

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Ref.: UA IRN 12/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

17 July 2026

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; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 58/21, 60/8, 55/5, 54/14, 59/4 and 62/12.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the arrest, detention and enforced disappearance of Kurdish folk artist Mr. Amir Sobhani on 18 May 2026**.

According to the information received:

Mr. Amir Sobhani is a Kurdish artist and cultural activist from Javanrud, Kermanshah province. He is reportedly known for his involvement in organizing Nowruz celebrations, Kurdish cultural events and artistic programmes aimed at preserving and promoting Kurdish cultural heritage. He has reportedly previously been summoned, detained and interrogated by security authorities.

Reportedly, on 18 May 2026, security forces arrested Mr. Sobhani at his home in Javanrud without presenting a judicial warrant and transferred him to Dizel Abad Prison in Kermanshah. Judicial authorities issued a 10-day detention order against him, which was subsequently extended. While some reports indicate that he was accused of "cooperation with Kurdish political parties", the precise charges against him remain unclear.

It has been reported that, during the initial period of his detention, Mr. Sobhani was able to make a brief telephone call to his family, informing them that he was being held in Dizel Abad Prison. He did not, however, have access to a lawyer. In the weeks that followed, his family reportedly visited the prison and judicial authorities in Kermanshah to seek information about him. However, they were informed that his detention order had been extended and that telephone calls and family visits had been prohibited until further notice.

Mr. Sobhani was transferred to solitary confinement around 9 June 2026. Since that time, his family has reportedly been unable to obtain reliable information

regarding his condition, precise place of detention, or to ensure he has access to legal representation.

The arrest reportedly took place in the context of a wider wave of arrests of civil, political, labour and environmental activists across the Islamic Republic of Iran following the December 2025–January 2026 nationwide protests and the subsequent armed conflict (UA IRN 1/2026; IRN 5/2026).

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information received, we express grave concern at the arrest, detention and enforced disappearance of Mr. Sobhani, which appear to be connected to the peaceful and legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, participation in cultural life and the promotion of a cultural identity through artistic and cultural activities.

We are particularly concerned by reports that Mr. Sobhani has been placed in solitary confinement in an unknown place, with no contact with his family or lawyer, thus placing him outside the protection of the law. The described situation, which contains the elements of an enforced disappearance, may also place him at heightened risk of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In connection with the alleged facts and concerns, we wish to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the applicable international legal framework.

The right to liberty and security of person is protected under article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the Islamic Republic of Iran ratified in 1975. Article 9 establishes that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention, that anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for the arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges, and that anyone deprived of liberty shall be brought promptly before a judge.

We further recall the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in particular article 2, which provides that no State shall practise, permit or tolerate enforced disappearances; article 7, which provides that no circumstances whatsoever may be invoked to justify enforced disappearances; and article 10, which requires that any person deprived of liberty be held in an officially recognised place of detention and that accurate information on their detention and place of detention be made promptly available to family members and counsel.

With regard to the alleged enforced disappearance, if confirmed, it would amount to violations of articles 6, 7, 9 and 16 of the ICCPR, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3). Moreover, it would entail a violation of article 7, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3) of the ICCPR with regard to the relatives of the disappeared person. In this respect, we also make reference to general comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the ICCPR, which states, *inter alia*, that extreme forms of arbitrary detention that are themselves life-threatening, in particular enforced disappearances, violate the right to personal liberty and personal security and are incompatible with the right to life (para. 57), and that enforced disappearance constitutes a unique and integrated series of acts and omissions representing a grave threat to life, and States parties must take adequate measures to prevent the enforced disappearance of individuals, and conduct an effective and speedy inquiry to establish

the fate and whereabouts of persons who may have been subject to enforced disappearance. (para.58). We are also draw your Excellency's Government's attention to the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of enforced disappearances (articles 2 and 7) which has attained the status of *jus cogens*.

We further 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. The Declaration also proclaims that each State shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance in any territory under its jurisdiction. We further recall that the Declaration sets out the necessary guarantees to be offered by the State. In particular, articles 9, 10, 11 and 12 relate to the rights to a prompt and effective judicial remedy to determine the whereabouts of persons deprived of their liberty; to access of competent national authorities to all places of detention; to be held in an officially recognized place of detention, and to be brought before a judicial authority promptly after detention; to accurate information on the detention of persons and their place of detention being made available to their family, counsel or other persons with a legitimate interest; and to the maintenance in every place of detention of official up-to-date registers of all detained persons. We make reference to the Working Group's study on Enforced disappearance and economic, social and cultural rights (A/HRC/30/38/Add.5), in particular paragraph 33-37 which highlights the chilling effect of the disappearance of human rights defender. States are accordingly called on to, "ensure the existence of and respect for cultural diversity and the existence of space where multiple opinions, positions and interpretations of history can find their expression in the public sphere diminishes the level of vulnerability of those questioning in one way or another mainstream ideas and positions, and so prevents against targeting of human rights defender" (para. 49).

The right to a fair trial is protected under article 14 of the ICCPR, which guarantees the right of anyone facing a criminal charge to be informed promptly of the charges, to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of a defence and to communicate with counsel of their own choosing.

Articles 19 and 22 of the ICCPR protect the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of association. We further recall article 27 of the ICCPR, which provides that persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture and to use their own language.

We further recall article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a State party, which recognizes the right of everyone to take part in cultural life. We recall that everyone, including members of diverse and minority cultural communities, has the right to participate in, develop and express their cultural identities and that artists and cultural practitioners must be able to exercise their freedom of artistic expression without fear of discrimination, harassment, arbitrary detention or other forms of interference.

We also recall rules 43 to 45 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which prohibit indefinite

and prolonged solitary confinement and recognize that solitary confinement should only be used in exceptional cases, as a measure of last resort, for as short a time as possible and subject to independent review.

We further recall the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), in particular rule 58, which requires that prisoners be allowed to communicate with their families at regular intervals.

We also recall that the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute and non-derogable under international law. Article 7 of the ICCPR forbids torture and ill-treatment and prohibits the use of statements obtained through such practices as evidence in judicial proceedings, while article 10 requires that all persons deprived of their liberty be treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity. Prolonged incommunicado detention may itself amount to a violation of these provisions and creates conditions conducive to torture and other ill-treatment.

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 as soon as possible on the initial steps taken by your Excellency's Government to safeguard the rights of the Mr. Sobhani 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 also be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide detailed information on the factual and legal basis for the arrest and detention of Mr. Amir Sobhani, including any charges brought against him and the legal provisions relied upon, and please identify the authority responsible for his arrest and current detention.
3. Please confirm the current whereabouts of Mr. Sobhani, including the facility and ward in which he is held. Please also confirm whether he is being held or has at any point been held in solitary confinement or incommunicado. If so, provide the legal basis for this measure, reasons for its imposition, and its duration, as well as the procedures in place for its review procedures and safeguards applied to protect Mr. Sobhani's rights.
4. Please indicate the measures taken to ensure that Mr. Sobhani has prompt and unimpeded access to legal counsel of his own choosing and regular contact with his family, and that he is brought promptly before a judicial authority.

5. Please indicate what measures have been taken to ensure that artists, cultural practitioners and other members of civil society are able to carry out their peaceful and legitimate activities without fear of harassment, arbitrary arrest, detention or reprisals.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to prevent any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of Mr. Amir Sobhani, to halt the alleged violations, to 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(s) responsible for the alleged violations. In particular, we urge your Excellency's Government to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Sobhani, and to ensure that he has immediate access to legal counsel of his own choosing and contact with his family.

We would like to inform your Excellency's Government that, after having transmitted the new information contained in the present communication to the Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may also transmit the cases 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 urgent appeal and the regular procedure. As well, should sources submit the allegations concerning individual cases of enforced disappearances for the consideration of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances under its humanitarian procedure, the case will be examined by the Working Group according to its methods of work, in which case your Excellency's Government will be informed by separate correspondence.

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's to clarify the issue/s in question.

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

Mai Sato

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