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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran

UN Human Rights Council 49th session

28 February – 1 April 2022

Mr. President,

ARTICLE 19 and Amnesty International welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur which highlights institutional impunity and the absence of a system for accountability for gross violations of human rights in Iran.

The authorities continue to crush protests using unlawful, including lethal, force with complete impunity. The violent suppression of 2021 protests in Khuzestan province and the city of Esfahan, in a context where thousands continue to be denied justice for violations committed during November 2019 protests, is a tragic reminder how impunity for the unlawful killing and torturing of protesters and bystanders facilitates further cycles of bloodshed. These acts further demonstrate the disregard of the Iranian authorities for the right to life, which is also evident in their continued resort to the death penalty, including as a tool of political repression, as well as their deadly and deliberate denial of medical care to prisoners.

The pattern of total and partial Internet shutdowns, violating the right to freedom of expression and access to information, continues to facilitate and conceal gross human rights violations, in particular during protests.

Since the last mandate renewal, the authorities' legislative efforts continue to further undermine the right to freedom of religion and belief, sexual and reproductive rights and access to the internet. New Penal Code provisions were introduced in 2021 criminalizing the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and religion and belief and have been used to prosecute and arbitrarily detain members of religious minorities, including Baha'is and Christian converts.

A new law passed in November 2021, which further undermines sexual and reproductive health by, among other things, further restricting access to abortion, modern contraceptive goods, services and information and voluntary sterilization.

A draft bill before parliament, known as “the Protection Bill”, will further erode an array of human rights in Iran, including the rights to privacy and freedom of expression, and places individuals at increased risk of complete information blackouts.

Thousands continued to be interrogated, unjustly prosecuted and/or arbitrarily detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Among them were journalists and media workers, peaceful protesters, dual nationals and human rights defenders, including labour rights activists, women’s rights defenders, LGBTI rights defenders and lawyers.

ARTICLE 19 and Amnesty International underscore the Special Rapporteur’s conclusion that, within Iran’s current legal, judicial and political structures, “obtaining accountability for human rights violations becomes arbitrary at best and impossible at worst.” For this reason, we urge the Human Rights Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and to further establish an independent investigative and accountability mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve, and analyze evidence of the most serious crimes under international law committed in Iran to facilitate fair criminal proceedings in the future.