

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

Ref.: UA IRN 1/2026  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

9 January 2026

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 58/21.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information I have received concerning serious allegations of human rights violations committed in the context of nationwide protests in the Islamic Republic of Iran since 28 December 2025.

According to the information received:

A sustained wave of anti-government protests began on 28 December 2025 in Tehran's Grand Bazaar, initially triggered by severe economic conditions, including record inflation, currency collapse and declining living standards. The protests rapidly spread across the country and have reportedly occurred in approximately 27 of Iran's 31 provinces and around 80 cities, including Ilam, Isfahan, Shiraz and Kermanshah. Student demonstrations have been reported in more than 20 universities nationwide, alongside labour and sectoral protests in multiple towns.

While I do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, I am gravely concerned by reports indicating that between 25 and 30 protesters have been killed in the first ten days of the protests. Among those killed are reportedly at least five children under the age of 18. Hundreds of individuals are reported to have been injured.

Information received further indicates that security forces have used live ammunition and other potentially lethal force against protesters in multiple locations. In Malekshahi county, Ilam Province, video footage dated 3 January reportedly shows security forces firing directly at demonstrators. Six of the fatalities in Malekshahi have reportedly been identified, with additional cases under verification.

I am particularly alarmed by reports of mass arbitrary arrests with over 1,000 individuals have been detained nationwide, including students, protesters and bystanders. In Harsin, Kermanshah Province, more than 100 schoolchildren are reportedly among those arrested. Many detainees are said to be held without access to legal counsel or contact with their families.

I am also concerned about reports of attacks on medical facilities and interference with the provision of medical care. On 4 January 2026, security forces reportedly raided Imam Khomeini Hospital in Ilam, where wounded protesters from Malekshahi had been transferred for treatment. It is alleged that security forces fired

tear gas, forcibly entered the hospital, attempted to arrest injured protesters, and ultimately detained several individuals despite resistance from relatives and medical staff. Reports suggest that approximately 200 people may have been arrested in the vicinity of the hospital.

Similarly, on or around 6 January 2026, special anti-riot units reportedly entered Sina Hospital on Hasanabad Street in Tehran, where protesters had sought refuge, with reported use of tear gas being fired within and around the hospital grounds, raising serious concerns regarding the violation of the neutrality of medical facilities and the safety of patients and healthcare personnel.

I am further concerned by the increasingly hostile rhetoric and threats issued by senior authorities. Following remarks by the Supreme Leader on 3 January calling for harsh action against protesters, senior judicial and law enforcement officials have publicly warned of severe repression. On 5 January, the Head of the Judiciary, Mr. Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, reportedly stated that no “leniency or tolerance” would be shown towards protesters, whom he described as enemies supported by foreign powers. He further called for expedited prosecutions and rapid issuance of verdicts, emphasizing that delays would undermine deterrence.

In this context, state media have reportedly continued to broadcast so-called “confessions” of detainees, for example admitting to using force against security agents. These broadcasts reportedly include footage of young detainees from several locations, as well as groups of defendants brought before state media cameras in multiple provinces, including Qazvin and Lorestan, with concerns that such confessions are frequently extracted under coercion or torture and are broadcast prior to any judicial proceedings, in violation of the presumption of innocence and fair trial guarantees.

The above allegations raise serious concerns regarding possible violations of, inter alia, the right to life (article 6); the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 7); the right to liberty and security of person and freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention (article 9); the right to a fair trial and due process guarantees (article 14); the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly (articles 19 and 21); and the right of every child to special measures of protection (article 24) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Islamic Republic of Iran ratified on 24 June 1975. The allegations also raise serious concerns about violations of children’s rights as protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Iran ratified on 13 July 1994, including the obligation to ensure the survival and development of the child, protection from all forms of violence, and the right to special safeguards and care (articles 6, 19 and 24, among others). In addition I would like to draw the attention of your Excellency’s Government to principle 4 of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Officials, which provides that, “[l]aw enforcement officials, in carrying out their duty, shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms. They may use force and firearms only if other means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the intended result.” Furthermore, principle 5 provides that, “[w]henver the use of force and firearms is unavoidable law enforcement officials shall, (a) Exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate object to be achieved; (b) Minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life; (c) Ensure that assistance and

medical aid are rendered to any injured or affected persons at the earliest possible moment and (d) Ensure that relatives or close friends of the injured or affected person are notified at the earliest possible moment” (adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, Cuba, 27 August to 7 September 1990).

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, I would appreciate a response on the initial steps taken by your Excellency’s Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person(s) in compliance with international instruments.

As it is my responsibility, under the mandate provided to me by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to my attention, I 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. What steps have been taken to ensure that all deaths and injuries of protesters, including those involving children, are promptly, independently and impartially investigated, and that those responsible are held accountable?
3. What is the legal justification for the reported mass arrests, and what safeguards are in place to prevent arbitrary detention, including the arbitrary arrest and detention of minors?
4. What measures have been taken to ensure the protection of medical facilities, healthcare personnel and patients, and to guarantee that access to medical care is not obstructed, including during law enforcement operations?
5. What steps have been taken to prevent torture and other forms of coercion in detention, and to halt the extraction and broadcasting of forced confessions on state media?
6. What guarantees are in place to ensure respect for due process and fair trial rights, and to protect detainees from the imposition of the death penalty following proceedings that do not meet international fair trial 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, I 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.

I may publicly express my concerns in the near future as, in my view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. I also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that I have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

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

Mai Sato

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