

Gender Persecution in the Islamic Republic of Iran

An Open Source Investigation by
the Iran Digital Archive Coalition

January 2025

Human Rights Center

UC Berkeley School of Law

Strategic Litigation Project

Atlantic Council



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Cover image: [Iranian protestors on Keshavarez Boulevard on 20 September 2022](#). Image by Darafsh via Wikimedia Commons.

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I. Introduction

This report, “Gender Persecution in the Islamic Republic of Iran: An Open Source Investigation for the Iran Digital Archive Coalition,” forms part of a series of open source investigations analyzing various human rights violations and international crimes committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI or Islamic Republic) in its brutal crackdown on Woman, Life, Freedom protesters that began in September 2022. The research conducted in each investigation is based on open source content¹ preserved as part of the Iranian Archive housed at Mnemonic — a repository of digital content that has been forensically preserved for use in future accountability efforts. Each report in this series focuses on a specific set of violations, and together they make visible some of the harms suffered by Iranian protesters in their demands for freedom and respect for their human rights. This introduction provides a brief overview of the movement and the IRI’s response, current investigations at the international level, calls for accountability, and a synopsis of the Iranian Archive created by Mnemonic as well as how the Iran Digital Archive Coalition contributed to it.

A. Woman, Life, Freedom Movement²

Following the 2021 election of now-deceased

President Ebrahim Raisi — a loyal supporter of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — the Islamic Republic started rolling out measures to tighten its grip on all aspects of life in Iran.³ These included harassment and the arrest of dissenters. This period has been described as a new “reign of terror” by human rights groups,⁴ one punctuated by a crackdown on women’s rights.⁵ In 2022, top officials — including President Raisi and numerous Friday Prayer Imams (powerful clerics handpicked by the Supreme Leader) — ordered, promoted, and justified the violent enforcement of “hijab and chastity” laws for women,⁶ which led to a brutal crackdown on women with allegedly improper hijab.⁷ As the violence intensified, people in Iran began calling for acts of civil disobedience to be performed on 12 July 2022. July 12th is the official “Day of Hijab and Chastity” in Iran, during which government officials are expected to promote chastity and wearing of the hijab for a week. On that day in 2022, women posted videos of themselves removing their hijab in public using the Persian hashtag “no to hijab” (حجاب_بی_حجاب), with male allies sharing additional photos displaying similar hashtags and slogans.⁸ At the same time, supporters of the Islamic Republic used social media to threaten women with acid attacks designed to cause

1 Digital open source information is online information that is publicly accessible through observation, request, or minimal purchase. *Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations* (UN Human Rights Office and UC Berkeley Human Rights Center 2022).

2 Woman, Life, Freedom (“Zan, Zendegi, Azadi” in Persian) was the key slogan of the protest movement that erupted in Iran in 2022. The first recorded instance of the slogan being used in the country was in Kurdish. Women mourners at Mahsa Jina Amini’s burial removed their headscarves in protest and chanted “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi.” The slogan dates back to 1987 and the Kurdish women’s struggle for liberation in Turkey. Its use has been observed by international media as early as 2003. However, it gained more prominence after 2011 and during the Syrian Civil War, when it became the battle cry of Kurdish woman fighters against Islamic State forces. See, e.g., لحظه‌نگاری‌های یک زن, *Radio Zamaneh* (23 Sept. 2023), <https://www.radiozamaneh.com/781853/>; شعار «زن، زندگی، آزادی» از کجا آمد؟, *AASOO* (27 Sept. 2022), <https://www.aasoo.org/fa/multimedia/videos/4048/>; Joshua Askew, Words have power: What are the origins of Iran’s protest chant ‘woman, life, freedom’?, *EuroNews* (11 Jan. 2023), <https://www.euronews.com/2023/01/11/words-have-power-what-are-the-origins-of-woman-life-freedom-iran-protest-chants>.

3 Khosro Kalbasi Isfahani, The ‘Butcher of Tehran’ is dead. It won’t change a thing, *Atlantic Council* (23 May 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/raisi-death-butcher-of-tehran-iran-policy/>.

4 Heightened Reign of Terror in Iran Under New Intelligence Chief, Center for Human Rights in Iran, *Iran Human Rights Documentation Center* (11 Jul. 2022), <https://iranhumanrights.org/2022/07/heightened-reign-of-terror-in-iran-under-new-intelligence-chief/>.

5 *BBC Persian* (6 Jul. 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-62068950>

6 Iranian President Orders Enforcement of Hijab and Chastity Law for Women, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty* (7 Jul. 2022), <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-president-orders-enforcement-hijab-chastity-law/31933583.html>.

7 اتاق خبر منوتو (@ManotoNews), X, (10 Jul. 2022, 3:19 AM), <https://x.com/ManotoNews/status/1546076707894857729>.

8 تصویر +۱۵۰۰ (@1500tasvir), X, (12 Jul. 2022, 7:04 AM), <https://x.com/1500tasvir/status/1546858037457162246>.

disfigurement,⁹ a tactic used in the past by fundamentalists in Iran to sow fear among women they consider “unchaste.”¹⁰ This wave of persecution culminated with the arrest of Sepideh Rashnu, a young Iranian writer who was jailed and tortured for not wearing a headscarf and then made to give a forced confession of her “crimes” before state broadcasters to sow fear among the public and discourage dissent.¹¹ However, the violent crackdown on civil liberties — coupled with a tanking economy¹² — had stoked public anger.

On 16 September 2022, less than two months after Rashnu’s violent arrest, Mahsa “Jina” Amini, a 22-year-old woman from Iran’s historically marginalized Kurdish ethnic minority, died in police custody in Tehran after being in a coma for three days. She had been detained for allegedly donning an “improper hijab” while on a family trip to Tehran from her Kurdish hometown of Saqqez, and taken to the notorious Vozara Detention Center to be “educated” about hijab restrictions.¹³

Amini’s death sparked nationwide protests. Young women took to the streets — burning their headscarves, dancing, and calling for an end to the regime.¹⁴ Wide swaths of Iranian society joined the movement, including parents, grandparents,

ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQ+ persons, and people representing all genders and socioeconomic backgrounds, supporting the demands for “Woman, Life, Freedom” and calling for an end to the four-decade rule of Iran by the Islamic Republic.¹⁵

Since the inception of the Islamic Republic in 1979, its reign has been marred by human rights violations that likely amount to crimes against humanity — from mass executions of political prisoners in the early 1980s and 1988;¹⁶ to the murders of Iranian intellectuals and political dissidents in the 1980s and 1990s;¹⁷ to persecution of marginalized groups including women, ethnic,¹⁸ and religious¹⁹ minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community.²⁰ These human rights abuses have been coupled with political mismanagement and corruption, a tanking economy,²¹ and environmental crises²² caused by ideology-driven state policies.

People in Iran have responded to the oppression with resilience, including solitary and collective acts of defiance. The Woman, Life, Freedom movement is part of a long history of people’s protests in Iran: the six-day uprising of women in March 1979 protesting the introduction of

9 Khosro K Isfahani (@KhosroIsfahani), X (11 Jul. 2022), <https://x.com/KhosroIsfahani/status/1546445179053395969>.

10 In 2014, people took to the streets of the city of Isfahan after a wave of acid attacks, which appeared to be aimed at terrorizing women who violated the country’s strict Islamic dress code. See Thomas Erdbrink, Thousands in Iran Protest Acid Attacks on Women, *N.Y. Times* (22 Oct. 2014), <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/23/world/middleeast/thousands-in-iran-protest-acid-attacks-on-women.html#:~:text=TEHRAN%20%E2%80%94%20Thousands%20of%20Iranians%20took,%E2%80%9Cun%20Islamic%E2%80%9D%20away>.

11 Sepideh Rashnu Receives Summons to Serve Almost Four Years in Prison, *Front Line Defenders*, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/sepideh-rashnu-receives-summons-serve-almost-four-years-prison> (last visited 18 Jul. 2024).

12 Sayeh Isfahani, The Ebrahim Raisi government just jacked up food prices. Iranians are understandably angry, *Atlantic Council* (12 May 2022), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/the-ebrahim-raisi-government-just-jacked-up-food-prices-iranians-are-understandably-angry/>.

13 David Gritten, Mahsa Amini: Protests over woman’s death claim more lives in Iran, *BBC* (21 Sept. 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-62986057>; UN experts strongly condemn death of Mahsa Amini, ‘victim of Iran’s sustained repression’, *UN News* (22 Sept. 2022), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127471>.

14 How the women and girls of Iran have fueled their ‘unprecedented’ protests: Bravery, solidarity, and innovation, *Atlantic Council* (11 May 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/transcripts/how-the-women-and-girls-of-iran-have-fueled-their-unprecedented-protests-bravery-solidarity-and-innovation/>; Somayeh Malekian, Iranian women drive protests targeting regime after suspicious death of Mahsa Amini, *ABC News* (22 Sept. 2022), <https://abcnews.go.com/International/iranian-women-drive-protests-targeting-regime-suspicious-death/story?id=90313020>.

15 Suzanne Kianpour, The Women of Iran Are Not Backing Down, *Politico* (22 Jan. 2023), <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/01/22/women-rights-iran-protests-00069245>; Tara Sepehri Far, Unveiling Resistance: The Struggle for Women’s Rights in Iran, *Human Rights Watch* (26 June 2023), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/26/unveiling-resistance-struggle-womens-rights-iran>.

16 Iran: Blood-soaked secrets: Why Iran’s 1988 prison massacres are ongoing crimes against humanity, *Amnesty International*, (4 Dec. 2018), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/9421/2018/en/>.

17 The ‘Chain Murders’: Iran’s Long, Bloody Reach, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-chain-murders-abroad/31596154.html> (last visited 18 Jul. 2024).

18 Press Release, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Iran: UN expert says ethnic, religious minorities face discrimination, UN Fact-Finding Mission says, *UN Press Release* (22 Oct. 2019).

19 “The Boot on My Neck” Iranian Authorities’ Crime of Persecution Against the Baha’is in Iran, *Human Rights Watch*, (1 Apr. 2024), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/04/01/boot-my-neck/iranian-authorities-crime-persecution-against-bahais-iran#:~:text=Baha'is%20are%20the%20largest,is%2C%20including%20their%20community%20leaders>.

20 U.S. Report: LGBTQI+ Persecution in Iran, *The Iran Primer* (25 Apr. 2024), <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2024/apr/25/us-report-lgbtqi-persecution-iran#:~:text=Iran's%20laws%2C%20based%20on%20a,consensual%20and%20nonconsensual%2C%20was%20criminalized>.

21 Sayeh Isfahani, The Ebrahim Raisi government just jacked up food prices. Iranians are understandably angry, *Atlantic Council* (12 May 2022), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/the-ebrahim-raisi-government-just-jacked-up-food-prices-iranians-are-understandably-angry/>.

22 Golnaz Esfandiari and Mohammad Zrghami, Iran’s Climate Migration Crisis Could Turn into a Disaster, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty* (Dec. 18, 2023), <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-climate-migrants-crisis/32729538.html>.

mandatory hijab;²³ the student uprising of July 1999 over a crackdown on freedom of the press;²⁴ the 2009 Green Movement protests in response to a fraudulent election;²⁵ the Bloody Aban protests in November 2019, where hundreds of civilians were killed by security forces during a total internet shutdown;²⁶ protests over a water crisis in 2021;²⁷ food price hikes in 2022;²⁸ and more. The Islamic Republic responded to each wave of protests with violence.

The Woman, Life, Freedom movement — the most widespread protest in the Islamic Republic's history — has fared similarly, with the regime unleashing brutal force against protesters. As of March 2024, rights groups estimate that more than 500 people have been killed, including as many as 68 children.²⁹ Persecuted Sunni Kurdish and Baluch communities absorbed the brunt of the violence.³⁰ On “Bloody Friday of Zahedan,” 30 September 2022, at least 94 civilians were killed and 350 were wounded by security forces in Zahedan, Sistan, and Baluchestan Province.³¹ Credible estimates put the number of people detained at over 20,000.³² As of July 2024, at least nine young men, many

of whom were subjected to torture in detention, had been executed after trials based on charges relating to the 2022 protests that were marred by forced confessions and other ill-treatment.³³ Recent reporting shows the lengths to which the IRI not only violently repressed those they deemed to be involved with the protests, but tried to cover up that violence.³⁴

Despite repeated denials from officials that they were targeting protesters, leaked government documents show that the Islamic Republic's highest military authorities gave explicit instructions to armed forces in every province to “severely confront” protesters in the weeks following Amini's killing.³⁵ The levels of violence employed by security forces and other officials leave no doubt of the IRI policy. Since protests began in September 2022, hundreds of people have been blinded or suffered other injuries in or around their eyes from metal pellets or rubber bullets.³⁶ Some protesters report that security forces explicitly threatened to shoot them in the eyes, even smiling before

23 In 1979, Iranian women protested mandatory veiling - setting the stage for today, *CBC Radio* (5 Oct. 2022), <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/iran-women-protests-1979-revolution-1.6605982>.

24 Behrouz Turani, Remembering The July 1999 Iran Student Movement; A Forgotten Protest?, *RadioFarda* (9 Jul. 2020), <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/remembering-the-july-1999-iran-student-movement-a-forgotten-protest-/30716685.html>.

25 Iran: Election contested, repression compounded, *Amnesty International* (10 Dec. 2009), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/123/2009/en/>.

26 A Web of Impunity; The killings Iran's internet shut down hid, *Amnesty International* (16 Nov. 2020), <https://iran-shutdown.amnesty.org/>.

27 Sahab Bahar, Iran's water is running dry. Now its water woes are worsening, *Atlantic Council* (13 Dec. 2021), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/irans-water-is-running-dry-now-its-water-woes-are-worsening/>.

28 Sayeh Isfahani, The Ebrahim Raisi government just jacked up food prices. Iranians are understandably angry, *Atlantic Council* (12 May 2022), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/the-ebrahim-raisi-government-just-jacked-up-food-prices-iranians-are-understandably-angry/>.

29 Iran committed crimes against humanity during protest crackdown, UN says, *Aljazeera* (8 Mar. 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/8/iran-committed-crimes-against-humanity-during-protest-crackdown-un-says>; Parham Ghobadi, Iran protests: ‘No going back’ as unrest hits 100 days, *BBC* (26 Dec. 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-64062900>.

30 BBC 100 Women, Disinformation, Monitoring, BBC Persian and Visual Journalism teams, Iran protests: BCC identifies many more people killed in demonstrations after Mahsa Amini's death, *BBC* (5 Dec. 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63836921>.

31 Bloody Friday in Zahedan, Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (19 Oct. 2022), <https://iranhrdc.org/bloody-friday-in-zahedan/>.

32 David Gritten, Aida Shakarami: Iran morality police arrests dead protester's sister, mother says, *BBC* (18 Apr. 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68849736>.

33 David Gritten, Mohammad Ghobadlou: Iran executes protester with mental health condition, *BBC* (23 Jan. 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68068233>; Iran executives 853 people in eight-year high amid relentless repression and renewed ‘war on drugs’, *Amnesty International* (4 Apr. 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/iran-executes-853-people-in-eight-year-high-amid-relentless-repression-and-renewed-war-on-drugs/>; Iran: Executions of tortured protesters must trigger a robust reaction from the international community, *Amnesty International* (19 May 2023), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/iran-executions-of-tortured-protesters-must-trigger-a-robust-reaction-from-the-international-community/>; Parham Ghobadi, Who are the protesters facing execution in Iran?, *BBC* (15 Dec. 2022), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63949566?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=KARANGA; David Gritten, Iran executes three over anti-government protests, *BBC* (19 May 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65640263>.

34 Parham Ghobadi, Nika Shakarami: Videos show Iran teenager protesting before death, *BBC* (10 Oct. 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63200652>; Gianluca Mezzofiore, Katie Polglase, Adam Pourahmadi, What really happened to Nika Shahkarami? Witnesses to her final hours cast doubts on Iran's story, *CNN* (27 Oct. 2022), <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/27/middleeast/iran-nika-shahkarami-investigation-intl-cmd/index.html>; Betram Hill, Aida Miller, Michael Simkin, Secret document says Iran security forces molested and killed teen protester, *BBC* (29 Apr. 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68840881>; Jon Gambrell, Iran files charges over BBC report on teen girl allegedly killed by security forces in 2022 protests, *AP News* (1 May 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/iran-protests-mahsa-amini-nika-shakarami-85332f1f3fe730fc42cbad3d7518f4c4>.

35 Iran: Leaked documents reveal top-level orders to armed forces to ‘mercilessly confront’ protesters, *Amnesty International* (30 Sept. 2022), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/09/iran-leaked-documents-reveal-top-level-orders-to-armed-forces-to-mercilessly-confront-protesters/>.

36 Cora Engelbrecht, Hundreds of Protesters in Iran Blinded by Metal Pellets and Rubber Bullets, *N.Y. Times* (23 Nov. 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/19/world/asia/iran-protesters-eye-injuries.html>.

pulling the trigger.³⁷ Sexual violence and torture have been rampant, including against children.³⁸ Those who dissent online have been targeted with criminalization for speech critical of the regime, while artists have been arrested, often tortured, and even sentenced to death.³⁹ Journalists have likewise been targeted, with at least 80 being arrested,⁴⁰ including the two women who first broke the story on Amini's death.⁴¹

As the protests have continued, international attention has shifted to other conflicts, even as the Islamic Republic has doubled down on enforcement of the mandatory dress code and broad repression of people in Iran. The latest crackdown has included a resurgence of morality police patrols, with videos surfacing online of

37 Edward Lempinen, More than 120 protesters blinded by Iranian agents, probe confirms, *Berkeley News* (21 March 2024), <https://news.berkeley.edu/2024/03/21/more-than-120-protesters-blinded-by-iranian-agents-probe-confirms/>.

38 Iran: Security forces used rape and other sexual violence to crush "Woman Life Freedom" uprising with impunity, *Amnesty International* (6 Dec. 2023), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/iran-security-forces-used-rape-and-other-sexual-violence-to-crush-woman-life-freedom-uprising-with-impunity/>; Iran: Security Forces Rape, Torture, Detainees, *Human Rights Watch* (22 Apr. 2024), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/22/iran-security-forces-rape-torture-detainees>; Tamara Qiblawi, et al., How Iran's security forces use rape to quell protests, *CNN* (21 Nov. 2022), <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2022/11/middleeast/iran-protests-sexual-assault/index.html>; Iran: Child detainees subjected to flogging, electric shocks and sexual violence in brutal protest crackdown, *Amnesty International* (16 Mar. 2023), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/iran-child-detainees-subjected-to-flogging-electric-shocks-and-sexual-violence-in-brutal-protest-crackdown/>; Iran: Security Forces Kill, Torture, Abuse Children, *Human Rights Watch* (25 Apr. 2023), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/25/iran-security-forces-kill-torture-abuse-children>.

39 Khosro Kalbasi Isfahani and Andrea Alice Richardson, Everything you need to know about Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi and his death sentence, *Atlantic Council* (26 Apr. 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/toomaj-salehi-iran-rapper-execution/>; Associated Press, Iranian singer who won Grammy for Mahsa Amini protest anthem is sentenced to prison in Iran, *NBC News* (2 Mar. 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iranian-singer-won-grammy-mahsa-amini-protest-anthem-sentenced-prison-rcna141499>; Jon Gambrell, Award-winning director Mohammad Rasoulof sentenced to prison in Iran ahead of Cannes, *AP* (9 May 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/iran-protests-director-mohammad-rasoulof-prison-415e70cbe740191d130747907ca8e25e>.

40 Names of journalists arrested in Iran's anti-state protests, *Committee to Protect Journalists* (30 Sept. 2022), <https://cpj.org/2022/09/names-of-journalists-arrested-in-irans-anti-state-protests/>.

41 Maryam Afshang, The journalists imprisoned for reporting the death that shook Iran, *BBC* (4 May 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-65466887>; Iran has arrested 79 journalists in a staggering crackdown since Mahsa Amini's death a year ago, *Reporters Without Borders* (15 Sept. 2023), <https://rsf.org/en/iran-has-arrested-79-journalists-staggering-crackdown-mahsa-amini-s-death-year-ago>; Annie Kelly, Female journalists under attack as press freedom falters, *The Guardian* (6 May 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/media/article/2024/may/06/female-journalists-under-attack-as-press-freedom-falters>.

women being forced into vans by police.⁴² The most recent surge of violence has come under the "Nour" ("light") campaign, announced on 13 April 2024 on state television by the chief of police in Tehran, the same day the IRI launched its drone and missile attack against Israel.⁴³ Later in April, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced that a new body had been created to enforce the mandatory dress code "in a more serious manner."⁴⁴ Reports indicate that businesses found not to enforce the mandatory hijab on their premises have been forcibly closed and that cameras are being used to surveil women while in their cars to identify and punish those seen as not complying with the rules.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the draft Hijab and Chastity Bill continues to advance in the legislative process — a bill that would impose even harsher punishments for violations of the mandatory dress code and criminalize actions like posting photos on social media of women without hijabs.⁴⁶

B. Ongoing International Investigations

In November 2022, the UN Human Rights Council

42 'War against women': Iran ramps up crackdown as regional tensions rage, *France24* (21 Apr. 2024), <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240421-war-against-women-iran-ramps-up-crackdown-as-regional-tensions-raise>; Deepa Parent, Iranian women violently dragged from streets by police amid hijab crackdown, *The Guardian* (24 Apr. 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/apr/24/iranian-women-violently-dragged-from-streets-by-police-amid-hijab-crackdown>.

43 Dan De Luce, Iran has launched a new crackdown on women defying its strict dress code, *NBC News* (9 May 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-launches-crackdown-women-defying-hijab-dress-code-rcna151406>; USCIRF Calls for Additional Sanctions Amidst New Harsh Enforcement of Iran's Mandatory Hijab Law, *U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom* (6 May 2024), <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-calls-additional-sanctions-amidst-new-harsh-enforcement-irans>.

44 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Iran: Crackdown on hijab law (26 Apr. 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2024/04/iran-crackdown-hijab-law#:~:text=UN%20High%20Commissioner%20for%20Human%20Rights%20Volker%20T%C3%BCrk%20calls%20on,human%20rights%20norms%20and%20standards>.

45 Dan De Luce, Iran has launched a new crackdown on women defying its strict dress code, *NBC News* (9 May 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-launches-crackdown-women-defying-hijab-dress-code-rcna151406>; Iran: Draconian campaign to enforce compulsory veiling laws through surveillance and mass car confiscations, *Amnesty International* (6 Mar. 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/03/iran-draconian-campaign-to-enforce-compulsory-veiling-laws-through-surveillance-and-mass-car-confiscations/>.

46 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Iran: Crackdown on hijab law (26 Apr. 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2024/04/iran-crackdown-hijab-law#:~:text=UN%20High%20Commissioner%20for%20Human%20Rights%20Volker%20T%C3%BCrk%20calls%20on,human%20rights%20norms%20and%20standards;Shadi%20Sadr,Iran's%20Hijab%20and%20Chastity%20Bill%20Underscores%20the%20Need%20to%20Codify%20Gender%20Apartheid,Just%20Security> (11 Apr. 2024), <https://www.justsecurity.org/94504/iran-hijab-bill-gender-apartheid/>.

adopted a resolution to establish the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFMI or Mission) for a period of one year.⁴⁷ In April 2024, the Mission's mandate was renewed for an additional year. The FFMI's mandate is to "thoroughly and independently investigate alleged human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022, especially with respect to women and children;" to establish facts relating to alleged violations; to collect, analyze and preserve evidence with a view to cooperating with future legal proceedings; and to engage with relevant stakeholders as it conducts its investigation.⁴⁸

In March 2024, the FFMI released its first report.⁴⁹ The FFMI had conducted an extensive investigation relying on laws, official regulations and policies, documents issued by the Iranian judiciary, interviews with victims and witnesses, independent reports, medical documents, verified photographs and videos, and satellite imagery.⁵⁰ It analyzed the use of force by security forces; detentions; torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; sexual and gender-based violence; sham trials and the use of the death penalty; the targeting of ethnic and religious minorities; and other protest-related issues.

The FFMI ultimately found that Iranian authorities had committed "serious human rights violations" such as "violations of the rights to life, not to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment, to security and liberty of the person, to a fair trial and due process, to an effective remedy, to freedom of religion or belief, of expression, of peaceful assembly and of association, and the rights to privacy, health, education, livelihood and work."⁵¹

47 Human Rights Council Res. 35/1, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/S-35/1 (29 Nov. 2022). <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/S-35/1>; *UN Human Rights Council, Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>.

48 UN Human Rights Council, Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>.

49 Press Release, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Iran: Institutional discrimination against women and girls enabled human rights violations and crimes against humanity in the context of recent protests, UN Fact-Finding Mission says, *UN Press Release* (8 Mar. 2024).

50 Detailed findings of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, *UN HRC*, 55th Sess., UN Doc. A/HRC/55/CRP.1, 6 (19 Mar. 2024).

51 *Ibid.*, 105.

Additionally, the FFMI found violations of "the right to equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender, age, religion or belief, political or other opinions," which were especially severe as applied to women, children, and ethnic and religious minorities.⁵² The Mission noted that "in implementing State policy, the security forces have used persecutory conduct, including rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, with the intention of discriminating against women and girls and men and boys supporting demands for gender equality and LGBTQI+ persons, in order to silence, deter and punish the protesters and their supporters."⁵³

The Mission further found that many of the serious human rights violations committed by the IRI amount to crimes against humanity. Specifically, the FFMI found that the crimes against humanity of "murder, imprisonment, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, persecution, enforced disappearance and other inhumane acts" were "committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack directed against a civilian population, namely women, girls and others expressing support for human rights."⁵⁴ Given the context of discriminatory deprivation of fundamental rights, the FFMI concluded that the crime against humanity of persecution on the grounds of gender had also been committed, intersecting with discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds.⁵⁵ It observed that the crimes committed by IRI agents were not random or spontaneous acts, but rather "part of a pattern of organized conduct, following instructions, encouragement and endorsement by high-level State authorities and senior members of State institutions, and implemented by a large number of physical perpetrators."⁵⁶ Given the continuing impunity and failure of the Islamic Republic to take action, the Mission concluded that these crimes were committed as part of a state policy.⁵⁷

The FFMI highlighted the absence of viable

52 *Ibid.*, 106.

53 *Ibid.*, 107.

54 *Ibid.*, 108.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*, 109.

57 *Ibid.*, 110.

domestic remedies for victims of human rights violations and international crimes inside Iran.⁵⁸ It found that the investigations IRI authorities had announced did not meet applicable international human rights standards and the Mission could not identify any criminal investigations or prosecutions of perpetrators responsible for the human rights violations covered in its report.⁵⁹ Further, the FFMI noted the role judges, prosecutors, some defense lawyers, and other members of the judiciary played to “deny and conceal violations, shield the perpetrators and punish and silence those seeking accountability.”⁶⁰

Against this situation of continuing impunity, the FFMI observed that international and domestic avenues outside Iran are the only viable options for legal accountability.⁶¹ It stressed the important role of third states that can initiate proceedings at the International Court of Justice, for example, or exercise universal jurisdiction domestically.

The FFMI also noted the potential of third party states to open structural investigations, establish and participate in a joint investigation team, track perpetrators, and submit requests for information and judicial assistance,⁶² including from the FFMI.⁶³ In addition to the information contained in its main report and conference room paper, the FFMI has collected information on the identity and responsibility of individual perpetrators, which it has kept confidential. That information is only available to national authorities that make the appropriate legal assistance requests.⁶⁴

C. Iranian Archive & Iran Digital Archive Coalition

The calls for accountability from Iranian civil society are clear.⁶⁵ Despite great personal risk, people in Iran have documented the abuses committed by

the IRI and actively shared them online for the world to see.⁶⁶ The material will be invaluable to future accountability proceedings, but only if it remains available. User-generated content documenting atrocities is vulnerable to removal from social media platforms either by the users who uploaded it due to pressure from government authorities, or increased danger to their safety or that of loved ones, or by companies that own the platforms on which the material is shared. Media reporting may be removed or links broken, making content inaccessible.⁶⁷

As a result, a coalition of organizations came together to contribute to the creation of the Iranian Archive led by Mnemonic to preserve the open source content people in Iran risked so much to share online and ensure that preservation complies with legal standards in order to maximize the value of that content for courts. The Iranian Archive was created by Mnemonic, in partnership with other members of the Iran Digital Archive Coalition including the Atlantic Council’s Strategic Litigation Project, the Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA School of Law, UC Berkeley’s Human Rights Center, Amnesty International’s Digital Verification Corps, the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, and the Azadi Archive, as well as Civil Rights Defenders, which has an independent collaboration with Mnemonic.⁶⁸ Approximately two million digital records have been preserved thus far that document human rights violations and atrocity crimes committed in the context of the Woman, Life, Freedom protests. In addition to preserving and analyzing this open source material, the Iranian Archive will offer support to future investigations and accountability proceedings.

The Coalition is releasing a series of publications

66 Cameran Ashraf, Iranians sacrificed their lives to share videos of regime violence. Now there’s an online archive for the world to see, *Atlantic Council* (12 Apr. 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/mahsa-amini-access-now-iranian-archive-human-rights/>.

67 See, e.g., “Video Unavailable”, *Human Rights Watch* (10 Sept. 2020), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/09/10/video-unavailable/social-media-platforms-remove-evidence-war-crimes>.

68 Human rights coalition unveils digital catalog of evidence pointing towards crimes against humanity committed against Iranian protesters, *Atlantic Council* (18 Mar. 2024), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/press-releases/human-rights-coalition-unveils-digital-catalog-of-evidence-pointing-towards-crimes-against-humanity-committed-against-iranian-protesters/>.

58 Ibid, 116-118.

59 Ibid, 117.

60 Ibid, 118.

61 Ibid, 119.

62 Ibid, 119-120.

63 Ibid, 119.

64 Ibid, 115.

65 *UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, “Woman, Life, Freedom” survivors want to end State impunity in Iran, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/03/woman-life-freedom-survivors-want-end-state-impunity-iran>.

analyzing some of the material that has been preserved in the Iranian Archive. The initial reports in the series document and analyze the targeted blinding of protesters and bystanders, the enforced disappearance of children and subsequent harassment of their families by IRI officials, and the crime against humanity of gender persecution. While each report utilizes a unique methodology, they nonetheless share a foundational approach.

The teams behind each report relied on open source material preserved in the Iranian Archive. The specific open source material analyzed varies by report, but mainly consists of photos, videos, and text uploaded to social media platforms. This is supplemented by news items from inside and outside Iran, and credible reporting from human rights organizations. The material preserved in the Archive can emanate from anywhere, but must relate to events that took place inside Iran and have a demonstrable link to the Woman, Life, Freedom protests, from September 2022 onwards. In designing the investigations and verifying the open source material, investigators followed the methodologies outlined in the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations.⁶⁹

At the time of research, all the material included in these reports was open source and publicly accessible. Some content may have been removed since the publication of these reports, but a copy of all artifacts are preserved in the Iranian Archive. None of the investigators of this report have interviewed witnesses or otherwise contacted any victims, survivors, or their families. This decision was made to avoid doing additional harm to victims and survivors or to their families and friends. As one of the reports makes clear, families of victims and survivors have been subjected to threats, harassment, and intimidation to prevent them from speaking out. In addition, case studies were selected in conjunction with a multi-stage security review of the potential risk to the victim of including their story, and survivor locations were

kept general so as to minimize contributing to any risk of retaliation.

⁶⁹ The Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations (UN Human Rights Office and UC Berkeley Human Rights Center 2022) is a set of guidelines for conducting investigations using publicly-accessible online content. The Berkeley Protocol is available in all six official languages of the United Nations at the United Nations Human Rights Office Website at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/berkeley-protocol-digital-open-source>.

II. Methodology

In light of the FFMI’s findings that the IRI perpetrated crimes against humanity, including gender persecution, the goal of the “Gender Persecution in the Islamic Republic” report includes the identification, verification, and analysis of open source information that supports elements of the crime against humanity of persecution on the basis of gender.⁷⁰ The analysis is intended to demonstrate how open source information can be collected and analyzed to support future accountability for the crime against humanity of gender persecution. All digital investigative methods that contributed to this report were guided by the Berkeley Protocol.⁷¹

A. Process

I. Planning

During the investigation’s planning stage, UC Berkeley’s Human Rights Center (HRC) and the Atlantic Council’s Strategic Litigation Project (SLP) conceived the scope of research and delineated investigative roles and duties. The investigation plan:

- Stated the goal of the investigation: to identify, verify and analyze open source information relevant to gender persecution;
- Outlined initial procedures regarding confidentiality and security, following an initial

risk and threat assessment;

- Described the investigative methodology, including verification processes;
- Identified and briefly described the relevant law under the Rome Statute; and
- Set a deadline for initial findings.

II. Identification

Investigators used a dataset from the Iranian Archive curated by Mnemonic as a starting point to identify incidents relevant to gender persecution. This data was sorted by location and reviewed for content that could be pertinent to an element of the crime of gender persecution. Investigators also relied on knowledge of Iran-related online spaces to identify additional incidents to supplement the Mnemonic dataset.

Investigators prioritized social media content that appeared to capture criminal acts. They focused on a broad cross section of incidents that would be somewhat representative of patterns of violence and of victim communities. Investigators excluded content showing crimes against children or the targeted blinding of protesters as those issues are covered in other reports in this series.⁷²

During the identification process, investigators needed to consider whether the identified media was accurate, as opposed to misinformation or disinformation. Investigators checked for staged content, image inversion, recoloring, and consistency in shadowing, among other

70 *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 358 (stating: “those using social media to defy laws were targeted with harsher punishments, including State-sanctioned flogging”); *United Nations Human Rights Council*, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, U.N. HRC 55th Sess., U.N. Doc. A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, (hereinafter “Report of the FFMI”) 20 (stating “pervasive and deep-rooted structural and institutionalized discrimination against women and girls, permeating all areas of their public and private lives, was both a trigger and an enabler of the widespread serious human rights violations and crimes under international law committed against women and girls in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as others advocating for equality and human rights, in the context of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement”).

71 See *Berkeley Protocol*.

72 “The Blinding of Protesters and Bystanders in Iran: An Open Source Investigation for the Iran Digital Archive Coalition,” *UC Berkeley Human Rights Center* (2024), at <https://humanrights.berkeley.edu/publications/the-blinding-of-protesters-and-bystanders-in-iran/>; “Disappearances, Deaths, and Denials: An Open Source Investigation into Violations Against Children During the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *UCLA Investigations Lab*.

indicators of manipulated, manufactured, or otherwise misleading data.

III. Verification

Investigators used the three-part verification methodology outlined in the Berkeley Protocol, which requires technical, content and source analysis. These methodologies helped establish the reliability of social media content. Investigators made the following inquiries:

- **Originality.** When was a particular piece of social media content posted compared to other social media postings regarding the same incident? Was this the first posting of this content? Reverse image search helped investigators determine the order in which different social media accounts posted about the same incident and find the original social media posting regarding that incident. Investigators verified the original source of the social media by attempting to ascertain the identity of the source and analyzing whether they appeared to have access to credible information.
- **When.** When was the media posted? When did the act described or shown take place? Is this consistent with information provided by other sources? Investigators integrated information about how different social media platforms timestamp content. A check of weather and lighting helped determine if alleged dates and times claimed for the incident were accurate.
- **Where.** Can the location of a post, photo or video be identified with corroborating information? Investigators utilized numerous data sources including maps, satellite imagery, street-view imagery, and geotagged photos and video to identify the coordinates of where an incident took place.
- **Who.** Is there visual or contextual information regarding any of the victims, witnesses, or perpetrators of the violence? Search techniques for other sources of information about an incident were used to supply or corroborate information about the identities of victims, witnesses and perpetrators. Uniforms and

weapons also offered clues that helped establish individuals' identities.

IV. Legal Analysis

Legal analysis was ongoing, with investigators endeavoring to apply the law to incidents as they were verified. The goal was to supplement information about what occurred with a basic analysis of how the documentation of the incident could be considered potential evidence of gender persecution.

In choice of law, the research team decided to adopt the definition of gender persecution as a crime against humanity in the Rome Statute and as prosecuted by the International Criminal Court.⁷³ For the legal analysis, investigators relied heavily on the ICC's 2022 "Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution" and the "Toolkit on Identifying Gender Persecution" ("Gender Persecution Toolkit") produced by the Human Rights and Gender Justice (HRGJ) Clinic at the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law and MADRE, in partnership with UN Women. The Gender Persecution Toolkit was conceptualized by Lisa Davis, Special Advisor to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on Gender Persecution, and drafted by Davis and attorney Jaime Gher, with input from numerous investigators and lawyers who specialize in related areas of law.⁷⁴ In particular, the Gender Persecution Toolkit's Section 3 — which includes the identification and documentation of gender persecution — informed investigators' legal analysis. Section 3 provided the following guiding questions to assist in identifying gender persecution:

- What underlying crimes may be present?

⁷³ Universal jurisdiction cases in state courts also represent potential avenues for accountability. In such situations, the particular state will apply its domestic law on gender persecution, which may or may not correspond to the definition provided in the Rome Statute. See, e.g., *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 20 (stating "third States exercising universal jurisdiction over the violations described in the present report represent an important avenue for accountability for victims, including those present on the territory of third States.") See also *Nadia's Initiative*, Press statement by victim's counsel Amal Clooney, Sonka Mehner and Natalie von Wistinghausen, Yazidi NGO Yazda, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad (July 2022), available online at <https://www.nadiasinitiative.org/news/german-court-hands-down-second-genocide-conviction-against-isis-member-following-enslavement-and-abuse-of-yazidi-woman-in-syria>.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

- What may indicate potential evidence of gender persecution?
- What additional information would you ask the investigator to gather?
- Are there intersecting forms of persecution?⁷⁵

Investigators chose to pay particular attention to the fourth question, recognizing that understanding persecution requires an intersectional approach. Along with the gender-related experiences of victims, investigators looked for evidence that race, ethnicity, age, and/or locality intersected with their experiences of persecution on the basis of gender.

The open source information in this report is intended to complement the findings and information compiled by the FFMI for possible use in accountability proceedings against the IRI. In this report, investigators adopted a qualitative approach over a quantitative one, focusing on a discrete number of incidents that could illustrate a range of issues, rather than aggregating and analyzing a large amount of data. This facilitated the development of powerful stories concerning specific victims. Further investigation and the collection of other forms of information, including witness testimonies, would be helpful and necessary to more conclusively establish the incidents as representative of gender persecution as a crime against humanity.

B. Ethical Considerations

Individuals and communities participating in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and their families continue to face daily attacks by the IRI. Social media platforms are a tool utilized by Iranians seeking to share information about their experiences, as well as by IRI intelligence agencies seeking to surveil and oppress dissidents.⁷⁶ Because of the risks Iranian citizens face when sharing stories that implicate the IRI, investigators paid special attention to risks that might come from amplifying survivors' online posts. While the investigators did not reach out to victims due

⁷⁵ Ibid., 21-23.

⁷⁶ *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 358 (stating: "those using social media to defy laws were targeted with harsher punishments, including State-sanctioned flogging").

to the risks they might create for those victims by contacting them, the investigators prioritized incidents involving victims whose social media strongly suggested that they wanted their stories amplified.

Investigators took additional precautions to protect the privacy and safety of survivors, witnesses, and their families. When investigators could not establish that a survivor of possible gender persecution wanted their story amplified (for example, if their identity was obscured), those survivors were kept anonymous.

Documentation of gender-related crimes and analysis of those crimes is intended to correct gender barriers that hinder accountability.⁷⁷ As noted elsewhere, investigations into gender-related crimes are often accompanied by "additional and heightened ethical challenges given the often-sensitive nature of the crimes, gendered access to and use of online platforms, the likelihood that not only the perpetrator but the victim may be stigmatized by the crimes, and the often-coded language used by sexual violence survivors, given those cultural stigmas."⁷⁸

Based on these considerations, the investigative team that worked on this report selected incidents that were shared across social media and initially appeared to result in the least risk for survivors – including physical, digital, and psychosocial security concerns. We identified many additional incidents that could have illustrated the crime against humanity of gender persecution, but did not investigate them further when their security risks were relatively unclear.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., *United Nations International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism*, IIIM Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan: Addressing the Adverse Impact of the Discriminatory Gender Hierarchy to Facilitate Inclusive Justice for International Crimes in the Syrian Arab Republic (September 2022), available online at <https://iiim.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Gender-Strategy-Implementation-Abridged>.

⁷⁸ Alexa Koenig and Ulic Egan, "Power and Privilege: Investigating Sexual Violence with Digital Open Source Information," *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 19, no. 1 (March 2021) 57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqab014>.

III. Legal Framework for Gender Persecution as a Crime Against Humanity

A. Elements of the Law

Under article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute, persecution is the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender or other grounds committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack against a civilian population. “Gender persecution” is the crime against humanity of persecution on the basis of gender. The International Criminal Court requires six elements for persecution on the basis of gender as a crime against humanity:

- The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;
- The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;
- The targeting was based on gender;
- The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC’s jurisdiction;
- The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population; and
- The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.

Although gender persecution as a crime against humanity was codified with the adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998, there has been little ICC

jurisprudence related to this crime.⁷⁹

Valerie Oosterveld, a leading academic on gender-based crimes and now Special Adviser on Crimes Against Humanity to the International Criminal Court’s Office of the Prosecutor (OTP), suggests that the “difficult nature” of the negotiations that led to the establishment of gender persecution as a crime against humanity in the Rome Statute, coupled with the concomitant “opaque nature” of the resulting elements of the crime, may have served as an initial deterrent to the OTP charging gender persecution in its cases.⁸⁰ The “Toolkit on Identifying Gender Persecution” opines:

“Despite over twenty years of official recognition, rarely is gender persecution specifically documented. Thus, perpetrators either evade accountability or are only prosecuted and tried for the underlying crimes, which do not fully represent their criminal conduct or the crimes suffered by the victims, nor the reasons for committing such a crime.”⁸¹

In 2022, the OTP published its Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution (“Policy”), offering critical insight regarding gender persecution and suggesting expansion of its application.⁸² The Policy explains that the term “gender” in article 7(3)

79 See, e.g., Valerie Oosterveld, “Recognizing the Complexity of Gender in the Crime Against Humanity of Persecution,” *Just Security* (July 2023), available online at <https://www.justsecurity.org/87303/recognizing-the-complexity-of-gender-in-the-crime-against-humanity-of-persecution/> (citing to the fact that gender persecution was not used by the OTP until the 2010 arrest warrant against Callixte Mbarushimana, “but it was ultimately excluded in the document containing the charges. The next time the crime was charged was in the Al Hassan case in 2018”).

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Toolkit for Identifying Gender Persecution*, 4.

82 *Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution*, 4 (stating: “investigating and prosecuting sexual and gender-based crimes is a key priority for the Office of the Prosecutor. The Office developed the Policy Paper on the Crime of Gender Persecution to help put its aims more fully into practice”).

of the Rome Statute refers to “sex characteristics and social constructs and criteria used to define maleness and femaleness, including roles, behaviors, activities and attributes. As a social construct, gender varies within societies and from society to society and can change over time.”⁸³

When applied to the crime of gender persecution, the Policy’s definition reflects “the continuum of historical and longstanding structural discrimination and fundamental rights deprivations experienced by vulnerable gender groups.”⁸⁴ The Policy goes on to describe how accountability is needed for perpetrators that use gender-based crimes “to regulate or punish those who are perceived to transgress gender criteria that define ‘accepted’ forms of gender expression manifest in, for example, roles, behaviors, activities, or attributes.”⁸⁵

The OTP first formally charged gender persecution in 2018 in the *Al Hassan* case.⁸⁶ Subsequent to the confirmation of charges in the *Al Hassan* case, the OTP has charged gender persecution in *Prosecutor v. Abd-Al-Rahman* (charges confirmed July 2021) and *Prosecutor v. Said* (charges confirmed December 2021).⁸⁷ Furthermore, exercising universal jurisdiction, German prosecutors achieved the first-ever successful prosecution of persecution on intersecting grounds of religion and gender in the *Sarah O.* case. The OTP’s Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution, along with the actions taken by the ICC and attorneys utilizing universal jurisdiction, suggest a growing understanding and use of the crime of gender persecution as a crime against humanity to seek accountability for legal harms.⁸⁸

B. Intersectionality

While gender persecution has been a useful

framework for this investigation, a focus on gender can de-emphasize other factors such as religion and ethnicity that often come powerfully into play with respect to abuses committed by the IRI. Critically, investigations in accordance with international criminal law require investigative strategies that consider a multiplicity of relevant grounds for persecution within a particular context.

The OTP’s Policy and the work of activists, practitioners, and academics have increasingly emphasized the need to apply an intersectional analytical approach when investigating all crimes, including gender-based crimes.⁸⁹ For example, the *Al Hassan* Pre-Trial Chamber described the intersectional nature of gender-based crimes in the *Al Hassan* case, stating:

“...violence against women could also have been motivated by considerations linked to skin color, since women with dark skin were more affected by this violence than others; the same goes for dark-skinned men who, according to some witnesses, were [more] persecuted than those with light skin.”⁹⁰

Intersectional approaches to international criminal justice are increasingly seen as fundamental and necessary for the field to achieve justice-related goals and improve outcomes for survivors. In her work “Intersectional Approaches to Investigating

89 See, e.g., Priya Gopalan “Intersectional Approaches to Investigating and Prosecuting International Crimes: Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes,” *The International Criminal Court in Its Third Decade* (Brill | Nijhoff, 2023) 143-173; Alexandra Lily Kather, “What Do Intersectionality, Feminist Leadership and Feminist Foreign Policy Have to Do with Justice?,” Heinrich Böll Stiftung (October 2022), available online at <https://www.boell.de/en/2022/10/21/justice-sexual-and-gender-based-crimes-conflict-what-does-intersectionality-feminist>; *Coalition of Feminists for Social Change* (COFEM), Learning Brief: Feminism, Racism and Intersectionality (2022), available online at https://cofemsocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/COFEM_LBS_Feminism-and-Racism-Final.pdf (hereinafter ‘Learning Brief: Feminism, Racism and Intersectionality’); *International Criminal Court Office of the Prosecutor, Policy on Children* (November 2016) 24, available online at https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/20161115_OTP_ICC_Policy-on-Children_Eng.PDF; *Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice*, Judicial Approaches to Sexual and Gender Based Crimes at the International Criminal Court (December 2023): 23-26, available online at <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/report/judicial-approaches-to-sexual-and-gender-based-crimes-at-the-international-criminal-court/Judicial-Approaches-to-Sexual-and-Gender-Based-Crimes-at-the-ICC.pdf>; Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution, at 12; Koenig and Egan, at 20; Toolkit for Identifying Gender Persecution, at 18.

90 *Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*, ICC Confirmation of Charges, Case No. ICC-01/12-01/18-66-Teng, 27 March 2018.

83 Ibid., 3.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 4.

86 M. O’Brian, K. Maloney and V. Oosterveld “Forced Marriage in the *Al Hassan* Trial Judgment,” *Opinio Juris* (July 2024), available online at <https://opiniojuris.org/2024/07/23/forced-marriage-in-the-al-hassan-trial-judgment/>.

87 *Prosecutor v. Mahamat Said Abdel Kani*, ICC Confirmation of Charges, Case No. ICC-01/14-01/21, 9 December 2021; *Prosecutor v. Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman*, ICC Confirmation of Charges, Case No. ICC-02/05-01/20, 9 July 2021.

88 Oosterveld.

and Prosecuting International Crimes: Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes,” Priya Gopalan depicts intersectionality as a “potent tool to further a fundamental precept of the international criminal law project — better and fuller justice processes and outcomes for victims/survivors.”⁹¹ Alexandra Lily Kather, co-founder of the Emergent Justice Collective, describes intersectionality and positionality as central pillars in international criminal justice. They advocate for integrating intersectionality and positionality analysis at every stage of the process:

“We need intersectional approaches not only guiding the application and interpretation of the law (Article 21 (3), Rome Statute), but for intersectionality and positionality to be established as central pillars in the ecosystem that is international (criminal) justice work: from approaching intermediaries and witnesses, to the gathering and analysis of evidence.”⁹²

Intersectional approaches to legal accountability are also necessary to begin to redress the fact that prevention of and responses to gender-based crimes have been dominated by white, Western ideologies and practices. The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change’s 2022 learning brief entitled *Feminism, Racism and Intersectionality* warns of the critical importance of bringing in diverse perspectives, noting that “[w]omen of color experience different realities from White women, whether they are the majority or the minority in their spaces.”⁹³ Applying an intersectional approach thus requires “self-reflexivity” from investigators in the humanitarian space about their own “context, power, position, privilege, and perspective.”⁹⁴

Investigators on this project found the application of an intersectionality analysis not only necessary to better understand the crime of persecution under international law but fundamental to understand the experiences of the victims and the responses of international humanitarian communities. While limited to publicly available information, investigators strove to think about the complex ways in which race, ethnicity, class, ability, sexual

orientation, gender identity, national origin, and religion may intersect with persecution on gender-based grounds.⁹⁵

C. Findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran

Critically, and reflective of gender persecution, the FFMI’s detailed report (“FFMI report”) concluded that the IRI had committed:

“...a series of continuing acts that individually constitute human rights violations, directed against women, girls and persons expressing support for gender equality and the rights of women and girls and, cumulatively, constitute what the Mission assesses to be gender persecution in the context of the protests and associated repression of fundamental rights.”⁹⁶

The FFMI at times relied on open source information to reach this conclusion,⁹⁷ along with witness statements and other forms of documentary evidence.⁹⁸ These sources formed the basis for their conclusion that state authorities had:

- Severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;
- Targeted individuals by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity — in this context, women and girls as well as their supporters;
- Targeted that group or collectivity on the basis of gender — given the nexus to protests pushing for greater gender equality;

⁹⁵ Judicial approaches to sexual and gender-based crimes at the International Criminal Court.

⁹⁶ *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 479.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 12 (citing to the Berkeley Protocol and describing how “the Mission collected, reviewed and analysed information drawn from a variety of open sources, namely social media, news and media outlets, blogs and press releases... and ensured that the authenticity, veracity and credibility of open sources was established through best practices of current open-source analytical methods”); 401 (stating: “the Mission was able to gather sufficient evidence, including through first-hand accounts from 134 victims and witnesses inside and outside Iran, corroborated with open source material, to draw conclusions and make findings on patterns of human rights violations”); 448 (explaining that Mission relied on open sources, witness interviews and submissions to assess allegations that “relate to the notable increase in scale and severity of detentions of foreign and dual nationals since the start of the protests”).

⁹¹ Gopalan, 145.

⁹² Lily Kather.

⁹³ Learning Brief: *Feminism, Racism and Intersectionality*, at 5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

- Committed the conduct in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC’s jurisdiction, including “murder, imprisonment, torture, enforced disappearance, rape and other sexual violence, and other inhumane acts;”⁹⁹

- Committed the conduct as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population – due to “the high number of victims, the wide range of locations in which victims were found and, in particular, the prevalence across the country of the recurring patterns of violations amounting to crimes.”¹⁰⁰

With respect to the mens rea (mental culpability) of the perpetrator, the FFMI concluded that:

- The perpetrators knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread and systematic attack. This was due to high-level state authorities having “publicly commented on the attack directed against the civilian population and encouraged, sanctioned, and endorsed underlying acts through statements justifying them” among other factors, with responsible entities including “members of State security and intelligence forces, notably of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Basij forces, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Faraja), the Military Intelligence, the “morality police,” as well as members of the judiciary and prosecutors.”¹⁰¹

In summation, the FFMI’s report found that high-level officials in the IRI perpetrated gender persecution as a crime against humanity in the context of the protests and associated repression of fundamental rights, and through the IRI’s policies and enforcement of mandatory hijab. This investigation is intended to complement these findings from the FFMI.

99 Ibid., 479.

100 Ibid., 456-457.

101 Ibid., 464.

IV. Verification and Analysis

In the following sections of this report, investigators document, verify, and analyze eleven incidents found online in which official members of the IRI appear to have perpetrated crimes against civilians that appear to constitute gender persecution as an international crime. The eleven incidents echo the FFMI's findings that the IRI has likely committed gender persecution as a crime against humanity against women, girls, LGBTQI+ persons, and others expressing support for gender equality and related rights for women and girls.¹⁰² These incidents spotlight the powerful role that digital open source information can play in establishing the elements of the crime of humanity.

The verification and analysis of these eleven incidents are presented below chronologically in establishing elements of the crime against humanity for gender persecution. Investigators include a detailed overview of their verification process to illustrate for the reader how the investigators came to conclusions. Following the verification of each incident, the investigators explain how each incident may satisfy various elements of the crime of gender persecution. Additionally, investigators referred to the Gender Persecution Toolkit and asked:

- Are there intersecting forms of persecution?
- What additional information would we ask the investigator to gather?¹⁰³

In conducting their analysis, investigators considered the FFMI's detailed findings on the crimes perpetrated by the IRI.

¹⁰² Ibid., 479 (stating: "a series of continuing acts that individually constitute human rights violations, directed against women, girls and persons expressing support for gender equality and the rights of women and girls and, cumulatively, constitute what the Mission assesses to be gender persecution in the context of the protests and associated repression of fundamental rights").

¹⁰³ *Toolkit for Identifying Gender Persecution*, 18.

A. Sepideh Rashnu

I. Hijab Enforcement

On 16 July 2022, the activist collective 1500 Tasvir posted a video to social media that quickly went viral.¹⁰⁴ 1500 Tasvir's caption for the video read, "Today in Tehran a woman was harassing people over hijab. People forced her off the bus."

In the video, a woman wearing conservative civilian clothes popular with IRI supporters threatens to report other women on the bus to authorities for "violating" mandatory hijab rules.¹⁰⁵ The threatening "hijab enforcer" was later identified as Rayehe Rabiei.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Post on X, 1500 Tasvir, at <https://x.com/1500tasvir/status/1548173095633952768>.

¹⁰⁵ Following the 2021 election of President Ebrahim Raisi, a close ally of the supreme leader, the clerical establishment in Iran started rolling out measures to tighten the IRI's grip on all aspects of life in Iran. The measures included harassment and arrest of dissenting voices, described as a new "reign of terror" by human rights group, and a crackdown on women rights. As is customary with the IRI, with the warmer season approaching in 2022, top officials, including President Raisi and Friday prayers leaders (powerful clerics handpicked by the supreme leader), ordered enforcement of "hijab and chastity laws" for women. As the crackdown intensified, using Persian hashtag "no to hijab (#حجاب_بی_حجاب)," people in Iran called for acts of civil disobedience on 12 July 2022, coinciding with the official "Day of Hijab and Chastity." Using the hashtag on the day, women posted videos of themselves removing their hijab in public and men shared photos of themselves holding placards displaying similar hashtags and slogans. At the same time, IRI supporters threatened women with "acid attacks" and disfigurement, a tactic used in the past by fundamentalists in Iran to sow fear among women they consider "unchaste."

¹⁰⁶ On 17 and 18 July 2022, Iranian social media users, including two diaspora journalists, identified the hijab enforcer as Rayehe Rabiei, with one sharing a video of her in another situation.



Rayehe Rabiei threatens to report Sepideh Rashnu to the IRGC for allegedly “violating” hijab rules.

Sepideh Rashnu, a passenger on the bus and the focus of Rayehe Rabiei’s threats, recorded the interaction on her phone; it was this recording that 1500 Tasvir posted on 16 July 2022.¹⁰⁷ In the video, Sepideh Rashnu responds to threats, stating “What did you say? Repeat what you said.” In response, Rayehe Rabiei points her own phone’s camera at Sepideh Rashnu and says, “Shut your mouth.”¹⁰⁸



Rayehe Rabiei points her own smartphone’s camera at Sepideh Rashnu and begins filming Sepideh Rashnu.

As the argument progresses, Rayehe Rabiei threatens to share the footage with IRI authorities, stating:

“This is the last time you go on the street like this. You send [the video] to [journalist] Masih Alinejad. What would she be able to do for you? You send [the video] to Masih Alinejad. I will send [this video]

¹⁰⁷ Post on X, 1500 Tasvir, 16 July 2022, at <https://x.com/1500tasvir/status/1548173095633952768>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

*to the IRGC. They will deal with you.”*¹⁰⁹

Other women on the bus come to Sepideh Rashnu’s aid and try to prevent Rayehe Rabiei from filming her.¹¹⁰



Other passengers on the bus attempt to prevent Rayehe Rabiei from filming Sepideh Rashnu.

As Rayehe Rabiei continues to film Sepideh Rashnu and threaten her for non-compliance regarding mandatory hijab, the altercation on the bus becomes physical between Rayehe Rabiei and other passengers. At one point, another passenger displays her scratched wrist and states that the injury was inflicted by Rayehe Rabiei.¹¹¹

Rayehe Rabiei eventually departs the bus with angry passengers pushing her and calling for her to exit. On the bus station platform, Rayehe Rabiei continues threatening the women on the bus and swearing at them. In her last audible phrase on Sepideh Rashnu’s video, she calls the other women on the bus “bastards.”¹¹²

II. Geolocation

This video is possible to geolocate, confirming the location of the incident. In the video filmed by Sepideh Rashnu, a sign for the bus stop is partially visible. The words “Doctor” in Persian script and “Gharib” in Roman letters are written on the sign.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Masih Alinejad is an Iranian journalist based in the United States who is focused on women’s rights.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., (00:24).

¹¹¹ Ibid., (00:28).

¹¹² Ibid., (01:08).

¹¹³ Ibid.



The sign also contains the logo of Tehran Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).¹¹⁴



Investigators were thus able to confirm the bus line and geolocate the bus stop where Rayehe Rabiei exited the bus. The GPS coordinates are approximately 35.70097, 51.38489. The bus station is marked on Google Maps and on the Iranian map service Balad.



Dr. Gharib Station on Iranian map service Balad.

III. Arrest, Forced Confession, Hospitalization

On 17 July 2022, IRGC-linked Fars News Agency reported: “a profane woman swearing on the bus has been arrested.”¹¹⁵ The outlet pointed to the

¹¹⁴ Ibid. The bottom line of the sign reads, “Next station, Islamic Revolution” in Persian.

¹¹⁵ *Fars News*, 17 July 2022, at <https://farsnews.ir/news/14010426000234>.

video filmed by Sepideh Rashnu and claimed the video has been published by “anti-Iranian media.” Fars News Agency further alleged that after Rayehe Rabiei “admonished a woman about removing her hijab on the bus,” Sepideh Rashnu, with help from one of her “companions,” engaged in “swearing [at] and assaulting” the woman trying to enforce the hijab rules.¹¹⁶

On 30 July 2022, Iran’s state broadcaster, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (“IRIB”), aired a forced confession from Sepideh Rashnu on Channel 2, IRIB TV2, and during the news bulletin at 20:30.¹¹⁷ On the same day, Mehr News Agency published the video as part of a report produced by IRIB journalist, Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour.¹¹⁸ The video report quickly circulated online.¹¹⁹

Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour is accused of human rights abuses in collaboration with security forces.¹²⁰ As part of targeted sanctions against Islamic Republic officials involved in human rights violations, the United States has sanctioned Zabihpour for her involvement in human rights violations, including her role in soliciting and broadcasting “hundreds of forced confessions of Iranian, dual national, and international detainees in Iran.”¹²¹



Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ The 20:30 news bulletin often includes smear campaigns against dissidents.

¹¹⁸ *Mehr News Agency*, 30 July 2022, at <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5551702>.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., *YJC*, 30 July 2022, at <https://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/8200582/>. YJC is an IRGC-linked news agency; Post on Telegram, Tasnim News Agency, 30 July 2022, at <https://t.me/Tasnimnews/227924>. Tasnim News Agency is also affiliated with the IRGC.

¹²⁰ *Spreading Justice*, “Database of human rights violators in Iran,” at <https://spreadingjustice.org/individual-violator/sj58825/>.

¹²¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Sanctions Senior Officials and “Interrogator Journalists” of Iran’s State-Run Media, *U.S. Press Release*, 16 November 2022, at <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1109>.

Sepideh Rashnu's alleged confession opens with her admitting that she "first sent [the video of Rayehe Rabiei] to 1500 [Tasvir], and then sent it to journalist Masih Alinejad." When Sepideh Rashnu says 1500 Tasvir (in Persian), a censor bleep can be heard. The noise, however, fails to cover her voice and 1500 is audible.¹²²

In the video, Sepideh Rashnu states that she did not "properly wear" the hijab. Appearing defeated, she expresses remorse for that and for spreading her video of Rayehe Rabiei online.¹²³ She appears drained with slumping shoulders and hollow eyes. She speaks in a cracked, low voice, distinctly different than her speech in other videos from before and after her detention.¹²⁴ Furthermore, unexplained marks are visible on Sepideh Rashnu's face. These marks could have been the result of possible abuse during her detention.¹²⁵



Unexplained marks visible on Sepideh Rashnu's face.

On 3 August 2022, Iran's leading human rights documentation group, the Human Rights Activists News Agency ("HRANA"), released a report titled "Beating to obtain forced confessions; A report on the latest situation of Sepideh Rashnu."¹²⁶

122 See, e.g., X Account, Masih Alinejad, at <https://x.com/AlinejadMasih>; Instagram Account, Masih Alinejad, <https://www.instagram.com/masih.alinejad/>; X Account, 1500 Tasvir, at <https://x.com/1500tasvir> or https://www.instagram.com/1500tasvir_en/; Instagram Account, 1500 Tasvir, <https://www.instagram.com/1500tasvir/> or https://www.instagram.com/1500tasvir_en/.

123 *Mehr News Agency*, 30 July 2022, at <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5551702>, (01:34 to 01:42 and 02:42 to 02:49).

124 See, e.g., Post on X, Arash Sadeghi, 18 July 2022, at https://x.com/Arash_sadeghii/status/1548986725543837696 (showing Sepideh Rashnu speaking before her detention); Post on X, Saman Radhnoo, 1 September 2022, at <https://x.com/samanrashnoo/status/1565293121788936195> (showing Sepideh Rashnu speaking after her release).

125 Post on X, 1500 Tasvir, 16 July 2022, at <https://x.com/1500tasvir/status/1548173095633952768>.

126 *Human Rights Activists News Agency* (HRANA), "Beating to obtain forced confessions; A report on the latest situation of Sepideh Rashnu," 3 August 2022, at <https://www.hra-news.org/2022/hranews/a-36310/>.

According to "informed sources," five days after Sepideh Rashnu's arrest security forces transferred her to Tehran's Taleghani Hospital for a CT scan due to the risk of internal bleeding caused by a beating injury in the abdominal area.¹²⁷

On 30 August 2022, the brother of Sepideh Rashnu, Saman Rashnu, posted a photo on X, stating that Sepideh Rashnu had been released from Evin Detention Center. Evin is notorious as a site for torturing dissidents.¹²⁸ The photo in his post shows Sepideh Rashnu and her family outside of Evin.



Sepideh Rashnu and family after her release from Evin Detention Center in Tehran.

IV. Geolocation

One of the prison's entrances is visible in the picture along with an adjacent wall and distinct pattern of trees. Investigators were thus able to corroborate the location of Sepideh Rashnu and her family in the photo posted by Saman Rashnu through geolocation. The approximate GPS coordinates are 35.79792, 51.386 on the Eastern side of Evin Detention Center.

127 *Ibid.*

128 See, e.g., Kian Tajbakhah, "Iran Has Become a Prison," *The Atlantic*, 1 November 2022, (stating: Evin Prison occupies a special place both within the regime's security apparatus and in the political imagination of many Iranians, which is why this disturbance caught people's attention. Although the prison opened a few years before the 1979 revolution that deposed the shah and brought the clerics to power, it has become a symbol of the Islamic Republic's absolutist rule and intolerance of any dissent: Evin is Iran's Bastille); *Amnesty International*, "Tortured prisoners at Evin prison are in urgent need of international protection," 18 October 2022, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6129/2022/en/>; Siamak Namazi, "I endured Evin, Iran's most notorious jail. I can't understand how Sweden can leave its citizen to die there," *The Guardian*, 24 June 2024, at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jun/28/evin-iran-sweden-citizen-death-row>.



III. Suspension and Ongoing State Prosecution

On 13 May 2023, Sepideh Rashnu wrote on Instagram that she had been suspended by her university, Alzahra University in Tehran, for two semesters, over not wearing a headscarf. Sharing a photo of herself, she posted that the suspension came through the University's Disciplinary Committee. She added that earlier she was banned from entering the campus for not wearing a hijab.¹²⁹



Sepideh Rashnu's Instagram post explaining her suspension.

On 1 June 2023, Sepideh Rashnu wrote on Instagram that she was facing charges in three cases brought against her by the IRI. The charges in the third case included "encouraging people to [engage in] corruption and prostitution and disseminating propaganda against the regime" in violation of Articles 639 and 500 of Islamic Penal Code.¹³⁰ Sepideh Rashnu wrote:

"They argued that since I follow social media accounts of some people, I am in contact with them. [They also argued that] by publishing one photo and only one photo of myself without a headscarf, I am encouraging people to engage in

129 Post on Instagram, Sepideh Rashnu, 13 May 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CsLOcS6oUi5/?img_index=1.

130 Post on Instagram, Sepideh Rashnu, 1 June 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cs8wB7OIPiZ/>.

*corruption and prostitution. The argument is that I, as a citizen, do not have the right to protest, and if I do, it will result in a serious political security case, which will result in the implementation of the suspended sentence of the previous case."*¹³¹

On 15 February 2024, Sepideh Rashnu posted on Instagram, describing the sentences she received from Judge Iman Afshari in three cases brought against her in Branch 26 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court.¹³² Human rights organizations have accused Judge Iman Afshari of being "directly involved in the suppression of political activists, artists, and women, as well as the violation of citizens' social freedoms and the issuance of unjust prison sentences."¹³³



Judge Iman Afshari.

Sepideh Rashnu reports receiving the following sentences:

- Three years and seven months imprisonment for the bus incident;
- An additional four months imprisonment for activities leading to her university suspension, to be served consecutively;
- A fine of 15 million rials, approximately \$356.27 USD, for attempting to enter court without a hijab; and

131 Ibid.

132 See, e.g., "A court session was held to deal with Sepideh Reshnu's accusations," *Mizan Online News Agency*, 29 August 2022, at <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4421608/>; "Judiciary report from Sepideh Rashnu court," *Iranian Students' News Agency*, 7 September 2022, at <https://www.isna.ir/news/1401060705829/>.

133 See, e.g., Spreading Justice, "Database of human rights violators in Iran," at <https://spreadingjustice.org/individual-violator/sj37154/>; "Afshari, Iman," *United Against Nuclear Iran*, at <https://www.unitedagainstanucleariran.com/sanctioned-person/afshari-iman> (citing that Iman Afshari has been sanctioned by both the United Kingdom and Canada).

- Prohibition on leaving the country.¹³⁴

On 23 July 2024, Saman Rashnu wrote on X that his sister Sepideh Rashnu had been summoned to begin serving her prison sentence starting on 27 July 2024. He stated that she would be imprisoned for three years and seven months (43 months in total).¹³⁵ On 27 July 2024, Saman Rashnu wrote on X that the judiciary had accepted an appeals request and therefore suspended the implementation of the prison sentence.¹³⁶

Despite facing a nearly four-year sentence, Sepideh Rashnu has continued to support other prisoners of conscience and the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.¹³⁷

V. Gender Persecution Analysis - Sepideh Rashnu

Gender persecution as a crime against humanity requires the perpetrator to severely deprive a person of their fundamental rights by targeting such a person by reason of their identity in a group or collectivity for one or more unlawful acts on gender grounds and other relevant intersecting grounds.

1. The perpetrator severely deprived one or more

*persons of fundamental rights;*¹³⁸

In the case of Sepideh Rashnu, enforcement of mandatory hijab, along with the arrest, detention and forced confessions as a result of her perceived violation of mandatory hijab rules deprived her of her fundamental right to freedom of association; her fundamental right to freedom of expression; and her fundamental right to liberty and security of person, among other rights.

2. The perpetrator targeted the person by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;

Sepideh Rashnu was targeted due to her perceived defiance against mandatory hijab and thus her identity as a member of a collective fighting for greater gender equality in Iran. Although Sepideh Rashnu was arrested before the death of Mahsa Jina Amini and the beginning of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, her ongoing case and resilience have become a symbol of that movement. The FFMI's report also references the case of Sepideh Rashnu, calling her "one of the leading voices during the Woman, Life, Freedom uprising" and confirming that the charges against her include "assembly and collusion against national security through contacts with individuals abroad," "propaganda against the Islamic Republic," and "encouraging... corruption and prostitution."¹³⁹

3. The targeting was based on gender;

¹³⁸ Many fundamental rights have been enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols. These rights include, but are not limited to: the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association guaranteed under the UDHR and ICCPR; the right to freedom of expression guaranteed under the ICCPR; the right to liberty and security of person, including the freedom from arbitrary arrest and/or detention established in Article 9(1) of the ICCPR; the right to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment established in Article 7 of the ICCPR. Acts of torture further violate Article 10 of the ICCPR, Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Article 7 (1)(f) Rome Statute holds that the act of torture can amount to a crime against humanity; the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one's life, recognised as part of customary international law and as a jus cogens norm, universally binding at all times. Arbitrary and/or extrajudicial killings also violate the right to life, as established in Article 6 and 26 of the ICCPR and Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 7 (1)(a) Rome Statute holds that the act of murder can amount to a crime against humanity.

¹³⁹ *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 102 (citing articles: "Sepideh Rashnu" by *United4Iran* and "Annual Report 2023" by *Human Rights Watch*).

¹³⁴ Sepideh Rashnu's post states that she will not be impacted by the prohibition on leaving the country, because she has no intention of leaving Iran.

¹³⁵ Post on X, Saman Sashnu, 23 July 2024, at <https://x.com/samanrashnoo/status/1815793943302275174>.

¹³⁶ Post on X, Saman Rashnu, 27 July 2024, at <https://x.com/samanrashnoo/status/1817105393488650621>.

¹³⁷ For more information about Sepideh Rashnu, see Khosro Sayeh Isfahni, "Everything You Need to Know about Sepideh Rashnu, Iranian Writer Persecuted for Defying Mandatory," *Atlantic Council*, 26 July 2024, at [Hijabhttps://iranhrdc.org/everything-you-need-to-know-about-sepideh-rashnu-iranian-writer-persecuted-for-defying-mandatory-hijab/](https://iranhrdc.org/everything-you-need-to-know-about-sepideh-rashnu-iranian-writer-persecuted-for-defying-mandatory-hijab/).

Imposition of mandatory hijab policies against Sepideh Rashnu is an archetypal example of gendered policies and conduct given the explicitly gendered nature of who is required to wear a hijab “under the current laws of the IRI”¹⁴⁰ — specifically, women. The case of Sepideh Rashnu also plays an important role in confirming the FFMI’s allegation that patterns of serious violations related to gender “pre-exist the death in custody of Mahsa Jina Amini and the protests that began on 16 September 2022.”

4. *The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC’s jurisdiction;*

With respect to the violations against Sepideh Rashnu, the underlying acts represented in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute include detention, possibly torture, and other inhumane acts.

5. *The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;*

The FFMI found that the acts of persecution on the basis of gender are a fundamental part of the widespread and systematic IRI attacks that support a finding of crimes against humanity.

The systematic nature of the IRI’s violent enforcement of mandatory hijab is reflected in discriminatory state laws and policies that have widespread application. Systematicity is also indicated by the many official IRI statements regarding mandatory hijab and the penalties for non-compliance.

On 6 July 2022, just ten days before Sepideh Rashnu’s altercation with Rayehe Rabiei, then-Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi called the lack of compliance with mandatory hijab laws “an organized promotion of [moral] corruption in

Islamic society.”¹⁴¹ The investigators who worked on this report found dozens of arrest videos seemingly associated with the IRI’s crackdown on mandatory hijab. As such, the detention, forced confession, and ongoing prosecution of Sepideh Rashnu should be understood as part of the IRI’s larger state policy of persecuting women and girls through violent and arbitrary enforcement of mandatory hijab laws.

6. *The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.*

As the FFMI explains in their report, for the contextual element to be satisfied there must be “a nexus between the individual act and the attack; and that the perpetrator acted with sufficient mens rea.”¹⁴²

Rayehe Rabiei, who reported Sepideh Rashnu for defying mandatory hijab laws, is clear in her statements to Sepideh Rashnu and others that she is aware of the IRI’s mandatory hijab policies and intends to report women for their “violations” of mandatory hijab. Moreover, IRCG-linked reporter Ameneh Sadat Zabihipour, the members of Evin Detention Complex who detained Sepideh Rashnu, and the Iranian judiciary who continue to prosecute Sepideh Rashnu were all also aware of the IRI’s widely publicized demands for strict enforcement of mandatory hijab. Thus, they knew their conduct was part of the state’s attack on women and girls who defy mandatory hijab laws. Rashnu’s arrest and her ongoing legal battles against charges associated with mandatory hijab “violations” highlight how state resources have been intentionally used to persecute her.

A. Intersectionality

The violent acts committed against Sepideh Rashnu are intersectional in nature. The circumstances suggest that her actions were perceived as political. She may have also been

140 The case of Sepideh Rashnu is illustrative of the reality that “patterns of serious violations pre-exist the death in custody of Mahsa Jina Amini and the protests that began on 16 September 2022.” See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 2 (stating: “the custodial death of Jina Mahsa Amini was a stark reminder of decades-long discrimination and violence against women in Iran. This was further evidenced by the images of countless courageous women and girls joining the demonstrations, and removing their hijabs in public, despite real risks to their safety, in order to protest the institutionalized discrimination which has for decades affected virtually every aspect of their lives”).

141 Maryam Sinaiee, “Iran’s Raisi Orders Strict Enforcement of Hijab Amid Crackdown,” *Iran International*, 7 July 2022, at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202207065340>; Kourosh Ziabari, “Iranian women under pressure as Raisi stiffens hijab mandate,” *Al-Monitor*, 23 July 2022, at <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/07/iranian-women-under-pressure-raisi-stiffens-hijab-mandate>.

142 *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 21.

targeted because of her relatively young age.

B. Additional information that would be helpful

At this time, the individual identities of those who arrested Sepideh Rashnu are unknown.¹⁴³ Additional research and analysis could aid in understanding the orders executed by those who triggered Sepideh Rashnu's arrest and the identities of the individuals who gave those orders.

B. Zahra Haghghatian

I. Inhumane Treatment by IRI Security Forces

On 24 September 2022, a short video went viral in Iran that allegedly showed the inhumane treatment of two women by Iranian security forces. Diaspora TV channel Iran International was the original source of the video.¹⁴⁴ The video quickly circulated online.¹⁴⁵

The video appears to show IRI security forces in riot gear physically assaulting two young women. One of them will later identify herself as Zahra Haghghatian. Both of the female victims are wearing loose, long clothes and headscarves.¹⁴⁶



Zahra Haghghatian in the video of her assault.

In the video, Zahra Haghghatian and the other young woman band together in their response to the IRI officers, using their arms and bodies to try and protect each other and pull each other to safety. During the incident, security forces can be seen pushing their hands towards the two women's chests. In one of the frames from

¹⁴⁴ Post on Telegram, *Iran International*, 24 September 2022, at <https://t.me/IranintlTV/139325>. The caption for the video claimed that it had been sent directly to the channel.

¹⁴⁵ See also Post on X, *Manoto News*, 24 September 2022, at <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1573711426723905536>. Another diaspora TV channel, Manoto TV, shared the same video at 12:30 EST on X. A woman can be heard at the end of the video saying: "Record this and send it [to journalists]"; Post on X, *Radio Farda*, 24 September 2022, at https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1573757457444356096. Radio Farda, the Persian service of RFE/RL, shared an edited copy of the video at 15:33 EST on the same day. Their video zooms in on different portions of the imagery, highlighting specific parts of the incident. Post on Twitter, *Mamlekate*, 24 September 2022, at <https://twitter.com/mamlekate/status/1573761096053395456>. The Iranian citizen journalist online collective, Mamlekate, posted a shorter, edited version of the video at 15:47 EST. Post on X, *BBC Persian*, 24 September 2022, at <https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1573832364551245824>.

¹⁴⁶ Post on Telegram, *Iran International*, 24 September 2022, at <https://t.me/IranintlTV/139325>.

¹⁴³ Investigators do feel that the IRGC Intelligence Organization was the entity likely responsible for her arrest, since she was transferred to Evin Prison, which is affiliated with the intelligence services.

the video, a male officer in riot gear can be seen groping Zahra Haghghatian's breast. In the video shared by Malekate and reposted by Radio Farda, the video has been slowed down and imagery enhanced to emphasize the sexual assault.¹⁴⁷



Security officer groping Zahra Haghghatian, enhanced by editors at Malekate.

Towards the end of the video, one of the officers can be seen throwing Zahra Haghghatian against a raised curb. Her head and neck make impact with the curb, and her body is thrown back from the force of the impact.¹⁴⁸



Zahra Haghghatian thrown against a raised curb.

The IRI security officers present in the video are wearing the distinctive riot gear of the Law Enforcement Command of the IRI. Four-star shoulder straps are visible on the uniforms of two of the officers.¹⁴⁹



Two captains present in the video and giving orders during the assault.

Four-star shoulder straps indicate that the officers are captains in the police force of the IRI. At least one of these captains is carrying a holstered pistol. They appear to be leading the other security forces in the commission of their duties.



Four-star shoulder straps indicate the rank of Captains (سروان) in the police force of the Islamic Republic.

In the video, at least one of the police captains can be seen carrying a holstered pistol.¹⁵⁰

147 Post on Twitter, *Mamlekat*, 24 September 2022, at <https://twitter.com/mamlekat/status/1573761096053395456>. <https://twitter.com/mamlekat/status/1573761096053395456>; Post on X, *Radio Farda*, 24 September 2022, at https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1573757457444356096.

148 Post on Telegram, *Iran International*, 24 September 2022, at <https://t.me/IranintlTV/139325>.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.



Captain carrying a holstered pistol.

Two of the officers acting under the apparent command of the captains carry teargas launchers and wear teargas bandoliers. Another two officers are armed with shotguns.¹⁵¹



Officers carrying shotguns surround Zahra Haghghatian.

II. Geolocation

The commentary for the 24 September 2022 post by Iran International reads:

“A video obtained by Iran International from Shiraz shows that the agents of the special unit violently attack[ed] two women and hit the head of one of them on the edge of a curb.”¹⁵²

Investigators looked at satellite imagery of large intersections in Shiraz. One intersection appeared to have curbs and trees very similar to the video. This intersection is called Paramount Intersection.



Paramount Intersection.

Although there is no Google Street View for Paramount Intersection, purported footage of this popular intersection appears in other videos on social media. For example, a YouTube account named 4K Video Ultra captures Paramount Intersection in a 16-minute video about the neighborhood posted on 16 April 2022.¹⁵³ The blue pagoda, traffic triangle with yellow and black stripes, and telephone pole are visible in both 4K Video Ultra’s video and the video of the assault.¹⁵⁴



Investigators were thus able to confirm the square where Zahra Haghghatian was victimized. The imagery from the video indicates that the assaults captured in the video took place at Paramount Intersection, otherwise known as 15 Khordad Intersection, with the approximate GPS coordinates 29.61989, 52.52822.

III. Summons to Court after Publicly Decrying the Assault

The identity of the two women in the video posted

¹⁵¹ Ibid. See <https://iranwire.com/fa/features/109393> for information on the weapons used by IRI security forces against protesters.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Post on Youtube, 4K Video Ultra, 16 April 2022, at https://youtu.be/D3m5gz44QrQ?si=G_UM0PzYxiykGqPo.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid; Post on Telegram, *Iran International*, 24 September 2022, at <https://t.me/IranintlTV/139325>.

on 24 September 2022 remained largely unknown until almost six months after the video was posted. On 9 March 2023, the woman who was beaten, groped and thrown against the curb revealed her identity as then 23-year-old Zahra Haghghatian through the social media of an attorney who provides legal assistance to Iranian activists from outside Iran, known as Dadban.¹⁵⁵ The post by Dadban on X also identified the other woman as Zahra Haghghatian's sister, without naming her.¹⁵⁶



12:38 AM Mar 9, 2023 - 66.5K Views

Post by Dadban revealing Zahra Haghghatian's identity as the one of women in the 24 September 2022 video.

The post reported that Zahra Haghghatian sustained injuries to her neck and lower vertebrae as a result of being thrown against the curb. She also reportedly suffered from severe anxiety and psychosomatic disorder due to ongoing threats and intimidation from IRI security forces, who pressured Zahra Haghghatian to remain silent about her experience.¹⁵⁷

The following day, 10 March 2023, Dadban posted an additional video of the 24 September 2022 incident.¹⁵⁸ The new footage shows Zahra Haghghatian, her sister, and a young man protesting and holding placards at the Paramount Intersection before the officers surround and assault them. The additional video footage also shows how the IRI security forces in riot gear approached the three protesters as they were

peacefully protesting.¹⁵⁹



Zahra Haghghatian protesting as security forces on motorcycles approach at Paramount Intersection.

On 15 July 2023, Radio Farda published additional statements from Zahra Haghghatian about the assault. She is quoted, stating:

"Initially, the officers went after the young man who was standing with us silently and peacefully holding a sign. They beat him severely. I tried to tell the officers that we are just standing here with placards, that we are doing nothing. [At] the same time I was trying to prevent the officers from beating and arresting the young man, but suddenly the number of officers increased and they surrounded us. After the officers took the young man away, my sister and I decided to leave the place, but the officers continued the confrontation, and started beating me and my sister, and while I was trying to rescue my sister, they pushed me to the curbside."¹⁶⁰

Since the assault, Zahra Haghghatian has posted numerous videos on social media speaking out about her support for the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and her defiance of mandatory hijab; these posts have been widely re-shared on social media platforms.¹⁶¹

Zahra Haghghatian's freedom, however, is still at risk at the time of writing. According to interviews

155 Post on X, Dadban, 9 March 2023, at <https://twitter.com/dadban4/status/1633749174528114688>. Dadban provides legal assistance to Iranian activists from outside Iran.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

158 Post on X, Dadban, 10 March 2023, at <https://twitter.com/dadban4/status/1634157624265416710>.

159 Ibid.

160 Radio Farda, 15 July 2023, at <https://www.radiofarda.ch/om/a/zahra-haghghatian/32491337.html>.

161 See, e.g., Post on Instagram, BBC Persian, 14 May 2023, at https://www.instagram.com/bbcpersian/p/CsPDUKtobD9/?img_index=1; Post on X, DW Persian, 15 May 2023, at https://twitter.com/dw_persian/status/1658109959899316227; Post on Instagram, Ethan Amani, 24 September 2023, at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CxmWGcULux-/>.

with local news agencies, Zahra Haghghatian was summoned to court by the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor of Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchestan Province.¹⁶² Zahra Haghghatian is quoted by HRANA as stating that the reason for the summons was “not complying with hijab [requirements] and publishing images violating public modesty.”¹⁶³ According to Dadban, Zahra Haghghatian has not been charged with any crime, but the Prosecutor of Chabahar threatened to charge her with “national security violations” that come with “heavy prison sentences.”¹⁶⁴

IV. Gender Persecution Analysis - Zahra Haghghatian

1. *The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;*

The assault and sexual violence perpetrated by IRI security forces against Zahra Haghghatian deprived her of her fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association, freedom of expression, and liberty and security of person.

2. *The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;*

The online information suggests that Zahra Haghghatian was targeted because of her support for the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Video footage shows the IRI officers stopping at a protest where Zahra Haghghatian was chanting and holding a sign. The protesters, including Zahra Haghghatian, were peacefully supporting the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Zahra Haghghatian is not shown engaging in conduct that would warrant arrest.

3. *The targeting was based on gender;*

All protesters who were targeted because of participation or perceived participation in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement were targeted based, in part, on their association with calls for gender justice, connecting the targeting to

162 See, e.g., HRANA, 16 April 2023, at <https://www.hra-news.org/2023/hranews/a-42070/>; Radio Farda, 15 July 2023, at <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/zahra-haghghatian/32491337.html>.

163 HRANA, 16 April 2023, at <https://www.hra-news.org/2023/hranews/a-42070/>.

164 Radio Farda, 15 July 2023, at <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/zahra-haghghatian/32491337.html>.

gender. Moreover, Zahra Haghghatian was also likely targeted because of her gender based on the sexual assault that a member of the security force perpetrated against her.

4. *The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC’s jurisdiction;*

In the case of Zahra Haghghatian, the underlying acts referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute include other inhumane acts.

5. *The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;*

On 3 October 2022, just ten days after IRI officers attacked Zahra Haghghatian, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei broke his silence on national television, speaking about the protests that had escalated following Mahsa Amini’s death.¹⁶⁵ He referred to the protests as “illegal rioting” and accused the U.S. and Israel of planning the protests as a “foreign plot to destabilize Iran.” He also promised to continue to support IRI forces in a coordinated state response.¹⁶⁶

The open source videos show that the officers who stopped and attacked Zahra Haghghatian targeted her because she was protesting, and thus their response can be seen as part of the state policy-driven, systemic response of the IRI against the Woman, Life, Freedom protests, which the government had deemed a sinister “foreign plot.”¹⁶⁷

6. *The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.*

The perpetrators in the video are uniformed and appear to be acting in concert to carry out state policy. Importantly, the other officers in the video do not appear to oppose or stop the perpetrators from committing violence against Zahra Haghghatian.

165 See, e.g., Associated Press, “Iran’s supreme leader breaks silence on protests, blames U.S: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei sharply condemned the protests as a foreign plot to destabilize Iran,” *Politico*, 3 October 2022, at <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/10/03/iran-supreme-leader-protests-us-00059981>.

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid.

Other open source imagery from September 2022 and the findings of the FFMI show similarly uniformed IRI officers perpetrating attacks on protesters across Iran, causing severe pain, injury, and sometimes death. This further suggests that the violence was widespread and that officers knew that their conduct was part of the IRI's crackdown on protests.¹⁶⁸

A. Intersectionality

The violent acts committed against Zahra Haghghatian are also intersectional in nature. Video footage shows IRI forces stopping when they see protesters, including Zahra Haghghatian, and others peacefully demonstrating. The circumstances suggest that she may have been targeted based on gender (due to the gendered nature of the protests) and political expression. It is also possible that Zahra Haghghatian was targeted because she was a relatively young woman and thus on the basis of age.¹⁶⁹ Many of the victims presented in the FFMI-detailed findings on the IRI are described in the FFMI's report as "young protesters" or even "child protesters" who face unique vulnerabilities because of their age.¹⁷⁰

B. Additional information that would be helpful

Further analysis of open source information could aid in understanding the "cumulative effect" of acts of gender persecution against protesters by the IRI. As the FFMI report explains,

"For the deprivation of fundamental rights to meet the severity threshold for them to constitute persecution as a crime against humanity, the [FFMI] has relied on jurisprudence of the international criminal tribunals. In this regard, and according to relevant jurisprudence, discriminatory acts charged as persecution must not be considered in isolation, but in context, by looking at their

*cumulative effect."*¹⁷¹

A pattern analysis comparing the violence committed against Zahra Haghghatian and violence committed against other protesters on the same date and at the same location could aid in understanding the severity of the rights deprivations perpetrated by specific IRI branches, as well as the systematic nature of their actions.

¹⁶⁸ Detailed Findings of the FFMI, 461.

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., Holly Dages. "Iran Protests: How Gen Z Is Driving the Uprising", *Foreign Policy*, 1 November 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/11/01/iran-protests-gen-z-mahsa-amini-social-media/>. (showing how leading Iran analysts have noted that young people in Iran, especially members of Generation Z, have been among the leading forces demanding fundamental change in the country).

¹⁷⁰ Detailed Findings of the FFMI (detailing crimes related to the death of twenty-two "young protesters" and sixteen "child protesters").

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 473 (citing: ICTY, IT-98-30/1-T, *Prosecutor v. Kvočka*, Judgement, Trial Chamber, 2 November 2001, para. 185; ICTY, IT-95-16-A, *Prosecutor v. Kupreškić et al.*, Judgment, Appeals Chamber, 23 October 2001, para. 615; ICTY, IT-05-88-A, *Prosecutor v. Popović et al.*, Judgment, Appeals Chamber, 30 January 2015, para. 766).

C. Ghazaleh Chalabi

I. Murder of Ghazaleh Chalabi

On 20 October 2022, Manoto TV, a London-based, Persian-language TV channel, shared a video on X and YouTube claiming that it showed the 21 September 2022 deadly shooting of a 32-year-old protestor, Ghazaleh Chalabi.¹⁷² The video quickly circulated on social media.¹⁷³

According to Manoto TV, Ghazaleh Chalabi was filming the protests when she inadvertently captured the moment that she was shot. The commentary for Manoto TV's post states:

*"The moment Ghazaleh Chalabi was killed while filming [protests] in Amol. Video of direct gunfire by security forces on people from inside the Governor General's Office in Amol on Wednesday, 21 September 2022."*¹⁷⁴

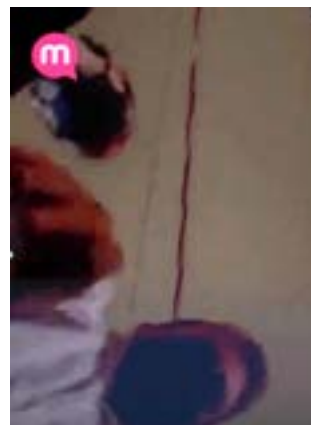
Manoto TV's video shows two distinct pieces of footage. Both appear to be from the same location and protest.¹⁷⁵

Ghazaleh Chalabi is purportedly filming the later segment of footage in the video.¹⁷⁶ The footage shows active participation of a diverse group of civilians in a protest for Woman, Life, Freedom. Suddenly, three separate gunshots can be heard. After the third shot, it appears that the person holding the camera falls to the ground. A loud thud can be heard; it is presumably the sound of a body hitting the ground. The cameraperson loses control of the phone just before the thud.¹⁷⁷



Ghazaleh Chalabi's footage of the protests.

The footage ends with the camera facing upwards. A man in a yellow T-shirt appears to be looking at the camera. Another man reaches out and picks up the camera. At the same time protesters begin screaming. One woman can be heard saying, "They killed her." Another man repeats, "oh God, oh God."¹⁷⁸



Final shot from Ghazaleh Chalabi's footage.

In the other piece of footage from the montage, a man in black clothes and a white face mask, wearing clothing similar to that issued to police and Basij militia forces, appears near a yellow brick wall, holding a weapon.¹⁷⁹ After nodding his head in the affirmative twice and making a hand gesture that in Iranian culture signals confidence, the armed man aims at the protesters and fires a shot at the crowd of protesters.¹⁸⁰

172 Post on YouTube, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdfnhpB9ecE>; Post on X, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1583194962820476928>.

173 See, e.g., Post on Facebook, Iran Briefing (IB), 21 October 2022, at <https://www.facebook.com/IRANBRIEFING/videos/ghazaleh-chalabi-a-32-year-old-woman-was-filming-the-protests-with-her-mobile-ph/8461757483849434/>.

174 Post on YouTube, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdfnhpB9ecE>; Post on X, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1583194962820476928>.

175 Post on YouTube, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdfnhpB9ecE>; Post on X, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1583194962820476928>. The segment runs from 00:01 until 00:12.

176 Ibid; starting at 00:13.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid, 00:01-00:12. The weapon is blurry, but it appears to be a shotgun or a rifle.

180 Ibid. The direction of his head and hand gestures indicate that they are also on the premises and close to the building.



The man in black clothes who shoots the projectile at the crowd.

Although Manoto TV's edit of the two pieces of footage suggests the videos are related, investigators could not confirm both pieces of footage were related and that the projectile fired on the Manoto TV video led to the death of Ghazaleh Chalabi. Information published online since the circulation of Manoto TV's video, however, confirms the death of Ghazaleh Chalabi.

On 2 November 2022, The Guardian published an article regarding the IRI murder of Ghazaleh Chalabi and the continued harassment of her family.¹⁸¹ According to the article an aunt of Ghazaleh described how she was "shot from the front" and in a coma for six days before she died. The aunt also reported that security forces threatened to withhold her body and bury her in an unknown location, if family members "made a noise" about her murder.¹⁸²

In this article, The Guardian shared a version of the video footage with Ghazaleh Chalabi's voice purportedly enhanced and audible; her words are translated.¹⁸³ The Guardian article notes:

"Ghazaleh Chalabi's death was particularly shocking because footage of the protests that she was making on her phone at the time she was shot

181 Maryam Foumani and Patrick Wintour, "Parents of Iranian woman killed during protests 'harassed by security forces,'" The Guardian, 2 November 2022, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/02/parents-of-iranian-woman-killed-during-protests-harassed-by-security-forces>. See also *Radio Farda*, "New details from before and after Ghazaleh Chalabi was shot; A protester who recorded the moment she was killed," 11 August 2023, at <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-protests-ghazalehchalabi/32490352.html>.

182 Maryam Foumani and Patrick Wintour, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/02/parents-of-iranian-woman-killed-during-protests-harassed-by-security-forces>.

183 Post on YouTube, *Guardian News*, 2 November 2022, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4C9Oozoqp8>.

*was conserved and uploaded on social media. Her last words were: "Do not be afraid, do not be afraid."*¹⁸⁴

On 23 November 2022, Iranian Journalist, Masoud Kazemi, posted an image on X, claiming it to be Ghazaleh Chalabi's unconscious body with a bullet wound in her head.¹⁸⁵ Within minutes, enhanced versions of the photo circulated online.¹⁸⁶



Image circulated regarding Ghazaleh Chalabi's death.

The unconscious body in the image posted by Masoud Kazemi can be compared to other images of Ghazaleh Chalabi found on social media, such as the following image posted by Amnesty Iran's account on X.¹⁸⁷



Photo of Ghazaleh Chalabi posted by Amnesty Iran.

184 Maryam Foumani and Patrick Wintour, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/02/parents-of-iranian-woman-killed-during-protests-harassed-by-security-forces>.

185 Post on X, Masoud Kazemi, 23 November 2022, at <https://twitter.com/masoudkazemi81/status/1595359860610195457>. This has not been confirmed to be the original posting of the image.

186 See, e.g., Post on X, Khaled Hoseini, 23 November 2022, at <https://twitter.com/khaledhoseini/status/1595360911597998081/photo/1> (enhancing the image from Masoud Kazemi and writing, "For fries who may not see the picture clearly").

187 Post on X, *Amnesty Iran*, 28 July 2023, at <https://twitter.com/AmnestyIran/status/1684943755063738368>.

The commentary for Amnesty Iran’s post states:

“Ghazaleh Chalabi was only 32 when she was unlawfully killed by security forces during the #WomanLifeFreedom protests. Not one official has been brought to justice for the hundreds of people killed. States must exercise universal jurisdiction to hold those responsible to account.”

By comparing photos from social media, the identity of the unconscious body with a head wound can be confirmed as Ghazaleh Chalabi.

II. Geolocation

Manoto TV’s commentary for the post of the video suggests that the shooting(s) captured on the video took place in Amol on 21 September 2022. Protests erupted in Amol on 21 September 2022 in several locations, including outside the Governor General’s office.

The Governor General’s Office is visible using Google Street View.



Distinct trees, a covered second-story balcony, curved metal fencing, flags at the sides of the building, and a blue sign for the Governor General’s office can all be identified.



These distinct features are also visible in the

footage of the protests captured by Ghazaleh Chalabi. The individual trees, covered second-story balcony, curved metal fencing, flags at the sides of the building, and blue sign for the Governor General’s office are visible.



Investigators were thus able to confirm that the footage shot by Ghazaleh Chalabi and posted by Manoto TV on 20 October 2022 captured protests at the Governor General’s Office in Amol.¹⁸⁸ The GPS coordinates are approximately 36.45810, 52.34808.

III. Gender Persecution Analysis - Ghazaleh Chalabi

1. *The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;*

The fatal shooting of Ghazaleh Chalabi deprived her of her fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association, freedom of expression, liberty, security of person, and life.

2. *The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;*

Video footage shows security forces targeting a protest where Ghazaleh Chalabi was chanting slogans related to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, a movement focused on gender rights. The protesters, including Ghazaleh Chalabi, are peaceful. Ghazaleh Chalabi is not shown engaging in any violence or other conduct

188 The other segment of footage in the Manoto TV video can also be geolocated to the Governor General’s Office in Amol. In that segment the covered second-story balcony, curved metal fencing and blue sign for the Governor General’s office are visible. See Post on YouTube, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdfnhpB9ecE>; Post on X, *Manoto TV*, 20 October 2022, at <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1583194962820476928>. The segment runs from 00:01 until 00:12.

that would warrant targeting or arrest. Instead, she appears to have been targeted because of her general support for the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

3. *The targeting was based on gender;*

All protesters who were targeted because of their participation or perceived participation in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement were targeted based, in part, on their association with calls for gender justice. Thus, the targeting has a nexus to gender.

4. *The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC's jurisdiction;*

In the case of Ghazaleh Chalabi, the underlying act in the Rome Statute is murder.

5. *The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;*

On 3 October 2022, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spoke publicly on national television, giving his "full backing to security forces confronting protests ignited by the death of Mahsa Amini in custody."¹⁸⁹ Referring to the protesters in his speech, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated:

*"The duty of our security forces, including police, is to ensure the safety of the Iranian nation.... The ones who attack the police are leaving Iranian citizens defenseless against thugs, robbers and extortionists...."*¹⁹⁰

The officer in the video who shot at the crowd of protesters will have been well aware of the Supreme Leader's unwavering support for the state police's crackdown on protests as part of the state's official policy against those portrayed by the IRI as "thugs and robbers" destabilizing Iran.

6. *The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.*

Investigators were not able to confirm documentary

189 See, e.g., Parisa Hafez, "Iran's Khamenei backs police over Mahsa Amini protests, may signal tougher crackdown," *Reuters*, 3 October 2022, at <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-khamenei-says-protests-were-planned-state-media-2022-10-03/>.

190 Ibid.

evidence of the perpetrator. Further analysis of open source information could shed light on whether the footage from Manoto TV showing an individual shooting at a crowd of protesters in front of the Governor General's office is related to the death of Ghazaleh Chalabi.

Due to the nature of the lethal weapon that struck Ghazaleh Chalabi in the head and the proximity of Ghazaleh Chalabi to other peaceful protesters, the perpetrator knew or should have known that they were using that weapon against civilian supporters of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and that the use of the lethal weapon would put protesters' lives at risk.

A. Intersectionality

The gender persecution committed against Ghazaleh Chalabi was intersectional in nature because Ghazaleh Chalabi was shot while protesting in support of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. This indicates that she was the victim of political persecution as well as gender persecution. Furthermore, it is possible that Ghazaleh Chalabi, like Zahra Haghightian, was also targeted because she was a young woman, and thus on the basis of age.

B. Additional information that would be helpful

Further investigations should prioritize finding open source information about the perpetrator of the crime. In addition, locating and analyzing additional open source content that shows the shooting would help to confirm the specifics around Ghazaleh Chalabi's death. Many people appear to have attended the protest during which she was shot, including people who were standing close to the camera at the time of the shooting. Additional footage or testimony from those individuals would provide further clarity about the incident.

D. Toomaj Salehi

I. Arrest

On 30 October 2022, Mizan News Agency, the IRI judiciary's official news outlet, published a video announcing the arrest of Toomaj Salehi and accusing him of "planning and organizing" protests and "threatening security forces" in collaboration with "diaspora leaders."¹⁹¹

According to Mizan, the posted video was produced by Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour, the same journalist affiliated with the IRIB that produced the video of Sepideh Rashnu's forced confession¹⁹² and who has been sanctioned by the United States for involvement in human rights violations.¹⁹³ Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour can be heard narrating throughout the video and signs off with her name.¹⁹⁴



Toomaj Salehi in a video produced by Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour.

On 2 November 2022, the Young Journalists Club ("YJC"), a media group affiliated with the IRIB, posted a short video on Telegram showing Toomaj Salehi.¹⁹⁵ In the video, Toomaj Salehi sits on the ground outdoors. He is blindfolded and his face is swollen. He audibly states:

"[I'm] Toomaj Salehi. I said that I'm sorry that I said

191 Mizan Online News Agency, "Bully Singer Captured by Security Forces," 30 October 2022, at <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4494864/%C2%A0>. The same day, Iran's state broadcaster, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), reported that Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi was arrested.

192 Ibid.

193 U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Sanctions Senior Officials and "Interrogator Journalists" of Iran's State-Run Media, *U.S. Press Release*, November 16, 2022, at <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1109>.

194 Mizan Online News Agency, at 03:15.

195 Even prior to the Women's, Life, Freedom movement, many trusted Iranian media and human rights sources – including the *Center for Human Rights in Iran*, *Iran Wire*, and *Radio Free Europe* – warned of the Young Journalists Club's affiliations with the IRI. They describe the seemingly innocuous media outlet as a hardline propaganda mechanism of the IRI, affiliated specifically with the IRGC. These sources point to the other "confessions" – all seemingly heavily edited – that have appeared on posts by the YJC News Channel.

*'I tell you as a friend, you should run away.'*¹⁹⁶



Video of Toomaj Salehi produced by the Young Journalists Club.

The video released by the YJC appeared that evening in an IRIB nightly news report.¹⁹⁷ The news report describes Toomaj Salehi as "one of the leaders of recent riots" and accuses him of "instigating sedition online."¹⁹⁸

II. Forced Confession

On 6 December 2022, Iranian state media, including the government-run newspaper *Iran Daily*, published a video entitled "Toomaj Salehi: I apologize to the society for the violence I caused."¹⁹⁹ The video appears to be a highly stylized "confession video" produced while Toomaj Salehi was in the custody of the state. At one point in the video, Toomaj Salehi states:

*"This was my mistake. I apologize for that to you [pointing to a person in the room] and to the society for producing violence. I wish I could... I can only apologize now. I wish I could produce the counterpoint to [the music]."*²⁰⁰

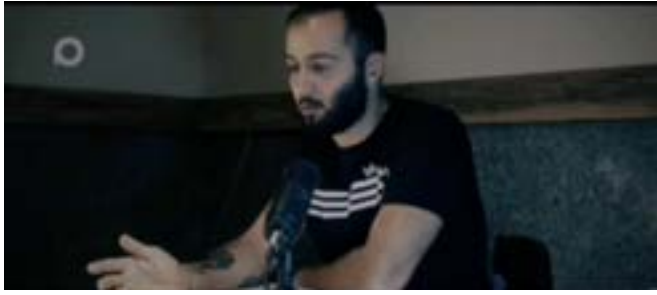
196 Post on Telegram, YJC, 2 November 2022, <https://t.me/yjcnewschannel/253058>. The video starts with a short clip of an already-deleted social media post by Toomaj Salehi in which he tells security forces to desert their posts and "run away" instead of oppressing people. As the video continues, as if in pain, Toomaj Salehi touches the side of his head. He can also be seen raising his hand in front of his face, as if anticipating a physical assault.

197 "20:30 news, TV Channel 2," *IRIB News*, 2 November 2022, at <https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/3623283> (starting at 22:45).

198 "Arrest of singer who intended to disturb order," *IRIB*, 2 November 2022, at <https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/3625095>.

199 "Toomaj Salehi: I apologize to the society for the violence I caused," *Iran Daily*, 6 December 2022, at <https://ion.ir/multimedia/2201>.

200 Ibid.



Toomaj Salehi in an IRI produced “confession video.”

The confession video heavily references Toomaj Salehi’s October 2022 music video for his song, *Faal*, in which Toomaj Salehi criticizes the IRI for corruption and oppression.²⁰¹



*Toomaj Salehi in his October 2022 music video for his song, *Faal*.*

The confession video mimics the style and many of the scenes from his music video, but highlights Toomaj Salehi’s “remorse” for his criticism of the IRI.²⁰² For example, in the video released by state media, Toomaj Salehi is shown drinking from a white cup similar to the one shown in the music video.²⁰³

201 Post on YouTube, Toomaj Salehi, 24 October 2022, at https://youtu.be/Jpi7d_uQ5Ec?si=qzHU5vfgIly-HBmg. In the track, Toomaj says that he rises up from the “bottom” of the society to defy the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the “head of the pyramid” responsible for the oppression.

202 *Iran Daily*, at <https://ion.ir/multimedia/2201>; Post on YouTube, Toomaj Salehi, 24 October 2022, at https://youtu.be/Jpi7d_uQ5Ec?si=qzHU5vfgIly-HBmg. For example, in both the music video and the forced confession video, the camera captures Toomaj while moving behind the person sitting in front of him.

203 For more examples, see Khosro Sayeh Isfahani and Andrea Richardson, “Everything you need to know about Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi and his death sentence,” *Atlantic Council*, 26 April 2024, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/toomaj-salehi-iran-rapper-execution/>.



Toomaj Salehi drinking from a white cup in the state-media “confession video.”

According to Mizan and BBC Persian, Toomaj Salehi was released on bail from Isfahan Central Prison on 18 November 2023.²⁰⁴

On 27 November 2023, the YouTube account that releases music produced by Toomaj Salehi posted a video of Toomaj Salehi after his release from jail speaking about his experiences in IRI detention.²⁰⁵ In the fourteen-and-a-half-minute video, Toomaj Salehi describes his time in custody and discusses the “confession video” produced by the IRI.



Toomaj Salehi speaks in a YouTube video after his release from jail.

According to Toomaj Salehi, before his release, the judge assigned to his case was Morteza Barati, head of the first branch of Isfahan Revolutionary Court.²⁰⁶ He has been accused of human rights violations including “jailing political critics of the government and believers in the Baha’i faith.”²⁰⁷

204 “Iran protests: Rap singer Toomaj Salehi released on bail,” *BBC Persian*, 18 November 2023, at <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cw925j22g9qo>; *Mizan Online News Agency*, “The Latest Status of the Toomaj Salehi Case,” 21 April 2023, <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4745588/>.

205 Post on YouTube, Toomaj, 27 November 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWf3i_1Kl8. The channel has been releasing Toomaj Salehi’s music as early as 18 October 2020.

206 Post on YouTube, Toomaj, 27 November 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWf3i_1Kl8. The channel has been releasing Toomaj Salehi’s music as early as 18 October 2020.

207 “Morteza Barati,” *United4Iran*, at <https://ipa.united4iran.org/fa/judge/1023/>.

According to Toomaj Salehi, Morteza Barati demanded access to his social media accounts, which Toomaj Salehi refused.



Judge Morteza Barati, head of the first branch of Isfahan Revolutionary Court.

With respect to the “confession video,” Toomaj Salehi explains:

“The Intelligence Ministry has produced and released a video in which it appears that I am apologizing to the interrogator. I didn’t say that. I wasn’t talking to the interrogator. I was interviewed there for nine hours. I have made one or two gaffes. The person asked me a question, for example asking me ‘If right now, the mother of such-and-such person who went out [to protest] because of you and is now in prison, was sitting before you, what would you tell her?’ And they have edited [my response] in a manner so that it appears that I am apologizing to him, which is ridiculous.”²⁰⁸

III. Torture and Ongoing State Prosecution

In the 27 November 2023 YouTube video, Toomaj Salehi also describes how he was “severely tortured” at the time of his arrest. His descriptions of this torture include the following:

- “They broke my arms and my legs. They were hitting my face and my head, so at first I tried to cover myself with my hands, and they broke my fingers.”
- “One of the other political prisoners told me that the injection they gave me in my neck was most likely adrenaline so I wouldn’t pass out

²⁰⁸ Post on YouTube, Toomaj, 27 November 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWIF3i_1Kl8. The channel has been releasing Toomaj Salehi’s music as early as 18 October 2020.

so that I would be conscious during the time they were torturing me so I would feel the pain fully.”

- “I was in solitary confinement for eight – nine months” and subjected to sensory deprivation known as ‘white torture.’²⁰⁹
- “Whenever I raise the issue of the illegality of the security officers’ behavior, they would laugh and say ‘what law? We can and we do whatever [we want].”²¹⁰



First page of official complaint from Toomaj Salehi alleging torture against the Director of the Intelligence Ministry in Isfahan Province and the officers responsible for his detention.

The illegal conduct described in the complaint includes:

- Illegal raid of Toomaj Salehi’s residence;
- Arrest without a warrant;
- Violent arrest and interrogation, including approximately twelve hours of beatings and verbal abuse, amounting to torture and leading to a fractured leg, fractured finger, fractured ribs and severe damage to both eyes;²¹¹
- Failure to transfer to a detention center in a timely manner; and
- Failure to provide timely medical care.²¹²

²⁰⁹ For more information on “white torture,” See, e.g., “Nobel Laureate Exposes Iran’s Use Of Solitary Confinement”, *Iran International*, 1 March 2024, at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202403011751>.

²¹⁰ Post on YouTube, Toomaj, 27 November 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWIF3i_1Kl8.

²¹¹ Toomaj Salehi alleges that officers participated in filming the violent interrogations, some of which were broadcast by IRIB.

²¹² Post on X, Official Toomaj, 29 October 2023, at <https://twitter.com/OfficialToomaj/status/1718610711855669668>.

On 24 April 2024, state-affiliated Mehr News confirmed that Toomaj Salehi had been “sentenced to death for spreading corruption on the Earth.”²¹³ Salehi’s death sentence was widely reported.²¹⁴

On 22 June 2024, Toomaj Salehi’s lawyer posted on X that his death sentence had been overturned by the Supreme Court. In the post, his lawyer, Amir Raeisian, quotes the Supreme Court’s ruling that the death penalty was “harsher than [what is] legal” in violation of Article 131 of the country’s Constitution.²¹⁵

At the time of writing this report, Toomaj Salehi has been released, yet he still faces criminal charges.

IV. Gender Persecution Analysis - Toomaj Salehi

1. The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;

The arrests, detentions, forced confessions and ongoing prosecution of Toomaj Salehi deprived him of his fundamental rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association, freedom of expression, liberty, and security of person.

2. The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;

Toomaj Salehi, a famous Iranian musician, used his social media accounts as a platform to criticize the IRI and advocate for the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. This included his posting of music

videos supporting the movement. The fact that Toomaj Salehi was charged with “propaganda against the state” strongly suggests that he was targeted, at least in part, because of his online support for the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

3. The targeting was based on gender;

In a video released on Toomaj Salehi’s YouTube channel on 27 November 2023, Toomaj Salehi states that while he was in detention, he was forced to participate in footage for a “doctored” forced confession, subjected to severe beatings resulting in fractures to his legs and arms, and kept in solitary confinement for 252 days. Toomaj Salehi was the target of these abuses because of his association with advocates for gender equality and his advocacy for the rights of women and girls.

4. The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC’s jurisdiction;

In the case of Toomaj Salehi, the underlying acts referred to in the Rome Statute include detention and torture.

5. The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;

The detention and prosecution of Toomaj Salehi by state actors confirmed that the crimes against Toomaj Salehi were supported and enforced by officials in the highest levels of the IRI. State resources were spent on Toomaj Salehi’s detention and related treatment.

When Toomaj Salehi was first indicted on 27 November 2022, Chief Justice of Isfahan Province, Asadollah Jafari, publicly stated to IRI media:

“Toomaj Salehi has been charged with spreading corruption on the earth by spreading lies in a way causing major losses, propaganda against the regime, establishing and managing illegal groups with the intention of disrupting national security, cooperating with a hostile government against the Islamic Republic, spreading lies and disturbing the public mind through cyberspace, and inciting and encouraging people to commit

213 “Toomaj Salehi Sentenced to Death,” *Mehr News*, 24 April 2024, at <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/6087998/>. Mehr News has ties to the Islamic Propagation Organization.

214 See, e.g., Patrick Wintour, “Iran’s death sentence for rapper sparks protests and undermines criticism of US,” *The Guardian*, 29 April 2024, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/29/iranian-authority-undermined-after-death-sentence-for-toomaj-salehi-rapper-sparks-global-protests>; Jackie Northam, “Iranian rapper receives death sentence for songs criticizing the establishment,” *All Things Considered*, 30 April 2024, at <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/30/1248245576/iranian-rapper-receives-death-sentence-for-songs-criticizing-the-establishment>; “Hundreds of Iranian Musicians Decry Toomaj Salehi’s Death Sentence,” *Iran Wire*, 29 April 2024, at <https://iranwire.com/en/news/128291-hundreds-of-iranian-musicians-decry-toomaj-salehis-death-sentence/>; Claudia Bennett, “Iran’s death sentence for rapper shows how far it’ll go to squelch dissent,” *The New York Post*, 29 April 2024, at <https://nypost.com/2024/04/29/opinion/irans-death-sentence-for-rapper-shows-how-far-itll-go-to-squelch-dissent/>; “Death Sentence for Toomaj Salehi Condemned by Rights Advocates,” *Iran International*, 9 May 2024, at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202405090788>.

215 See, e.g., Post on X, Amir Raeisian, 14 August 2024, <https://x.com/amirraei/status/1823747654821843318>; Post on X, Mostafa Nili, 11 August 2024, at <https://x.com/MostafaNili58/status/1822644264011976858>; Post on X, *Dadban*, 22 June 2024, at <https://x.com/dadban4/status/1804462373773734084>.

violent acts.”²¹⁶

Other open source information collected during this investigation suggests that these charges were leveled against numerous dissidents associated with the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. The FFMI reports states:

*“Individuals were particularly targeted if they were seen as having influential dissident voices....Several rappers were explicitly targeted for their criticism over the Government (see below), as well as poets, theatre and cinema directors.”*²¹⁷

The findings of the FFMI report demonstrate that the targeting of influential dissidents with detention and charges of “spreading corruption on earth” and “propaganda against the regime” was part of the systematic state policy of the IRI and perpetrated against numerous individuals. Therefore, the detention and charges against Toomaj Salehi should be understood as part of a state policy of the IRI to systematically attack participants in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

6. The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.

This investigation revealed the identity of the state media “journalist” involved in Toomaj Salehi’s forced confessions, Ameneh Sadat Zabihpour. It also revealed that the Director of the Intelligence Ministry in Isfahan Province and his officers were responsible for the torture of Toomaj Salehi. The judge assigned to his case was Morteza Barati.

All of those involved with Toomaj Salehi’s arrest, torture, and ongoing prosecution were working in their official capacity for the IRI. The arrest was conducted with the authority of the state at a time during which state leadership was calling for the suppression and detention of affiliates of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. As such, the direct perpetrators knew their conduct was part of the state’s response against the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

²¹⁶ “The court case for Toomaj Salehi has not been held,” *Mizan Online News Agency*, 27 November 2022, at <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4530831>.

²¹⁷ *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 421.

A. Intersectionality

The persecution committed against Toomaj Salehi was based on intersecting ethnic, political, and gender grounds. Toomaj Salehi’s complaint states that he was arrested in Gerd Bisheh, a village in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, along with several other individuals from the village. Toomaj is from Iran’s Bakhtiari ethnic minority, which has historically faced oppression at the hands of the IRI.²¹⁸ Toomaj Salehi’s father was a political prisoner for eight years.²¹⁹ The actions taken against Toomaj Salehi were likely founded on his political speech, which concerned gender-based issues.

B. Additional information that would be helpful

In the section of their report on the targeting of artists, writers, athletes, and other public figures, the FFMI details the facts of Toomaj Salehi’s multiple arrests and charges.²²⁰ They end the section by emphasizing an intersectional analysis with regards to artists, stating:

*“Repression has been met with acts of solidarity with protesters, along with those same artists subject to arrest. It yet again indicates the intersectionality of artist repression.”*²²¹

Further information could aid in understanding the orders executed by those arresting Toomaj Salehi and the identities of the individuals who gave those orders.

²¹⁸ Holly Dages, “A Rapper’s Detention Shows Iran’s Crackdown is Failing,” *New York Times*, 31 May 2023, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/31/opinion/toomaj-salehi-iran.html>.

²¹⁹ “Who is Toomaj Salehi,” *BBC Persian*, 7 December 2022, at <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c03nxydx6no>.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 423-425.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

E. Mehdi Hazrati

I. Murder of Mehdi Hazrati

On 4 November 2022, three videos began to circulate on social media related to the killing of a young man by IRI security forces. Given the dress, physical build, and position of the body, the videos depict the same victim.²²²



(Left) video 1; (Center) video 2; (Right) video 3.

In the first video, the young man walks along an urban road in the direction of a group of security forces in riot gear. Other civilians, including protesters, are visible on the street. The young man is unarmed and clearly visible to the security forces facing him. The video then captures the IRI security forces shooting the young man, who collapses on the ground.²²³



IRI security forces shoot a young man, who collapses on the ground.

In the second video, the young man lies on the street motionless and bleeding.



The motionless young man in the second video.

The third video shows IRI security forces in riot gear approaching the body of the young man from the direction from which he was shot. They examine his bleeding body. The end of the video cuts to a clip of a white pickup truck surrounded by security forces with what appears to be the body of the young man wrapped in white fabric in the truck bed.²²⁴



Possible body of Mehdi Hazrati.

The videos circulated quickly on social media, posted on accounts like Iranian journalist account Vahid Online and the account for the local activist collective 1500 Tasvir.²²⁵

On 8 November 2022, in a Telegram post, activist collective 1500 Tasvir identified the person shot in the video as Mehdi Hazrati, posting an old video

²²⁴ Post on X, Farzad Seifikaran, 13 November 2022, at <https://x.com/FSeifikaran/status/1591795299739115522?s=20>.

²²⁵ See, e.g., Post on X, 1500 Tasvir, 4 November 2022, at <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588506589027524608>; Post on X, Vahid Online, 7 November 2022, at <https://x.com/Vahid/status/1589744196214484994>. By the second week of November, all three videos had been reposted by, among others, Radio Farda, as well as known Iranian journalists Masih Alinejad and Farzad Seifikaran. See Post on Facebook, Radio Farda, 13 November 2022, at <https://www.facebook.com/radio.farda/videos/540062254122974>; Post on Instagram, Masih Alinejad, 12 November 2022, at https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck5IbeRjN_/; Post on X, Farzad Seifikaran, 13 November 2022, at <https://x.com/FSeifikaran/status/1591795299739115522?s=20>.

²²² For examples of the three videos, see: Post on Telegram, Mamlekate, 12 November 2022, at <https://t.me/mamlekate/73379> (Video 1); Post on X, 1500 Tasvir, 4 November 2022, at <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588506589027524608> (Video 2); Post on X, Vahid Online, 7 November 2022, at <https://x.com/Vahid/status/1589744196214484994> (Video 3).

²²³ Post on Instagram, Masih Alinejad, 12 November 2022, at https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck5IbeRjN_/.

of Hazrati with music next to the video of Hazrati lying motionless and bleeding.²²⁶



Post by 1500 Tasvir identifying Mehdi Hazrati.

According to news reports and social media postings, on 3 November 2023, thousands of citizens protested the killing of Hadis Najafi – an Iranian woman who had been killed while protesting in Karaj only forty days prior. Many protesters honored Hadis Najafi by walking to her grave.²²⁷ Other social media accounts posted videos of the protests.²²⁸ The BBC interviewed witnesses that reported the security forces' violent response to the protests in Karaj, including shootings and stabbing protesters with machetes.²²⁹

On 23 November 2022, the Iranian Students' News Agency ("ISNA") published an article regarding the death of Mehdi Hazrati.²³⁰ The article reports that the Chief Justice of Alborz Province, Hossein Fazeli Harikandi, confirmed that Mehdi Hazrati's

226 Post on Telegram, 1500 Tasvir, 8 November 2022, at https://t.me/Tasvir_1500/7715.

227 See, e.g., David Gritten, "Iran protests: Police fire on Mahsa Amini mourners - witnesses", BBC News, 26 October 2022, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63397159> (explaining that in Iran, forty days after a loved one's passing is a day of commemoration. During the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement, both burials and 40th day commemorations turned into major gatherings and protests against the Islamic Republic and its violence against people).

228 See, e.g., Post on X, *Iran International*, 3 November 2023, at <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1720431251914416504> (showing 17-year-old Nima Nouri after being shot by security forces on 3 November 2022); Post on X, *Vahid Online*, 3 November 2022, at <https://twitter.com/Vahid/status/1588120279787634689>; Post on X, *Vahid Online*, 3 November 2022, at <https://twitter.com/Vahid/status/1588151059561807877> (showing the aftermath of shootings by security forces); Post on X, Farzad Seifikaran, 3 November 2022, at <https://x.com/FSeifikaran/status/1588124960588955648>.

229 David Gritten & Khosro Kalbasi Isfahani, "Hadis Najafi: Iran police fire on mourners for female protester - witnesses," *BBC News & BBC Monitoring*, 3 November 2022, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63498820>.

230 "The manner of Mehdi Hazrati's suspicious death is being carefully investigated by the judiciary," *Iranian Students' News Agency*, 23 November 2022, at <https://snn.ir/fa/news/1043033>.

cause of death was "the impact of a bullet to the forehead."²³¹ Chief Justice Harikandi, however, insisted that the security forces present at the scene of the shooting "were not armed."²³²



The Chief Justice of Alborz Province, Hossein Fazeli Harikandi.

Footage in the third video circulating online, however, contradicts the statements of Chief Justice Harikandi. Multiple security officers can be seen in riot gear holding rifles or shotguns.²³³



Armed IRI security officers surround Mehdi Hazrati's body.

On 15 December 2022, the Campaign for the Defense of Political and Civil Prisoners ("Kampain") posted a YouTube video showing Mehdi Hazrati's tombstone.²³⁴ It gives his date of birth as 1 September 2004 and date of death as

231 *Spreading Justice*, "Database of human rights violators in Iran," at <https://spreadingjustice.org/individual-violator/sj53699/>. According to BBC Persian, Mehdi Hazrati's death certificate also named "impact of a bullet" as the cause of death. See Post on Telegram, *BBC Persian*, 25 January 2023, at <https://t.me/bbcpersian/158636>.

232 "The manner of Mehdi Hazrati's suspicious death is being carefully investigated by the judiciary," *Iranian Students' News Agency*, 23 November 2022, at <https://snn.ir/fa/news/1043033>.

233 Post on X, Farzad Seifikaran, 13 November 2022, at <https://x.com/FSeifikaran/status/1591795299739115522?s=20>.

234 Post on YouTube, Kampain, 15 December 2022, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Km5IJQGByls>.

3 November 2022.²³⁵ Mehdi Hazrati was eighteen years, two months, and two days old when he was shot and killed by IRI security forces.



The gravestone of Mehdi Hazrati.

On 28 March 2023, citizen journalist account Mamlekate posted a photo on Telegram purporting that it was taken at the location of Mehdi Hazrati's death.²³⁶ The commentary for the post states:

"People have showered flowers on the place where Mehdi Hazrati, a protesting teenager, rolled in blood. The agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran killed this [teenage] who was standing on the street in Khorramdasht, and then threw his body in the back of a van and took it away."²³⁷



Iranians commemorate Mehdi Hazrati by laying flowers at the spot he was killed.

II. Geolocation

Through geolocation, we can confirm the location where Hazrati was killed. In the second and third videos, four signs and a car are visible:

- The sign for Arad Electronics (کالای برق آراد) (below,

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Post on Telegram, Mamlekate, 28 March 2023, at <https://t.me/mamlekate/78270>.

²³⁷ Ibid.

marked in yellow);

- A flashing red sign (below, marked in red);
- A yellow, outdoor, a-frame sign (below, marked in green);
- A smaller blue, outdoor, a-frame sign (below, marked in blue);
- A silver car (below, marked in orange).



Distinct identifiers visible in the second video (left) and third video (right).

In the first video, four of these five identifiers are visible:

- A flashing red sign (below, marked in red);
- A yellow, outdoor, a-frame sign (below, marked in green);
- A smaller blue, outdoor, a-frame sign (below, marked in blue);
- A silver car (below, marked in orange).



Distinct identifiers visible in the first video.

The commentary of many social media posts circulating the videos of Mehdi Hazrati mention that he was killed in Khormadasht, Karaj. For example, Masih Alinejad's commentary states:

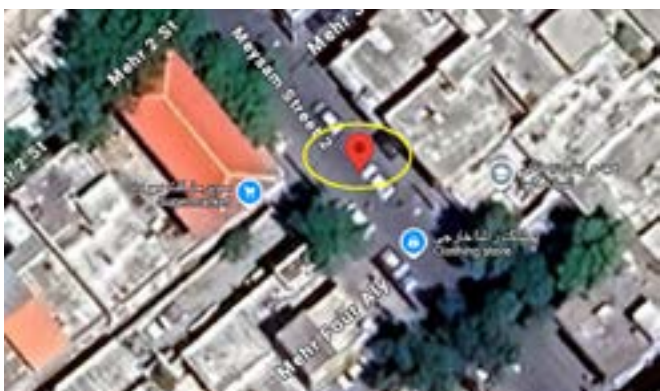
"A shocking video of the moment when the

suppressors directly shot at the head of Mehdi Hazrati, a 17-year-old teenager who participated in the gatherings related to the 40th day of Najafi Hadith in Khormadasht, Karaj. The video shows that the Islamic Republic responds to the stone-throwing of the protesters by shooting them in the head with the intention of killing them.”

Arad Electronics and its address is registered on Karaj Asnaf, which lists businesses in Karaj. The Karaj Asnaf website states that the address for the business is Khorramdasht, Meisam 2, between Mehr 3 and 4.²³⁸ Arad Electronics is also registered on the Iranian navigation service Balad, and the location for Arad Electronics is given as (35.84844, 50.89545).



This location is in Khormadasht and is consistent with the address registered on Karaj Asnaf.



Investigators were thus able to confirm the location of the shooting of Mehdi Hazrati. The GPS coordinates are approximately 35.84844,

50.89545.²³⁹

III. Gender Persecution Analysis - Mehdi Hazrati

1. *The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;*

The fatal shooting of Mehdi Hazrati during the protests deprived him of his fundamental right to freedom of association; his fundamental right to liberty and security of person; and his universally binding right to life. These rights transgressions were intensified by the IRI’s actions in refusing to promptly provide Mehdi Hazrati’s body to his relatives for burial.

2. *The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;*

Although it is unclear from the videos whether Mehdi Hazrati was actively participating in protests when he was lethally shot, the videos show that he was walking on a street where there were active protesters, and he was near other protesters.²⁴⁰ Mehdi Hazrati was likely the target of this fatal shooting at least in part because of his perceived association with protests related to gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

3. *The targeting was based on gender;*

As previously stated, citizens who were targeted because of the perceived association with protests related to the Woman, Life, Free movement were targeted on the basis of gender.

4. *The conduct was committed in connection with*

²³⁹ “When protesters were killed in Iran, their funerals became deadly. *The Washington Post*, 21 April 2023, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2023/iran-protests-funerals-mahsa-amini/>. *The Washington Post* reported the killing of Mehdi Hazrati and published purported coordinates for the location of the shooting on 21 April 2023. They reportedly used the direction of the protesters on their walk to Hadis Najafi’s grave to find the street junction at which the shooting took place: Meysam 2 St and Sarv Alley, Khormadasht, Karaj, Alborz Province, Iran. (35°50’59.4”N 50°53’38.4”E). They published no corresponding visual verification of the location. The coordinates found in this investigation are on the same street but a few meters away from those initially reported by the *Washington Post*.

²⁴⁰ A source close to Mehdi Hazrati told the BBC Persian that he actively participated in the protests since Mahsa’s killing. See “The victims of Iran’s protests; Mehdi Hazrati was shot in front of the mobile camera and died,” *BBC Persian*, 10 September 2023, at <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/ckrllmrp5z2o>.

²³⁸ See Karaj Asnaf website, at <https://karajasnaf.ir/listing/>.

an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC's jurisdiction;

In the case of Mehdi Hazrati, the underlying act referred to in the Rome Statute is murder.

5. The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;

As previously stated, the FFMI's report establishes that the retaliatory acts taken by the IRI against the Woman, Life, Freedom movement were authorized by individuals at the highest level of the IRI.

On 19 November 2022, just weeks after the shooting of Mehdi Hazrati, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made a televised speech to IRI Basij militia forces in which he described members associated with the Woman, Life, Freedom movement as "rioters" and "thugs" and "praised innocent Basij fighters for protecting the nation."²⁴¹ On 17 November 2022, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned the world that Iran was in a "full-fledged human rights crisis" and called for the establishment of the FFMI.²⁴²

In this political context, the murder of Mehdi Hazrati by on-duty IRI forces should be seen as the result of the Supreme Leader's state policy calling for systematic attacks on civilians protesting for the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

6. The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.

The physical perpetrator who shot and killed Mehdi Hazrati would have been aware of the IRI's policies against protesters associated with the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, given their affiliation with the IRI. Moreover, according to the video footage, the physical perpetrator was almost certainly on duty when he shot and killed Mehdi Hazrati, and when the officers took away Mehdi Hazrati's lifeless body, given that the officers were all wearing uniforms and were armed. They appear to be acting in concert and under police

command as they stand in line, facing Mehdi before he is shot. The officers also appear to be acting in concert and under police command when they remove Mehdi Hazrati's lifeless body in what appears to be a coordinated manner. As such, the IRI officer's visible conduct strongly suggests that they are part of the IRI's systematic, violent response to the protests of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

A. Intersectionality

The acts against Mehdi Hazrati are intersectional in nature. The evidence strongly suggests that he was shot because of his perceived association with political protesters who were protesting gender-related issues. Moreover, accounts from social media state that Mehdi was actively engaged in protests related to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Thus, he appears to be a victim of political persecution as well as gender persecution.

Furthermore, Mehdi Hazrati and his family lived in one of the poorest quarters in Karaj, generally inhabited by laborers.²⁴³ Poorer families like Mehdi Hazrati's family have fewer resources to fight state persecution and thus may be targeted by IRI with a higher rate of impunity due to class-related reasons.

B. Additional information that would be helpful

There are many reports of the IRI's violent crackdowns in Khoramdasht, Karaj, on 3 November 2024. A pattern analysis of information provided in other social media from that date and location could allow for a greater understanding of the systematic use of lethal force by IRI security forces at that time. In addition, documentation from the government security institutions continues to be leaked and archived.²⁴⁴ This documentation should also be analyzed to see if there is evidence of direct orders from senior members of the IRI regarding the use of lethal

241 Angus Watson, "Iran's supreme leader praises paramilitary for crackdown on 'rioters' and 'thugs'", 26 November 2021, at <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/26/middleeast/iran-supreme-leader-praises-crackdown-intl/index.html>.

242 Ibid.

243 "The victims of Iran's protests; Mehdi Hazrati was shot in front of the mobile camera and died," *BBC Persian*, 10 September 2023, at <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/ckrllmnp5z2o>.

244 "Hacktivist Group Breaches Iranian Judiciary Servers," *Iran International*, 20 February 2024, at <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202402201687>.

force against protesters.

F. Mashallah Karami

I. Public Mourning of Son's Execution

On 7 January 2023 Mashallah Karami's son, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, was executed by the IRI after being convicted of "spreading corruption on earth."²⁴⁵ According to numerous open source accounts, this 22-year-old Iranian karate champion was an active participant in the Woman, Life Freedom movement.²⁴⁶



Mohammad Mehdi Karami, speaking in court before his 7 January 2023 execution.

According to Amnesty International, Mashallah Karami received no notice of his son's execution, which was done in secret less than two months after his arrest.²⁴⁷ He learned of his killing through local press reports. Mashallah Karami publicly mourned the loss of his son. On 19 August 2023, Mashallah Karami journeyed fifty-five miles from

²⁴⁵ See, e.g., Antoinette Radford and Sarah Fowler, "Iran protests: Two men hanged over killing of militiaman," *BBC News*, 7 January 2023, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-64196635>; "Iran: Young man at grave risk of execution in connection with protests amid 'killing spree,'" 11 January 2023, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-young-man-at-grave-risk-of-execution-in-connection-with-protests-amid-killing-spreed/>; "Iran: Young man at grave risk of execution in connection with protests amid 'killing spree'" *Amnesty International*, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-young-man-at-grave-risk-of-execution-in-connection-with-protests-amid-killing-spreed/> (stating: "The court convicted and sentenced them to death less than a week after the trial began on 30 November 2022. Before trial, state media aired their forced "confessions" and described them as "murderers", violating their right to presumption of innocence. Both were also denied access to lawyers of their own choosing"). Mohammad Mehdi Karami is also known by his Kurdish name, "Komar". See Khosro Sayeh Isfahani, "A pilgrimage of love: Mourning the dead in defiance of the Islamic Republic," *Atlantic Council*, 19 August 2023, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/relatives-protesters-iran-mashallah/>.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ "Iran: Young man at grave risk of execution in connection with protests amid 'killing spree,'" *Amnesty International*, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-young-man-at-grave-risk-of-execution-in-connection-with-protests-amid-killing-spreed/>.

his home to the cemetery where his son was buried.²⁴⁸ Mashallah Karami decided to film himself on this journey and release the footage on social media.²⁴⁹



Mashallah Karami walking to his son's grave as the sun rises on 19 August 2023.

In his video, Mashallah Karami states:

*"Salute, dear people of my homeland. It's almost five in the morning. I started walking to the cemetery at one [a.m.]...[calling his son by his Kurdish name, Komar] I just want Komar to know how much I love him. I just want him to know that I remember him, that his love is driving me to take every and each of these steps."*²⁵⁰

At the end of the video, Mashallah Karami arrives at his son's grave. His son's name is visible on the gravestone.²⁵¹



Mashallah Karami arrives at his son's grave.

²⁴⁸ Khosro Sayeh Isfahani, "A pilgrimage of love: Mourning the dead in defiance of the Islamic Republic," *Atlantic Council*, 19 August 2023, at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/relatives-protesters-iran-mashallah/>.

²⁴⁹ Post on X, *DW Persian*, 19 August 2023, at https://twitter.com/dw_persian/status/1692912773846700050.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

On the same day Mashallah Karami filmed his journey to his son’s grave, 19 August 2023, his video was posted on X by DW Persian and quickly went viral. Commentary for the post by DW Persian states:

“Mashallah Karmi, the father of Mohammad Mehdi Karami, walked a distance of 90 kilometers to his son’s grave in memory of his son and Mohammad Hosseini.²⁵² The father of this executed protester traveled this route from night until 9 am today.”²⁵³

II. Arrest, detention, and ongoing state prosecution

On 10 December 2023, Follow Up Iran — which is dedicated to monitoring the situation of protesters who have been wrongfully detained — reported in a post on Telegram that Mashallah Karami and eleven other individuals had been arrested. They cited “informed sources,” but provided no further information about the arrest.²⁵⁴

On 20 December 2023, ten days after the post about Mashallah Karami’s arrest, Follow Up Iran posted a document on X, claiming it to be a scanned copy of a court file listing the charges against Mashallah Karami and eight others.²⁵⁵ This document was posted alongside a photograph of Mashallah Karami.²⁵⁶ The document shows what appears to be an indictment from Branch 11 of the Karaj General and Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office. The names of eight other individuals listed on the indictment are redacted but Mashallah Karami’s name is visible as one of the individuals charged.²⁵⁷



First page of purported indictment posted by Follow Up Iran.

The charges in the indictment against Mashallah Karami include:

- Propaganda against the regime of the Islamic Republic and establishing a group with the aim of disturbing national security;
- Desecration of Islamic sanctities;
- Propaganda against the regime of the Islamic Republic and insulting the Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei];
- Propaganda against the regime of the Islamic Republic; and
- Membership in a group or association or a branch of associations that have been formed inside the country with the intent of disrupting national security.²⁵⁸

The header for the document reads:

“Alborz Branch of the Judiciary [Under logo] Final Decision in Center, first line: Case number – Branch 11 Prosecutor (Subrogation), General and Revolutionary Court of Area 2 of Fajr in Karaj.”²⁵⁹

The judiciary logo in the top-right corner of the document can be compared to the judiciary logos on other court documents archived by human rights organizations on social media.²⁶⁰

252 Seyed Mohammad Hosseini was a co-defendant in Mohammad Mehdi Karami’s trial. He was also found guilty and executed on 7 January 2023. See “Iran: Young man at grave risk of execution in connection with protests amid ‘killing spree’” *Amnesty International*, at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/iran-young-man-at-grave-risk-of-execution-in-connection-with-protests-amid-killing-spreel/>.

253 Ibid.

254 Post on Telegram, *Follow Up Iran*, 10 December 2023, at <https://t.me/Followupiran/961>.

255 Post on X, *Follow Up Iran*, 20 December 2023, at <https://twitter.com/followupiran/status/1737403479251918893/photo/2>.

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid.

258 Ibid.

259 Ibid.

260 See, e.g., the five documents labeled supporting evidence on “Act Now,” *United4Iran*, at <https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/7247/> (last visited September 2024).



Judiciary symbols from court documents posted to United4Iran's (Bottom) Partial judicial logo seen on the scan of the document posted by Follow Up Iran.

On 14 March 2024, local news outlet Emtedad Net posted on X the purported charges against Mashallah Karami brought by prosecutors in Karaj Revolutionary Court in Alborz, including:

- Propaganda against the regime under Article 500 of Islamic Penal Code;
- Gathering and collusion with the intent of committing a crime against national security under Article 610 of Islamic Penal Code;
- Accumulation of illegal assets; and
- Money laundering.²⁶¹

On 21 May 2024, Dadban wrote on X:

"The state has confiscated all the assets of the family, including house, car and everything that this family has." Dadban added that even if charges of "accumulation of illegal assets" stands, only assets acquired through the practice should be seized, not all assets of the family, therefore it constitutes "illegal confiscation of citizens' private property, which is a crime."²⁶²

On 25 May 2024, Ali Sharifzadeh Ardakani, one of the defense attorneys representing Mashallah Karami before the Karaj Revolutionary Court in Alborz, wrote on his personal account on X:

"Mashallah Karami has been sentenced to six years of imprisonment for gathering and collusion [with the intent of committing a crime against national security] and propaganda [against the regime] plus seizure of assets obtained from public donations. The Revolutionary Court does not have the authority to issue a property confiscation order since the two other charges ["accumulation of illegal assets" and "money

laundering"] are being reviewed by Criminal Court 2 [of Karaj]. The sentence has legal flaws and we will appeal."²⁶³

According to HRANA and BBC Persian, on 15 August 2024, Mashallah Karami received a second sentence in a second case that was brought in Branch 102 of the Criminal Court Branch 2 of Nazarabad County.²⁶⁴ For charges of "money laundering and acquiring illicit property," he was sentenced to eight years and ten months in prison, a fine of 1.9 billion tomans (approximately \$42,752.81 USD) and the confiscation of his assets.²⁶⁵



Mashallah Karami with a photo of his son.

At the time of the writing of this report, Mashallah Karami remains in IRI custody.

III. Gender Persecution Analysis - Mashallah Karami

1. The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;

The arrest and detention perpetrated by members of the IRI against Mashallah Karami deprived him of his fundamental right to freedom of association; his fundamental right to freedom of expression; and his fundamental right to liberty and security of person.

2. The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;

The court document that lists the official charges

²⁶³ Post on X, Al Sharifzadeh, 25 May 2024, at https://x.com/Al_Sharifzadeh/status/1794308712783597817.

²⁶⁴ "Criminal Court Sentences Mashallah Karami to Over 8 Years in Prison and Other Penalties," HRANA, 19 August 2024, at <https://www.en-hrana.org/criminal-court-sentences-mashallah-karami-to-over-8-years-in-prison-and-other-penalties/>; "New sentence for Mashallah Karami: 8 years and 10 months in prison and a fine of one billion and 920 million tomans," BBC Persian, 17 August 2024, at <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c049endkppqgo>.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Post on X, Emtedad Net, 14 March 2024, <https://t.me/emtedadnet/87089>.

²⁶² Post on X, Dadban, 21 May 2024, <https://x.com/dadban4/status/1792941012333056137>.

against Mashallah Karami shows that along with charges related to “propaganda” against the IRI, Mashallah Karami is charged with:

“Membership in a group or association or a branch of associations that have been formed inside the country with the intent of disrupting national security.”²⁶⁶

This charge presumably refers to Mashallah Karami’s association with persons who support the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, including his son Mohammed Mehdi Karami, who was executed by the IRI. Family members of suspected affiliates have frequently been the targets of the IRI. Mashallah Karami was almost certainly the target of these crimes because of his association with supporters of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

3. The targeting was based on gender;

If the perpetrator targets someone based on the perpetrator’s perceived belief that they are associated with a movement advocating for gender rights, then international law recognizes them as a victim of targeting on the basis of gender. Thus, Mashallah Karami was targeted on the basis of gender, as the targeting was likely the result of his and his son’s support of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

4. The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC’s jurisdiction;

In the case of Mashallah Karami, the underlying acts mentioned in the Rome Statute include detention and torture.

5. The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;

The verified IRI document circulated on social media platforms charges Mashallah Karami with “propaganda against the regime” and “membership in a group or association or a branch of associations that have been formed inside the

country with the intent of disrupting national security.”²⁶⁷ According to the findings of the FFMI, these charges were systematically leveled against numerous civilians associated with the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and/or their family members.²⁶⁸ Therefore, the detention and charges against Mashallah Karami should be understood as part of the IRI’s systematic attack against civilians.

Moreover, the ongoing detention and prosecution of Mashallah Karami confirms that his treatment has been — at a minimum — sanctioned by high-level IRI officials. As with Sepideh Rashnu and Toomaj Salehi, state resources have been used and continue to be used to persecute Mashallah Karami through state-led legal proceedings.

6. The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.

At this time, there is no information as to who ordered the arrest of Mashallah Karami, but we know from the document that the prosecutor and officials at Branch 11 of Karaj General and the Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office were involved. Open source information shows that they were working in an official capacity and producing official state documentation regarding Mashallah Karami during his arrest and detention. Therefore, perpetrators would have known that their conduct was connected with the state’s widespread and systematic response to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ See, e.g., *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 2 (stating: “restrictions on protesters’ rights under international law are further exacerbated by other legislation, most notably the 2013 Islamic Penal Code, which contains provisions that not only impose undue restrictions but criminalise them, in some instances making them punishable by death. These include provisions criminalising insulting the Islamic religion and religious figures, insulting the authorities, including Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei and the President as well as those imposing sanctions for “spreading propaganda against the system” Other vague and overtly broad offences also allow for the criminalisation of conduct that may encompass lawful and legitimate exercise of protected human rights. This includes, “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against the security”, “forming of and/or membership in a group or association with the intent to undermine the country’s security”, “spreading lies with intent to disturb the public opinion”, “disrupting the public order”, the capital offences of “waging war against God” (moharebeh) and “spreading corruption on earth” and “collaborating with enemy groups and hostile governments”).

²⁶⁶ Post on X, *Follow Up Iran*, 20 December 2023, at <https://twitter.com/followupiran/status/1737403479251918893/photo/2.oto/2>

A. Intersectionality

The gender persecution committed against Mashallah Karami was intersectional in nature. Because his son was a confirmed supporter of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement who was executed by the IRI, he appears to be a victim of political persecution as well as gender persecution. In addition, Mashallah Karami is Kurdish, and therefore may have been the victim of ethnic persecution. Along with individuals belonging to the Baluchi ethnic minority, members of the Kurdish ethnic minority have long faced discrimination from the IRI.²⁶⁹ During the IRI's violent crackdown on the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, Kurdish and Baluchi civilians have suffered disproportionate targeting, including violence. As the FFMI's report confirms, this disproportionate response occurred through targeting Kurdish and Baluchi localities:

*"Security forces used particularly brutal and militarized violence, causing higher numbers of deaths, in regions with minority populations, in particular in Sistan and Baluchestan province, the Kurdish regions of the country (Kurdistan and Kermanshah) and parts of Western Azerbaijan."*²⁷⁰

The IRI's discriminatory response also included the imposition of harsher punishments on Kurdish and Baluchi people:

*"As captured in the interviews with witnesses, perpetrators imposed their views with harsher penalties on ethnic/religious groups such as Baluchi and Kurds."*²⁷¹

269 Handan Çağlayan, *Women in the Kurdish movement: Mothers, comrades, goddesses*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 2020.

270 *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 2.

271 *Ibid.*, 462 (stating: "in particular Baluchi and Kurdish women, were subjected to particularly brutal acts of sexual violence, including gang rape, and some acts were accompanied by racist and gender-based insults directed against women protesters"); 478 (clarifying: "in particular, in the context of the protests that began on 16 September 2022, Kurdish regions saw a militarized response to the protests and serious human rights violations").

G. Continued Violent Enforcement of Mandatory Hijab

I. 13 April 2024

On 13 April 2024, Iran International posted a video on X of two incidents²⁷² that show two women being confronted and forcefully taken away in a white van. The post claims that it is the original source of the video.²⁷³ The commentary for the post states:

*"Videos sent from Tehran shows: On Saturday, April 13, at First Square of Tehran of Pars, Morality Police patrols were enforcing [mandatory] hijab. [They] arrested women and put them [in] their vehicles, resorting to force."*²⁷⁴



(Left) Female victim from the first incident in the video; (Right) Female victim from the second incident in the video.

In the footage of the first incident, a male police officer and two women dressed in black chadors — a cover-all loose veil that is part of the police uniform for female officers — verbally confront a young woman whose hair is uncovered. They are accompanied by six male officers in police uniforms. At one point in the video, one of the female officers strikes the woman across the face.²⁷⁵ The victim appears to struggle to regain her balance after the assault.²⁷⁶

272 Post on X, *Iran International*, 13 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1779192830835007993>.

273 A reverse image search revealed no earlier postings of the video.

274 Post on X, *Iran International*, 13 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1779192830835007993>.

275 *Ibid.*, 00:26.

276 *Ibid.*



At 00:26 in the video, the woman without the hijab is struck across the face.

After the woman is hit, the female and male officers physically force the young woman into the unmarked white van while she screams: "I don't want to go! Let me go! Help!"²⁷⁷ As soon as the doors of the van are closed, her screams become inaudible.²⁷⁸

In the footage of the second incident, two females, similarly dressed in the uniform of female morality officers, and at least eight uniformed male officers verbally confront a young woman who has her hair covered and is in a manto, a loose-wearing shirt-like dress. The young woman attempts to walk away, but eventually one of the female officers holding her arm leads her to a white van. She is placed into the back of the van and driven away.²⁷⁹

In the footage of the second incident, at least two of the officers participating in the arrest use their cell phones to record the arrest and detention of the woman.²⁸⁰ During recent years, the Islamic Republic police force has been rolling out body-worn cameras for police officers.²⁸¹ The additional use of cellphones to capture the arrest suggests IRI-related threats of retaliation if the arrested woman resists.



Officer uses a cellphone to film the arrest.

II. Geolocation

Comparing the footage of the two incidents confirms the first and second incident occurred at the same location and on the same date. The visible curbside, tree trunks, metal dumpster, and black car parked outside the bank branch appear to be identical in both incidents.²⁸²



(Left) Imagery from the first incident; (Right) Imagery from the second incident.

Iran International's commentary for the post states that these detentions took place at "the First Square of the Tehran Pars neighborhood."²⁸³ In the footage from Iran international, the sign for Maskan Bank is clearly visible during the second incident.²⁸⁴

277 Ibid.

278 Ibid.

279 Ibid.

280 Ibid.

281 "Installation of 20,000 cameras on the uniforms of police officers," Mehr News, 15 August 2023, at <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5855201>.

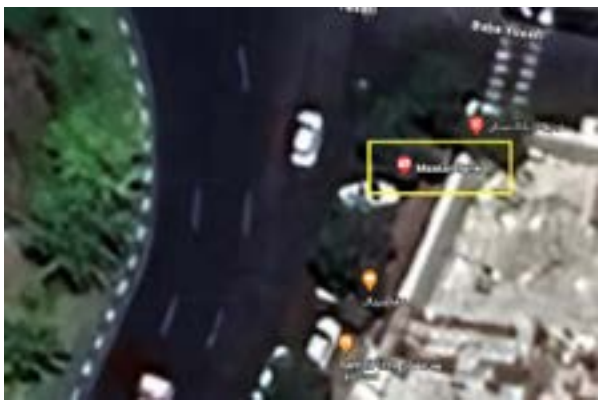
282 Post on X, *Iran International*, 13 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1779192830835007993>.

283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.



This branch of Maskan Bank can be located on Google Maps near the First Square of the Tehran Pars neighborhood.



The sign and building structure of Maskan Bank from the video posted by Iran International can also be compared to user-generated photos of the bank branch uploaded to Google Maps. Both signs and building structures have numerous points of visual corroboration, including the same shutters, outerwall, and concrete protrusion below the bank's sign.²⁸⁵



(Left) Imagery from the video posted by Iran International; (Right) user-generated imagery from Google Maps.

285 Ibid.

Investigators were thus able to confirm that the two incidents that took place in the video shared by Iran International took place at the First Square of Tehran Pars, Tehran, by Maskan Bank (35.72694, 51.52585).

III. 16 April 2024

On 16 April 2024, Simorgh News, a social media account that publishes videos by Iranian users, posted a video on X of a civilian woman being forced into a white van.²⁸⁶ The commentary for the post states:

"The poor woman got out of the resident complex. Morality Police [forced] her [in] the van and took her away. People protested by honking!"²⁸⁷



Civilian woman forced into a white van.

In the video, three women dressed in the all-black uniform commonly worn by female police officers forcefully push a woman into an unmarked white van. In the footage, the targeted woman's hair is visible.²⁸⁸ Her clothing appears to be loose fitting, and she appears to be wearing a manto.²⁸⁹

At one point in the video, one of the female morality police officers pulls the hair of the

286 Post on X, *Simorgh News*, 16 April 2024, at https://twitter.com/Simorgh_News/status/1780148818052354196. This appears to be the first posting of the video on social media. Nine hours later on the same day, 16 April 2024, BBC Persian posted the video on X and on BBC Persian's YouTube Channel. See Post on X, *BBC Persian*, 16 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1780282809648603427>; Post on YouTube, *BBC Persian*, 16 April 2024, at <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/I8sBVB1CMwc>.

287 Post on X, *Simorgh News*, 16 April 2024, at https://twitter.com/Simorgh_News/status/1780148818052354196.

288 Ibid. It is not clear in the video whether the victim was wearing a hijab at the start of the arrest, which may have fallen off.

289 Ibid. The manto (overall shirt) she is wearing appears to be dress shirt length when she is pushed into the van.

woman as she pushes her into the van.²⁹⁰ A male police officer appears to be coordinating with the female perpetrators. At the end of the video, the van pulls into a six-lane urban street and drives away.²⁹¹

IV. Geolocation

The location of this incident can be corroborated through geolocation of the video. Simorgh News's post claims that the incident took place at a residential apartment complex in Sa'adat Abad.²⁹² In the video, a sign and phone number for an auto dealership named Faridnia Auto Gallery are visible.²⁹³



Faridnia Auto Gallery can be located in Sa'adat Abad on Google Maps. The phone number registered for on Google matches the one seen in the video posted by Simorgh News. According to satellite imagery, Faridnia Auto Gallery is located across from the Kohestan Residential Complex.



The distinct security entrance to Kohestan Residential Complex is visible in the video posted by Simorgh News.²⁹⁴



The same security entrance is visible in user generated photos posted on Google Maps of the entrance to the Kohestan Residential Complex.



Investigators were thus able to confirm that the two arrests that took place in the video shared by Simorgh News took place on Kohestan Boulevard in Tehran outside of the Kohestan Residential Complex (35.77590, 51.34717).

III. 17 April 2024

On 17 April 2024, Dadban posted footage on X

²⁹⁰ Post on X, *Simorgh News*, 16 April 2024, at https://twitter.com/Simorgh_News/status/1780148818052354196 (00:05).

²⁹¹ Post on X, *Simorgh News*, 16 April 2024, at https://twitter.com/Simorgh_News/status/1780148818052354196.

²⁹² Ibid. Sa'adat Abad is an upper-middle class district in Northern Tehran. BBC Persian's corresponding post from later that day also states that the detention took place in Sa'adat Abad, Tehran. See Post on X, *BBC Persian*, 16 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1780282809648603427>.

²⁹³ Post on X, *Simorgh News*, 16 April 2024, at https://twitter.com/Simorgh_News/status/1780148818052354196.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

of two incidents.²⁹⁵ The two incidents show two different women being forced into a white van.²⁹⁶

Footage of the first incident shows male and female officers forcing a woman into a white van.²⁹⁷ The two female officers wear black chadors and the male officers wear police uniforms. At one point, a female officer grabs the woman by her hair and neck — pushing her into the van.²⁹⁸



Woman in the first incident forced by IRI officers into the white van.

Footage of the second incident depicts officers confronting a woman wearing a loose-fitting manto and a headscarf called Maqna'e worn by students and employees of public services.²⁹⁹ The victim gestures to her clothes and headscarf, suggesting that she may be arguing that her clothing is appropriate. At the end of the footage, the officers lead the woman to a white van and she enters the back.³⁰⁰



Woman in the second incident being led to the white van.

The unmarked white vans featured in the video are similar in size, shape, and design to the vans used by the IRI morality police. The license plates on the two vans are dark green, the official color of number plates issued to the police force in Iran. In the video, the license plate numbers and vehicle numbers for the vans are legible. The plates are not identical, denoting that different police were likely involved in the two incidents.³⁰¹



(Left) Van from the first incident; (Right) Van from the second incident.

V. Geolocation

Comparing the footage of the two incidents strongly suggests that the first and second incident occurred at the same location. The striped traffic block, tree and raised street are identical in the footage of both incidents.³⁰²

²⁹⁵ A reverse image search revealed no earlier postings of the video.

²⁹⁶ Post on X, *Dadban*, 17 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/dadban4/status/1780834809348038791>.

²⁹⁷ It is not clear from the video if the woman was wearing a hijab at the start of the arrest.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 00:00-00:13.

²⁹⁹ Some of her hair is visible under her hijab.

³⁰⁰ Post on X, *Dadban*, 17 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/dadban4/status/1780834809348038791>, 00:14-00:45.

³⁰¹ Post on X, *Dadban*, 17 April 2024, at <https://twitter.com/dadban4/status/1780834809348038791>.

³⁰² *Ibid*.



(Left) Imagery from the first incident; (Right) Imagery from the second incident.

Dadban’s commentary for the 17 April 2024 post suggests the incidents took place outside of the Mirzaye Shirazi Metro Station.³⁰³ The Mirzaye Shirazi Metro Station can be located on Google Maps.



In the footage posted by Dadban, the entrance to the metro station is visible, along with an adjoining blue-striped wall, striped curbs and two tall trees.



An identical entrance, adjoining blue-striped wall, striped curbs, and two tall trees can be seen in user-generated imagery on Google Maps.

Investigators were thus able to confirm that two incidents took place at the Mirzaye Shirazi Metro Station in Shiraz (35.72821, 51.41743).

VI. Gender Persecution Analysis - Continued Violent Enforcement of the Hijab

1. *The perpetrator severely deprived one or more persons of fundamental rights;*

In reference to the five incidents from April 2024 analyzed above, the enforcement of mandatory hijab, arrests, detentions, and forced confessions resulting from alleged non-compliance deprived these women of their fundamental right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association; their fundamental right to freedom of expression; and their fundamental right to liberty and security of person.

2. *The perpetrator targeted the persons by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity, or targeted the group or collectivity;*

According to the ICC’s Gender Policy, the phrase “targeted group or collectivity” is interpreted broadly. The targeted persons are not required to be part of the targeted group, or personally carry membership in the group; it is sufficient if the perpetrators believe an individual to be affiliated with the targeted group, whether or not that is actually the case.³⁰⁴

The FFMI’s report explains that the discriminatory policies of the IRI targeted people who support the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, and

³⁰⁴ *Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution*, 16 (stating: “If a perpetrator targets a person for being perceived as a gay man or lesbian, it is irrelevant that the person does not personally identify as homosexual. That the perpetrator wrongly perceived the person as belonging to the targeted group, does not deprive such conduct of its discriminatory character”).

³⁰³ Ibid.

women and girls perceived to be in violation of mandatory hijab rules.³⁰⁵ It is unclear if any of the women described above who appear to have been arrested for hijab violations had associations with the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, as the videos do not include footage of protests. These women were potentially targeted as part of the IRI's mass targeting of women and girls through severe imposition of opaque mandatory hijab policies.

3. *The targeting was based on gender;*

The women in these videos were targeted due to their gender because the IRI's mandatory hijab policies and enforcement are inherently gendered. Although the laws regarding the morality police and public conduct may initially appear gender-neutral, the IRI's focus on mandatory hijab with respect to policy, substance, and enforcement results in gender discrimination. The focus on mandatory hijab necessarily results in the targeting of women and girls. Indeed, investigators did not find any evidence on social media of men and boys being systematically detained for dress code violations.

In the videos, the women wear a variety of clothing; many are wearing loose hijabs. The authority given to arresting officers to interpret and enforce mandatory hijab policies has led to broad and inconsistent interpretations. This is particularly true since April 2023, when, as the FFMI's report describes, "The intention of the Islamic Republic to discriminate on the basis of gender is apparent through its actions to uphold and enforce a system of institutionalized and structural discrimination, and the punishment of those who are challenging or perceived to challenge it."³⁰⁶ Women's and girls' "access to public services and to public spaces, freedom of movement, right to health are conditioned by their adherence to mandatory hijab laws."³⁰⁷

305 *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 459 (stating: "the imposition of the mandatory hijab on women and girls, including through the "morality police" and the repression of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, with its demands for gender equality and an end to discrimination and forms of gender segregation, represent the ideology and form the motivation underpinning the commission of violations").

306 *Ibid.*, 469.

307 *Ibid.*, 73.

4. *The conduct was committed in connection with an act referred to in Article 7(1) of the Rome Statute or any crime in the ICC's jurisdiction;*

In the case of the five women above, all are victims of acts referenced in the Rome Statute, specifically detention and other inhumane acts.

5. *The conduct was committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population;*

The systematic nature of these violations is enshrined in the IRI's discriminatory laws and policies. It is also emphasized in the plethora of official IRI statements regarding mandatory hijab. On 3 April 2024, just days before these incidents of mandatory hijab enforcement, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei held a meeting with top officials of the Islamic Republic and delivered a televised speech, dedicating six minutes to the issue of mandatory hijab.³⁰⁸ He stated:

*"Sharia charges women with covering their whole body except their face and palms of their hands." He added that "even those who do not believe in sharia must follow the law. There are laws in this regard [hijab] and everyone must follow the law."*³⁰⁹

The Ayatollah went on to claim that:

*"According to reliable reports that we have received, [the enemy] hired some people to come and break social norms, to break the sanctity of hijab. Well, our women and those who think and talk about this issue should pay attention to these points. When we see the hand of foreign [powers] in a matter, we should adjust our positions accordingly so as not to help that foreigner."*³¹⁰

Investigators found numerous videos depicting mandatory hijab enforcement. Further verification and analysis of these videos, as well as mapping and timelining of the various incidents, could help

308 "Ayatollah Khamenei calls opposition to the mandatory hijab a "foreign plot" and demands "legal and religious" action by the authorities," *BBC Persian*, 15 April 2024, at <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cxezzz5j5zxo>; "Statements in the meeting with officials of the system," *Khamenei.ir*, at <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=55950>. This was his first speech after the Iranian new year, Nowruz. Traditionally this annual speech sets the tone and lays out the policy of the clerical establishment and security forces for the next 12 months.

309 *Ibid.*

310 *Ibid.*

to show the widespread and systematic nature of mandatory hijab enforcement.

6. *The perpetrator knew the conduct was part of, or intended the conduct to be part of, a widespread or systematic attack.*

The perpetrators in these videos almost certainly knew that their conduct was part of a systematic plan by the IRI. The speech given by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was his first speech after the Iranian New Year, Nowruz. Traditionally, this annual speech is widely broadcast and viewed by Iranian citizens. Its intent is to lay out the policy of the clerical establishment and security forces for the upcoming year.

All five victims in the videos were approached and arrested by women dressed in black chadors, the cover-all loose veil that is part of the police uniform for female officers in all branches of the IRI's police forces. These female morality police officers are specifically tasked with the systematic enforcement of state policies regarding dress code and mandatory hijab.³¹¹

The perpetrators in these videos were aware of and actively participating in the IRI's morality policing regarding mandatory hijab. The morality police and IRI forces in the videos appear to have been on duty and intentionally executing IRI policies when arresting the five women.

A. Intersectionality

Due to security considerations, investigators chose not to research the identities of the victims depicted in the five videos. As a result, investigators do not have a lot of information about the intersectional nature of these crimes. It is imperative to state, however, that these crimes are likely intersectional in nature, as the FFMI's report established that the IRI targets younger civilians, religious minorities, and ethnic minorities on a more frequent and severe basis for the same "perceived" crimes committed by other Iranian civilians.

B. Additional information that would be helpful

Although the videos of continued violent

311 See, e.g., *Detailed Findings of the FFMI*, 55 (stating: "the Moral Security Police is a sub-branch of the Intelligence and Public Security Police, with a mandate to "fight evil and corruption" and enforcing related morality laws, including the mandatory hijab").

enforcement of the wearing of the hijab were circulated by media outlets, the names of the women are not included. As explained above, the investigators did not attempt to determine their identities given potential security risks to those women. However, some victims of the IRI's violent hijab enforcement do choose to share their experience after their release from custody, or their families choose to come forward while the victims are detained, and therefore their identities may someday become public. Footage of the crimes against them should be archived and preserved to support any future attempts at amplification and accountability.

V. Conclusion

In this report, the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley and the Atlantic Council's Strategic Litigation Project have demonstrated how digital open source information may be used as corroborating and / or primary evidence of the crime against humanity of persecution on the basis of gender. Often, these crimes are intersectional, with gender as well as political, ethnic, or age-related variables being a factor in the targeting of the victims.

Sadly, what is described above is only a tiny sampling of abundant documentation posted to social media of the violent enforcement of the mandatory wearing of hijab against supporters of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran. By the time of writing, the Iranian Archive run by Mnemonic and supported by the Iran Digital Archive Coalition has preserved more than two million posts shared on open sources that suggest the scale of potential documentation of possible international crimes.

Our hope is that this report, and others that the Coalition is launching, will bring global attention to the range of violence suffered by protesters in Iran, as well as their exceptional bravery, and the courage demonstrated by those who have shared information about that violence online. We hope that this report has also illustrated the potential for digital open source information to contribute to legal accountability for the crime against humanity of persecution on gender, political, and other intersecting grounds.

VI. Acknowledgements

A. About the Iran Digital Archive Coalition

This report was drafted in support of and with input from an international research coalition that was formed to document, forensically preserve, and bring additional attention to evidence of potential human rights violations committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran against Woman, Life, Freedom movement protestors following the death of Mahsa Jina Amini in September 2022. The Coalition is led by the [Atlantic Council's Strategic Litigation Project](#) and [Mnemonic](#), in partnership with the International Programs at UCLA Law, [UC Berkeley's Human Rights Center](#), [Amnesty International's Digital Verification Corps](#), the [Iran Human Rights Documentation Center](#) and the [Azadi Archive](#). The Iranian Archive was launched by the Coalition in March 2024 to support future investigations and accountability proceedings. Housed by Mnemonic, the Iranian Archive joins other [standalone archives](#) created to support international investigations into alleged atrocities in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and Ukraine. Evidence collected by the Coalition includes information related to the blinding of protesters; forced disappearances and deaths of children; and targeted abuse based on gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, among other violations. This report is the second in a series that will be published by Coalition partners.

B. About the Human Rights Center & Investigations Lab

Using evidence-based methods and multidisciplinary frameworks, the [Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley](#) builds blueprintable solutions to address significant human rights challenges, and supports community-driven efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. In doing so, the center functions as a bridge between the

worlds of academia, policy and practice. With a mission of pursuing justice through science, technology, and law, the Human Rights Center:

- Researches and investigates war crimes and human rights violations;
- Develops standards for policymakers and practitioners; and
- Trains investigators, students, and human rights advocates.

The Investigations Lab at the Human Rights Center empowers the next generation of lawyers, journalists, and researchers to use digital investigation methods to tackle a wide array of human rights challenges. Hundreds of students have been trained in the Lab to investigate alleged human rights violations around the world.

The students — both graduate and undergraduate — have come from more than two dozen majors and minors, and have collectively spoken more than 70 languages since the Lab's founding in 2016. Lab participants are trained with holistic security at the core of their investigative approach, and recognize the mental and emotional impact of this work, as well as the heightened digital and physical security risks that can come with online research both for themselves and those they hope to support.

Our student and professional teams partner with credible, respected organizations around the world, taking on up to a half dozen investigations each academic year. The Lab is creating a pipeline of researchers who are prepared with the technical skills, collaborative mindset, and resilience needed to responsibly conduct human rights investigations in the 21st century.

C. About the Atlantic Council's Strategic Litigation Project

Through advising on legal tools and impact litigation, the Atlantic Council's Strategic Litigation Project works on accountability efforts for atrocity crimes, human rights violations, terrorism, and corruption offenses.

D. About the Investigators & Authors

Andrea Richardson is the senior legal researcher for investigations at the Human Rights Center. She is an attorney, Arabic linguist, and open source investigator specializing in international criminal law and international humanitarian law. She has worked on numerous international investigations pursuing justice for grave crimes committed in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories for organizations including the United Nations, Amnesty International, the Syrian Archive, the Wall Street Journal, and the Associated Press. As a former public defender, Andrea is also experienced in U.S. criminal investigations. Andrea holds a Bachelor's degree in Middle East Studies from Brown University, a Master's degree in Anthropology from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, and a J.D. from UC Berkeley School of Law.

Khosro Isfahani is the lead open source researcher at the Strategic Litigation Project at the Atlantic Council. He is a journalist and open source investigator working on all things Iran with a focus on human rights, security, and armed forces. Between 2009 and 2021, he worked in Iran as a frontline human rights defender in addition to his journalism work, delivering rapid aid to at-risk communities, including but not limited to ethnic minorities and LGBTQ communities. Khosro was a lead analyst and reporter on Iran with BBC Monitoring until 2023, where he covered state killings and violence against protesters along with military and security developments linked to Iran. Prior to joining the Atlantic Council, Khosro was a human rights fellow with the Oak Institute and a lecturer at Colby College. A regular contributor to the Atlantic Council's IranSource, Khosro's work has been published by various media outlets, including

BBC World Service, BBC Monitoring, Slate, and Financial Tribune, in addition to rights groups such as Article 19. He has also contributed to the United Nations' reporting on Iran. Khosro's work includes reporting on social movements in Iran as well as state violence against protestors and persecution of ethnic, religious, and LGBTQI+ minorities. As an analyst, he tracks the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional ambitions and military activity; nuclear program; and domestic, security, and foreign policy, along with war crimes committed by the Iranian regime and its proxies.

E. With Thanks

The investigators thank Lene Guercke; Nushin Sarkarati; Gissou Nia; Alexandra Lily Kather; Elise Baker; and the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center's legal team and researchers for their suggestions and feedback on earlier drafts. This report was edited by Alexa Koenig; designed and edited by Maggie Andresen; and supported in critical ways by several experts who must, unfortunately, remain anonymous for security reasons. The investigators are deeply grateful for their contributions.

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