

# RENMUN VIII

*The Restoration of Serenity*



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## Chair Report

**Addressing the Issue of Human Rights  
Abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

## Chair Introduction

Greetings Delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the eighth edition of RENMUN in 2023. I am Adhit Ranjan, a sophomore from German Swiss International School, and am honored to be your head chair this year. Alongside me will be Korliss Cheung, a sophomore from St. Paul's Co-educational College.. We look forward to witnessing an engaging and immersive debate, as well as creating long-lasting memories and friendships. Furthermore, we aim to facilitate competitive debate, while ensuring that the spirit of diplomacy prevails.

The Human Rights Council was founded in 2006, with the prime mission and focus of promoting and safeguarding human rights around the world. Despite being what sounds like an unfortunate mission, it is necessary for the nations of the world to maintain inspection of the adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family", and the foundation of the Human Rights Council.

Being a beginner committee, HRC does not require prior Model UN experience, and aims to serve as a learning curve for participants. Nonetheless, all delegations are expected to participate in a high standard of debate, and hence it is advisable to come fully prepared. As HRC is a committee where a supermajority is required to pass resolutions, delegations should keep the spirit of diplomacy, trust-building and unanimity at heart throughout the conference. At the same time, the chairs look forward to seeing controversial, heated debate regarding the two issues at hand. Aside from reading the chair reports, which will serve as a useful starting point for your research, conduct thorough research via the internet and other sources. With that being said, the chair hopes that all the delegates thoroughly enjoy themselves during the conference. Should any enquiries arise, please feel free to contact Korliss or me via the email addresses below.

Best Wishes,

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# Addressing the Issue of Human Rights Abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is a country located in the Middle East bordering the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian Sea. It has a strategic location on the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz, which are vital maritime pathways for crude oil export. Neighboring countries include Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan. The government system is a theocratic republic; the chief of state is the supreme leader, and the head of government is the president. Iran has a largely controlled economic system in which the central government directs the economy regarding the production and distribution of goods, but there is some private sector activity.

Iran has extensive oil reserves, but its economy has been hit hard by a trade ban imposed by the United States since the shah was ousted in 1979. Allegations that Iran supports terrorism and a belief that it is developing nuclear weapons has led to further isolation in recent years.

Iran is known for a questionable human rights record. Restrictions and punishments in the Islamic Republic of Iran which violate international human rights norms include harsh penalties for crimes, punishment of victimless crimes such as fornication and homosexuality, execution of offenders under 18 years of age, restrictions on freedom of speech and the press (including the imprisonment of journalists), and restrictions on freedom of religion and gender equality in the Islamic Republic's Constitution (especially ongoing persecution of Bahá'ís).

## Key Terms

Term	Definition
Guidance Patrol	The Guidance Patrol or morality police is a vice squad / Islamic religious police in the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, established in 2005 with the task of arresting people who violate the Islamic dress code, usually concerning the wearing by women of hijabs covering their hair.
Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps	An ideological custodian of Iran's 1979 revolution. Charged with defending the Islamic Republic against internal and external threats

Masha Amini Protests	Iran has been beset by protests since the death in custody on 16 September 2022 of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin who had been arrested three days earlier for allegedly breaching the Islamic dress code for women.
Religious Freedom	A principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community, in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, it set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected

**Background Information**

Iran has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights without reservations, committing itself to the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, and social rights including freedom of expression, assembly, association, and religion. The Iranian Constitution also guarantees these freedoms. However, several articles of the constitution guaranteeing specific liberties suffer from ambiguity and are often restricted by various conditions and provisions. For instance, Article 24 on press freedom states: "publications and the press are free to express their ideas unless these contravene the precepts of Islam or harm public rights. These conditions will be defined by laws."

International organizations have accused several branches of the Iranian government of human rights abuses, particularly security forces like the elite Revolutionary Guards and the volunteer paramilitary force the Basij, as well as the judiciary. Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, writes that after the 2009 protests following the disputed presidential election, the "judiciary has emerged as a key instrument to intimidate protestors and remove many leading activists and opinion makers, steps that were both critical to the regime's survival." The judiciary, he notes, also implements the Islamic penal code, including stoning, amputations and flogging, all considered torture under

international law. Plus, Iran has separate Islamic revolutionary courts whose legal standing has been repeatedly questioned by rights groups. Formed after the 1979 revolution to prosecute government officials of the previous regime, they are primarily charged with trying offenses involving acts against national security, drug smuggling, and espionage.

Recent reports from international organizations and Western governments have slammed Iran's rights record. The 2012 U.S. State Department report notes the role of Iran's regular and paramilitary security forces in cracking down on protestors and how they have committed serious human rights abuses, including torture and murders, with impunity. Tehran rejects these claims. Rights groups point to some particular issues of concern:

1. **Arbitrary arrest and detention:** More than four thousand people were arrested in connection with protests over the disputed 2009 elections. Hundreds more have been arrested since then in connection with protests. Rights groups say the government denies due process and fair trials to detainees and uses systematic torture in its prisons and detention facilities. Kouhyar Goudarzi, an Iranian human rights activist who fled the country in 2013 after his own repeated detentions for speaking out on abuses, told RFE/RL in an interview that Iranian "civil society is in a state of desperation and that the establishment has managed to instill fear and silence dissent."
2. **Capital punishment:** Rights groups accuse the Iranian authorities of imposing the death penalty and using execution as a political tool. A 2013 report notes an increase in executions, both official and secret. It says 297 executions were officially announced by the government and about 200 secret executions were confirmed by family members, prison officials and members of the judiciary in 2012.
3. **Women's Rights:** An United Nations report which compared disparity between men and women on economic participation, access to education, health, and political empowerment ranked Iran 123rd out of 134 countries. This was better than most countries in the region, ahead of Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and even Turkey. However, the UN report notes that the application of certain laws is a barrier to gender equality in Iran. For instance, a woman's worth and testimony in a court of law is regarded as half that of a man's.
4. **Systematic Discrimination against ethnic minorities:** Religious, ethnic, and other minorities: There are widespread abuses against members of recognized and unrecognized religious and ethnic minorities such as Arabs, Azeris, Baloch, Kurds, Sufi Muslims, Sunnis, Baha'is, and Christians. Iran's largest

non-Muslim religious minority, the Baha'i, has historically been discriminated against and continues to be denied jobs and educational opportunities, and face arbitrary detention and unfair trials. There are rising reports of such abuses committed against other religious minorities

## **Potential Clashes**

### **Death Penalty**

Many have called Iran's penalty unethical, especially given the fact that it is arbitrarily enforced, often for minor offenses such as anti-regime protests. Furthermore, the death penalty is often used disproportionately against minority groups. However, defenders of capital punishment in Iran point out that it remains a valid punishment in 104 countries, and is necessary to preserve law and order. Moreover, according to some sources Iran commits less executions per year than countries with "exemplary" human rights records, such as the United States, although this is impossible to verify due to inaccurate statistics in Iran.

### **Women's Rights**

Many Western countries claim that Iran systematically suppresses women, severely curtailing their rights. Examples of lack of freedom for women include strict prudism laws (having to wear a hijab), lack of equal opportunity in workplaces, and inability to travel alone. There is widespread discontent among women in Iran over the illiberal control over their lives, as is exemplified by the Mahasa Amini protests. Defenders of the Iranian regime point out that Iran grants women significantly more freedom than neighbors such as Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan, and that morality is based on Sharia (Islamic) law.

### **LGBT+ Rights**

Iran retains among the harshest laws for LGBT+ individuals, with homosexuality illegal, and punishable by death. Iran remains one of twelve countries that actively enforces the death penalty for homosexual acts. According to various reports, persecution of LGBT individuals has been heightened recently. Iran's government claims all laws regarding LGBT individuals are in accordance with Sharia law, and believe it is unislamic to liberalize on the issue

### **Persecution of Religious Minorities**

Religious minorities, such as those practicing the Baha'i Faith, Zoroastrians, Christians, and Sunni Muslims often face discrimination in Iran. Those from minority faiths have been victims of crackdown and arbitrary arrest, and often face difficulty obtaining public services. Iran's government claims there is no religious discrimination and that people of all religions have equal opportunity.

## Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Involvement with the Issue
Iran	Iran denies human rights abuses, instead claiming all its laws are necessary to keep law and order, and are in line with Sharia law. Iran has shown little willingness to amend its laws in line with UN and international suggestions, and highlights that other countries in the region often have similarly harsh laws.
United States of America and Canada	Both the United States and Canada strongly condemn human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic, and have issued numerous sanctions to address human rights violations. In a joint statement to address recent protests in Iran, the government statement read “Canada and the United States are united in condemning the Islamic Republic of Iran’s brutal acts of violence against peaceful protestors and its ongoing repression of the Iranian people. We also condemn Iran’s pervasive oppression and state-sponsored violence against women. While these are longstanding concerns, the Iranian authorities’ intensification of violence against the Iranian people following the death of Mahsa “Zhina” Amini calls for consequential responses from all corners of the world.”
United Kingdom	The United Kingdom condemns human rights abuses in Iran, and has taken an active role in sanctioning individuals and organizations that have committed abuses. The United Kingdom houses many Iranian dissidents, and has taken a vocal role in supporting various protest movements in Iran, such as the recent Mahasa Amini protests.
Germany	Germany follows a similar stance as most Western, European nations, calling on Iran to improve its human rights situation. In particular,

	Germany has condemned Iran's treatment of LGBT individuals, and has encouraged greater UN involvement in Iran's human rights situation,
Saudi Arabia	As one of Iran's rivals in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has often condemned Iran's human rights abuses. However, as a nation that has allegedly committed human rights abuses itself, Saudi Arabia's criticisms have often been muted. Saudi Arabia, as a large, Sunni Muslim nation, has taken particular concern with the issue of religious discrimination in Iran.
Iraq	Iraq has taken issue with alleged extrajudicial killings conducted by Iranian troops, given that many killings have allegedly been conducted in Iraqi Kurdistan. With regard to other human rights issues in Iran, Iraqi criticism has been muted, likely because Iraq has also allegedly committed similar human rights abuses

## Possible Solutions

### Increase foreign pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran

Some activists have called for greater foreign involvement in Iran's human rights situation, expanding the UN's role from regular reports to restrictive sanctions, suggesting greater foreign economic pressure will force the Iranian regime to change its policy, and also energize local protest movements. Others argue that increased foreign pressure may in fact make conditions worse off for key groups within Iran.

### Allow countries to take unilateral action

Given the wide range of stances on the human rights situation in Iran, some nations recommend the issue be tackled on a unilateral basis, with nations allowed to choose individually what sanctions to enforce. This allows foreign pressure to be applied while simultaneously not forcing international action.

### Maintain status quo

The Iranian government (and some other organisations) deny the occurrence of human rights abuses in Iran and therefore believe no changes to the status quo should be made, and instead foreign sanctions should be lifted.

## Past Actions

The United Nations has been actively involved in the human rights situation in Iran. In early 1980s, Iran became one of the few countries to ever be investigated by a UN country rapporteur under the UN Special Procedures section. Four years later the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Representative on Iran to study its human rights situation. Iran's human rights situation has been placed on the agenda of the General Assembly because of "the severity and the extent of this human rights record".

From 1984 to 2021, United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) passed resolutions about human rights violations against Iran's religious minorities, especially the persecution of Bahá'ís. Furthermore, the UNCHR along with other international organizations such as Amnesty International release annual reports on the human rights situation in Iran, to be discussed by the General Assembly.

Although reports and resolutions condemning poor human rights situation in Iran have regularly been published, past UN action has not included any sanctions and has had little effect on Iranian policy.

## Guiding Questions

1. How should the international community respond to human rights abuses in Iran?
  - a. Should the General Assembly and Human Rights Council take a more active role in the issue by sending investigators to Iran on a regular basis?
  - b. Should countries place unilateral sanctions on Iran?
  - c. How can religious minorities be protected in a nation where there is only one official religion?
  - d. How should clothing and morality laws be adjusted while simultaneously keeping them in line with Islamic norms?
  - e. How can the international community best protect sexual minorities and LGBT individuals in Iran?
2. How should the United Nations respond to allegations that IRGC troops have committed extrajudicial human rights abuses?

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