

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

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(Please use this reference in your reply)

11 December 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; 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 55/19, 59/20 and 59/14.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the death sentence imposed for *baghy* on Zahra Shahbaz Tabari, currently detained in Lakan Prison in Rasht.

According to the information received:

Zahra Shahbaz Tabari is a 67-year-old electrical engineer who holds a master's degree in Sustainable Energy from the University of Borås in Sweden and is a member of the Iranian Engineers' Association.

On 17 April 2025, security agents raided Tabari's home in Rasht, without presenting a judicial warrant. During the raid, electronic devices belonging to both Tabari and her daughter were confiscated. Tabari was taken to Lakan prison in Gilan province and interrogated for a month and held in solitary confinement, during which authorities pressured her to confess to taking up arms against the State and to being a member of an opposition group.

Tabari was charged with *baghi* (armed rebellion against the foundations of the Islamic Republic of Iran). The two pieces evidence against her were: a piece of cloth bearing the slogan 'Woman, Resistance, Freedom,' a popular slogan used in the 2022 protests, and an unpublished audio message. The authorities claimed that she planned to install the cloth as a banner in public as a challenge to the State.

On 25 October 2025, the Revolutionary Court of Rasht sentenced Tabari to death for *baghi*. The trial was conducted via video conference and lasted less than ten minutes.

Tabari was reportedly denied access to a lawyer of her choosing and was instead represented by a court-appointed lawyer whom she met for the first time during the trial. The death sentence was issued immediately at the end of the brief hearing.

Tabari has been detained before for her online activities. She was previously arrested in June 2022 and later convicted for ‘collaboration with hostile groups’ over her social media activities. She served three months in Lakan Prison, followed by 15 months under house arrest with an electronic ankle monitor.

Tabari suffers from chronic health conditions. We have received reports on her detention in the poor conditions of Lakan Prison, lack of access to adequate medical care and constant psychological pressure, which has severely deteriorated her physical condition

We would like to note that Tabari’s case represents one of at least 52 individuals currently facing the death penalty for broadly applied national security offences, including *baghi*, *moharebeh* (waging war against God), corruption on earth, and espionage.

We express grave concern that the death sentence against Tabari appears to be in violation of international human rights law and standards for fair trial and due process, particularly those enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the Islamic Republic of Iran ratified on 24 June 1975.

We remind your Excellency’s Government of its obligations under article 6(2) of the ICCPR, to which Iran is a state party since ,1975 which provides that the death penalty may only be imposed for the ‘most serious crimes’, a standard interpreted by the Human Rights Committee as restricted to intentional killing. In general comment No. 36 (para. 35), the Human Rights Committee has clarified that ‘most serious crimes’ must be read restrictively to mean crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing, consistent with the United Nations Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty (ECOSOC resolution 1984/50). Tabari’s death sentence for *baghi* do not appear to meet this threshold.

The charges against Tabari appear to criminalise the exercise of fundamental rights protected under the ICCPR, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

We remind your Excellency’s Government that a violation of the fair-trial guarantees provided in article 14 of the ICCPR, resulting in the imposition of the death penalty, would render the sentence arbitrary in nature and in violation of article 6. Such violations may include the lack of effective representation at all stages, failure to respect the presumption of innocence, lack of adequate time and facilities for the preparation of the defence, and a general lack of fairness of the criminal process, including lack of independence or impartiality of the trial or appeal court. In Tabari’s case, these violations appear in the short duration of the trial, denial of access to legal counsel of her choice, lack of adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence, and conducting the trial via video conference without justification.

We also refer to article 6 of the Covenant which provides that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life and that the right shall be protected by law. It lays the foundation for the obligation of States parties to respect and to ensure the right to life, to give effect to it through legislative and other measures, and to provide effective remedies and reparation to all victims of violations of the right to life (CCPR/C/GC/36).

This includes States parties obligation to respect and ensure the right to life for all individuals without distinction, including those accused of the most serious crimes; to give effect to it through effective legislative, judicial, and other measures that guarantee rigorous due process and fair trial standards; and to provide accessible remedies and reparation for victims of violations. The Government's failure to ensure a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal afforded sufficient time for proper examination of evidence, presentation of defense, and reasoned deliberation renders the deprivation of life arbitrary, in breach of its non-derogable duty to safeguard the supreme right to life.

We further recall articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, which establish the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and the right of all detainees to be treated with humanity and dignity. The deteriorating health conditions of Ms. Tabari and the lack of adequate medical care in detention may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

We further refer your Excellency's Government to articles 12 and 2(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ratified by your Excellency's Government on 24 June 1975 and to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' general comment No. 14 (para. 34), which establish the obligation to respect the right to health by, inter alia, refraining from denying or limiting equal access for all persons, including prisoners and detainees, to preventive, curative and palliative health services.

We also recall the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (General Assembly resolution 45/111), according to which prisoners should have access to health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation (principle 9). Additionally, we refer to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (A/RES/70/175), which recognise the responsibility of States to provide health care for prisoners, free of charge and without discrimination (rule 24), paying special attention to those with special health-care needs (rule 25), and providing for transfer to specialised institutions or civil hospitals where required (rule 27). Tabari's chronic health conditions and the deteriorating state of her health due to inadequate medical care in Lakan Prison may constitute violations of these standards.

We remind Your Excellency's Government that rule 61 of the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules) emphasises that courts shall have the power to consider mitigating factors when sentencing women offenders, taking into account their typical backgrounds. The rules acknowledge that women prisoners have disproportionate experience of domestic violence and that criminal justice responses should address the structural causes that contribute to women's contact with the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, the Bangkok rules contain comprehensive standards for the treatment of women prisoners including the need to provide mental and physical health care. In her report(A/68/340), the Special Rapporteur on violence against women highlighted that "international standards recognize that violence against women have specific implications for women's contact with the criminal justice system and that violence against women may be a cause of women's involvement in criminal offences and subsequent imprisonment" (para 84).

Moreover, and as indicated by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls in her report (A/73/301), women in politics can be targeted with violence because they are women or because it affects women disproportionately and can take gender-based forms of violence as included in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (art. 1). Women in politics who fall victim to gender-based violence face multifaceted barriers to obtaining justice that go beyond their situation as women in politics, including re-victimization during the reporting and complaint process, resistance from law enforcement officials responsible for prosecuting perpetrators and inadequate legal protection or access to integrated services, all of which are features common to other forms of gender-based violence against women.

We would also like to recall to your Excellency's Government that the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in its 2019 thematic report (A/HRC/41/33), emphasized that women who work specifically to combat gender stereotypes and advance women's rights are most likely to be targets for criminal persecution and imprisonment. Furthermore, the Working Group warned against "[j]udicial gender bias [which] often subjects women to disproportionate sentencing for non-conformity with gender stereotypes," even resulting in the death penalty in some cases, and urged States to create accountability mechanisms to prevent, mitigate and remedy the discriminatory application of the law.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on www.ohchr.org or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, we would appreciate a response on the initial steps taken by your Excellency's Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person in compliance with international instruments.

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 explain how the charge of *baghi* meet the requirements of the 'most serious crimes' threshold in Tabari's case.
2. Please provide information on what steps are being taken to review Tabari's death sentence in light of international human rights standards.
3. Please explain whether a judicial warrant was presented for the raid on Tabari's home on 17 April 2025, and kindly clarify the legal grounds under which her electronic devices were confiscated.
4. Please clarify the circumstances under which Tabari was denied access to a lawyer of her choosing, and kindly explain what steps were taken to ensure she received effective legal representation and the measures taken to protect her from heightened and discriminatory persecution due to her being a woman, and her political opinions.

5. Please explain the legal basis for conducting Tabari's trial via video conference for less than ten minutes, and kindly clarify how this procedure ensured compliance with fair trial standards under international law.
6. Please provide details on what medical assessment has been conducted regarding Tabari's health conditions, and kindly explain what medical treatment is being provided to her in Lakan Prison.

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.

While awaiting your response, we urge your Excellency's Government to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of Zahra Shahbaz Tabari's rights and to halt any steps towards her execution.

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

Mai Sato

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

Reem Alsalem

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

Claudia Flores

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