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Iran: Swift action by UN Human Rights Council essential after latest horrifying protester killings

UN Human Rights Council member states must urgently establish an investigative and accountability mechanism on Iran to address the alarming spike in unlawful killings and other human rights violations, Amnesty International said today, following a week in which the Iranian security forces shot dead at least 60 protesters, mourners and bystanders, including children.

Security forces are ruthlessly persisting in their widespread use of unlawful lethal force, exposing a clear intent to kill or maim protesters in their quest to quell the popular uprising at any cost. Since 15 November, they have also intensified their exclusive use of live ammunition to disperse protests in provinces populated by Kurds and other oppressed ethnic minorities.

At the 24 November Special Session on Iran, member states of the UN Human Rights Council have an opportunity to amplify calls by people in Iran, who continue to risk their lives to protest for human rights, freedom and accountability for protester killings. It is horrifying that so many men, women and children have paid the ultimate price over their cries for a hopeful, rights respecting future," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

The situation in Iran calls for a robust resolution establishing an independent investigative and accountability mechanism on Iran to collect and preserve evidence of crimes, tackle impunity and send a clear message to the Iranian authorities that their crimes under international law will no longer go unchecked."

Since protests erupted in mid-September, Amnesty has recorded the names and details of 305 people, including at least 41 children, killed by security forces. In the past week alone, Amnesty International has identified 53 men, 2 women and 5 children killed in 10 provinces across Iran, the majority (42) in Kurdish populated areas. Members of Iran's

oppressed ethnic minorities, including Baluchis and Kurds, have borne the brunt of the vicious crackdown by security forces. Investigations into the identities of those killed continue, with the true death toll believed to be far higher.

Over two months into the popular uprising, systematic impunity has emboldened the Iranian authorities not only to continue unlawfully deploying lethal force, but also to resort to the death penalty as a tool of intimidation and political repression. Since late October 2022, the authorities have sought the death penalty in grossly unfair trials by Revolutionary Courts against at least 21 individuals who were all charged in connection with the protests amid disturbing calls by officials to rush proceedings and execute them in public.

In an attempt to weaken international support for the Special Session and the establishment of an investigative mechanism at the UN Human Rights Council, the Iranian authorities have falsely claimed that they are de-escalating their crackdown, and conducting investigations.

Unlawful killings continue unabated

Since 15 November 2022, Iran's security forces have persisted in their widespread use of unlawful force — including lethal force — against protesters, killing at least 60 people in the provinces of Bushehr, East Azerbaijan, Esfahan, Fars, Gilan, Hormozgan, Kermanshah, Khuzestan, Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan. Protesters, bystanders and mourners attending funerals of protesters are all among the dead.

On 20 November, security forces killed at least two children, both aged 16: Baha'aldin Veisi in Javanroud, Kermanshah province, and Karwan Ghader Shokri in Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan province. Days before, on 16 November, security forces unlawfully killed at least three children. Security forces shot dead Kian Pirfalak, 10, and Artin Rahmani, 14, in Izeh, Khuzestan province, while 17-year-old Danial Pabandi was killed by security forces during a protest in Saqqez, Kurdistan province.

Last week marked three years since security forces killed hundreds of men, women and children during nationwide protests in November 2019. Demonstrations held to mark this anniversary were met with unlawful force by security forces and further killings, all of which occurred amid internet

and mobile network disruptions.

“This week, as UN Human Rights Council member states prepare for Thursday’s Special Session, the country’s security forces are continuing to unleash a barrage of bullets against men, women and children while enforcing mobile and internet blackouts to conceal their crimes from the world. These patterns of killing hundreds of protesters under cover of darkness are reminiscent of the Iranian authorities’ crackdown on the November 2019 protests, demonstrating how the failure of the international community to respond adequately then enabled the ongoing bloodshed. It is now high time for UN Human Rights Council member states to do their part to help break this cycle of violence,” said Agnès Callamard.