TABLE OF CONTENTS

Women Lead the Fight for Freedom 02
Targeting Iran’s Youth: Scores Arrested 12
Horrifying Tactics Used to Crush Dissent 18
Unjust Plight of Protesters in Detention 26
Systematic Cover-Up of Protest Killings 32
A Catalogue of Women Who Died in Protests 42
Women lead the charge in Iran’s fight for freedom

The Iranian people’s uprising was one of the world’s most significant events of the year 2022. In light of its importance, the NCRI Women’s Committee has devoted this year’s Annual Report to the various aspects of this democratic Revolution and women’s role in it.

Women are the force for change

One of the most prominent features of the 2022 Iran uprising that inspired the world was women’s bravery and leadership role. But how did this come about?

Of course, it did not happen overnight. Women’s leading role in the uprising is deeply rooted in the Iranian women’s long history of struggle for their democratic rights, especially over the past 44 years.

Women played a significant role in the 1979 Revolution but saw their hard-won rights and freedoms increasingly restricted under the mullahs’ rule. They became the mullahs’ prime target since suppression of women was a mechanism to clamp down on the entire society in the name of religion.

However, Iranian women did not give in and defied the mullahs’ rule, by paying a dear price. Many women joined the main opposition force, the PMOI/MEK. In the course of this struggle, women proved to be indispensable to the movement. In the 1980s, thousands of PMOI women and girls walked to the altar or endured vicious torture but did not abandon their democratic cause and their belief in freedom and equality.

Women from all ages and all walks of life stood firm against the mullahs and gave their lives before firing squads or under torture. In the 1988 massacre of 30,000 political prisoners, PMOI women stood their ground and did not yield to the mullahs.

At such high cost, women rose to the organization’s leadership and took over the helm in 1985. Under Maryam Rajavi’s leadership, PMOI women have worked at all levels of political leadership and decision-making for the past 37 years, leading the opposition movement through the most challenging conditions.

Today, the PMOI is led by a Central Council made of 1,000 battle-tested women. Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, believes that women are the force for change. In a speech on June 1996, in London, she addressed the mullahs and said, “You have done your utmost to humiliate, suppress, torture and slaughter Iranian women, but rest assured that you would receive the blow from the very force you discounted, the very force whom your reactionary mindset cannot allow you to take into consideration. Rest assured that these knowledgeable and free women would dismantle your oppression everywhere.”

The role of women in the vanguard opposition force has exerted its impact on women’s social struggles. The world saw Iranian women playing a more prominent role in the protests since 2009 to 2018, 2019, and finally in 2022.
On September 16, 2022, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, Maryam Rajavi, called for a public mourning for Mahsa Amini, reiterating that the Guidance Patrols (Morality Police) must be disbanded. She called on the courageous women of Iran to hold nationwide protests against the mullahs’ misogynous regime. The resistant and resilient women of Iran will stand up to the tyranny and oppression of the mullahs and the IRGC and defeat them. Iranian people and women will fight back with all their might.

Under the mullahs’ misogynistic rule, women have turned into compressed coils, leaping forward when conditions allow.

Six months on, the uprising defies suppression efforts

It is against such a backdrop, that the cold-hearted murder of an innocent woman by the Morality Police set alight the powder keg of social discontent and economic grievances and gave rise to conditions where women could play their courageous role in confronting the security forces and leading the movement. Started on 16 September 2022, the Iran uprising has entered its sixth month despite the regime’s brutal attempts to suppress it. The clerical regime’s security forces have killed at least 750 protesters, including 84 women and 70 children. They have arrested and detained around 30,000 protesters and subjected them to the most brutal tortures, including sexual assault and gang rapes.

The regime has also handed down death sentences for many detained protesters, including teenagers and juveniles, in unfair trials where they have no access to legal representation. Some of these trials were held online and lasted less than five minutes, without allowing the defendants to defend themselves. The regime has already executed six protesters. The arrested protesters were unyielding even inside prisons. To silence them, the regime launched an attack on Evin Prison on October 15, burning down the compound. Between 30 to 40 prisoners are believed to have died during the attack, and dozens more were badly wounded but were abandoned without medical care.

Excessive brute force used to confront audacious students

Another prominent feature of the uprising was that it was spearheaded by college and high school students. An average of 100 universities across the country were scenes of protests by young women and men every day. To quell the student protests, plainclothes agents opened fire on students, even on the university premises. Plainclothes agents also abducted students from dormitories without legal warrants at midnight or in the early morning as they were leaving the building.

Another frequently chanted slogan is “Death to the oppressor, be it the shah or the [mullahs’ supreme] leader,” indicating the people of Iran’s rejection of all forms of dictatorship and yearning for a democratic, pluralistic society founded on the separation of religion and state and gender equality.

The security forces’ surrounding of Sharif University of Technology on October 2, trapping its students inside, is emblematic. They trapped students inside the parking lot of Tehran’s prestigious Sharif University of Technology and fired live ammunition, rounding up at least 60 students, according to semi-official media.
The women of Iran are paying a high price for their fight for freedom, and they are determined to continue their struggle until the regime falls. Despite the dangers, Iranian women and men have continued their protests, which speaks to the success of the organized network of Resistance Units in inciting and leading the protests and teaching the youth how to confront the regime.

What are Resistance Units?
The Resistance Units are a network of activists associated with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), the main opposition force that the clerical regime does not tolerate at all. The regime has executed more than 120,000 members and supporters of the MEK since the 1980s, including a mass killing of 30,000 political prisoners during the summer of 1988.

Beginning in 2014, the PMOI/MEK started organizing the Resistance Units inside Iran. While affiliated with the organization, the Resistance Units are ordinary citizens with regular ties and communication with others around them, in the workplace, in offices, hospitals, and in society in general. One of the essential features of Resistance Units is that their members are integrated into the broader society. Most are students, employees, workers, or have other occupations. They are not covert forces.

In the past few years, hundreds of members of Resistance Units and thousands of other people have been arrested due to their connection with Resistance Units. Some have been subjected to the most severe forms of torture, while others have been sentenced to long-term prison and even execution. But despite the severe repression and widespread arrests, the regime has not been able to eradicate the Resistance Units.
On the contrary, the trend of the formation of Resistance Units has seen a rise throughout the country. The number of Resistance Units was estimated at 1,000 in July 2021, but in July 2022, their numbers grew to 5,000, unveiling a 500% growth in the number of these units despite the regime’s brutal reign of terror and repression.

The role of Resistance Units in the 2022 uprising

The role and functions of Resistance Units in recent protests are multifaceted. Resistance Units have been actively present in the protests and played a leading role in many areas. In particular, the role of women in the Resistance Units has been vital. Iranian women have long played a central role in the country’s struggle for freedom, and their participation in the Resistance Units has been critical to the success of the resistance movement. Women have been actively involved in the organization and leadership of the Resistance Units, working alongside men to mobilize and educate young people and to engage in acts of civil disobedience against the regime.

The slogans of the 2022 protests, which were fundamentally unified throughout the country, are an indication of the uprising’s organized nature. Such organization is one of the primary functions of Resistance Units. Another function of Resistance Units was to confront the oppressive forces of the regime, specifically the “plainclothes” agents who played a crucial role in suppressing the protests of 2019 and 2017. By engaging the agents of repression, these Resistance Units, in addition to repelling the forces of repression in many cases, raised the spirit of defiance in protesters. These acts played a decisive role in prolonging the uprising.

Burning and targeting the regime’s centers of repression, which are highly despised in society, provided an inspiration and a practical model for many young people during the recent protests. The Resistance Units’ activities have thus triggered and spread the spirit of Resistance and the ability to stand up to the regime and its repressive forces among the younger generations.

Resistance Units ensure that protests are sustained and organized. They have become role models for the younger generations, showing them the viable way forward in challenging the regime. The Iranian people, who overthrew the monarchical dictatorship in 1979 and are today rising up against the ruling religious dictatorship, are paving the way for a new democratic revolution. This revolution stands for the rejection of all forms of dictatorship, whether they stem from a hereditary system or one that uses religion as a guise.

Iranian people demand full gender equality in all aspects, including political leadership. They envision a democratic republic that is based on the separation of religion and state. Women are at the forefront of this revolution, risking their lives to fight for their rights and the rights of all Iranians.

They call on the world to support their resistance and struggle against the brutal dictatorship and to recognize their right to self-defense. By standing in solidarity with the women of Iran, the world can help them achieve their aspirations for freedom and democracy.
A FEMALE MEMBER OF RESISTANCE UNITS TELLS OF HER DAILY STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

The following article written by Mina Lotfi, a female member of Resistance Units inside Iran, was published by the British Express.

I have worked for years as a tailor in Iran and have become quite good at using needles and sewing machines to sew, mend, and alter posh women’s clothes. But since September 16, my life has totally changed, and I have become used to other tools and other skill sets. Nowadays backpacks are indispensable, and I mastered the use of things like tear gas neutralization devices, which I carry when I take part in protests.

At 25, I am one of the young Iranian women who have been battling in the streets for the past two months, trying to overthrow the theocratic regime and establish a democratic republic. What is taking place in Iran is a revolution.

As a member of the Resistance Units affiliated to the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (MEK), I team up with my friends in the southern city of Shiraz during most evenings.

Depending on what we have on the agenda, we might organize and participate in rallies, promote and direct those rallies, post graffiti with slogans like “Death to Khamenei” or “Death to oppressor, be it Shah or the leader (Khamenei)” on prominent walls, or set fire to billboards bearing pictures of Khamenei or Qassem Soleimani (the notorious Corps who was killed by the US in Iraq in January 2020).

In the mornings, whenever we have spare time, we recruit new people for the Resistance Units. Iran has simply changed. I have been a member of MEK Resistance Units for some time now. There was always sympathy for the Resistance, but lately the public mood has totally changed. There is an aura of solidarity and unanimity for one objective: Freedom.

People help each other. They try not to leave anyone alone. They leave the door of their houses open for the protesters to take refuge. For years the regime has tried to divide the people based on their ethnicities. But that strategy has failed. When the regime massacred our compatriots in Zahedan in destitute Sistan and Baluchestan Province, people in other cities took to the streets and chanted, “From Zahedan to Kurdistan to Khuzestan, I will sacrifice my life for Iran.”

People are determined to liberate Iran and take back their homeland. I am at loss to describe the cruelty and savagery of the ayatollahs, though at times I have felt very close to the threats against our very lives. During a rally one evening, the IRGC and Bassij forces attacked us from all directions. The IRGC fired pellet guns and Bassij forces attacked with whatever they had in their possession, including batons and knives. They started beating people – men and women, young and old – mercilessly and with all their strength.

As we were organizing the people to hold their ground, one of the Bassijis was about to grab me on my arm when one of my friends courageously charged at him and gave me a split second to run away. I still cannot fathom what would have been awaiting me if I had been arrested.

People have demonstrated courage and unmatched bravery during this uprising. That same evening, the people did not back down against the brutalities of the IRGC and Bassij. They were not intimidated; they confronted them. That is something new. Fear is fading away.

Every day that we protest, I see more people are willing or able to negotiate. And now the people are in the streets, making history. The West should stand by the Iranian people, not merely with words, but with actions. The West should recognize our legitimate right to resist and defend ourselves. All we are asking is that our legitimate rights be recognized. How do they expect people like me, with bare hands, to stand before armed IRGC and Bassij forces? Proscribe the IRGC as a terrorist entity; close Iranian embassies; guarantee our unhindered access to the internet.

The West should take these actions, and we will overthrow the ayatollahs ourselves. It is not a dream anymore. We feel it and we will continue to strive for it.
TARGETING IRAN’S YOUTH: AUTHORITIES DETAIN SCORES OF STUDENTS

In a highly classified document obtained by the Iranian Resistance, the Commander in Chief of the IRGC reported to Khamenei, the mullahs’ supreme leader, of 20,445 arrests during the first two weeks of the uprising. Hossein Salami, the incumbent IRGC Commander in Chief, stated in the report that the IRGC forces had arrested 9,654 persons, and the State Security Force [SSF] arrested 9,545 people. The Ministry of Intelligence [MOIS] detained 1,246. Salami stressed in the report that some of those detained had been organized by the MEK.

The state-run Khabarfoori.com, wrote on October 21, “At least 20,000 have been arrested in the recent unrest across the country.” Seyyed Jalal Hosseini, political deputy to the Organization of the paramilitary IRGC Basij, acknowledged, “%70 of those arrested during the recent protests were youngsters under 20 years old.” (The state-run Aftabnews.ir, October 20, 2022)

The Commander of the State Security Force of Qom Province also acknowledged that the age of 60 percent of those detained during the protests in Qom was between 15 and 22 years old. (akhakhabar.ir, October 11, 2022)

A member of the mullahs’ parliament, Ahmad Alireza Beigi, acknowledged that 3,000 protesters arrested during the protests in Tehran province were detained in the Greater Tehran Penitentiary. They include 360 women and 200 high school students. (Asriran.com, October 18, 2022)
High school girls have been particularly active during the nationwide protests. They held anti-regime protests in schools across Iran. Some took to the streets and chanted against the mullahs’ supreme leader. Others confronted the regime officials and forced them out of school. Many held protests at school, tearing off pictures of Khomeini and Khamenei from their books. And some resisted the regime’s orchestrated pro-government ceremonies. The authorities reacted ruthlessly toward the young girls who dared to speak out against the regime and refuse their orders.

On 19 September 2022, armored vehicles entered Tamaddon High School in Bukan, Kurdistan, and attacked the girls. There are numerous reports of arrests: 29 high school girls in Mahabad, Kurdistan, Parvaneh Salehnia in Shahinshahr, Isfahan, three 15-year-old Baluch girls in Zahedan, Mandana Nemati, also 15, in Karaj, Parva and Shenia Hosseini, both 17 years old, in Sarvabad, Kurdistan, etc. More arrests of high school girls were reported in Tehran, Kermanshah, Javanrud, Iranshahr, Isfahan, etc.

In several instances, teachers or principals attempting to protect their students, were also arrested. Kurdish media have identified and reported around 100 students arbitrarily arrested and abducted in Kurdistan.

Asra Panahi, 15
Plainclothes agents attacked the Shahed High School for girls in Ardabil on 13 October 2022. They brutalized the students because they refused to participate in a pro-regime ceremony to sing an anthem in praise of Ali Khamenei. Instead, they chanted, “Death to the dictator.” The injured were taken to hospital; however, Asra Panahi, 15, lost her life due to internal bleeding.

The government forced Asra’s uncles and brother to make false confessions on TV, saying that she had passed away due to a heart condition. Her brother reportedly committed suicide after appearing on the state TV against his will and lying about the cause of his sister’s death.

Parmis Hamnava, 15
On October 25, a ninth grader in Iranshahr, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, SE Iran, was beaten by the State Security forces in class and in front of her classmates for tearing off Khomeini’s picture from her textbook. She died of severe injuries and bleeding on the same day. Parmis Hamnava studied in Parvin Etesami High School.

Hasti Hossein Panahi, 16
Hasti Hossein Panahi, 16, has been in a coma since 10 November 2022. Hatchi and several other students from Dehgolan were summoned to the Department of Education and brutalized for participating in protests. The authorities claimed that Hasti had jumped out of the bus when leaving the department. Her mother, however, believes that she had been hit in the head. Hasti is brain dead, and her consciousness is below five, but since she blinks her family have not agreed to end her life. Recently, Hasti Hossein Panahi and her family were relocated to a government owned house in Sanandaj. The family is not allowed to see or talk to anyone.
The clerical regime is now using toxic gases against them. High school girls actively participated in anti-regime protests, and many believe this is their punishment.

The poisoning of female students in Iran has been ongoing for three months, with incidents reported in up to 15 cities across the country.

The first case was reported in Qom, a city in central Iran, on 30 November 2022, affecting 12 schools and quickly spreading to Chaharmahal-e Bakhtiari and Tehran.

The incidents have now extended to schools in Borujerd, Isfahan, Sari, Ardabil, Torbat-e Jam, Quchan, and Kermanshah in February 2023.

Over 400 students have been treated for poisoning symptoms such as nausea, headaches, coughing, breathing difficulties, and heart palpitations since December.

The medical staff in Qom determined that the poisoning had been caused by a microbial gas, but two intelligence agencies intervened and hushed the issue. Members of IRGC intelligence present at Vali Asr Hospital in Qom, take the results of the students’ blood tests to their own laboratory, and the staff is unaware of what is happening.

One student, Fatemeh Razaei, has reportedly died because of the poisoning.

**Total denial of the incidents**

In the past three months, the regime officials denied or lied about these poisonings. The state-run website Donyay-e Eghtesad, February 15, quoted Minister of Education Youssef Nouri as saying, “Major part of the poisoning of students in Qom is caused by rumors that have scared people and students. We received reports from competent authorities and they said there is no issue... Some students had gone to the hospital. Some of them, because they suffered from chronic diseases, the doctors kept them in the hospital.”

Other officials said the students’ blood samples were normal, and the issue had been exaggerated.

Donyaye Eghtesad wrote on February 10: “Suspicious poisonings in the schools of Qom Province remind people of the acid attacks [on women] in Isfahan, the case of which has not yet been determined and the victims are still in limbo.”

**Intentional criminal actions at work**

After three months, regime officials have begun acknowledging part of the truth.

Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, the mullahs’ Prosecutor General, said on February 20, “A worrying trend of poisoning in some educational centers in Qom indicate the possibility of intentional criminal actions...”

A newsletter attributed to the Fadaian-e Velayat group, affiliated with the mullahs’ leader, Ali Khamenei, stated that education is forbidden for girls. The group threatened to spread the poisoning of girls all over Iran if the girls’ schools were not closed down. (Tabnak.ir, 25 February 2023)

Yunes Panahi, the regime’s Deputy Minister of Health, said the poisoning was caused by chemical compounds accessible publicly. (Tabnak.ir, 27 February 2023)

Fatemeh Maqsudi, a parliament deputy from Borujerd, said, “The inspection of the schools’ CCTV cameras show that the incident is not only not normal, but also intentional.” (Ham Mihan newspaper, 27 February 2023)

**Evidence suggests regime’s involvement**

All evidence suggests that the ruling criminal gangs use these heinous actions as a substitute or supplement for the work of the so-called “Guidance Patrol” or the “Morality Police” to terrorize people, especially women, and to prevent them from participating in social protests.

The poisoning of innocent girls in Iran is not possible without the active involvement of the IRGC or the Ministry of Intelligence and other state bodies.

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) called on the students and their families to protest the poisoning of girls and the state of their education security, as they did against the compulsory hijab.

The NCRI Women’s Committee condemns these criminal actions and renews the call by Mrs. Rajavi urging the World Health Organization to send a delegation to Iran to deal with the tragedy.

The NCRI Women’s Committee urges the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women to investigate this matter.
State-sponsored violence against women in Iran was already prevalent, but it increased drastically during the uprising. Iranian women and girls have suffered seriously at the hands of brutal security forces for daring to stand for their inalienable rights. One of the security forces’ inhuman methods of dealing with protesters was striking directly on their heads. In this way, security forces have killed a considerable number of protesters, including many young women under 18 years of age.

On this page, you see the names, age, and place of death under the victims’ pictures.
Among the irreversible effects of the Iranian regime’s efforts to crush the uprising has been the blinding of those participating, a crime that the regime needs to account for. Across Iran, scores of protesters have gone to hospitals with eyes ruptured by the metal pellets and rubber bullets fired by security forces. “Ophthalmology wards in hospitals have been inundated with hundreds of eye wound victims. Eyewitness accounts and more than 80 pages of medical records from several hospitals and clinics showed that the range of injuries have included mutilated retinas, severed optic nerves, and punctured irises,” wrote the New York Times, 19 November 2022. On 3 February 2023, a BBC world service podcast reported that some protesters were facing “life-threatening injuries with a growing number being shot in the face with rubber bullets or metal pellets.” The United Nations’ human rights guidance on less lethal weapons states that kinetic impact
projectiles such as rubber bullets should not be targeted at the head, face, or neck. And metal pellets such as those fired from shotguns should never be used.

The BBC broadcast several accounts of victims who testified that they had been deliberately shot in the eye. A protester, introduced as Maryam, said, “One plainclothes agent appeared and began shooting at me with rubber bullets from a meter and a half away. He shot me eight times. I fell down. The same officer pointed his shotgun back at me and shot me in the eye.”

Another victim, Aydin, said, “They pointed a laser at my head and fired birdshot from a 15-meter distance. Six pellets and there are all over my body.”

Another protester, Saman, said he was shot by a plainclothes officer who recognized him and identified him as a protester. “As soon as he saw me, he raised his paintball gun and shot rubber bullets at me. I lost my sight in my left eye permanently. I also suffered injuries in my teeth and skull. Due to the inflammation of my brain veins, I was an inch away from becoming brain dead.” Saman went on, “I saw similar cases in the hospital. People who were shot in the eyes but with birdshot. There were 50-60 metal pellets in their bodies and 1 to 3 pellets in the eyes.”

Another victim was Ghazal Ranjkesh, a law student from Bandar Abbas. On 15 November 2022, when she was returning home with her mother, security forces shot her in the right eye. After a 3-hour surgery to remove bullets from her right eye, she wrote in a post on Instagram, “The last image my right eye recorded; it was the smile of the man who was shooting at me.”
Farideh Salvatipour, from Sanandaj, lost her sight on 17 November 2022, after security forces shot her in the eyes with pellet guns. There is no hope for her treatment.

Shokoufeh Goudarzi, a 59 year-old mother, tried to save a young man and a young woman from being arrested by security forces on December 15 in Tehran’s Sanaii Street. She clashed with plainclothes agents. She lost sight of one eye due to a paintball shot from close range by security forces.

On 30 November 2022, news broke out on social media that a six-year-old girl named Bita Kiani was shot in the eye by state agents using pellet guns. She was playing on the balcony of their house in Malekshahr, Isfahan. Bita has now lost her right eye.

Inspiring Iranian women, however, have kept their high spirits despite losing an eye.

Elaheh Tavakkolian, a Ph.D. student from Khorasan, lost her eye in the early days of the Iran uprising after being shot by pellet guns. She wrote in an Instagram post, “You targeted my eye, but my heart still beats for Iran!”

Niloufar Aghaii, a midwife shot in the eye in October during the doctors’ protest, spreads hope by continuing with her duties, and continuing to smile.

Raheleh Amiri, a psychologist, lost sight of her right eye when security forces fired directly at her eye. She wrote in a story dated January 17, “Today someone asked me: Was it worth it? I said: Yes, absolutely.”

One of the prevalent forms of crackdown on protesters was their abduction from the streets, dormitories, their homes, etc. There have been numerous reports of security forces abducting students from dormitories in Tehran, Sanandaj, Kermanshah, Shiraz, and other cities.

Khamenei’s Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) and plainclothes agents used pellet guns, live ammunition, and tear gas, and abducted the students, particularly the female students. Agents of the Intelligence Department in Sanandaj attempted to arrest some female students from the Fereshtegan Dormitory on Sunday night, October 30. But they failed to do so with the intervention of university professors.

Plainclothes agents of the intelligence services kidnapped Fatemeh Mashhadi Abbas, a dentist and an associate professor at Melli University (a.k.a. Beheshti), on 19 October 2022. Ekbatan township has always been a hotbed of anti-regime protests in Tehran. From mid-September to December 2022, plainclothes agents and security forces have repeatedly raided Ekbatan and made violent arrests. Eyewitnesses have reported plainclothes agents raiding people’s apartments in Ekbatan and kidnapping people after midnight without providing identification papers or arrest warrants. They covered the heads of those abducted with a veil to prevent their identification during the transfer.
CRUEL AND UNJUST: PLIGHT OF PROTESTERS IN DETENTION

The Iranian regime detained around 30,000 protesters during the Iran uprising. Extracting false confessions from detainees under torture has become a common practice in all Iranian jails, leading to death sentences based on these false confessions. The clerical regime claimed to have released tens of thousands of prisoners, but most political detainees remain incarcerated, and those released either had not committed any serious crime or had finished serving their sentences.

Reports from Iranian prisons indicate that they are overcrowded and filthy, with prisoners suffering from infectious diseases. Ward 209 of Evin Prison, where every detainee is first imprisoned, is contaminated, and inmates fear lice. Detainees are not allowed to use the bathroom, and the bathrooms are unsanitary, with no detergent provided for cleaning. Inmates are only allowed fresh air twice a week for 10 minutes, and if anyone is being interrogated at that time, they miss out.

Due to overcrowding, inmates can only take a shower twice a week. The overcrowded cells have no ventilation, with seven or eight inmates detained in a 10 square-meter cell, leaving no room for walking or even lying down. If one inmate falls ill, others also tend to catch the illness. Food is scarce, of poor quality, and prisoners are often hungry.

A common method of ill-treatment of prisoners is taking them to a mental hospital to endure psychological torture. Detainees in Adelabad Prison of Shiraz are deprived of all forms of medical care, including sedatives, while female detainees in Liam Prison reported being deprived of fresh air for one year, not receiving enough food, and not having hot food for a long time.

HORRIFYING ABUSE OF PROTESTERS

All prisoners, including pregnant women, are subjected to brutalization in Iranian jails. Mahshid Kashani Nejad suffered a miscarriage due to beatings after her arrest at the Central Prison of Mashhad.

Mina Yaghoubi, a bodybuilding coach with a 12 year-old daughter, was released on bail with a bruised eye. The Justice Department of Arak claimed that Mina had attempted suicide twice, including throwing herself from the prison’s second floor. The bruise around her eye is believed to be a result of severe blows to her head and forehead.

Yalda Aghafazli spent four days in Evin and was then transferred to the notorious Qarchak Prison, where she endured intense beatings to make false confessions. In a phone call to a friend, Yalda recounted the extreme physical abuse she endured, saying she was beaten more in those 12-13 days than in all her 19 years of life. Although she did not express remorse, Yalda accepted responsibility for her actions and the riots, shouting and screaming under torture until she lost her voice. After being released on bail, Yalda was in high spirits. However, two days later, on November 11, she died in suspicious circumstances.

Dr. Maryam Arvin was an accomplished lawyer who obtained her doctorate in law at age 28. Dr. Arvin had been arrested for defending detained protesters free of charge as part of her professional work. She was released on temporary bail on 13 December 2022, but tragically passed away two months later.

It has been speculated that prison authorities provide prisoners with some type of pills or injections that, after several days, have a similar effect to a drug overdose, which may lead the prisoner to take their own life.
SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE

Since the 1980s, rape and sexual assault have been used by the clerical regime as a means to break resistant opponents, including female and male prisoners. This inhuman tactic has also been used on young women and men protesting in the streets since September of last year. Victims of sexual assault have shared harrowing stories of sexual harassment and abuse. The use of sexual assault against incarcerated protesters, particularly women, is so extensive that foreign media has reported on it. CNN corroborated several reports of sexual violence against protesters, including severe injury and the rape of an underage boy. In some cases, sources have reported that the sexual assault was filmed and used to blackmail protesters into silence.

One victim of such brutality is Armita Abbassi, who was gang-raped in prison multiple times and rushed to the hospital on October 17. She had been bleeding from rectum due to repeated rape. The medical staff reported Armita’s case, and at least four or five medics confirmed that she had been raped in custody. Police prevented staff from speaking to Armita, and security forces removed her from the hospital through a rear entrance just before her family arrived.

Elaheh Jabbari, a psychology graduate from Tehran University, was found injured and sexually assaulted in a street in Tehran on 9 December 2022. She had been kidnapped by security forces on December 5 and taken to an unknown location for three days of interrogation. Recent reports indicate that two young women arrested in October were sexually assaulted in Tehran by two IRGC officers identified as Alireza Sadeghi and Alireza Hosseini. Additionally, three female detainees were reportedly sexually assaulted in a detention center in Zahedan.

On 21 February 2023, CNN reported that a young woman had been sexually assaulted by her three interrogators in an IRGC detention center in Zahedan, southeastern Iran. These heinous acts demonstrate the cruelty of the clerical regime towards those who protest against its policies.

DEATH UNDER TORTURE

The brutality and torture inflicted on detained protesters in Iranian prisons have resulted in the deaths of dozens.

Among them was Neda Bayat, a courageous young woman who protested by climbing on top of a State Security vehicle in the early days of the uprising. She was violently brought down by the Morality Police and disappeared ever since. Subsequently she was raped and her skull was smashed under interrogation. She died under torture in Zanjan on November 26.

Another victim was Sepideh Qalandari, a young Kurdish woman from Mahabad who was arrested in Tehran in November. Despite enduring torture, Sepideh did not survive and her body was handed over to her family on 1 January 2023, on the condition they remain silent regarding the atrocity.

The loss of these innocent lives underscores the inhumane conditions and practices in Iranian prisons.
Iran has arrested dozens of journalists and photographers during the past six months in an attempt to prevent the dissemination of news and information about the suppression of protests. The International Federation of Journalists estimated that 71 journalists, half of them women, were arrested since the beginning of the protests on 16 September 2022. Some 20 people, including 13 women, are still in jail. Reporters Without Borders described the detention of reporters and journalists as a sign of massive repression and placed Iran in 178th place among 180 countries in the World Press Freedom index.

The Committee to Protect Journalists announced Iran as the top jailer of journalists in 2022. The CPJ also noted that Iranian authorities have imprisoned a record number of female journalists. Some of them have been released temporarily on bail.

1. Nilufar Hamedi, a journalist and reporter at Sharq newspaper, was arrested on 22 September 2022, in Tehran.
2. Elaheh Mohammadi, a journalist and reporter at Ham Mihan newspaper, was arrested in Tehran on 23 September 2022.
3. Vida Rabbani, a freelance journalist at Sharq newspaper, was arrested in Tehran on 23 September 2022, and was sentenced to 7 years and three months in prison on December 31.
4. Nasrin Hassani, a journalist at Eftegahieh magazine, was arrested on 30 September 2022, at her workplace in Bojnourd.
5. Farkhondeh Ashoori, a freelance journalist and former reporter at Fars news agency, was arrested in Shiraz on 17 October 2022.
6. Farzaneh Yahya Abadi, a local journalist, was arrested in Abadan on 19 October 2022.
7. Mandana Sadeghi, a journalist, was arrested on 19 October 2022, with her husband at their home in Abadan.
8. Malieheh Daraki, a freelance photojournalist in Shiraz, was arrested on 26 October 2022, while covering a protest in Abadan.
9. Maral Darafarin, a local journalist and a women’s rights activist in Gilan Province, was arrested in Lahijan on 1 November 2022.
10. Fahimeh Nazari, a journalist at Entekhab news website, was arrested on 13 November 2022, at her workplace in Tehran.
11. Ziba Omidifar, a journalist at Kurdpress, was arrested in Oorveh on 8 December 2022. She was subjected to severe torture and harassment in the detention center of the IRGC Intelligence Organization. Hence, they transferred her to Kowsar Hospital in Sanandaj after a week.
12. Melika Hashemi, a freelance journalist, was arrested on 21 January 2023, after being summoned to Evin Prosecutor’s Office in Tehran.
13. Saeedeh Shafiei, a freelance journalist, was arrested at her home in Tehran on 22 January 2023.
In more than five and a half months since the Iranian people’s uprising, there have been numerous deaths among protestors. The clerical regime’s security forces, plainclothes agents, Basij, IRGC, and intelligence agents have killed at least 750 protesters. The names of 644 of the slain protesters, including 84 women and over 70 children have been obtained and verified. However, the clerical regime has falsely attributed these deaths to accidents, suicides, underlying diseases, poisoning, and other false narratives.

This report focuses on the regime’s false narratives over the killing of female protestors. Cases related to protesting youths and men have not been included.

It is crucial to highlight that the clerical regime exerts extraordinary pressure on the families of those killed in the protests. They instruct families to either remain silent about their child’s death or to appear on state television and confirm the regime’s false narrative. Otherwise, their other children would suffer the same fate.

Security and intelligence services go to extreme lengths to pressure families to cooperate. They do not release the child’s body until the family promises to cooperate, and in some cases, they try to force families to register their slain children with the regime’s Martyrs Foundation in exchange for money.

Amnesty International’s report on 13 October 2022, highlighted examples of state cover-up efforts, including the cases of two 16 year-old girls, Nika Shakarami and Sarina Esmailzadeh.

Security forces fatally beat them on their heads, and intelligence and security forces subjected their families to intense harassment and intimidation to coerce them into recording video statements reiterating the official narrative that their children committed “suicide” by jumping off a roof.

Amnesty International also reported that security forces fired both metal pellets and live ammunition at 17 year-old Amir Mehdi Farrokhipour during protests in Tehran on September 28. According to informed sources, he died from gunshot wounds in his chest, while intelligence officials forced his father to record a video statement stating that his son died during a car accident, threatening to kill or otherwise harm his daughters if he refused.

The following is a summary of the false narratives that the clerical regime has spread about the deaths of women and girls killed during Iran protests.
Dr. Ayda Rostami

On December 12, while visiting patients in the Ekbatan district of Tehran, Dr. Rostami went to a pharmacy to obtain bandages and gauze but never returned. The police contacted her family on December 13 to inform them of her death, which they claimed was due to a car accident. The Forensics Office was ordered to attribute her death to “being struck by a hard object” in an “accident.”

When Rostami’s family saw her body, they were shocked to find that she had been killed under torture, with a smashed face and nose, broken arms, and an enucleated eye. Her body also bore the scars of sexual assault, and the police have yet to show her family the location of the accident or her car.

Despite public outrage, the Judiciary issued a false narrative on December 17, claiming that Dr. Rostami had thrown herself off a pedestrian bridge after an argument with her boyfriend.

Mahsa Amini

At the beginning of the protests in mid-September, Iranian authorities denied any responsibility for the death of Mahsa Amini. She fell into a coma after being brutalized and struck repeatedly in the head. Despite three days of hospitalization, she died due to brain death, a fractured skull, and internal bleeding. The authorities claimed that her death was due to a chronic illness, but her family’s lawyer stated that the bleeding from the back of her neck and ear was due to external trauma, and her father confirmed that she had never been ill.

Many of the girls arrested on the same day as Mahsa, called her father and told him that security forces had beaten Mahsa. Despite these claims, officials refused to publish the complete footage of cameras at the time of arrest, the images from inside the Morality Police van, and the Vozara detention center, presenting only selected parts of the footage from the Vozara detention center. The commander of the State Security Force in Greater Tehran, Hossein Rahimi, claimed that it was impossible to air all the footage due to its length. Mahsa Amini’s family has been pressurized not to talk to the media about her death, and officials have failed to provide any answers about the reason for their daughter’s death, passing her father around from one agency to the other.

Her father, Hashem Saedi, revealed in an Instagram post on 29 November 2022, that he was forced to give the interview aired on state television. He also said that he had been offered money by the security of his daughter’s school to keep silent about her death.

Sarina Saedi

Sarina Saedi, 16, suffered a brain hemorrhage during protests in Sanandaj on October 26 after being beaten and hit with a baton on the head. She died in the hospital the next day. The governor of Sanandaj said her death had been caused by drugs.

Her father, Hashem Saedi, revealed in an Instagram post on 29 November 2022, that he was forced to give the interview aired on state television. He also said that he had been offered money by the security of his daughter’s school to keep silent about her death.

Sepideh Qalandari

Sepideh (Bigard) Qalandari, a young Kurdish woman, was killed under torture but her death was falsely attributed by Iranian authorities to an illness. Her family was pressured into silence about her death, and her father was threatened not to speak to the press or media.

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Sarina Esmailzadeh
Sarina Esmailzadeh was a brilliant and energetic girl who recorded everything she did and posted them on YouTube. The initial reports on Sarina’s death indicated that she had been killed under the blows of batons to her head during a protest in her hometown, Mehrshahr, on September 21. Iranian authorities claimed that Sarina had committed suicide by jumping from the 5th floor of a building adjacent to her grandmother’s residence. (The state-run Entekhab.ir, 7 October 2022)

Subsequently, a woman appeared on state television claiming to be Sarina’s mother. She was calm and completely in control of herself despite the terrible loss of such a lovely daughter. She said Sarina was not opposed to the mandatory Hijab, was busy with her studies, and would not participate in such protests. These statements contradicted all the videos left by Sarina and are still available on her YouTube channel.

Social media users questioned whether the woman was actually her mother due to inconsistencies in photos and videos.

Nika Shakarami
Nika Shakarami, 17, was killed by “repeated blunt force trauma to the head” as indicated in her death certificate. However, the authorities claimed that she had committed suicide by jumping from a tall building. She had talked to her mother several times on September 20, the day she disappeared. In one call, her mother said, she and her friends were escaping from security forces. Ten days later, when her family found Nika’s body, it did not seem like someone who had jumped from a height.

The state television, however, aired a program in which Nika’s aunt and uncle said she had committed suicide by jumping from a building in their neighborhood. Intelligence services had arrested Nika’s aunt and uncle and forced them under torture to endorse the regime’s narrative. Nika’s mother rejects the official narrative. “My daughter was killed in the protests on the same day that she disappeared. I personally saw my daughter’s body... The back of her head showed that she had suffered a very severe blow as her skull had caved in. That’s how she was killed.” (Radio Farda, 7 October 2022)

Nasrin Shakarami said Nika was fearless, outspoken, and opposed the Morality Police. She said Nika was not a depressed girl but wanted to bring about change.

Darya Nazmdeh
Darya Nazmdeh, 27, left home with her friends on 3 November 2022, to participate in the 40th day memorial of the slain protester, Hadis Najafi. On their way back, they encountered the IRGC Sarullah Corps. They fired tear gas at the protesters, and clashes ensued. One of Darya’s friends testified that she had been beaten and violently pushed into the Sarullah van and taken away.

After two weeks, Darya’s family found her body in the morgue of Behesht-e Sakineh cemetery in Karaj. Her mother saw bruises on Darya’s face and cheeks, but there were no broken bones. Security services told Darya’s family that they should publicly confirm that their daughter had been killed in a car accident to receive her body. And that if they talked about Darya’s arrest by IRGC forces afterwards, they would suffer the same fate. The family received the death certificate two weeks later with the date of death registered a week before Darya’s arrest. In addition, the cause of death was mentioned as being hit by a hard object and shock caused by the trauma, meaning that she was hit by a car, not that the blows of baton to her head and face caused her death.
Kobra Sheikheh Saqqa and Fereshteh Ahmadi

On October 27, the funeral ceremony of a slain protester in Mahabad led to widespread protests. Vahed Soltani was on the balcony of his house when he saw people in green military uniforms targeting their street and home with a volley of live ammunition. He ran down the stairs and saw his wife, Kobra Sheikheh Saqqa, shot in the neck. She died instantly.

The authorities pressured Mr. Soltani to publicly declare that an unidentified car with no license plate had shot his wife, but he refused.

The governor of Mahabad and security officials also repeatedly called Mr. Soltani to convince him to register his wife as a martyr of the Islamic Republic, but they failed.

On the same day, Fereshteh Ahmadi, 32, was shot in the chest by state security forces during the protests in Mahabad on 27 October 2022, as she was standing on the roof of her house. Her family and relatives were summoned and pressured by the intelligence department.

The Chief Justice of West Azerbaijan, claimed that the shot had been fired from inside the victim’s house. But Fereshteh’s brother, Ebrahim Ahmadi, denied his claim and emphasized that their family were confident that the Iranian regime forces had killed Fereshteh Ahmadi. (Hengaw.net, 2 November 2022)

Negin Abdolmaleki

Negin Abdolmaleki, 21, was a medical engineering student at the Industrial University of Hamedan. During a protest in Hamedan on 11 October 2022, security forces repeatedly hit her in the head by batons. A severely injured Negin returned to the dormitory, where she died due to severe bleeding.

Security forces threatened eyewitnesses and her family, forcing them to say that Negin had been intoxicated by expired canned fish.

Ghazaleh Ghasemi

Ghazaleh Ghasemi, 26, had a Bachelor of Biology and worked in an animal clinic. She was killed by government troops with a heavy blow to the head at 10 p.m. on 1 October 2022. Government officials said that the cause of Ghazaleh Ghasemi’s death was an accident, while her death certificate stated that a heavy blow to the head killed her.

Behnaz Afshari

Behnaz Afshari was a college student. She left home on October 26 to participate in the protests in Tehran. Her body was found after five days in forensic medicine. Security officers told her family that she had committed suicide in a hotel.

Her relatives, however, reject this narrative and say she was happy and actively participated in recent protests.
Nasrin Qaderi
Tehran University Ph.D. student Nasrin Qaderi, 38, was in a coma following multiple blows to her head. The state security forces in Tehran hit her head by batons during a November 4 protest in Tehran, where she studied philosophy. She died in a hospital on November 5.
State forces secretly buried her in a local cemetery in Marivan early morning. The clerical regime’s official news agency, IRNA, claimed on November 6 that she had died due to a “chronic disease.” And again, on November 10, the Judiciary’s media center claimed that her death was due to the consumption of methanol (non-edible alcohol) and the poisoning caused by it.

Donya Farhadi
The lifeless body of Donya Farhadi, 22, was found on the banks of Karun River in Ahvaz on 15 December 2022. Donya Farhadi was studying architecture at the Azad University of Ahvaz, the capital of Khuzestan province. She had been missing since December 7, the Student’s Day. State media attributed Donya Farhadi’s death to “self-inflicted jumping from the bridge and drowning in the Karun River.”
But in January it was revealed that Donya had been shot three times in the chest.

Arnika Qaem Maghami
Arnika Qaem Maghami, 17, was hit in the head by consecutive blows of a hard object (probably a baton) during protests in Tehran. She suffered brain death and a fractured neck vertebra. Security forces deliberately took her to a military hospital.
By forcing her father to give a television interview, the clerical regime claims that Arnika Qaem Maghami jumped down from the balcony and committed suicide.
“On Saturday morning, we went with my wife to wake up the child to go to school, we saw that the window was open, and the child had fallen in the yard... She was in the ICU for 8 days and died the following Saturday.”

Kian Pirfalak
During the crackdown on the protests in Izeh, Khuzestan Province, on 16 November 2022, security forces opened fire on a family passing by in their car. Kian Pirfalak, 9, was killed on the spot, and his father, Maysam Pirfalak, was severely injured. Zeynab Molaei Rad, Kian’s mother, declared that security forces and plainclothes agents told her husband to turn around and leave the area, but they started shooting at them when her husband made a U turn.
The state media, however, refuted Mrs. Molaei’s remarks, saying she had no documents to prove. Security forces subsequently arrested several protesters in Izeh to introduce them as murderers of Kian, something that the Pirfalak family rejected outright. Kian had already had many inventions and wanted to become an engineer and an inventor.
The NCRI Women’s Committee compiled a list of women killed by repressive forces during the Iran uprising 2022. The number of women whose names have been verified so far is 84, including 4 girls between 7 and 8 years old and a 12-year-old girl.

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(L-R) Narges Khorrami Fard, lawyer; Zohreh Shamasi, Maryam Soleimanian, Ariana Seif

(L-R) Dr. Maryam Ghorbanpour, Bahar Khorshidi, Kimia Moghaddasi, Maryam Esmailzadeh

(L-R) Fatemeh Rahimi, 16, Soha Etebari, 12, Setayesh Sharifinia, 16, Shideh Aliparast

(L-R) Mohabbat Mozaffari, lawyer, Zarbibi Esmael Zehi, Maryam Arvin, lawyer, Negin Salehi
The uprising sparked by the death of the innocent young woman, Mahsa Amini, instantly rocked and swept Iran. The glorious movement that has endured and lasted to this day despite the clerical regime’s utmost brutality evoked unprecedented support around the world, particularly for the brave women of Iran. The people’s courageous stand on the streets of almost every city and town in Iran met the awe and respect of the free world since its first day. From Human rights organizations, the United Nations’ various agencies and top authorities, various foreign ministries, the world’s female foreign ministers, to the world nations’ decision to hold a Special Session on November 24, approving the formation of a fact-finding mission to investigate the human rights violations in Iran during the uprising. The international solidarity also led to the unprecedented move by the UN to remove the Iranian regime from the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW), which was the Iranian Resistance’s demand since the outset when the regime was elected as a CSW member. The NCRI Women’s Committee in a statement on 23 April 2021, called the regime’s CSW membership a disgrace and a step against women’s rights and human rights, which allowed the regime to step up the suppression and marginalization of Iranian women. It also emphasized that the membership was an insult to Iranian women who have struggled against this medieval regime for more than four decades to regain their rights. These stances were what we reiterated in every article, statement, meeting, and conference. However, the Iranian women’s courageous leadership of the uprising and the price they paid opened eyes and ears and led the world to the right conclusions and decisions at the right time. The world needs to continue to listen to the voices of the Iranian people and their brave women. Today, the Iranian people are taking their final steps in their quest for freedom, to establish a democratically elected republic, and end all forms of dictatorship. In an uneven conflict with heavily armed forces of suppression, they are rightfully resisting with what they have, rocks, their honor, blood, sweat and tears. When inalienable and God-given rights cannot be secured through peaceful means in the face of a brutal dictatorship lacking any legitimacy, it is incumbent upon women and men of honor to secure them through organized, responsible and self-sacrificing struggle by any means within the bounds of internationally recognized covenants. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right “to have recourse as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression.” The United States Declaration of Independence, too, holds that “it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish” a government that is destructive to its citizens’ life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Faced with ruthless violence from well-armed security forces exhorted to show no mercy and a regime that seeks no less than their wholesale massacre to continue its control and enslavement of the citizenry, there is only one recourse of last resort. The free world needs to lend greater support to the democratic revolution for which our empty-handed compatriots and the courageous women and youths of Iran are laying down their lives. NCRI Women’s Committee March 2023