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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement submitted by Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

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

[17 August 2026]

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



The Islamic Republic of Iran: Behind Every Execution, a Life and a Family Shattered

I. Purpose of the statement

Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme urges the Human Rights Council and the international community to focus on the alarming scale of the death penalty in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Behind the figures lies a human reality: every execution ends a life and shatters a family. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the death penalty does not serve criminal justice. It is used as an instrument of state intimidation, designed to silence dissent and spread fear across society.

This statement relies primarily on Centre Zagros's verified documentation - names, dates, prisons, charges, and direct testimony from families or local networks. Confirmed cases are strictly distinguished from those pending verification, and records are cross-checked with published data from the 'Iran Human Rights Society' (Iran HRS), the 'Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran' (CFPPI) and the 'Hengaw Organization for Human Rights' (Hengaw). State secrecy makes it impossible to document every execution, but this victim-centred approach establishes a credible minimum baseline.

II. An Escalating, Hidden Practice

Iran HRS reports at least 894 executions across the Islamic Republic of Iran during the first six months of 2026 - nearly five a day. This is its documented count, not a consensus figure: Hengaw's monthly reports identify at least 375 over the same period. The gap reflects different sources and verification thresholds amid official secrecy. It cannot obscure the central fact that hundreds of lives were taken without a complete public record.

In July 2026, Hengaw verified the identities of 67 people executed that month, among them two women. Only eight of those 67 executions - 12 per cent - were officially announced; seven were carried out in secret, with no notice to the family and no final visit. Two took place in public, turning urban space into a display of intimidation. Capital punishment remains wrapped in state-imposed silence: prisoners are isolated in their final hours, and grieving families are threatened if they speak out or honour their dead.

III. When the death penalty becomes a political language

At least nine of the people executed in July 2026 were political prisoners, prisoners of conscience, or citizens arrested during the January 2026 protests and the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. Vaguely defined security charges - moharebeh ("enmity against God"), efsad-e fel-arz ("corruption on earth"), espionage and other national-security offences - have been applied to protest, media activity and alleged associations, exposing defendants to death sentences.

Documented cases illustrate the pattern:

- Aref Khoshkar, executed at Ghezel Hesar Prison on 15 July 2026 after being detained in connection with the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement; • Erfan Esfandiari and Afghan national Gol Mohammad Mohammadi, executed in Isfahan on 19 July 2026 after the January protests;
- Abolfazl Sepahi and Amir Hossein Safari, publicly hanged in Isfahan on 28 July 2026 after protest-related arrests;
- Javad Zamani and Abolfazl Saeidi, executed earlier in Semnan after proceedings lacking transparency and effective access to counsel, according to CFPPI.

These cases show the political function of executions, especially public hangings. They create fear and silence, raising grave concerns under the Islamic Republic of Iran's obligations on fair trial, freedom of expression and the right to life.

IV. Trials that Undermine the Right to Life

Because capital punishment is irreversible, international law requires the utmost judicial safeguards. Yet the documented record shows warrantless arrests, prolonged incommunicado detention, denial of a lawyer of one's choosing, closed hearings, and convictions resting on contested confessions. Hengaw has documented beatings, sexual violence, threats of rape, and mock executions used to coerce young protesters into signing self-incriminating statements.

CFPPI reports that twelve protesters in Isfahan faced the death penalty after rushed hearings without effective defence. Hengaw separately documented the executions of Erfan Esfandiari and Gol Mohammad Mohammadi on 19 July, and the public hangings of Abolfazl Sepahi and Amir Hossein Safari on 28 July. Articles 6, 7 and 14 of the ICCPR protect life, prohibit torture, and guarantee fair-trial rights. When families are denied case files, lawyers are obstructed, and confessions are extracted under torture, execution makes injustice permanent.

V. Poverty and Discrimination at the Gallows

The death penalty continues to be imposed for drug-related offences and disproportionately affects people from impoverished or marginalised communities. CFPPI reports that prisoners at Ghezel Hesar began a hunger strike after six inmates were moved to solitary confinement ahead of execution. In a video message from the prison, they said poverty had driven their offences and appealed for clemency. Their cases show how closely capital convictions can follow poverty.

Kurdish, Baloch and other ethnic or religious minorities remain at heightened risk. In July 2026, Hengaw documented ten Kurdish and five Baloch prisoners among those executed. Limited access to counsel, language barriers, poverty and pressure on relatives can further restrict a defence. Afghan nationals may face additional isolation, particularly when interpretation or consular assistance is inadequate.

Women may face compounded discrimination under qisas (retribution-in-kind) provisions, which allow a murder victim's family to seek execution. In domestic homicide cases, domestic violence, forced marriage, economic dependence or self-defence may receive too little weight. Setayesh Mohammadipour was executed in Shiraz and Azam Gerami in Yasuj in July 2026. No woman should face death without genuine consideration of her circumstances, including any violence she endured.

VI. Death Penalty Against Children

Meysam Irandegani, an 18-year-old Baloch youth, was executed at Iranshahr Prison on 21 July 2026 for an alleged offence committed when he was 14 years old. His execution confirms that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to apply capital punishment to people who were children at the time of the alleged offence.

Waiting until a juvenile offender reaches adulthood does not change their age when the act occurred. This practice violates an absolute prohibition under international law, set out in Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 6 of the ICCPR. Executing someone for an offence committed as a child empties juvenile rehabilitation of meaning and breaches the Islamic Republic of Iran's treaty obligations.

VII. The courage of those who refuse silence

Inside the Islamic Republic of Iran's prisons, condemned detainees - political and non-political alike - are speaking out together in a remarkable act of collective resistance. CFPPI

documented a prolonged hunger strike at Ghezel Hesar in July 2026. Reports then described solidarity and anti-execution protests in other prisons, including Adelabad in Shiraz.

Reports of overcrowding and of prisoners from different legal categories being held together raise separate concerns under Rules 11 and 12 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules): Rule 11 requires appropriate separation, while Rule 12 requires adequate accommodation. Prisoners joining anti-execution strikes seek no privileges; they defend life, dignity and due process. Attempts to make their plight known must not be answered with harsher punishment.

Centre Zagros acknowledges the bravery of prisoners' families, dedicated lawyers, principled journalists, and human rights defenders who verify names, locate detainees, and mobilize campaigns against executions. Under international law, these individuals must be protected from state persecution.

VIII. Recommendations and urgent appeal

Centre Zagros calls on Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately implement an official, verifiable moratorium on all executions as a step toward full abolition;
- Commute all existing death sentences and halt all pending hangings;
- Refrain from executing anyone who was a child at the time of the alleged offence;
- Prohibit executions for non-lethal conduct, including drug-related and protest-related offences, and in every case where basic fair-trial guarantees were denied;
- Ensure immediate access to an independent lawyer of choice from the moment of arrest;
- Exclude all confessions obtained under torture, coercion, or solitary confinement;
- Notify families and legal counsel before executions take place, ending secret and public executions;
- Regularly publish execution data, disaggregated by charge, sex, age, origin, and place of detention;
- Allow families receiving a loved one's body to mourn in peace without surveillance or intimidation.

Centre Zagros calls on the Human Rights Council and Member States to:

- Speak out publicly and use urgent protection mechanisms in cases of imminent execution;
- Protect individuals engaged in essential data collection and dissemination;
- Support secure documentation and preservation of evidence;
- Press for judicial independence and an end to interference by security bodies in capital cases.

Article 6 of the ICCPR obliges States that have not abolished capital punishment to confine it to the most serious crimes and to the strictest procedural safeguards. The Council has both the authority and the responsibility to act when those limits are so plainly disregarded.

[1] Centre Zagros pour les Droits de l'Homme, own documentation and monitoring of death sentences and executions in Iran, 2025–2026; public summaries: <https://zagros-centre.org/>.

[2] Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI), Die in Prison or Die by Execution During War, July 2026, and Monthly Publication – July 2026, published on 1 August 2026: <https://cfppi.org/>.

[3] Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, statistical reports on executions, January–July 2026, and investigation into mock executions, January 2026: <https://hengaw.net/en/reports-and-statistics-1/2026/08/article-1>; <https://hengaw.net/en/reports-and-statistics-1/2026/01/article-8>.

[4] Iran Human Rights Society (Iran HRS), Executions in Iran, first half of 2026: <https://iranhrs.org/iran-executions-first-half-2026-statistical-report/>.