**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

Ref.: AL IRN 18/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

27 November 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 60/8, 52/9, 60/10, 53/12, 55/19 and 52/7.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the poor prison conditions of and a lack of appropriate medical attention for human rights defenders and lawyers Mr. **Taher Naghavi** and [redacted], as well as the introduction of the charge of espionage against [redacted].

Mr. **Taher Naghavi** is a lawyer and human rights defender, who has represented political prisoners and has defended ethnic minorities in Iran, especially Azerbaijani Turks. He also represented a number of political defendants and the families of those killed during the 2022 Woman Life Freedom protests, sparked by the killing of Jina Mahsa Amini. He serves as the director of the Azerbaijani Literary Association in Alborz Province.

[redacted] He has represented ethnic activists in Iran's Azerbaijan Province. He also supported the 2022 Woman Life Freedom protests; he was a co-signatory of an open letter by 70 Iranian jurists calling for the abolition of the "morality police" and for an independent investigation into human rights violations. He also followed up on the situation of detained protestors and lawyers during that period.

Mr. Naghavi was the subject of communication IRN 20/2024, sent on 26 November 2024. We thank Your Excellency for the response received dated 12 February 2025. However, in light of the following information received, we remain concerned about the situation of Mr. Naghavi, in particular regarding his health condition and a lack of appropriate medical attention.

Concerns over the crackdown on lawyers and minority groups was the subject of a previous communication sent by Special Procedures on 4 October 2022 (IRN 20/2022). We thank your Excellency's Government for the response but remain concerned that the violations continue.

According to the information received:

*The case of Mr. Taher Naghavi*

On 6 February 2024, Mr. Naghavi was arrested from his home by seven agents from the Ministry of Intelligence. All his electronic devices were confiscated. He was charged with "propaganda against the state" and "assembly and collusion with the intent to undermine national security," and detained. During his detention for 40 days in Ward 209 of Evin Prison, he was reportedly subjected to physical assault, sexual harassment, threats, and denied access to a lawyer.

On 22 October 2024, Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Mr. Naghavi to a total of six years in prison, five of which were for "assembly and collusion with the intent to undermine national security" and one for "propaganda against the state". He was also given supplementary punishments, including a two-year travel ban and a two-year prohibition from joining political parties. Mr. Naghavi appealed the verdict.

In November 2024, after refusing to wear prison clothing and restraints, Mr. Naghavi reportedly faced retaliation, including lack of access to hospital services and healthcare. While in detention, his health condition has deteriorated significantly.

In January 2025, the Tehran Court of Appeals, Branch 36 upheld the verdict. Mr. Naghavi is currently serving his sentence in Evin Prison.

On 29 September 2025, the Iranian Bar Association Disciplinary Court issued a ruling suspending Mr. Naghavi's law license.

Since his arrival at Evin Prison, Mr. Naghavi has reportedly suffered from [redacted]. Prison doctors have reportedly recommended an MRI and specialist tests, though these have yet to take place.

On 20 April 2025, Mr. Naghavi was moved to Shohada-e Tajrish Hospital in Tehran after his health condition further deteriorated. Hospital tests revealed a worsening of his condition, including [redacted] that required immediate surgery. At the time of writing, no such treatment has been carried out.

In July 2025, Mr. Naghavi's health further deteriorated. Mr. Naghavi had been transferred to Fashafouyeh Prison along with other political prisoners following the Israeli strikes on 23 June 2025. Poor prison conditions in Fashafouyeh and continued denial of medical care further worsened Mr. Naghavi's symptoms.

On 27 October 2025, Mr. Taher Naghavi, along with a number of other prisoners, started a hunger strike to protest authorities' treatment, including their ongoing denial of medical care. Instead of providing him with the treatment he needs, in early November authorities transferred him to solitary confinement in Section 240 of Evin Prison.

As of 5 November 2025, Mr. Naghavi is held in Section 240 of Evin Prison. This Section sustained damages during the 23 June Israeli attack and lacks access to hot water, a heating system, and bathroom facilities. The cell in which Mr. Naghavi is held is cold given that temperatures are dropping, in particular in north Tehran where the prison is located. Mr. Naghavi is suffering from [redacted].

*The case of* [redacted]

On 14 May 2025, [redacted] was arrested by Iran's intelligence agents and held in solitary confinement for over three months in the Intelligence Service Detention Centre during the period of interrogation into the accusation of "propaganda against the State." He had no access to his lawyer or any communication tools.

On 18 July 2025 [redacted] was transferred to Tabriz Prison Quarantine Ward and kept in isolation in a cell that is used for solitary confinement.

On 26 July 2025, [redacted] was charged with "propaganda against the State."

He was transferred to the Tabriz Prison Public Ward at the time of writing of this letter, and the prosecution has extended his detention in the Tabriz Prison Quarantine Ward on a monthly basis, leaving it open to the possible addition of new charges. He has been denied telephone calls and visits from his lawyer and family and has not been provided with access to essential medication.

In September 2025, during a remote hearing via video conferencing, the Tabriz Revolutionary Court filed a new charge of "espionage for the Republic of Azerbaijan" against [redacted]. If convicted, he faces the death penalty or up to 15 years in prison.

A new espionage bill, the 'Bill for Intensifying the Punishment of Espionage and Cooperation with the Zionist Regime and Hostile States', was introduced immediately after the military attacks and came into effect on 1 October 2025. Espionage was already a capital offence, but the bill expands the scope of conduct considered espionage to include activities linked to information dissemination and media work, such as contact with foreign and diaspora media outlets.

The accusation reportedly stems from his participation in an academic conference in Baku seven years earlier, where he presented a paper analyzing Iran's judicial system. Known for defending political and ethnic minority activists and for signing a 2022 open letter by 70 jurists calling for an

investigation into protest-related abuse, his detention appears to be retaliation for his peaceful academic and human rights work.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we express serious concern regarding the upholding of a verdict against Mr. Naghavi which is based on the criminalisation of actions taken as a lawyer and human rights defender, as well as the suspension of his license to practice law, which appears to be in relation to his work as a human rights lawyer and his peaceful advocacy of minority rights. We are also deeply concerned at the continued deterioration in his health condition, the repeated denial of timely access to adequate medical attention and, despite his transfer to hospital, a lack of the urgent care needed as confirmed by hospital tests.

We are equally concerned at the arrest and charges pressed against [redacted], which appear to be linked to his work as a human rights lawyer defending ethnic minority rights and supporting women's rights. We are particularly concerned at the new charge of espionage, for which he could face the death sentence or long-term prison if convicted.

In the light of several communications on related matters sent to your Excellency's Government in past months, these actions seem to reflect a broader pattern, indicative of a crackdown on lawyers and minority groups in Iran. Such practices trigger a serious chilling effect on lawyers, human rights defenders and minority groups, deterring or impeding them to carry out their work.

If confirmed, the facts alleged would violate article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran acceded to on 24 June 1975, which enshrines the protection of the right to liberty and security of a person and establishes that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law. Certain allegations would also conflict with the State's obligations to treat arrested and detained persons with dignity and humanity, in line with articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR. They would also conflict with the so-called Mandela Rules, adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly and which recognize the responsibility of States to provide health care for prisoners. The broad charges of "propaganda against the State" both against these human rights defenders show that their prosecution is in direct connection with the exercise of to respect freedom of opinion and expression and thus could violate article 19 ICCPR.

We wish to recall that according to international standards, States must guarantee that those who practice law can do so free from intimidation, obstacles, harassment, or interference. The free exercise of the legal profession contributes to ensuring access to justice, oversight of state power, protection of due process and judicial guarantees.

It is pertinent to remind your Excellency's Government that, according to the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, governments have the duty to ensure that legal professionals are able to perform all of their functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference, including threats of prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with their recognized professional duties, standards and ethics (principles 16 and 17).

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

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/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.

2. Please provide information on how the detention and prosecution of Mr. Naghavi's is compatible with international human rights law, and information regarding his current health condition and on the reasons why he has been prevented from accessing necessary surgery and treatment as recommended by tests run at the Shohada-e Tajrish Hospital.

3. Please provide detailed information regarding the legal basis for the detention and prosecution of [redacted], which is seemingly in relation to his human rights activism as a lawyer and defender of minority rights, and explain how these are compatible with Iran's obligations under international human rights law.

4. Please provide information on the grounds that would justify the prolonged detention without trial of [redacted], the two charges against him and his lack of access to a lawyer. Please explain whether and how these actions align with your Excellency's Government's obligations under international human rights law, including article 14 ICCPR.

5. Please provide specific reasons and legal grounds for placing and maintaining Mr. Naghavi in solitary confinement; whether any less restrictive alternatives have been considered; what assessments have been conducted by health-care personnel regarding the impact of solitary confinement on his physical and mental health; and what safeguards are in place to ensure full compliance with the Mandela Rules mentioned above.

6. Please provide information on the measures undertaken to ensure an enabling environment of human rights defenders in Iran, including lawyers and those working on minority rights.

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 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(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

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.

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Matthew Gillett
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

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

Tlaleng Mofokeng
Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Margaret Satterthwaite
Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

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

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

## Annex

## Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 24 June 1975. As per article 12, States parties recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and take septs to achieve the full realization of this right, including those necessary for the creation of conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness. In particular, States are under the obligation to respect the right to health by refraining from denying or limiting equal access for all persons, including prisoners (CESCR, general comment No. 14(2000), E/C.12/2000/4, para. 34).

Furthermore, we would like to refer to the so-called "Mandela Rules", adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly (A/RES/70/175), which recognize the responsibility of States to provide health care for prisoners, free of charge without discrimination (rule 24), paying special attention to those with special healthcare needs or with health issues that hamper their rehabilitation (rule 25) and indicate that prisoners requiring specialized treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals (rule 27). We would also like to refer to rules 43.1(b), 43.3, 44, 45 and 46 which refer to the use of disciplinary sanctions or restrictive measures, including solitary confinement, and the role of health-care personnel regarding any adverse effect of disciplinary sanctions or other restrictive measures on the physical or mental health of prisoners subjected to such sanctions or measures.

Furthermore, we wish to refer to the report of the former Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, in which he noted that "[i]n contexts of confinement and deprivation of liberty, violations of the right to health interfere with fair trial guarantees, the prohibition of arbitrary detention and of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the enjoyment of the right to life", stressing that "[v]iolations of the right to health emerge as both causes and consequences of confinement and deprivation of liberty".[1] He also emphasized that "[a]s elsewhere, for the right to health to be enjoyed in detention centers, health-care facilities, goods and services must be available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality".[2] Furthermore, the former Special Rapporteur urged States to 'fully respect and implement the Nelson Mandela Rules,' particularly with regard to the provision of health care […]."[3]

Furthermore, we would like to refer Your Excellency's Government to general comment No. 14 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that the right to health contains the following essential and interdependent elements: Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality (GC 14, para. 12). In particular, we wish to emphasize that the element of accessibility includes dimensions of non-discrimination and physical accessibility, among others. In this regard, the CESCR Committee states that protection obligations include, among other things, the

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1 A/HRC/38/36, para. 18.
2 Ibid., para. 34.
3 Ibid., para. 98 a).

duty of States to take measures to protect all vulnerable or marginalized groups in society (GC 14, para. 35).

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR or "the Covenant"), ratified by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 24 June 1975. In particular, we would like to refer to article 9 of the ICCPR enshrining the right to liberty and security of person and establishing in particular that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law as well as the right to legal assistance from the moment of detention.

Article 9(4) of the ICCPR also entitles everyone detained to challenge the legality of such detention before a judicial authority. In addition, article 14(3) entitles everyone charged to be informed promptly, to have adequate time for the preparation of their defence and to be tried without delay. Furthermore, United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on Remedies and Procedures on the Right of Anyone Deprived of Their Liberty to Bring Proceedings Before a Court state that the right to challenge the lawfulness of detention before a court is a self-standing human right, the absence of which constitutes a human rights violation.

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend.

In its general comment No. 34, the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11).

The Committee further asserted that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stressed that "all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress" (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant and any

restriction must be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function” (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34).

We would also like to recall the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which provides guarantees for the functioning of lawyers, and in article 16 calls on governments to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference. Article 20 states that lawyers shall enjoy civil and penal immunity for relevant statements made in good faith in written or oral pleadings or in their professional appearance before a court, tribunal or other legal or administrative authority. In addition, articles 27 and 28 entitle lawyers to the right to a fair hearing in case of charges made against them, and in case of disciplinary proceedings, to be brought before an impartial disciplinary committee, respectively.

We would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration which state that everyone has the right to promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.