

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

13 September 2023

Iran: One year after uprising international community must combat impunity for brutal crackdown

The international community must pursue pathways for justice at the international level to address systemic impunity for Iranian officials responsible for hundreds of unlawful killings of protesters and widespread torture, Amnesty International said today, as Iran marks the one-year anniversary of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising.

Over the past year, Iranian authorities have committed a litany of crimes under international law to eradicate any challenge to their iron grip on power. These include hundreds of unlawful killings; the arbitrary execution of seven protesters; tens of thousands of arbitrary arrests; widespread torture, including rape of detainees; widespread harassment of victims’ families who call for truth and justice; and reprisals against women and girls who defy discriminatory compulsory veiling laws.

“The Iranian authorities have spent a year inflicting unspeakable cruelty on people in Iran for courageously challenging decades of repression and inequality. One year after Mahsa/Zhina Amini’s death in custody, not one official has been criminally investigated, let alone prosecuted and punished for crimes committed during, and in the aftermath of, the uprising,” said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“The anniversary of the ‘Woman Life Freedom’ protests offers a stark reminder for countries around the world of the need to initiate criminal investigations into the heinous crimes committed by the Iranian authorities under universal jurisdiction. Government statements calling on the Iranian authorities to halt the unlawful use of firearms against protesters, stop torturing detainees, and release all individuals detained for peacefully exercising their human rights remain as crucial as ever. These actions show victims they are not alone in their darkest hour.”

Oppression of women and girls who defy compulsory veiling

The Iranian authorities have waged an all-out assault on the human rights of women and girls over the past year.

Despite months of protests against Iran’s compulsory veiling laws, triggered by the arbitrary arrest and death in custody of Mahsa/Zhina Amini, the authorities have reinstated “morality” policing and [introduced](#) a raft of other measures that deprive women and girls who defy compulsory veiling of their rights.

These include the confiscation of cars and denial of access to employment, education, healthcare, banking services and public transport. Simultaneously, they have prosecuted

and sentenced women to imprisonment, fines and degrading punishments, such as washing corpses.

This assault on women's rights is taking place amid a spate of hateful official statements referring to unveiling as a "virus", "social illness" or "disorder" as well as equating the choice to appear without a headscarf to "sexual depravity."

The authorities are also working on new legislation that will introduce even more severe penalties for defying compulsory veiling.

Flagrant lies over hundreds of unlawful killings

Between September and December 2022, security forces unleashed a brutal militarized crackdown, unlawfully [killing](#) hundreds of protesters and bystanders, including dozens of [children](#). More than half of those unlawfully killed belonged to the oppressed [Baluchi](#) and Kurdish ethnic minorities.

Not only have the authorities failed to hold those suspected of criminal responsibility to account, but they also spent the past year telling barefaced lies to both the public and the international community, blaming the deaths on "rioters", "unknown persons", suicides or accidents. In parallel, they aggravated the suffering of victims' [families](#) through relentless [harassment and intimidation](#).

Mass arbitrary detentions and summons

During the uprising and in the months that followed, the authorities [arbitrarily arrested](#) tens of thousands of men, women and children, including protesters, human rights defenders and minority rights activists. Those arrested include at least 90 journalists and other media workers and 60 lawyers, including those representing families of individuals unlawfully killed. Scores of other lawyers were summoned for interrogations.

Ahead of the anniversary, the authorities have intensified their campaign of arbitrary arrests targeting, among others, family members of those unlawfully killed, and forcing thousands of university students to sign undertakings not to participate in anniversary protests.

A tsunami of torture

During the uprising, security forces unlawfully fired live ammunition and metal pellets to disperse and terrorize protesters, causing injuries amounting to torture or other ill-treatment to thousands, including blinding, loss of limbs and impaired mobility. The authorities also oversaw the widespread commission of torture and other ill-treatment against thousands of detained protesters, including [children](#).

Many survivors are still living with the long-term physical and psychological trauma as a result of their torture.

Execution of protesters

Over the past year, the authorities have increasingly used the death penalty as a tool of political repression to instil fear among the public, arbitrarily [executing](#) seven [men](#) in relation to the [uprising](#) following [grossly](#) unfair sham trials.

Some were executed for alleged crimes such as damage to public property and others in relation to the deaths of security forces during the protests.

All were executed after Iran's Supreme Court rubberstamped their unjust convictions and sentences despite a lack of evidence and without carrying out investigations into their allegations of torture.

Dozens remain at risk of execution or being sentenced to death in connection with the protests.

A crisis of impunity

The authorities have refused to conduct any thorough, independent and impartial investigations into the human rights violations committed during and in the aftermath of the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising and have failed to take any steps to hold those suspected of criminal responsibility to account.

Instead, authorities have applauded the security forces for suppressing the unrest and shielded officials from accountability, including two officials who admitted raping women protesters in Tehran. They have also dismissed complaints from victims and/or their families, threatening them with death or other harm if they pursued their complaints.

Amnesty International [welcomed](#) the establishment of a Fact-Finding Mission on Iran by the UN Human Rights Council in November 2022, yet much more is needed to combat the crisis of impunity for serious crimes in Iran - and to deter further cycles of bloodshed.

Amnesty International urges all states to consider exercising universal and other extraterritorial jurisdiction in relation to crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations committed by Iranian authorities, irrespective of the absence or presence of the accused in their territory. This includes initiating adequately resourced criminal investigations aimed at disclosing the truth about the crimes, identifying those suspected of responsibility, including commanders and other superiors and issuing, when there is sufficient admissible evidence, international arrest warrants. States should also contribute to achieving reparations for the victims.