

Fulfilling Promises

A Human Rights Roadmap
for Iran's New President

عدالت اجتماعی
www.rouhani.ir

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN



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for Iran's New President



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for Iran's New President

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www.iranhumanrights.org

ABOUT US

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran is a non-partisan, independent human rights 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in New York that works actively in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. The Campaign's team is comprised of advocates, researchers, and journalists with extensive experience at international organizations.

The mission of the Campaign is to promote human rights to ensure a culture of respect for the human dignity and rights of all and to hold Iranian state actors accountable to their international obligations.

The Campaign documents human rights violations in Iran via first-hand and original sources within the country, and publishes statements, appeals, blog posts, multimedia productions, and comprehensive reports in both English and Persian. The Campaign advocates with national governments and intergovernmental institutions, and cooperates with a broad range of civil society organizations on strategies aimed at protecting civil society and improving human rights in Iran.






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Introduction

During his 2013 presidential campaign, Iranian president Hassan Rouhani promised to uphold the “rights of the people” enumerated in the country’s constitution. Millions of his supporters demanded social and political rights, including the release of political prisoners from prison and house arrest.

In this paper, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran addresses the ongoing human rights violations occurring under the purview of nine ministries that are under the authority of the president, and provides recommendations he can implement to put an end to these violations. It also notes the executive powers and areas that are under the president’s direct control, and the immediate measures he can take to address rights violations. While the document is by no means comprehensive, the Campaign offers it as a starting point for Rouhani to begin fulfilling his campaign promises to reinstate the rule of law in Iran.

Although Iran’s executive branch is limited in scope, the ministries under its purview are responsible for a wide range of human rights violations. The president therefore is empowered to prevent and stop these violations. Rouhani pledged to uphold the Iranian constitution at his inauguration; hence he should immediately implement changes to amend harmful policies, monitor the performance of officials within his administration, and uphold the mechanisms guaranteeing the implementation of the Iranian constitution.

A number of Iranian institutions outside of the executive branch—including the Revolutionary Guards Intelligence Organization (IRGC), the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), and the Judiciary—have become safe harbors for human rights violators. However, as head of the executive branch and principal enforcer of the constitution, the president has the authority to hold these state institutions accountable by investigating and formally noting any violations of the rights guaranteed by the Iranian constitution. He can also introduce legislation and issue directives regarding government practices, affording him significant ability to affect the state of human rights in Iran.

The Campaign welcomes the election of Hassan Rouhani, the only candidate to raise issues of human rights and the rights of the people, and entreats him to heed the voices raised during his campaign, engage with the Iranian and international human rights communities who work to protect the rights of the Iranian people, and use all the tools at his disposal to fulfill his campaign promises.

Rouhani's Remarks on Human Rights

During Rouhani's election campaign he made several promises to respect human rights and uphold the "rights of the people." Below is a selection of quotes from his campaign appearances.

April 11, 2013 [\[Video\]](#)

"All Iranian people should feel there is justice. Justice means equal opportunity. All ethnicities, all religions, even religious minorities, must feel justice."

"Long live citizenship rights!"

May 27, 2013 [\[Video\]](#)

"Justice means that anyone who wants to speak in a society should be able to come out, speak their mind, criticize and critique without hesitation and stammering."

June 4, 2013 [\[Video\]](#)

"In the future cabinet, in all social areas, discrimination among men and women will be eliminated."

"All people of Iran must feel justice and justice means equal opportunity."

June 8, 2013 [\[Video\]](#)

"If I am bestowed with the responsibility, I will return dignity back to the university and students."

[After the audience chants "Political prisoners must be freed"] "Why political prisoners? We must do something for all these prisoners to be released."

"With the help of the country's hard-working police, I will do something to establish real security on all streets, so that our girls can feel safe on the streets. I shall not allow an anonymous force to ask anyone questions."

"I will draft [a law based on] chapter three of the [Iranian] constitution, 'The Rights of the People.' I shall send it to the Parliament and will present it to the nation as law."

"In citizenship rights, the Kurds, the Fars, the Baluchis, the Turkman, and the Arabs are equal."

"Those who have been dismissed from the university because of expressing their opinions must return."

June 10, 2013 [\[Video\]](#)

"I will implement Article 15 of the [Iranian] constitution. It is the people's right to be able to decide about their mother tongue."

"I will draft and implement citizenship rights. In citizenship rights there is no minority and majority. Kurd, Azeri, Turkman, Baluch, Lur, Arab, and Fars will all be equal."

"In the Wisdom and Hope government, a professor will no longer be dismissed for a criticism."

"In the Wisdom and Hope government, the stars will only be in the Iranian sky. We will not have 'starred' students."





President Hassan Rouhani

- *Citizenship rights*
- *The Political Crimes Bill*
- *Abuses by herasat offices*
- *Notices of constitutional violations*
- *Free speech*
- *Women's rights*
- *Discrimination in government employment practices*
- *The encouragement of government transparency*

In this report, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran highlights human rights violations occurring under the purview of nine Iranian government ministries that report directly to the Iranian president. The new administration, led by President Hassan Rouhani, has the authority to stop and prevent these violations, and the report provides specific, actionable recommendations aimed at stemming the violations.

In addition to the activities of the ministries under executive control, the president of Iran also has specific powers and areas under his direct control that afford him significant ability to affect the state of human rights in Iran. For example, the president can introduce legislation to Parliament, issue executive orders regarding government practices, and, as the chief enforcer of the Iranian constitution, hold state institutions accountable to the law by monitoring and noting violations of the Iranian constitution by state institutions.

In this section, actions that President Hassan Rouhani can take directly and immediately to fulfill his campaign pledges to uphold the rights of the Iranian people are highlighted.

Citizenship rights

The Fourth Development Plan, which was adopted as the state's comprehensive guiding plan by the government and Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2002, includes a requirement that the executive branch introduce and the Parliament pass legislation detailing the specific rights of Iranian citizens. The purpose of this legislation is to gather and detail in domestic law the various rights enumerated in the country's constitution and to incorporate into such legislation the Iranian government's obligations

under international human rights conventions to which it is a party.

However, this aspect of the state's Development Plan has never been implemented. In 2005, then-President Khatami introduced to the Parliament such mandated legislation, which included a "Citizen's Rights Bill," legislation on "Privacy Rights," and a "Freedom of Press and Access to Government Information Law," but Parliament failed to debate and vote on any of these legislations.

At present, Iranian rights are codified only in the constitution, and only in the most general terms, with no specific delineation or definition of these rights.

President Rouhani can and should re-introduce and actively pursue the passage of these three mandated legislations in the Iranian Parliament so that the rights of Iranians are specifically codified and legally binding, and are in accordance with international human rights law. He should use all the powers of his presidency to ensure that these laws are debated, voted on, and passed in the Parliament, assigning this issue the prioritization it must have, given the widespread and systematic abuse of rights in Iran that are ostensibly protected by the Iranian constitution.

The Political Crimes Bill

Given the Iranian president's ability to introduce legislation and his capacity to use the powers of his office to lead and persuade on legislative issues, Rouhani can and should actively push for the passage in the Iranian Parliament of a Political Crimes Bill. This bill would clearly delineate those political activities that are legal in Iran, and those that are not. Importantly, these delineations would be in full accordance with international human rights laws, including those that guarantee the freedoms of speech and association and freedom of the press. This would not only protect internationally accepted norms of political activity inside Iran, it would also prevent the Iranian authorities from arresting and imprisoning Iranian citizens arbitrarily on vague "national security" charges.

A Political Crimes Bill was originally introduced to Parliament under the reformist Khatami administration, but it has languished unapproved since then. Decades after the Islamic Revolution, there is still no definition of a "political crime" in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and hundreds of people are imprisoned each year in Iran for their peaceful social and political activism.

In addition, Article 168 of the Iranian constitution states that "political and press offenses will be tried openly and in the presence of a jury, in courts of justice." However, with political crimes left undefined, individuals arrested and imprisoned for their journalistic activities or in relation to their political activities under vague national security charges are rarely tried in open courts or in the presence of a jury.

The new President should re-introduce a Political Crimes Bill, ensure that the definition of a "political crime" is based on the constitution and complies with Iran's international obligations in this area, and use his full capabilities to have this law approved in the Iranian Parliament.

Abuses by *herasat* offices (local state intelligence bureaus)

Herasat offices are found in state institutions and universities throughout Iran, and are comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Intelligence who monitor such institutions in order to ensure continued fealty to the Islamic Republic and “prevent penetration” of any state institution by those deemed disloyal to the regime. They are found in every government office, in state-owned enterprises throughout the Iranian economy, in the state-run media, and in all of the universities, where they conduct surveillance, monitor private communications, act as informants, and influence hiring and firing practices. Members of the *herasat* harass, intimidate, and engage in widespread human rights abuses, and, in particular, violate Article 23 of the Iranian constitution, which states that “the investigation of an individual’s beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief.”

For example, the *herasat* offices in Iranian universities play a major role in the suspension and expulsion of students who engage in political or religious activities with which the *herasat* disapproves, or who dress or engage in conduct with which they disapprove. *Herasat* offices have deprived hundreds of Iranian students of their right to education because of those individuals’ legal political activities and the expression of their opinions.

President Rouhani must review and evaluate the policies and actions of the *herasat*, ensure that its members do not continue to engage in the systematic violations of human rights, and, if they do violate the laws, that they not enjoy immunity from legal and criminal accountability. Additionally, the president must create effective legal and oversight mechanisms to ensure that the employment and/or dismissal of students, professors, or employees is not based on an individual’s beliefs.

In addition, according to Article 127 of the Iranian constitution, the president may, in special circumstances, appoint one or more special representatives with specific powers. It is incumbent upon President Rouhani, given his role as the principal enforcer of the Iranian constitution, to assign a special representative to review the *herasat*’s activities, report directly to the president on the use or misuse of its powers and any violations, make specific recommendations aimed at reigning in the abuses committed by the *herasat*, and follow through on the implementation of these recommendations.

Notices of constitutional violations

According to Article 113 of the Iranian constitution, the president of Iran is the highest official in the country after the Supreme Leader, and he is responsible for implementing the constitution. As the principle enforcer of the constitution, President Rouhani has not only the right but the responsibility to defend the rights contained therein and serve official notice to any branch, body, or institution of the government that has carried out practices in violation of the constitution. Such constitutional notices (formal presidential notifications of constitutional violations) are a vital mechanism to check constitutional abuses, drawing public attention to and calling on violating organizations to cease their violations.

For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Broadcasting organization (IRIB) [routinely broadcasts](#) show trials and forced confessions of prisoners that have been elicited through torture, and produces documentaries that have defamed, libeled, and facilitated the illegal prosecution of Iranian citizens, without extending them an opportunity to defend themselves. This is a clear case where it is incumbent upon the president to serve a constitutional notice to IRIB that they are violating the constitutional rights of Ira-

nian citizens contained in Article 37 (which states that innocence is to be presumed, and no one is to be held guilty of a charge unless his or her guilt has been established by a competent court) and Article 38 (which states that all forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information is forbidden), and that they must cease this practice.

The continued house arrest of political opposition figures Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi, and Zahra Rahnavard, who were never charged nor convicted in a court of law, is also in clear violation of the Iranian constitution. Article 34 states that all citizens have a right of access to competent courts, and Article 37 states that innocence is presumed until guilt has been established by a competent court. President Rouhani should issue a constitutional notice regarding the illegality of their arrest, publicly demand their release, and use all the powers of his office to put an end to such practices.

The president can and must launch investigations into all allegations of abuses and issue constitutional notices to any state organization that is violating the constitutional rights of Iranians. Moreover, he must demand that such organizations respond to the allegations and cease the violations, and inform the public of the results of such investigations, thereby fulfilling his responsibility to defend the constitution.

Free speech

Many journalists and publications have faced lawsuits, arrests, detentions, shutdowns, and bans on publishing by officials for criticizing government organizations, particularly in recent years. This is in direct violation of the Iranian constitution, which states in Article 24, "Publications and the press have freedom of expression except when it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public."

The Iranian president can use his authority to issue directives to all ministries under the executive branch to discourage government officials from filing lawsuits against newspapers for their criticism, and can use his office to encourage them to respond to the criticism rather than persecuting the critics.

Women's rights

According to Article 20 of the Iranian constitution, "All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria." Yet in practice and in law in Iran, women face severe discrimination in such areas as education, employment, state benefits, family law, and court proceedings.

President Rouhani should fulfill his campaign pledges to uphold the rights of women and present legislation to Parliament that directly addresses discrimination against women in Iran.

For example, he can remove restrictions on the enrollment of female students in academic disciplines that have been imposed in recent years by the Ministry of Science, and issue an executive order to the Ministry of Science to end segregation policies that lead to discrimination against female students inside Iranian universities. The president should also present bills which end discriminatory divorce laws and address all other discriminatory aspects of family law in Iran. He should introduce legislation that makes women equal to men under the law. Extending public health insurance and state services to unemployed female heads of households is also a critical need of women in Iran.

In addition, the lack of female participation in high-level government positions (including the president's own cabinet, which does not have a single female minister) is an issue that should be addressed. President Rouhani should actively promote the participation of women in senior government positions who will effectively pursue anti-discriminatory policies.

Discrimination in government employment practices

The government is a major employer in Iran, and as such, government hiring practices have a huge impact on the country. At present, there is severe religious and ethnic discrimination in government hiring practices in Iran. Religious discrimination most pointedly affects Baha'is and Christian converts: Iranian Baha'is are completely denied government employment, and converted Christians have to hide their faith or they will be expelled from government employment. In addition, ethnic Kurds, Arabs, and Baluchis face significant discrimination in state hiring practices. Provincial and local level government offices rarely hire citizens indigenous to the province in management and high-level positions, and these communities are thus cut off from an important source of employment as well as decision-making capabilities on the local governmental level.

The Iranian president can take direct action to address this discrimination, issuing an executive order forbidding discrimination against religious or ethnic minorities in Iranian government hiring. In addition, he can explicitly institute anti-discrimination government hiring codes. Moreover, the president's Minister of the Interior appoints provincial governors, and thus the president can direct them to increase the hiring of local ethnicities in management positions, particularly in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Khuzestan.¹

The encouragement of government transparency

At present in Iran there is a glaring lack of government transparency and a severe lack of reliable and timely government statistics. This dearth of information leads to a lack of government accountability and facilitates government inaction. Inaccurate or nonexistent information on such areas as the state of the country's economy, corruption, and substance abuse and other public health issues impedes the government's ability to address the country's social and economic ills.

The president can and should develop policies to provide citizens, journalists, and academics with full access to unclassified government information, documents, and publications. He can issue directives requiring state organizations and units to provide regular, accurate, and timely information and statistics to the public on the activities of the government and on the state of the country. He should also require public access to transcripts of public sessions of all decision-making centers under his administration.

¹ ["Few Baluchis in Management Posts of Local Government,"](#) April 19, 2013.



Ministry of Intelligence

- Arbitrary arrests, false accusations, and harassment
- Harassment of family members of critics and dissidents
- Torture, mistreatment, and forced confessions
- Invasion of privacy through monitoring
- Censorship of newspapers prior to publication
- Interference in universities
- Persecution of religious and ethnic minorities

Arbitrary arrests, false accusations, and harassment

The Ministry of Intelligence is directly involved in imposing illegal and arbitrary restrictions on the activities of political parties and independent non-governmental organizations. There are hundreds of cases of arbitrary arrests of organization members every year, false accusations against them, and a pattern of illegal interference with the Judiciary in order to stop the activities of independent organizations.

The Ministry of Intelligence engages in a pattern of arbitrary arrests of journalists and activists, silencing critics and independent media and associations. The Ministry regularly summons individuals to their offices and threatens them without any legal justification. These pervasive attacks on dissidents and media professionals have created an atmosphere of censorship and repression, and have had a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of expression and association.

In addition, the Ministry of Intelligence has a record of mounting false cases against activists, journalists, artists, and academics. These false accusations interrupt their work, discredit them, and often lead to their arrest. While many of the accused are eventually acquitted of their charges when their cases are finally heard in court, they are often detained for years before their cases are reviewed.

Harassment of family members of critics and dissidents

The Ministry also harasses, interrogates, and arrests [family members of critics](#) and dissidents. In 2012

and 2013, for example, [family members of journalists](#) working for news agencies outside of Iran, such as BBC Persian and Radio Farda, were repeatedly harassed and arrested.

Torture, ill-treatment, and forced confessions

The Ministry of Intelligence operates various detention centers throughout Iran. Scores of human rights violations have been documented in these centers, including ill-treatment of detainees, physical and psychological torture, and denial of access to counsel or family, all in violation of Iranian and international law. Many detainees have been forced under torture to issue false confessions. According to the [March 2013 report](#) of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, 78% of witnesses he interviewed reported having been tortured.

In the case of political prisoners, it is the Ministry of Intelligence that makes arrests, detains prisoners in dedicated prison wards without oversight from the Judiciary, and mounts preliminary investigations before releasing them to the Judiciary. There is a consistent pattern of torture of political prisoners, especially during the initial days of their detention, often in solitary confinement and during interrogations, aimed at extracting false confessions. Many prisoners, such as the human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, [have reported](#) that their interrogators from the Ministry of Intelligence informed them of their sentences before their trials, raising concerns about the independence of the judges in charge of political prisoners' cases.

In addition to detention centers, the Ministry of Intelligence also operates certain prison wards without the oversight of the Iranian Judiciary, in which there is a documented a pattern of ill-treatment. For example, [seven Dervish lawyers](#) being held at the Intelligence Ministry's Ward 209 at Evin Prison have not had access to light in months and have developed consequent illnesses.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Intelligence systematically violates due process. Detainees are routinely denied access to lawyers and are often denied knowledge of the charges against them.

Invasion of privacy through monitoring

The Ministry of Intelligence actively invades the privacy of Iranian citizens by tapping their phones, reading their text messages, and monitoring their Internet use. These monitoring mechanisms are often used to detain activists as well as denying them freedoms of expression and assembly in their private spheres.

Censorship of newspapers prior to publication

Without any authority for censorship or review, the Ministry of Intelligence routinely threatens editors, journalists, publishers, and other media professionals with arrest or closure of their publications in order to censor content prior to the publication of the news.

Interference in universities

In direct violation of the Iranian constitution, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence has banned [hundreds of Iranian youth](#) from pursuing higher education because of their political or religious activities. The Ministry interferes in university admissions, "stars" students (marking their educational transcripts to prevent enrollment in any Iranian university), and sits on the disciplinary committees of various universities. The Ministry also interferes with the independence of universities by establishing security offices at universities and arresting and detaining student activists who are then charged with various national security-related crimes.

Persecution of religious and ethnic minorities

During the last eight years, the Ministry of Intelligence has increased its persecution of religious minorities, including Christian Protestants, Dervishes, and Baha'is. Houses of worship are routinely shut down and leaders of religious communities are frequently monitored, harassed, and detained. For example, in May 2012, the oldest Persian-language Protestant Christian church in Iran, the Central Assemblies of God, was [closed due to pressure](#) from intelligence forces.

The Ministry of Intelligence has also engaged in the prolonged harassment and persecution of ethnic minorities, such as Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, and Azeris. As with religious minorities, leaders of these communities are often monitored, harassed, and detained; use of their language is restricted; and university enrollment and business permits are frequently denied. For example, for more than three decades the Iranian government has persecuted Kurdish people for practicing their customs, with the police and the Ministry of Intelligence routinely arresting Kurdish citizens for observing their ethnic celebrations.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Intelligence:

- Remove the Ministry of Intelligence from universities, and end their intimidation and silencing of student activists, religious minorities, and students with independent political convictions.
- Remove the Ministry of Intelligence from prisons.
- Hold the Intelligence Ministry accountable for its interference in the affairs of the Judiciary. Restore the independence of the Judiciary.
- Prevent torture, and hold accountable those who employ the practice.
- Stop televising coerced confessions.
- Stop the abuse of national security charges against activists, artists, students, and religious and ethnic minorities.
- Respect and implement the Citizens' Rights Bill of 2004.
- Put an end to the Ministry's illegal interference with political groups and parties.
- Sign and ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (United Nations Convention against Torture).
- End the persecution of religious minorities.
- Respect the rights of ethnic minorities to follow their traditions, protected by Articles 19 and 20 of the Iranian constitution. Stop harassing and persecuting ethnic minorities.



Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance

- Books
- Cinema
- Music
- Press

Books

A prolonged process for the review of book license applications and the Ministry of Culture's refusal to issue licenses for independent publishers have led to the closure of many publishing houses.

It should be noted that in 2007, the Research and Cultural Unit of the Center for Strategic Research, with Hassan Rouhani at its helm, criticized the Ahmadinejad government's [cultural policies](#), stating that these policies do not allow the development of the publishing industry in Iran. The government's policies have led to the devastation of independent Iranian publishers, many of which have either been officially shut down or have had to stop their activities under financial pressure.

Cinema

Currently, the Ministry of Culture requires a strict process of review and approval for all screenplays. In July 2012, the Ministry of Culture [said in a parliamentary hearing](#) that they do not approve half of the screenplays they receive. For those screenplays that are approved, the Ministry imposes strict censorship and often requires the removal of certain scenes before release of the film. The Ministry's restrictions include adherence to government dress codes and removal of lines in the script that may be perceived as political or critical of the government.

Iranian authorities have also created obstacles for Iranian filmmakers and actors to attend international

film festivals.²

In addition, the previous administration initiated a trend of harassing and intimidating filmmakers, which continues to this day. Leading filmmakers have been accused of cooperating with international media or satellite networks, which is a criminal offense in Iran, and arrested and banned from making films.³

In January 2012, the Ministry of Culture ordered the [dissolution of the House of Cinema](#), the largest trade association of the Iranian film industry, stating that its activities “lacked legal legitimacy.” In June 2012, after a long legal struggle between the Ministry’s Cinema Office and members of the House of Cinema, the then–Deputy in charge of Cinema for the Ministry ordered the establishment of a new government supported organization, to be called “The House of Iranian Cinema Trade Unions.” Members of the original House of Cinema have said that they do not recognize “The House of Cinema 2,” and consider its formation illegal.

Music

In recent years, many musicians have been forced to flee Iran in order to freely pursue their work. The Ministry of Culture is charged with reviewing and approving all lyrics and music, as well as giving permission for performances. In April 2010, Hamid Shahabadi, then–Deputy Minister for the Arts for the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, stated that only [20 percent of the music](#) reviewed receives approval by the Ministry of Culture.

This state of affairs leads many musicians to function underground. If the authorities find musicians performing unapproved music, they face imprisonment. In addition, musicians cannot publish and sell their music through legal channels without a license. In recent years, authorities have raided many underground studios, arresting artists and confiscating music and equipment.⁴

In addition, female musicians face gender-based restrictions, which vary from province to province. In Isfahan, for example, women performers are only allowed to perform for female audiences, and women taking music lessons can only perform for women. If their music teachers are men, their teachers cannot be present during their performances. In other provinces, [women singers can accompany](#) a man’s voice, but cannot be the dominant voice nor be solo singers.

Press

Journalism falls under the purview of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance; as such the Ministry

² In February 2013, for example, director and filmmaker Kambozia Partovim and actress Maryam Moghaddam attended the Berlin film festival, where Partovim’s film received a Silver Bear. Upon returning to Iran, their passports were confiscated and they were forbidden from leaving the country because the Deputy in charge of Cinema for the Ministry of Culture at the time, Javad Shamaghdari, said the award was political in nature.

³ Recently, six independent filmmakers—Mohsen Shahrnazdar, Hadi Afarideh, Katayoun Shahabi, Naser Safarian, Shahnam Bazdar, and Mojtaba Mir Tahmaseb—who had been arrested in September 2011 were acquitted of all charges, raising suspicions that their initial arrests were politically motivated.

⁴ For example, in May 2012, the Iranian police arrested a person who allegedly ran an underground music studio North Khorasan and confiscated all equipment. In November 2012, members of a band known as Se-Band (Three Band) [were similarly arrested](#).

has the responsibility to uphold Iran's constitution and protect freedom of the press. Yet there has been a rapidly intensifying crackdown on journalists and media in Iran over the past several years, mainly by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Judiciary. Journalists are routinely summoned, harassed, arrested, and sentenced to long prison terms for charges relating to their writing. In order to circumvent constitutional protections, journalists are often charged with national security-related crimes. Iranian journalists also face strict reviews in the process of applying for publication licenses, a process that is often politicized. Access to government events or press conferences is also provided to journalists based on their adherence to political criteria.

Iranian intelligence and security agencies often put pressure on media and newspapers to not cover certain issues, such as the impact of sanctions, the state of the economy, or criticism of Iran's nuclear program. In addition, the Iranian Judiciary and prosecutors often censor newspapers before publication, sometimes leading to blank pages. The Ministry of Culture does nothing to prevent these illegal interventions.⁵

In August 2010, reformist Members of Parliament criticized the Deputy Minister of Culture for sending repeated directives to reformist newspapers restricting the topics they were allowed to cover. After the reformist newspaper Etemad-e-Melli was banned in 2009, Ghodrattallah Alikhani, a reformist MP, [said that at no period](#) in Iran's recent history has the press been as damaged as under the ministry of Mr. Hosseini, Iran's Minister of Culture under Ahmadinejad.

The media department of the Ministry of Culture also leverages its control over paper subsidies, which a large number of papers in Iran depend upon, in order to selectively undermine publications for political reasons. Independent newspapers have been targeted in this regard, with the loss of such subsidies resulting in the closure of a number of newspapers due to financial difficulties.

Iranian Journalists Association, the most pervasive guild of reporters and journalists in Iran, was active between 1997 and 2008. In June 2008, the Ministry of Labor [dissolved the association](#) in a letter and the administrative offices of the association were sealed a few months later on orders from Saeed Mortazavi, who was at the time the Tehran Prosecutor.

⁵ For example, on July 3, 2013, Mehr News published news of the Kahrizak trial ruling regarding the deaths under torture of at least three 2009 post-election protesters held at the Kahrizak Detention Center. Authorities then detained Mehr News' managing director for several hours inside the judicial complex. Mohsen Eftekhari, Head of the Penal Court, had said the night before that "details of Kahrizak court were not to be published and the medium that published it must be legally accountable." Bahar News website reported that the Tehran Prosecutor called the managers of all newspaper print shops and [ordered them not to print newspapers](#) containing news of the Kahrizak ruling. According to that report, newspapers that had already been printed by the time the orders were received were destroyed and re-printed with changes in their page layout. Bahar News reported that Tabnak Newspaper ran with a white section where the censored news had been. Also, Arman, Bahar, Ghanoon, and several other newspapers were forced to eliminate the news about the court ruling in the middle of the night, and Siasat-e-Rooz Newspaper did not publish that day altogether.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance:

- Protect freedom of the press: Review all applications for publication licenses without political bias and end all press censorship.
- Protect journalistic freedom from security, intelligence, and judiciary interference.
- Renew the revoked licenses of publishers and remove the restrictions on book licensing.
- End the censorship of and interference in the film industry.
- Lift the bans on filmmaking for those who have been censured; stop using bans on filmmaking as punishment.
- Stop the harassment and intimidation of filmmakers who attend international film festivals and allow for their free and unfettered participation in such forums.
- Stop obstructing the work of independent associations; reinstate the House of Cinema and allow it to operate freely.
- End the censorship of music.
- Stop the persecution and prosecution of musicians.
- End gender discrimination against female singers and musicians.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- *Non-cooperation with the United Nations*
- *Non-cooperation with international human rights organizations*
- *Protecting the rights of Iranians with dual nationalities*

Non-cooperation with the United Nations

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs represents the Islamic Republic of Iran at the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council (HRC) as well as at other UN human rights bodies. For the past eight years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has failed to establish any meaningful cooperation with these UN mechanisms.

In 2011, the UN HRC appointed a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rather than responding to the numerous rights violations that the Special Rapporteur, Ahmed Shaheed, has documented in his four reports, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has categorically denied any human rights violations. Furthermore, the Ministry has repeatedly denied an entry visa to the Special Rapporteur and has refused to cooperate with his office or allow him or any of his representatives to enter the country.

On February 15, 2010, the Islamic Republic of Iran underwent its first HRC Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Delegations at the HRC made a [total of 188 recommendations](#). Iran fully accepted 123 recommendations, partially accepted 3, rejected 46, and took note of the remaining 16. The importance of the UPR, as a central mechanism of the HRC, is that it applies to all member states and is the UN human rights mechanism that Iranian authorities often describe as most legitimate.

Nonetheless, Iran has done essentially nothing to implement any of the 126 recommendations it accepted during the UPR. In addition, since 2005, the government of Iran has not allowed any thematic UN mandate-holders to visit the country, despite repeated requests by the UN.

Moreover, the government of Iran has repeatedly ignored recommendations by the UN Secretary General issued in his annual reports on the situation of human rights in Iran, as well as annual UN General

Assembly resolutions on the situation of human rights in Iran.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also failed to respond to the majority of communications by the UN Special Procedures regarding specific individual human rights cases.

Non-cooperation with international human rights organizations

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also consistently failed to respond to communications by international human rights organizations or honor their requests for meetings or for visits to the country for the purposes of research. Iran, along with North Korea and Turkmenistan, is one of the very few “closed” countries that, for the past 35 years, have not allowed visits by any international human rights organization.

Protecting the rights of Iranians with dual nationalities

Iran routinely detains, under highly questionable circumstances, Iranians with dual citizenship who have traveled to the country. In dozens of recent cases in which Iranians with dual nationality have been arrested or imprisoned in Iran, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not cooperated with the families of the accused nor with their other country of nationality. The government does not provide information regarding these individuals’ circumstances or the status of their case, and, in the vast majority of these cases, the family members of these detainees are not provided any information regarding the reasons for their detention or the conditions of the detainees. Iranian officials also ignore inquiries by the home governments of these detainees. For example, imprisoned [Iranian-American Amir Hekmati’s](#) family learned of his status through the media, rather than directly from Iranian officials.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- Allow immediate access to Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, and fully cooperate with his mandate.
- Take concrete steps to implement the recommendations from the 2010 Universal Periodic Review, Special Rapporteurs’ reports, Secretary General’s reports, and General Assembly resolutions.
- Respond credibly to communications by the UN Special Procedures.
- Allow visits to Iran by international human rights organizations, allow Iranian diplomats to meet with their representatives, and make sure the recommendations and concerns of these organizations are communicated to the appropriate Iranian officials.
- Communicate responsibly with the families and home governments of detainees with dual nationalities, and provide any information needed in order to follow up with their cases and ensure their right to due process.



Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

- Limiting Internet access, censoring and filtering websites
- Limiting Internet speed
- State-sponsored hacking
- Monitoring and targeting citizens
- Jamming satellite signals

Limiting Internet access, censoring and filtering websites

The government of Iran blocks access to millions of websites from within the country. Under the supervision of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, representatives of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the Ministry of Intelligence, and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology systematically limit Iranian users' access to websites and other Internet services based on a law [passed by the Iranian Parliament](#) which says that websites can be filtered if they contain criminal content. Such content is determined by an eleven-member committee (six members of which are from the President's cabinet) formed by the Iranian Judiciary which meets under the General Prosecutor.

However, the committee actually filters websites that are political in nature or critical of the government. For example, during the 2009 and 2013 presidential elections, the Iranian government severely limited Iranians' access to news and information websites, as well as their access to social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter. While the Iranian authorities do not publish official statistics on filtered websites, [various officials](#) have made [reference to millions](#) of websites being filtered.

The government's latest efforts have revolved around creating a "[national Internet](#)" (intranet), which will only provide access to content approved by the Iranian government and will include built-in surveillance

of all online activity, including email and other personal correspondence.

Limiting Internet speed

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology currently limits the speed of Internet access from the homes of private citizens. According to a directive sent to all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Iran in 2006, they are not to provide access speeds [in excess of 128 Kbps](#) to home users. The directive continues to this day, with home users often experiencing speeds as [low as 6 Kbps](#). At this reduced speed, accessing online information or sharing files becomes difficult if not impossible.

The mean download speed for all Internet users in Iran, including residential and business, was 2.17 Mbps in the first six months of 2013, placing Iran [172nd out of 184 countries](#) measured by Net Index. As many Iranians rely on the Internet for information and education, access to news outside of the heavily state-censored media, and communication, the government's Internet speed directives result in severe restrictions of access to information. In September 2012, Iran's then-Minister of Communications Reza Taghipour acknowledged the state's role in [limiting Internet speeds](#) and bandwidth, claiming that this was done for security reasons.

State-sponsored hacking

There have been many reports of denial of service attacks (flooding a site with so much traffic that it is unable to maintain online access) against websites critical of the Iranian government, and significant evidence that the Iranian government is behind these attacks. There have been no investigations into the attacks.

In May 2010, a Revolutionary Guards' commander, Ebrahim Jabbari, confirmed that the IRGC had [created a Cyber Army](#). Over the past several years, the Cyber Army has mounted denial of service attacks against many websites, especially those of political dissidents or people critical of the government, and has been actively hacking the emails, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts of students and activists in order to access their private information, all without warrants or just cause.⁶

Monitoring and targeting citizens

Communications surveillance in Iran is extensive and particularly focused on the monitoring and harassment of private Iranian citizens who criticize the government. The Iranian government regularly taps cell phones and landlines to monitor citizens without legal permission or court review. Activists report that their families' telephone lines are constantly tapped in addition to their own; several of them have been directly informed of the phone tapping by representatives from the Ministries of Communications and Intelligence.⁷

Furthermore, the Ministry of Communications has been collaborating with the Ministry of Intelligence to

⁶ The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran has documented several of these cases, and has conducted interviews with various victims of these attacks who request anonymity for security reasons.

⁷ Campaign interviews with activists in Iran who request anonymity for security reasons.

use tracking technology to monitor the whereabouts of activists and political dissidents, assisting state efforts to harass and/or detain such individuals.⁸ The Ministry of Communications has also been using voice recognition tools to target activists and political dissidents on orders from the Ministry of Intelligence.⁹

Iran also continues to monitor bloggers, arresting and imprisoning them for exercising their right to freedom of expression, in direct violation of Iran's constitution and the ICCPR, to which Iran is a signatory.¹⁰

Jamming of satellite signals

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has been aggressively combating satellite technology. The Iranian police routinely raid private homes to collect and destroy satellite television hardware. Military organizations have also engaged in massive-scale jamming of satellite television signals to block access to satellite programming broadcast from Persian-language television networks outside Iran, as well as other networks.

While several Iranian authorities, including a former Minister of Communications, have warned about the health hazards of satellite jamming signals, no organization has so far assumed responsibility for the practice. On August 21, 2012, in an oblique acknowledgement of such jamming, then-Minister Reza Taghipour [told the Iranian Parliament's News Agency](#), ICANA, that the jamming signals have nothing to do with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and that his Ministry was attempting to discover the source of the jamming signals. However, the Head of the Iranian Parliament's Health Commission Hosseinali Shahriari [said in August 2012](#) that the Communications Minister and Members of the Parliament are all aware of the source of the jamming signals, but refuse to announce it.

Massoumeh Ebtekar, the Head of Tehran City Council's Environment Commission, has repeatedly expressed concern about the effects of the jamming signals on citizens' health. There are reports that the waves used to jam signals are physically harmful to humans. Some reports allege that the [rates of cancer and infertility](#) may be higher in regions where there are satellite jamming devices. "As an immunologist and researcher, I can say that these signals can be the source of many complications and illnesses," Ebtekar [said in May 2013](#), as reported by Khabar Online. To date, there have been no official investigations into the health effects of satellite jamming.

⁸ For example, political prisoner Issa Saharkhiz was arrested in 2009 after his [cell phone was tapped](#).

⁹ Campaign interview with a source aware of the technology the Iranian government obtained after the 2009 election.

¹⁰ According to Reporters Without Borders, [20 bloggers were imprisoned](#) in Iran in 2012, and one was killed in detention.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology:

- Ensure that the filtering committee be independent of political, commercial, or other unwarranted influences. Implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, as laid out in his [May 2011 report](#).
- Provide a public list of blocked websites along with explanation and justification for blocking each website.
- Ensure that the filtering committee only censor criminal content, rather than using filtering as a tool to silence political opponents or limit access to online education.
- Stop violating freedom of speech and expression, as protected by the Iranian constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Iran has signed.
- Stop imprisoning bloggers for exercising their right to freedom of expression, and release all currently imprisoned bloggers.
- Lift restrictions on Internet speeds for Iranian users (Iran is the only country in the world to use Internet speed as a means for censorship of Internet).
- Investigate the systematic denial of service attacks, and hold the perpetrators accountable. Given its role as a guardian of the constitution, the Ministry must confront the extra-legal acts of the IRGC's Cyber Army and put an end to them.
- End broad monitoring of private citizens' communications. Establish transparent criteria for monitoring specific individuals with cause, including requiring a warrant for surveillance.
- Put an end to all tapping and monitoring of dissidents and their families.
- End jamming of international satellite channels and investigate the impact of satellite jamming on people's health.
- As Head of the National Security Council, Rouhani can order the police to stop raiding people's homes and rooftops to collect and destroy satellite hardware. He can also order an end to the transmission of signals aimed to jam satellite programs.
- Lift the monopoly on Internet services and provide Fiber to the Home (FTTH) cable services.
- The Communications Minister should order a review of the "National Internet," and ensure that such a network does not limit or restrict Iranians' access to the outside world or endanger their privacy.



Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology

- Denying women access to fields of study in universities
- Academic censorship and dismissal of faculty
- Starred students
- Student organizations
- Imprisoned students

Denying women access to fields of study in universities

The Ministry of Science has increasingly [banned female students](#) from education in arbitrarily chosen disciplines. Whereas only two areas of study had been closed to women in the prior academic year, [Mehr News Agency reported](#) that in the 2012-2013 academic year, 36 universities banned admissions for women in 77 academic areas. In addition, [restrictions on the number of women](#) enrolling in another 241 majors were put in place in 2012.

This trend has continued: in the current academic year, Isfahan Technical University has [refused to admit](#) female students into seven different areas of study.

The Ministry of Science and Technology, responsible for conducting university entrance examinations and admissions, continues to admit men and women according to pre-defined quotas in each area of study. In 2013, in many disciplines and areas of study, the [quota for male students](#) is considerably higher than that for female students.

Overall, during the last eight years there has been a consistent policy in place to gradually reduce female enrollment in universities, which include policies removing preferential quotas that encourage female

enrollment, instituting preferential male quotas, and excluding female enrollment in certain areas.¹¹

Academic censorship and dismissal of faculty

The Ministry of Science has been participating in an [ongoing assault](#) on social sciences and humanities curricula and a purge of independent faculty in recent years, in an effort to cleanse universities of “un-Islamic” concepts.¹²

In an explicit statement justifying the removal of faculty members from their positions due to their political viewpoints, then-Minister Kamran Daneshjoo [said in March 2010](#) that faculty members who do not “share the regime’s direction,” and who do not have “practical commitment to *velayat-e faqih* [rule of the Supreme Leader]” will be dismissed. “We do not need some faculty members whose tendencies and actions are not in coordination with the Islamic Republic regime,” stated Daneshjoo.

Registered [statistics indicate](#) that over the past eight years, [at least 45](#) distinguished faculty members of Iranian universities have either received dismissal orders or have faced forced retirement.

Starred students

Through close coordination between its Ministries of Intelligence and Science, the government of Iran has systematically targeted university campuses to suppress social and political activism, as well as to exclude Baha’i students due to their religious beliefs over the last eight years. Hundreds of students have been barred from higher education through this process. In 2010, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran compiled [a list of 217 students](#) who were denied their right to education. The true numbers are believed to be much higher, as many targeted students have preferred to remain silent, fearing further persecution, or hoping that they can reverse their education bans by giving written guarantees to cease future activism.

In June of this year, three student groups presented [a comprehensive report](#) of eight years of suppression and education ban of university students. The report, prepared by Daneshjoo News Website, the Human Rights Commission of Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat student organization, and the Right to Education Campaign, claims that more than one thousand cases of education ban have taken place over the past eight years.

The Ministry of Science uses different methods for banning student activists from continuing their education. For example, they [tamper with the test results](#) of students who participated in the Graduate Admission Examination. In rare situations where Baha’i students were able to pass the nationwide University Entrance Examination, immediately after finding out their religion, the Ministry has [dismissed the students](#).

¹¹ For example, at Isfahan University, only male students are [allowed to enroll](#) in political science, accounting, business administration, public administration, industrial administration, and electrical and mechanical engineering, among other areas.

¹² For example, as part of the ongoing process to [dismiss faculty members](#) who have different viewpoints from the government, or who have supported students during student protests, three professors were dismissed from Allameh Tabatabaee University and Elm-va-San’at University in April 2010, following a call by Iran’s Minister of Science, Research, and Technology for ideological conformity on the part of professors.

Student organizations

One of the first policies enforced by the Ministry of Science during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's first term was to crack down on independent student organizations, especially the Islamic Student Associations and the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat. Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat was banned from universities and the Ministry of Science did not allow the organization to hold meetings, elections, or activities inside university campuses. During this period, the few student associations that continued their activities, such as the Tehran Polytechnic Islamic Students Association, faced arrests and the detention of their active members. According to Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, between 2009 and 2013, more than [32 cases of harassment](#) and intimidation of members of student organizations were registered. In addition, hundreds of students from student guild councils and cultural and artistic centers were summoned to disciplinary committees during these years and expelled from universities for one to several semesters for any activities not approved by the authorities.

Imprisoned students

Since June 2009, many of the political prisoners in Iran have been student activists. At present, [at least 29 students](#) remain in prison for their activism. Among the [dozens of student activists](#) currently inside Iranian prisons, students such as Majid Dorri, Zia Nabavi, Bahareh Hedayat, and Majid Tavakoli, who are serving prison sentences ranging from four to ten years, have not been allowed one day of furlough, despite its requirement under Iranian law.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology:

- Revoke all discriminatory policies which have affected women's admission to universities, and open all fields of academic study to female students.
- Reinstate faculty members who were dismissed for ideological reasons. End the ideological purge of academia.
- Reinstate banned students in universities. Allow Baha'i students to attend university.
- Allow peaceful assembly and association by students. Reinstate all independent student organizations, including the Islamic Student Associations and the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat. Stop harassing student activists.
- Release all students imprisoned for student activism. Stop arresting students for student activism.



Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives, and Social Welfare

- Union-busting, labor union members & leaders prosecuted on security charges
- Child labor (State Welfare Organization)
- Definition of employment

Union-busting, labor union members & leaders prosecuted on security charges

Iran's Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives, and Social Welfare has dismantled virtually all of Iran's independent labor unions and trade associations, and prosecuted and imprisoned most of their leaders and many of their members. (Such individuals are typically prosecuted under national security charges.) As such Iran is directly violating the protections for freedoms of association and assembly guaranteed by the Iranian constitution as well as Article 22 of the ICCPR, to which Iran is a party.¹³

Major unions shut down by the Ministry include the Iranian Journalists Association, the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, the Haft Tapeh Sugarcane Company Trade Union, and the Teachers Association.

Also during the previous administration, a law was passed exempting small workshops and manufacturers with fewer than five employees from having to adhere to labor laws. This led directly to millions of workers losing their access to insurance, retirement, and legal protections overnight.¹⁴

¹³ For example, the Iranian Journalists Association was the largest guild of reporters and journalists in Iran, active between 1997 and 2008. The Association was dissolved when Ahmadinejad's Labor Ministry issued a ruling rejecting the Association's elected Board of Directors. The Association filed a complaint with the Administrative Justice Court, but eventually, the Court disregarded the organization's defense and ruled [in favor of the Labor Ministry](#). In June 2008, the Labor Ministry dissolved the Association [in a letter](#) and the administrative offices of the Association were sealed a few months later on orders from Saeed Mortazavi, who was at the time the Tehran Prosecutor.

¹⁴ Campaign interview with Mansour Osanloo, former president of the Tehran Bus Drivers Union.

Child labor (State Welfare Organization)

According to Iranian law, employing children under the age of 15 is illegal. However, increasing manufacturing costs and the high inflation rate have led owners of small industries to seek cheaper labor, often resorting to child workers. Though Iranian law does allow for special employment circumstances for children between the ages of 15 to 18, these regulations are largely ignored.

Economic difficulties and the increased cost of education have resulted in large numbers of children entering the Iranian labor force. Child laborers are mostly employed in workshops with fewer than 10 employees, many of which are not covered by labor laws and have no oversight. No government organization takes responsibility for working children, and the Ministry of Labor does not consider them laborers, leaving them vulnerable and without government protection.

Definition of employment

The current [definition of employment](#) includes individuals who work only a few hours each month. By counting such people as “employed,” they become ineligible for guaranteed state unemployment and welfare benefits, and therefore are living in extreme poverty.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Labor, Cooperatives, and Social Welfare:

- Allow the establishment of free and independent labor unions and organizations, and allow them to be active and to advocate for their constituencies.
- Reverse the dissolution of the Iranian Journalists Association, allowing journalists to have their own guild again.
- Stop harassing labor union members and leaders.
- End the improper overuse of security charges to circumvent constitutional protections of associations.
- Release imprisoned labor activists.
- Review the law exempting small workshops and manufacturers from labor laws and the laws defining employment, and reinstate insurance, retirement, and legal protections for affected workers.
- Enforce the law that makes it illegal to hire children.
- Provide oversight on child employment to detect and report violations.



Ministry of the Interior

- Iran's police force
- Right to assembly
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Killing of couriers by border agents

Iran's police force

The Interior Minister is entrusted with all issues pertaining to Iran's police force. For this reason, the Interior Minister has a central role in defining the policies and practices of the police force.¹⁵

The Iranian and international human rights community has repeatedly criticized the Iranian police force for its violent crackdown on peaceful street protests, its severe mistreatment and abuse of the detainees held in its custody, especially after the 2009 elections, and its routine practice of attacking citizens in their private homes in order to confiscate satellite TV equipment. In addition, the police operate their own detention centers, which are not under the supervision of Iran's Prisons Organization and therefore are not bound by established rules of conduct under which they may be held accountable.

The police routinely detain citizens illegally or inside these unsupervised detention centers, often engaging in physical and psychological abuse and, in some cases, causing the death of detainees.¹⁶ In late 2012, for example, the cyber unit of the police detained blogger Sattar Beheshti and returned his dead body to his family in less than a week. There is strong evidence that police agents [tortured and killed Beheshti](#) while interrogating him in a police detention center in Robat Karim.¹⁷

¹⁵ In the summer of 1988, Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [said](#), "All issues related to the Islamic Revolution Committee, Gendarmerie, and the Police, within the framework of the law, are entrusted with the Interior Ministry; but in the areas of Holy Defense [war], the authority lies with the Deputy Chief Commander of the Joint Forces. When in doubt, the Deputy Chief Commander of the Joint Forces and the Interior Minister shall coordinate with each other."

¹⁶ Several individuals arrested in the aftermath of the disputed 2009 presidential election and transferred to Kahrizak Detention Center in southern Tehran lost their lives due to severe beatings by police forces and detention under unbearable conditions. Ayatollah Khamenei ordered the closure of the facility after news of its regrettable and inhumane conditions was publicized. Iran's Chief Commander of the Police wrote [in a letter](#) about the widespread violations of human rights at Kahrizak, "The negligence and violations of several officials, forces, and employees of Kahrizak Detention Center and their supervisory ranks has been confirmed.... For this reason, while creating a case file and sending it to the Iranian Judiciary, punitive action on these individuals is planned inside the organization."

¹⁷ During the investigations immediately following the murder of Sattar Beheshti, the Police Chief Commander Ahmadi Moghaddam explicitly stated that the detention center was illegal. "The Robat Karim Detention Center or 'Monitoring Station' was not an approved detention center and this issue must become the subject of an investigation," the Police Chief said, [according to Khabar Online](#).

The morality police, formed to monitor adherence to the government's Islamic dress code and the behavior of women and men in Iran, have issued summons and fines to thousands of people for their appearance and public conduct, and hundreds have been detained. As the new Iranian President Rouhani stated on the campaign trail, the practices of the morality police violate the rights of thousands of Iranian citizens. In many instances, these police have harassed and physically abused people, in violation of their basic human rights.

Right to assembly

The right to free peaceful assembly is guaranteed in Iran's constitution, as well as in Article 21 of the ICCPR, to which Iran is a party. According to [Article 27 of Iran's constitution](#), "Unarmed assemblies and marches may be freely organized, provided that no violation of the foundations of Islam is involved."

The Ministry of the Interior is tasked with issuing permissions for peaceful gatherings. However, the Ministry has routinely denied permits for peaceful assemblies to civil society organizations, labor organizations, and political groups over the last several years. In some cases, the Ministry has granted permits for such gatherings but has been unwilling to guarantee the security of the gatherings, which have been attacked by plainclothes individuals believed to be part of the intelligence and security apparatus.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

The regulations for the establishment and operation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were developed in 2005 during the Seyed Mohammad Khatami presidency. According to [these regulations](#), NGOs must obtain their operation licenses from the Deputy for Social Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior.

At the time, as many as 2000 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of the Interior. However, [recent reports indicate](#) that currently fewer than 300 registered NGOs remain in operation throughout the country. All of the country's prominent independent NGOs, including the Center for Human Rights Defenders, the Association for the Defense of Prisoners Rights, Raha, the Volunteer Actors, the Committee of Human Rights Reporters, and the Association for Defense of Press Freedoms, have been shuttered and their members have been prosecuted and imprisoned. Human rights organizations have been particularly targeted. In recent years, the Ministry of the Interior has not issued a license for any independent rights-based organization.

Killings of couriers by border agents

In 2006, Iranian authorities began implementing a border security program ostensibly intended to prevent terrorists and smuggled illegal goods from crossing its borders. However, in the months between March 2011 and April 2012, at least 74 unarmed, low-income Iranian citizens who work as cross-border couriers of goods were killed in the border regions, and at least another 76 were injured, largely by security forces. This excessive use of lethal force is an outcome of Iran's "comprehensive project of sustainable security," as then-Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Ali Abdollahi called the Border Closure Plan.

In addition, the continued existence of mines in this border region of northwestern Iran, which are left over from the Iran-Iraq war and have yet to be cleared, pose a continued threat to lives of the couriers and residents of the area.

Recommendations for the Ministry of the Interior:

- End the police force's routine practice of attacking peaceful protestors.
- Identify and close down illegal detention centers and those that are not operating under the oversight of organizations responsible for monitoring such facilities, such as the Judiciary's Prisons Organization.
- Implement the Citizenship Rights Law and the Procedures Manual for Treatment of Detainees from Arrest to Delivery at Judicial Offices, and supervise their proper implementation.
- End the entrenched culture of impunity that protects members of the police force who engage in torture and murder and other violations of citizens' rights from punishment.
- Investigate and prosecute those responsible for the murder of Sattar Beheshti.
- End the morality police's harassment of Iranian citizens, their intrusion into the homes and private domains of the country's citizens, and their routine violations of Iranians' human rights.
- Provide necessary permits for lawful assemblies and guarantee the security of such gatherings.
- Allow the establishment of new independent NGOs and the continued existence of current ones.
- Observe the people's rights to organize, assemble, and participate in civil society, as protected by Iran's constitution.
- Stop harassing local human rights activists who shed light on abuses committed by border security.
- Put an end to the use of lethal force against unarmed cross border couriers.
- Clear the landmines in border regions.



Ministry of Education

- Language discrimination

Language discrimination

Article 15 of the Iranian constitution states, “The official language and script of Iran, the lingua franca of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as textbooks, must be in this language and script. However, the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian.”

This article thus explicitly safeguards the right of different ethnic groups within Iran to teach and learn a mother tongue other than Persian. In addition, a 2009 resolution by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution requires that a two-unit elective course in the local native language be made available in regional universities in Iran. However, no steps have been taken to implement Article 15 or this resolution even though, [according to the Minister of Education](#), as many as 70% of Iranian students enrolled in elementary schools are bilingual.

Policies in the Kurdish region are indicative: In 2012, a confidential internal memo from the Ministry of Education was [leaked and published](#) on several Kurdish websites, indicating that the Ministry had issued a ban on teaching in the local languages in several Kurdish cities. The National Organization for Civil Registration refuses to register Kurdish names for newborn infants and the Public Buildings Oversight Office of the Iranian Police routinely closes and seals businesses with Kurdish names.¹⁸

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education:

- End the ban on teaching in local native languages. Adhere to Article 15 of the Iranian constitution upholding minority language rights for all ethnicities, including Kurds, Azeris, Baluchis, and Arabs.

¹⁸ In one recent instance, a business in Fars Province was forced to [change its Kurdish name](#) because it was “non-Iranian and Kurdish.”



Ministry of Oil

- Carcinogens in the fuel produced in Iran

Carcinogens in the fuel produced in Iran

The air pollution in Tehran has reached lethal levels. According to Hassan Aqajani, an advisor to Iran's Health Minister, air pollution [caused 4,460 deaths](#) in Tehran in the Persian calendar year 1390, spanning March 2011 to March 2012. The production of low-grade gasoline, which is high in carcinogens and poses serious respiratory and cardiac risks to the citizenry, is a major contributor to the problem. The director of Tehran's air quality monitoring services, Youssef Rashidi, noted that the level of carcinogens in Iranian-produced gasoline is more than double that recommended by international standards. "Based on Euro 4 standard the amount of carcinogens in petrol should be less than one percent but the level of our domestically-produced petrol is between two and three percent," Rashidi said in [remarks reported by Agence France Presse](#) in January 2013.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Oil:

- The Ministry of Oil must end the production of low-grade gasoline and expedite conversion to production of higher-grade gasoline compliant with Euro 4 and 5 standards to fully cover the [estimated 60 million liters](#) (nearly 16 million gallons) of gasoline the country produces daily. In addition, Rouhani's cabinet should propose a law to reduce the fuel subsidies that are encouraging wasteful consumption of gasoline and causing dangerous levels of air pollution in Iran's major cities, many of which are rated by UN bodies as among the most contaminated in the world.

Fulfilling Promises

A Human Rights Roadmap for Iran's New President

Justice means that anyone who wants to speak in a society should be able to come out, speak their mind, criticize and critique without hesitation and stammering.

—Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

During his 2013 presidential campaign, Iranian president Hassan Rouhani promised to uphold the “rights of the people” enumerated in the country’s constitution. Millions of his supporters demanded social and political rights, including the release of political prisoners from prison and house arrest.

In this paper, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran addresses the ongoing human rights violations of nine ministries under the direct control of the president, and provides recommendations he can implement to put an end to these violations. While the document is by no means comprehensive, the Campaign offers it as a starting point for Rouhani to begin to fulfill his campaign promises and reinstate the rule of law in Iran.