

INTERNAL LINES OF RESPONSE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S POSITION ON FORCED RETURNS OF IRANIANS TO IRAN

1. What are the risks that Iranians face if forcibly returned to Iran?

All Iranians who have sought safety outside Iran and have been forcibly returned to Iran are generally viewed by the Iranian authorities with great suspicion by virtue of simply having sought asylum in another country. This applies even to individuals who do not have particular profiles which would increase their vulnerability to being targeted by the Iranian authorities, such as human rights defenders, dissidents, protesters, LGBTI people or those from ethnic and religious minorities.

Over the years, Amnesty International has made numerous interventions on individual cases to prevent the refoulement of asylum seekers to Iran due to well-founded concerns that they could face persecution or/and a litany of serious human rights violations and crimes under international law if forcibly returned, including arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, unjust prosecution and unfair trial, and sentences of flogging, prison and/or death.

2. What is Amnesty International's position on forcible returns to Iran in light of the ongoing nationwide protests?

Iran has been rocked by an unprecedented popular uprising against the Islamic Republic system since mid-September 2022, with security forces unlawfully killing hundreds of men, women and children, injuring thousands, and subjecting thousands more people to arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, unjust prosecutions and unfair trials resulting in prison and death sentences, and arbitrary executions. Amnesty International's assessment about the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran is shared by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, who stated in November 2022 that Iran was "now in a full-fledged human rights crisis".¹

The gravity of the situation is reflected in the landmark decision of the UN Human Rights Council in November 2022 to establish an independent, international fact-finding mission to thoroughly and independently investigate human rights violations related to the nationwide protests in Iran.²

Despite the bloody repression, protests are ongoing and show no signs of abating, revealing the extent of outrage by people in Iran against decades of severe repression and discrimination.

In the current political and security climate in Iran, with the official narrative blaming foreign governments and counterrevolutionary groups from both inside and outside Iran for fomenting the nationwide protests, Iranian asylum seekers are viewed with heightened suspicion.

Given the gravity of the current political, security and human rights situation in Iran amid an unprecedented and protracted uprising, all states must suspend any forcible returns to Iran, including

¹ [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, The deteriorating human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 22 November 2022](#)

² [Amnesty International, Iran: Landmark UN fact-finding mission marks long-awaited turning point in tackling systematic impunity, 24 November](#)

of individuals whose claims for asylum have been rejected. The organization has strong grounds to believe that any Iranians forcibly returned to Iran at present, including asylum seekers whose claims for international protection have been rejected in third countries, face a real risk of grave human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest and detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, unjust prosecution and unfair trial, and sentences of flogging, prison and/or death.

3. What is Amnesty International calling on states to do?

Amnesty International is calling on all states to immediately halt all deportations of Iranians to Iran or to third countries where they would be at risk of further transfer to Iran.

States have a legal and moral responsibility to allow those fleeing Iran access to their territories and must also refrain from unlawful practices such as pushbacks at borders. All claims by Iranian asylum seekers must be assessed in fair and efficient asylum procedures, in accordance with international and regional refugee and human rights law, and Iranian asylum seekers must be provided with adequate reception conditions.

In the light of the new circumstances, the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran and the heightened risks for Iranians forcibly returned to the country, Amnesty International calls on states to reconsider the protection claims of Iranians present in their territories, whose applications for international protection were previously rejected. States should grant regular migration status to Iranians currently on their territories in an irregular status and/or awaiting return, to ensure they can fully enjoy their human rights and access basic services.

All states must abide by the principle of non-refoulement, which is recognized as a norm of customary international law and prohibits States from returning or transferring individuals to a place, in any manner whatsoever - where they would be at risk of persecution, torture or other serious human rights violations.

LINKS TO SOME OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S PUBLIC DOCUMENTS ON THE PROTESTS:

[Iran: Youth with mental disability risks execution: Mohammad Ghobadlou, 20 January 20, 2023 \(MDE 13/6368/2023\)](#)

[Iran: Young man at grave risk of execution in connection with protests amid 'killing spree', 11 January 2023](#)

[Iran: 26 people risk execution in relation to protests, 16 December 2022 \(MDE 13/6309/2022\)](#)

[Iran: List of individuals at risk of execution in connection with nationwide protests, 16 December 2022 \(MDE 13/6308/2022\)](#)

[Iran: Public execution of Majidreza Rahnavard exposes authorities' revenge killings, 12 December 2022](#)

[Iran: Authorities covering up their crimes of child killings by coercing families into silence, 9 December 2022](#)

[Iran: Killings of children during youthful anti-establishment protests, 9 December 2022 \(MDE 13/6104/2022\)](#)

[Iran: Horrifying execution of young protester exposes authorities' cruelty and risk of further bloodshed, 8 December 2022](#)

[Iran: 28 people risk execution in relation to uprising, 2 December 2022 \(MDE 13/6271/2022\)](#)

[Iran: Landmark UN fact-finding mission marks long-awaited turning point in tackling systematic impunity, 24 November](#)

[Iran: Chilling use of the death penalty to further brutally quell popular uprising, 16 November 2022](#)

[Iran: Death penalty sought in sham trials, 16 November 2022 \(MDE 13/6219/2022\)](#)

[Iran: Swift action by UN Human Rights Council essential after latest horrifying protester killings, 22 November 2022](#)

[Iran: UN must act urgently after authorities unlawfully kill eight protesters in less than 24 hours, 27 October 2022](#)

[Iran: At least 82 Baluchi protesters and bystanders killed in bloody crackdown, 6 October 2022](#)

[Iran: Leaked Official Documents Ordering Deadly Crackdown Highlight Need for International Action, 30 September](#)