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Council of Australian
Postgraduate Associations

Review of the listing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a state sponsor of terrorism under the Criminal Code

**your national
postgrad voice.**

Compiled with the assistance of the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) office bearers and their affiliated member organisations.

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Introduction

The Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Review of the listing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a state sponsor of terrorism under the Criminal Code. CAPA is the peak body representing the interests of the over 570,000 postgraduate students in Australia. We represent both domestic and international coursework and research postgraduates. The Council is comprised of 29 university and campus-based postgraduate associations, and collaborates closely with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association (NATSIPA). CAPA carries out its mission through policy, research, and advocacy, communicating the interests and issues of postgraduate students to higher education stakeholders, Federal, State/Territory governments, Opposition parties, and minor parties.

Postgraduate Iranian students comprise approximately 85% of the Iranian student cohort in Australia and over 6% of international PhD candidates. They are a critical part of the postgraduate community, contributing to social and academic cohesion and enrichment.

CAPA recommends that the committee takes whatever measures necessary protect and support Iranian students in Australia from reprisal by the IRGC.

Background.

The IRGC was initially created by Ayatollah Khomeini during the 1978–1979 Islamic Revolution as an apparatus to ideologically protect the regime (Wehrey, 2009). In 2026, the IRGC is a central political and military body of the Iranian Islamic Republic. Therefore, they have been directly responsible for the extreme repression of Iranians in Iran, and abroad.



Tretykov (Tretyakov, 2025) notes that the IRGC “combines the functions of an armed formation, an economic entity and a political actor.” Historically, the arrival of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s Islamic Republic administration in 2005, heralded the introduction of the Revolutionary Guard into policy-making, resulting in its now prominent presence in the political system (Ikder, 2021).

Current and former IRGC leaders now comprise significant portions of the cabinet and senior positions in the government. Similarly, IRGC aligned members now occupy 51 seats in the parliament (Iran Wire, 2024). Resultingly, the IRGC wields direct influence through participation in strategic decisions and control over institutions, and networks within and outside of Iran to achieve its political objectives.

The IRGC also fills another vital role in the regime: indoctrination and ideological outreach. The IRGC relies extensively on its para-military, the Basij Resistance Force, which was merged into the IRGC’s in 2007. Resultingly, the IRGC is embedded and essential to the government (Wehrey, 2009).

Student Welfare.

An Australian study of over 6,500 students at two universities found that over 19 percent of students currently had a mental health disorder, while over 67 percent of students were experiencing sub-clinical distress (Stallman 2010). According to Stallman (2010, p. 254):

The vast majority of students (83.9%) reported elevated distress levels, which is significantly greater than that found in the general population (29%) (Australian

Bureau of Statistics 2008) suggesting that university students are a very high-risk population.

Mental health disorders and distress are also significantly more prevalent among PhD candidates than among undergraduates (Levecque et al. 2017). Indeed, a mixed-methods study of doctoral candidates in Australia found that these students report higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than are the norm for their age groups, and those that said they were 'behind' in their studies had 'significantly higher scores for depression, anxiety and stress' than those who said they were on track (Barry et al. 2018, p. 468).

Notably, Iranian postgraduates have been living in more acutely stressful conditions than the average student, with their families facing worsening inflation, drought and sustained restrictions on civil rights. This not only impacts their ability to support themselves, due to currency conversion, but generates additional anxiety over the wellbeing of their loved ones.

Consequently, the recent mass protests in Iran, which began on the 28th of December, have resulted in Iranian students facing increased wellbeing challenges. This was exacerbated when the government disabled all civilian telecommunications on January 8, and began using violent force against civilian protestors, resulting in the deaths of at least 12-20 thousand civilians (CBS News, 2026), 330,000 injured (Sunday Times, 2026). These massacres have been largely operationalised by the IRGC and its Basij Resistance Forces.

Our members report significant anxiety and fear of IRGC activities in Australia. Particularly, our members are concerned that their activities, whether in support or opposition to the Islamic Republic, are monitored and reported to the IRGC. As well, due to the internet blackout, they are unable to contact their loved ones, further impacting their wellbeing.

CAPA recommends that the committee takes whatever measures necessary protect and support Iranian students in Australia from reprisal by the IRGC.

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