



## JOINT STATEMENT

Impact Iran Coalition

# Human Rights Must Be at the Center of Any Engagement with the Islamic Republic of Iran

As hostilities give way to diplomacy and governments across the world begin repositioning their relationships with the Islamic Republic of Iran, we express our profound concern that the human rights crisis facing the people of Iran is once again being sidelined. This pattern is neither new nor accidental. Excluding repeatedly Iranians' human rights from the negotiations is a clear and strong message to Iran's leaders that they can blatantly violate their international obligations, as they did in January 2026 by killing thousands of protesters, without consequences. Leaving behind the human rights of Iranians also undermines efforts to achieve sustainable peace and security, which can only prevail when Iranians have their fundamental rights respected, including their equal right to take part in the conduct of political and public affairs.

Only months ago, Iranian authorities carried out one of the deadliest crackdowns on peaceful protesters in the country's contemporary history. Beginning with the nationwide protests of December 2025, state security forces responded with unlawful lethal force, mass arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, widespread torture, and threats of execution. As documented by independent human rights organizations, the authorities sought to conceal the scale of the killings through internet shutdowns, restrictions on information, and intimidation of victims' families.

This latest atrocity follows a well-established pattern of systematic repression that has repeated itself over decades; from the mass executions of the 1980s, to the violent suppression of protests in 1999, 2009, 2017-18, 2019, 2022, and now 2025–

2026. Each cycle has been marked by escalating brutality against peaceful protesters and deepening impunity.

The conflict and renewed diplomatic efforts that followed have exposed a familiar dynamic: negotiations have concentrated on security, military de-escalation, sanctions, and regional stability; the rights and lives of the Iranian people have been largely excluded from the discussion.

The recent military strikes on Iran killed and injured civilians and damaged civilian infrastructure. These losses demand acknowledgement in their own right. The people of Iran are not abstractions in a security calculus, and the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict fall first and hardest on ordinary civilians. International humanitarian law applies without exception: all parties to the conflict bear an obligation to protect civilian life and to distinguish at all times between combatants and civilians. We condemn violations of that obligation regardless of who commits them.

The conflict must not become a pretext for impunity. Even as Iranian civilians have borne the cost of war, the Islamic Republic has exploited wartime conditions to intensify repression at home — accelerating executions, expanding arbitrary detention, and silencing dissent under the cover of national emergency. Civilians in Iran thus face danger from two directions at once: the violence of conflict, and the violence of their own government.

Sustainable peace cannot be built while systematic human rights violations continue unchecked. Peace and stability require Iranians are allowed to participate in Iran's public and political life safely, without discrimination and have a say in their country's foreign policy.

The Islamic Republic continues to deploy executions - including at an unprecedented scale - with a disproportionate and well-documented impact on Kurdish and Balochi individuals as an instrument of political repression; to carry out arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances; criminalize the peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms; to intensify persecution of women, journalists, writers, lawyers, human rights defenders, trade unionists, and civil society actors; and to escalate discriminatory policies and violence targeting ethnic and religious minorities; pursue the transnational repression of journalists, activists, and political dissidents beyond Iran's borders. In recent months, officials and state-affiliated institutions have also increasingly resorted to inflammatory rhetoric, incitement, and threats against perceived opponents, and the scapegoating of Kurdish and Bahai communities, further heightening the risk of serious human rights violations.

We therefore call on all States engaged in negotiations or diplomatic processes with the Islamic Republic of Iran to adopt a dual approach to diplomacy: advance

talks on security and stability while simultaneously and publicly pressing the Islamic Republic on human rights — not as a precondition for negotiations, but as an independent and non-negotiable obligation running in parallel to any political or security process. The two tracks are not in competition. Insisting on one does not obstruct the other.

In particular, we urge governments and international institutions to:

- Maintain full pressure to stop executions, arbitrary detention, and accountability regardless of the status or outcome of any security or nuclear talks — treating human rights as a continuous obligation, not a bargaining chip;
- Call for an immediate moratorium on executions, and raise consistently and at senior levels the systematic use of the death penalty — imposed after proceedings that fail fair-trial standards, applied to juvenile offenders, and falling disproportionately on Baloch and Kurdish defendants — alongside arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture;
- Demand the immediate release of all individuals arbitrarily detained for exercising their fundamental rights; including those held in connection with the recent protests, and an end to incommunicado detention, torture, and forced confessions.
- Condemn incitement to violence, hate speech, and discriminatory policies targeting ethnic, religious, and other marginalized communities, including the scapegoating of Kurdish and Bahá'í communities;
- Address the Islamic Republic's transnational repression — threats, surveillance, harassment, and violence against Iranian journalists, activists, and dissidents abroad — as a violation of host states' sovereignty and of their duty to protect those within their jurisdiction, and call on them to investigate, protect those targeted, and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Support and adequately resource the independent international mechanisms, the Fact-Finding Mission, whose mandate now runs through 2028, and the Special Rapporteur — including their work to collect and preserve evidence to evidentiary standards for future proceedings, complemented by universal-jurisdiction cases in national courts.
- Ensure that any future agreement with Iran incorporates measurable, time-bound human-rights benchmarks and independent mechanisms to monitor and verify compliance, with the restoration of open and uncensored internet access among the threshold conditions.
- Ensure that no diplomatic agreement contains provisions — explicit or implicit — that would weaken, suspend, or trade away existing UN human-rights mandates, accountability mechanisms, or targeted sanctions on those responsible for grave violations; the human-rights architecture built over years must not be bargained down for short-term diplomatic gain.

The international community has repeatedly affirmed that peace, security, justice, and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Ignoring systematic human rights violations in pursuit of short-term political or security objectives has consistently failed to deliver lasting stability.

The people of Iran should not once again bear the cost of diplomacy that overlooks their fundamental rights. Human rights are not an obstacle to peace - they are an essential condition for achieving it.

## **SIGNATORIES**

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Ahwaz Human Rights Organisation

All Human Rights for All in Iran

ARTICLE 19

Association for the Human Rights of the Azerbaijani People in Iran (AHRAZ)

Balochistan Human Rights Documentation Network

Balochistan Human Rights Group (BHRG)

Defenders of Human Rights Center

ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty)

Iran Human Rights

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva (KMMK-G)

Kurdistan Human Rights Network

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Outright International

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United For Iran