



Qasim Child Foundation Ltd

ABN: 55639297411

Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

31 December 2022

Human Rights Implications of Recent Violence in Iran

Dear committee members,

The Qasim Child Foundation Ltd (The charity) is a not-for-profit charity organization registered in Australia with Australian Charities and not-for-profit Commissions (ACNC) and endorsed by Australian Taxation Office (ATO). This submission has been prepared by Mehdi Ghatei, founder, and director of the charity organization. The attached submission emphasizes on children's rights violation by the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in the past 44 years as well as the most recent violations.

Further details and evidence can be provided upon request.

Mehdi Ghatei
Founder and Director



Executive summary

The Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) conduct in the past 44 years specially in the Woman Life Freedom movement, is demonstrative of an illegitimate government. IRI's response to protests is not only affecting children but other vulnerable members of society. Australia must take urgent diplomatic action against the IRI, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and IRI officials. Diplomatic action is necessary to fulfil Australia's human rights policy objectives and ensure the safety of Australians by firmly shutting Australia out from serving as haven to IRI and IRGC activity.

Background

The murder-in-custody of 22-year-old Mahsa (Jina) Amini on 16 September 2022, has sparked an unprecedented female-led protest and uprising that continues to the present time, and is gaining momentum every day, despite the brutality of IRI to silence protesters and anyone connected with this movement. According to Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA)¹ at least 508 people including 69 children, have been killed by security forces in the current nationwide protests by 29 December 2022.

On 6 November 2022, 227 of the 290 members of IRI's parliament called on the judiciary to issue death sentences to each of the near 15,000² (this number is increased to more than 18,000 by the time of writing this letter) protesters currently detained for participating in the Woman Life Freedom movement³. Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavard were executed on 8 and 12 December 2022 respectively and many other protesters are sentenced to death. In the silence of the international community to IRI's human rights violation, we should expect majority of the protesters to be executed.

IRI's obligation to children's rights

IRI is a party to the Convention on the Rights of Child, and has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children to life, privacy, freedom of thought, and peaceful assembly⁴.

Most recent violation of children rights

In the first month of the unrest in Iran, Iranian schoolchildren were being arrested inside school premises by security forces arriving in vans without license plates, according to social media reports emerging from the country⁵.

1-<https://www.instagram.com/p/CmxQeftpUr6/?igshid=OGQ2MjdiOTE=>

2-<https://www.iranintl.com/en/202211068924>

3- <https://www.newsweek.com/iran-votes-execute-protesters-says-rebels-need-hard-lesson-1757931>

4-<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

5-<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/09/iranian-security-forces-arresting-children-in-school-reports-claim-state-tv-hackers>



Amnesty International's research has shown that Iran's security forces shot 34 of the identified child victims with live ammunition in the heart, head or other vital organs. At least four were killed by metal pellets unlawfully fired by the security forces at close range. Five other children, four girls and one boy, died from injuries consistent with fatal beatings, and one girl was killed after being struck on the head with a tear gas canister. The recorded child victims include 39 boys, aged between two and 17, and five girls, three of whom were 16 years old, one 17 years old, and one aged six.

The Iranian authorities' arbitrary arrest, intimidation, and harassment of relatives of children, unlawfully gunned down or beaten to death by security forces in connection with protests, exposes their inconceivable cruelty and sinister attempt to cover up their crimes.

Security and intelligence agents often threatened not to return the bodies of child victims for burial unless families commit, in writing, to remaining silent and observing restrictions on funeral and memorial ceremonies.

Over 60% of the children killed were from Iran's oppressed Baluchi and Kurdish minorities. These communities have long suffered from systemic discrimination and persecution by the authorities. Thirteen of the children were killed by security forces on 30 September in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province, during the deadliest day of the authorities' crackdown on the protests, widely known to Iranians as "Bloody Friday"⁶.

The IRI regime killed many children and denied its crime. Among these children, Kian Pirfalak, a 9-year-old child from Izeh, was killed by plainclothes forces, his mother said⁷.

The IRI also recruited many children to Basij (a branch of IRGC) to establish their Shiite ideology. It has been reported that children in uniforms of the Basij paramilitary forces, a branch of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), have been used to suppress the anti-government protesters in Iran⁸.

Other relevant violation of children's rights by IRI

Mass killing of protestors in 2019

Protests erupted across Iran on 15 November 2019, after the government announced a sudden gasoline price hike, spreading to more than 100 cities nationwide. Amnesty International has uncovered evidence that at least 23 children were killed by Iranian security forces in the nationwide protests that took place between 15 and 19 November 2019⁹.

6-<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/iran-authorities-covering-up-their-crimes-of-child-killings-by-coercing-families-into-silence/>

7-<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/11/18/iran-protests-izeh-kian-pirfalak/>

8-<https://www.rferl.org/a/farda-briefing-protests-crackdown-minors-oil-workers-esfandiari/32078103.html>

9-<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MDE1318942020ENGLISH.pdf>



Deadly repression of Khuzestan protests

On July 15, people in dozens of towns and cities in Khuzestan province, which has a large ethnic Arab population, took to the streets for several nights to protest not having clean water for days. As of July 28, human rights groups have verified the identities of at least nine people who were shot dead or died of injuries during the protests, including a 17-year-old boy, in Khuzestan and Lorestan provinces¹⁰.

Restrictions in naming children

IRI enforces parents to name their children from specific pre-determined names to issue them birth certificates. Some parents who don't abide by such a rule deprive themselves and their children of some basic rights as their children can't have birth certificates¹¹.

Mahsa (Zhina) Amini's parents call their daughter Zhina however her official name is Mahsa!¹²

Discriminatory policy for issuing birth certificate

For decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in repressive and discriminatory policies towards ethnic and religious minorities, creating a de-facto division between first and second-class citizens. One of the most serious legal measures causing such inequalities is a law that prevents children of mixed marriages from obtaining nationality. As a result, more than a million inhabitants of Iran do not enjoy fundamental rights such as those to education, health care, social security or decent work. Iran's two million-strong Baloch minority, for instance, who live in the undeveloped area near the border with Pakistan and Afghanistan, have been the victims of tremendous discrimination at the hands of the Iranian authorities, whose policies bar many Baloch people from full citizenship¹³.

Child labor

According to unofficial sources in Iran, the number of working children in Iran is between three million and seven million. This estimate does not include many of those working in small workshops, home-based businesses, and construction workshops. Due to the regime's lack of transparency in providing statistics, there is no exact figure for social harm, including child labor. A child without experience, knowledge, or skills will inevitably choose jobs such as garbage collection. Some teenage girls are suffering from long working hours (as many as 12 hours a day) with low wages in small sewing workshops¹⁴.

10-<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/29/iran-deadly-repression-khuzestan-protests>

11-<https://www.voanews.com/a/the-politics-of-iran-s-forbidden-names-/6580642.html>

12- <https://women.ncr-iran.org/2022/09/17/mahsa-amini-mother-zhina-wake-up/>

13-<https://unpo.org/article/21621>

14-<https://women.ncr-iran.org/2022/06/11/child-labor-poverty-in-iran/>



Separation of children from their mom

IRI separates children from their activist mothers. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe¹⁵ and Narges Mohammadi¹⁶ are just examples of many others. Based on a report Iranian regime official have ordered 1,800 children to be separated from their imprisoned mothers¹⁷.

Religious discrimination

IRI systematically discriminate between children from different religion. As an example, fifteen-year-old Adib Vai has been expelled from a school for gifted students in Karaj, west of Tehran, solely because he is a member of the banned Baha'i faith, his father told the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI)¹⁸.

Deprivation of learning mother tongue within minorities

Unfortunately, the first day for children from national minorities is not an enjoyable experience. It is a day when minority students experience their first cultural and language shock at the age of seven. They go from their homes and neighborhoods, where they speak their native tongue, and enter a totally foreign environment that not only does not allow students to even speak their mother tongue among themselves, but also subjects them to humiliation due to their accents or inability to speak Persian (Farsi), the only official language of Iran. Unfortunately, I had a similar experience in my childhood when I had to hide my cultural background for years and couldn't learn my mother tongue in school, except very limited classes. According to the minister of education, in 2012 70% of students who started their education in Iran did not have Farsi (Persian) as their mother tongue. After some 100 years of forced assimilation of non-Persian minorities in Iran, still the demand for education in one's mother tongue resurfaces every year to shake the monolingualistic education system in the Islamic Republic of Iran¹⁹.

Brainwash children and abusing them in military forces

Since 1979 when the IRI seized power, IRI brainwashed children as low as 12 years old given an intensive indoctrination in the Shiite tradition of martyrdom, and then sent weaponless into battle against Iraqi armor²⁰.

I'd like to share my personal experience too. When I was only 13 years old (year 7) some of the security forces with coordination of the school principal came to our school and brainwashed us to join the front line of the battle to defend our country during the war between Iran and Iraq.

15-<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-iran-women-drama-idUSKBN1CF2FK>

16-<https://iranhumanrights.org/2019/10/political-prisoner-narges-mohammadi-has-been-separated-from-her-children-for-five-years-and-counting/>

17-<https://women.ncr-iran.org/2019/01/31/1800-children-separated-mothers/>

18-<https://iranhumanrights.org/2020/07/bahai-youth-expelled-from-secondary-school-for-gifted-students-solely-due-to-his-faith/>

19- <https://unpo.org/article/21115>

20-<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/02/12/magazine/iran-five-years-of-fanaticism.html>



As we were underage, they distributed some forms between us to fill out and ask our parents to sign them off. Fortunately, when I took one of these forms to my parents, they refused to sign it. I could have been one of the so many innocent children who were killed during the war.

Sexual assault

Many children have been sexually assaulted by clerics and Koran teachers. At least four plaintiffs brought allegations against 46-year-old Saeed Tusi, who is known for reciting the Koran at state events attended by senior officials, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, however, Mr. Tusi hasn't been charged by the court!²¹

Justice for Iran (JFI) was the first human rights organization to publicize the rape of virgin female prisoners prior to their executions. In its research on torture—sexual and otherwise—of female political prisoners, it found numerous documents and uncontested witnesses with regards to statements by prison officials on the matter of rape prior to execution. Also included in this research were references to Islamic sacred scripture used by prison officials for Islamic judicial justification of this practice²².

The UN's special rapporteur, Javid Rahman, on the situation of human rights in Iran has expressed concern over reports that the country has subjected lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) children to “torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.”²³

Urgent necessary actions

- Australia must make robust use of its Magnitsky sanctions regime to target all Islamic Republic (IR) officials. All IR officials benefit from human rights violations either directly or indirectly and must be all sanctioned.
- Australia should close Iran's Embassy in Canberra, and identify, sanction, and expel the IR's ambassador, top-ranked diplomats, and their spy network among Iranian-Australian citizens. The Iranian-Australian community is willing to assist DFAT and other anti-terrorist organizations in this important matter.
- Australia must take a 'no business as usual in bilateral relations in trade and diplomatic relationships with the IR regime for the violation of human rights.
- Australia must identify the affiliates and close relatives of the IR human rights abusers and does not allow our free country to be a haven for the close families of killers, murderers, and those responsible for the oppression of Iranian people unless they publicly exonerate.
- Australia should list the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist organization.
- Australia should not allow the IR's hostage diplomacy for the exchange of their export terrorists.
- Australia should facilitate the visa process for freedom fighters and students who have been arrested and make an exception for the recent prison sentences on their background checks.

21-<https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-koran-reciter-tusi-accused-sexual-abuse/28072473.html>

22-<https://justice4iran.org/5431/>

23-<https://www.rferl.org/a/un-expert-raises-alarm-over-reports-of-lgbt-child-torture-in-iran/31104181.html>