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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Joint written statement* submitted by International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, International Educational Development, Inc., a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Human Rights Violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the world has witnessed grave violations being committed in the open, with systematic impunity prevailing and no hope for impartial mechanisms to seek justice. The current situation of the Iranian people is an example of the systematic failure in the application of human rights to constrain state power.

From 16th of September 2022, when Masha Amini was murdered by members of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Guidance Patrol in Tehran, to March 2023 the Islamic Republic of Iran was gripped by anti-government protests. In response, the government has illegally used lethal and excessive force against protestors contrary to the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force, UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, and the ICCPR. Furthermore, there have been a high number of summary executions.

The murder of Masha Amini and the Iranian government's aggressive response caused widespread outrage, inciting nationwide protests where Iranian people came together to protest against the authoritarian regime in a movement that showcased the resilience of women's groups and civil society actors who work to repeal draconian laws and rectify the systematic oppression faced by women in the country. The work thus far, and the courage displayed by women and girls that are leading the revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran, has been acknowledged by many UN member states.

The Iranian government has regrettably persisted in using the death penalty to punish people for exercising their basic rights of participating in or organizing peaceful demonstrations. This ignores the strong condemnation of the Human Rights Council and Special Procedure mandate holders who called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to facilitate peaceful protests, and restrain its unnecessary use of enforce against protestors. The recent murder of three participants in the protests - Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi and Saeed Yaqoubi - brings the number to a total of 259 executions since January 2023, but the true numbers are expected to be higher.

Action in response to these human rights violations has been muted, which has serious consequences, not least to protect the hundreds of other detained protestors who are imminently at risk of a similar fate.

Unfortunately, responses to the death of Masha Amini are emblematic of the critical situation the country is facing more broadly. The recent human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran represents the myriad of indignities Iranians have suffered for decades. There is much more the international community can do to galvanize these positive responses and to hold the Iranian government to account.

On top of the extensive domestic human rights abuses within the Islamic Republic of Iran, there are widespread reports of the interferences of the Islamic Republic of Iran against other nations, such as Yemen, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, by using its brutal revolutionary guard and militias. The Islamic Republic of Iran has promoted sectarian violence by trading weapons with military groups and states with no consideration for human rights and the atrocities that have been committed against civilians.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Influence on the Conflict in Yemen

The armed conflict in Yemen, which began in 2014 when Houthi forces took control of Yemen's capital, has resulted in one of the largest ongoing humanitarian crises in the world. Thus far, more than 150,000 people have been killed, including 14,500 civilians. Not only are Yemeni civilians dying, they are facing severe and persistent human rights violations; more than twenty million Yemeni civilians are experiencing food insecurity with ten million being at risk of famine; children are being recruited as soldiers throughout the war in Yemen; there are reports of arbitrary detention and torture, including sexual violence; violence against women; increase in child marriage from 52% in 2016 to two thirds in 2017; amongst other heinous violations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has played a major role in the Yemeni conflict. They supported the Islamic Republic of Iran-aligned Houthi movement since the beginning of the war with the UN previously noting that Tehran armed the Houthis with many small arms, military manufacturing components and drone technologies, in addition to more advanced and lethal weapons. Despite their denials in public, on the 6th of January 2023, the United States of America's Navy seized more than 2,000 assault rifles from a ship which came from the Islamic Republic of Iran, bound for Yemen. Furthermore, since 2019, the Islamic Republic of Iran has proclaimed the recognition of the Supreme Political Council in Yemen as the sole "legitimate government", inciting political unrest.

Iranian investments in Yemen have allowed Houthis to strengthen their political and military power. The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the Houthis as part of an 'axis of resistance' against Israel and the United States of America. Though it is difficult to quantify how much of the Houthi's success is due to these investments, it is undeniable that it has allowed the Houthi movement to pursue their interest in the region. Ultimately, such interest is resulting in an exceedingly large number of human rights violations being committed in Yemen.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Influence on the Conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic

2023 marks twelve years of the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Comparably to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic began in March 2011 due to pro-democracy demonstrations erupting against the government whose overreaction to peaceful demonstrations incited political unrest.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's influence over the conflict is direct and wide-reaching. It is a key ally of the Syrian government and continues to increase its military power presence within the Syrian Arab Republic by its own militias and those recruited locally.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's soft-power investment and military engagement in the Syrian Arab Republic has undeniably increased the violations in the country and the targeting of certain groups on sectarian basis.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Influence in Iraq

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been known to exert significant influence in Iraq since the 2003 the United States of America-led invasion. The Islamic Republic of Iran has strong relationships with Iraqi Shi'a political and religious leaders. Additionally, the Islamic Republic of Iran has supported various Shi'a armed groups in Iraq, such as the Badr Organization, one of Iraq's most powerful armed groups providing them with weapons, funding, and training by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), part of the Iranian armed forces. On the pretext of helping Iraq to fight ISIS, the Islamic Republic of Iran integrated further into Iraq's government, becoming the largest faction within state security forces and embedded with Iraqi political parties. Consequently, it has played a crucial role in leading the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (the umbrella of the different Shi'a militias), but also in carrying out armed activities across different regions of Iraq targeting civilians and those without links to militia groups.

With regard to Iraq's political process, the Islamic Republic of Iran frequently intervenes to support its allies in the Iraqi government and Parliament. This has resulted in the Islamic Republic of Iran having significant sway over key political decisions. The illegal interference has not stopped there. Recently the Islamic Republic of Iran has attacked northern Iraq where it confirmed that it had hit three different areas with missiles and drones hurting dozens of civilians. The ongoing campaign of cross-border violence by the Islamic Republic of Iran jeopardizes the sovereignty and stability of Iraq and the wider region.

Finally, the Islamic Republic of Iran has also been accused of using its economic leverage in Iraq, including through trade and investment, to further its political interests. The Islamic Republic of Iran is increasingly focused on securing access to the Iraqi market by pushing the Islamic Republic of Iran's paramilitary networks in the parliament to change and control also the economic policy in favor of Iranian investors and exporters against other types of competitors in the country.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The signatory organizations strongly condemn the Islamic Republic of Iran's human rights violations within its territory and through its interventions in Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, and call upon the international community to take action to protect the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other nations from further violations. We recommend the Human Rights Council to do the following:

- urge the abolition of the death penalty in the Islamic Republic of Iran and encourage the government to establish a moratorium on executions as a first step towards eventual abolition.
- condemning the Islamic Republic of Iran's interferences in the conflicts in Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and its incitement of political unrest within the region using false narratives.
- Establish an independent international fact-finding Mission to investigate all human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran and its violations in the region.
- urge the authorities to respond to people's demands for equality, dignity and respect for human rights, rather than using unnecessary and disproportionate force to repress peaceful protests.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), Just Atonement Inc., Arab Lawyers Association-UK, Human Rights Defenders (HRD), The Brussels Tribunal, Iraqi Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), Association of Humanitarian Lawyers (AHL), Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRD), NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.