the exercise of their human rights.

The near total Internet shutdown by the authorities during the ongoing protests represents an indiscriminate and disproportionate interference with the right to freedom of expression and access to information, as well as the right to peaceful assembly. Experience has shown that Internet shutdowns jeopardise the exercise of a

wide range of other human rights as well. State mandated Internet disruptions cannot be justified under any circumstances. Communications shutdowns not only invariably fail to meet requirements for lawful restrictions under international human rights law, they are often implemented specifically for unlawful purposes.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) or can be provided upon request.

**In view of the urgency of the matter, we urge your Excellency's Government to immediately cease the use of excessive and lethal force, as well as the use of live ammunition, in the context of the above-mentioned protests. We call on your Excellency's Government to respect and protect the rights to life, freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and of association, in accordance with its obligations under Articles 6, 19, 21 and 22 of the ICCPR. We also call on your Excellency's Government to stop any criminalisation of peaceful protesters or their family members and to end intimidation, punishment of protestors that cause severe physical or mental pain and suffering. We also reiterate the long standing call on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to end discrimination in law and in practice against women and girls and the use of excessive force against Iranians, including women and girls that challenge the discriminatory institutional policies, including those pertaining to the dress code. We, moreover, call on your Excellency's Government to adopt all necessary measures to prevent any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of persons deprived of their liberty.**

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on the legal basis for Ms. Amini's arrest and how this is compatible with Iran's obligations under international law and especially article 9 of the ICCPR. Please also provide information on the steps taken to ensure an independent, impartial, and prompt investigation into Ms. Amini's death and that of other protesters in line with the Prevention and Investigation Principles and the Minnesota Protocol, where the findings of the investigation are made public and all perpetrators, including at commanding level, are held accountable if evidence demonstrates wrongdoing. Please also indicate whether the participation of family members is facilitated at all stages of investigations into the deaths of all persons involved in the events.
3. Please provide information on the number of deaths and injuries, including children, during the protests and the circumstances of these, detailing the involvement of the security forces.

4. Please provide details, and where available, the results of any investigation and judicial or other inquiry undertaken in relation to the allegations of excessive use of force, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and unlawful killings in the context of the above- mentioned demonstrations. If no independent and impartial investigations have been carried out, please explain why.
5. Please provide the results of autopsy reports of the alleged victims of arbitrary killings and indicate whether these were conducted compliant with the Minnesota Protocol, including by an independent forensic pathologist, or in the presence of an independent observer.
6. Please provide information on the regulations and operational procedures for law enforcement agents concerning the use of force in the context of law enforcement during assemblies and arrests. In this regard, please provide information on the assessment made by Iranian law enforcement prior to their engagement with the protests. Please specify the targeting criteria used and the procedural safeguards employed to ensure that these actions fully complied with international human rights law. In particular, please explain in detail and in relation to the incidents mentioned in this communication, how the proportionality of such actions and the protection of the life and physical and mental integrity of protesters were ensured. Please also explain what steps have been taken to ensure these regulations are compatible with international standards, in particular on the use of force and firearms, and that the security forces are trained accordingly.
7. Please provide information on the number of people arrested and detained during the protests and how these arrests and detentions comply with international human rights law. Furthermore, please provide information on whether official up-to-date registers of all persons deprived of their liberty are maintained in every place of detention and the measures taken to ensure that relatives of persons deprived of their liberty, their counsel or any other person having legitimate interest have access to the information contained in such registers.
8. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that human rights defenders in general, and women human rights defenders in particular, and other civil society actors, including journalists and lawyers, in Iran are able to carry out their legitimate work in a safe and enabling environment without fear of threats or acts of intimidation and harassment of any sort.
9. Please provide information on the arrest of journalists in the context of the demonstrations and how this complies with international human rights law.

10. Please provide information on where detained protesters, human rights defenders, journalists and in particular women human rights defenders are being held, including the names of the facilities and the number of detainees held in each facility vis-a-vis its official capacity, and the charges they are held under. Please also provide information as to what measures have been taken to ensure that the rights of all detained individuals to due process and a fair trial have been respected, and how such measures comply with the obligations of your Excellency's Government under international human rights law.
11. Please provide information as to what measures have been taken to release detained girl and young activists and children under the age of 18.
12. Please provide information on the compatibility of the disruption of the Internet and telecommunication services with the requirements under Articles 19 and 21 of the ICCPR. In particular, please provide information on the legal basis and the necessity and proportionality of the measure.
13. Please provide information on the intentions or steps taken to remove policies discriminating against Iranian women, girls and others based on gender and sex, including compulsory dress codes.
14. Please also provide information concerning the steps being taken, if any, by the Iranian Government, towards its accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT).

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations. We also urge the authorities to publicly condemn the violence against peaceful protesters, and immediately remove the military and security units and personnel allegedly involved in the human rights violations from managing the protests.

We would like to inform your Excellency's Government that after having transmitted the information contained in the present communication to the Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit the case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. The present communication in no way prejudices any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to the allegation letter and the regular procedure.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned

allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government to clarify the issue/s in question.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within **60 days**. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Clement Nyaletsossi Voule  
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Mumba Malila  
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Aua Baldé  
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Morris Tidball-Binz  
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Irene Khan  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Mary Lawlor  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Javaid Rehman  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Fernand de Varennes  
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Alice Jill Edwards  
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Reem Alsalem  
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Dorothy Estrada-Tanck  
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls