

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

Ref.: AL IRN 19/2025  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

3 December 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 55/19, 60/10 and 52/7.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning detention conditions and treatment of detainees in several detention centers, including recent cases of death in custody due to medical neglect. The facilities of particular concern include Qarchak Prison (Varamin), Ghezel-Hesar Prison (Karaj), Sheyban Prison (Ahvaz), Lakan Prison (Rasht), and several prisons across Kurdistan and the Azerbaijani provinces.

We recall having addressed aspects of these concerns in previous communications (UA IRN 5/2025, UA IRN 8/2025, UA IRN 10/2025). While we appreciate your Excellency's Government's responses to a number of these communications, we remain deeply concerned that many of the underlying issues persist, and in some cases appear to have intensified.

According to the information received:

Detention conditions for women in Qarchak Prison remain deeply concerning, characterised by severe overcrowding, unsanitary environments, and inadequate food, clean water, and sleeping arrangements that force many women to sleep on the floor. The facility has also housed mothers with young children and pregnant women in inadequate conditions described above. Following Israel's military attack on Evin Prison in June 2025, dozens of women prisoners were transferred to Qarchak, many without their personal belongings or medication. Between 16 and 25 September 2025, the deaths of three women prisoners detained at Qarchak have been reported. According to information received, all three deaths occurred as a result of the authorities' failure to provide timely medical treatment. On 13 October 2025, female political prisoners were returned to Evin Prison; however, the situation of women still held in Qarchak continues to be equally concerning.

In late October 2025, two male prisoners, one in Shiraz Prison and another in Ghezel Hesar Prison, reportedly died following preventable delays in access to medical care. Furthermore, since the onset of the military conflict with Israel,

the overall situation in prisons across the Islamic Republic of Iran has reportedly worsened, with increasing reports of ill-treatment, overcrowding, and lack of access to medical care. These developments have been accompanied by a marked escalation in the use of violence and intimidation against detainees, particularly political prisoners and those on death row.

On 26 July 2025, in Ghezel Hesar Prison, situated in Alborz Province and one of the prisons with the largest number of individuals facing the death penalty, a large number of prison guards and intelligence agents carried out a coordinated raid on the political prisoners' ward in Unit 4. Prisoners were subjected to severe beatings, handcuffing, hooding, and transfer to solitary confinement, followed by the execution the next morning of two prisoners, Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani, without prior notification.<sup>1</sup> In October 2025, more than 1,500 prisoners in Ghezel Hesar launched a mass hunger strike to protest the surge in executions and the use of solitary confinement, which has since ended.

The Sheyban Prison in Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province, which holds a considerable number of detainees from the Arab and Lor ethnic minority communities, is reported to have experienced a dramatic deterioration in prison conditions in recent months. In September 2025, more than half of the detainees suffered food poisoning after being served spoiled food, while medical capacity in the facility remained gravely inadequate for the estimated prison population of four thousand. As of October 2025, in-person family visits had been suspended for over two months without explanation, causing psychological distress among detainees and their relatives. In September 2025, extended power outages lasting up to twenty-one hours during temperatures exceeding fifty degrees Celsius left prisoners without air conditioning, access to water, or any other relief from the extreme heat.

In Lakan Prison, Rasht, in Gilan Province, detainees have been subjected to physical and psychological torture, including pressure involving family members, in order to obtain confessions.

In the provinces with Kurdish populations, including the provinces of Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam and West Azerbaijan, numerous political prisoners have reported overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, poor-quality food, and harassment of family members by security agencies.

In Urmia Central Prison, the installation of signal-jamming devices in several wards has raised serious health concerns, which remain unaddressed by prison authorities. Prisoners suffering from serious medical conditions face delays or denial of access to hospitals, particularly when security approval is required. It has been reported that two Kurdish detainees died in custody in June and July 2025, one allegedly under torture shortly after arrest and another on the day of his scheduled release, despite not suffering from any known illness.

In Ilam Central Prison, several prisoners have recently resorted to acts of self-harm in protest against repeated refusals of furlough, without receiving adequate

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<sup>1</sup> <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29694>

psychological or medical intervention.

In the provinces with Azerbaijani populations, including East and West Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan and Qazvin, prison conditions are likewise reported to fall below minimum international standards. Facilities such as Tabriz Central Prison and Urmia Central Prison are described as overcrowded, lacking medical facilities and sanitation, and marked by widespread ill-treatment of detainees, particularly those held on political or ideological grounds. Reports indicate the denial of medical leave, violent disciplinary measures, without oversight mechanisms.

Beyond the treatment of prisoners in the above-mentioned prisons, families have reportedly been subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment during visits, including intrusive body searches and prolonged denial of contact. The widespread practice of transferring prisoners to different prisons without notifying families also makes it extremely difficult for families to maintain contact with their imprisoned relatives.

Without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, we express our grave concern that the described acts and omissions, including torture and other forms of ill-treatment, denial of timely and adequate medical care, arbitrary restrictions on family contact, prolonged solitary confinement, conditions of detention incompatible with human dignity, and deaths in custody, may constitute violations of the Islamic Republic of Iran's obligations under international human rights law.

We remind your Excellency's Government of its obligations under international human rights law, including the right to life protected under article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under article 7 of the ICCPR ratified by your Excellency's Government in June 1975. We emphasize that States bear a heightened duty of care for all persons deprived of their liberty, and that the prohibitions of torture, arbitrary deprivation of life, and enforced disappearance are non-derogable and apply in all circumstances, including during situations of armed conflict or public emergency.

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 steps taken to prevent, investigate, and address acts of torture, ill-treatment, medical negligence, and enforced disappearances in Qarchak, Ghezel Hesar, Sheyban, Urmia, and other detention facilities, including measures to ensure the accountability of

officials found responsible.

3. Please describe the policies and safeguards in place to regulate and monitor the use of force within detention facilities, including during transfers of prisoners to solitary confinement or other prisons. Please specify any investigations or disciplinary actions taken in response to reported incidents of excessive or unlawful force.
4. Please describe measures taken to ensure minimum standards of detention, including access to safe drinking water, adequate food, ventilation, sanitation, electricity, and temperature control, particularly during extreme temperatures, as well as to ensure access to healthcare and medication.
5. Please outline the measures adopted to ensure that all detainees are treated humanely and in accordance with the Nelson Mandela and Bangkok Rules, including access to adequate medical care, safe conditions of detention, and protection from reprisals following complaints or participation in collective protests such as hunger strikes.
6. Please outline the measures adopted to ensure that all detainees are treated humanely and in accordance with the Nelson Mandela Rules and the Bangkok Rules, including access to adequate medical care, safe conditions of detention, and protection from reprisals following complaints or participation in collective protests such as hunger strikes.
7. Please clarify the rules and procedures governing family visits and communications, and the transfer of prisoners to facilities distant from their families. Please indicate what measures have been taken, or are planned, to facilitate regular family contact and information on relatives whereabouts, and to ensure that detention arrangements allow visits in line with international human rights standards.

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 prevent any irreparable harm to the life and personal integrity of all persons currently deprived of their liberty on similar or related charges, 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 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.

Mai Sato

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

Tlaleng Mofokeng

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

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 following:

The right to life is protected under article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) ratified by your Excellency's Government in June 1975 and the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under article 7 of the ICCPR ; the right to liberty and security of person under article 9 of the ICCPR; and the requirement of humane treatment of persons deprived of liberty under article 10 of the ICCPR. The denial of timely and adequate medical care may further contravene the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, enshrined in article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

We would like to draw your attention to article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 24 June 1975, States parties recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and take steps 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).

We recall that the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) require that all persons deprived of liberty be treated with respect for their inherent dignity and value as human beings, that they have access to adequate medical care and family contact (rules 24-27, 43, 58-59), and that no prisoner be subjected to disciplinary measures amounting to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It also recognizes 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 further note that the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) provide specific guidance to ensure the protection of women deprived of liberty. These include the requirement for comprehensive health screening to determine primary and gender-specific health care needs (rule 6), access to preventive health services such as gynaecological cancer screening on an equal basis with women in the community (rule 18), and the facilitation of family and legal contact by all reasonable means (rule 26). Rule 4 further specifies that, as far as possible, women prisoners should be allocated to facilities close to their homes in order to maintain family relations.

We recall that the prohibition of enforced disappearance constitutes a jus cogens norm under international law and a rule of customary international law from which no derogation is permitted, including in situations of internal instability or public emergency (Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 36, para. 2). Enforced disappearance represents a unique and continuous violation involving multiple human rights and requires States to take all necessary measures to prevent such practices and to conduct prompt, effective, and impartial investigations to establish the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons (general comment No. 36, para. 58). We further draw attention to the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which provides that no State shall practice, permit, or tolerate enforced disappearance (articles 1, 7, 9–13), and to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances' General Comment on women affected by enforced disappearances (A/HRC/WGEID/98/2).

We wish to recall that paragraph 28 of the Special Rapporteur's latest report to the General Assembly (A/80/349) and the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/58/62), have expressed concern on the conditions in a number of prisons including Qarchak Prison.