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Iran: Detainees flogged, sexually abused and given electric shocks in gruesome post-protest crackdown – new report

- *Widespread torture including beatings, floggings, electric shocks, stress positions, mock executions, waterboarding, sexual violence, forced administration of chemical substances, and deprivation of medical care*
- *Hundreds subjected to grossly unfair trials on baseless national security charges*
- *Death sentences issued based on torture-tainted “confessions”*

Iran’s police, intelligence and security forces, and prison officials have committed, with the complicity of judges and prosecutors, a catalogue of shocking human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, against those detained in connection with the nationwide protests of November 2019, said Amnesty International in a damning new report published today.

The report, *Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran’s 2019 November protests*, documents the harrowing accounts of dozens of protesters, bystanders and others who were violently arrested, forcibly disappeared or held incommunicado, systemically denied access to their lawyers during interrogations, and repeatedly tortured to “confess”. They are among the 7,000 men, women and children arrested by the Iranian authorities within a matter of days during their brutal repression of the protests.

Victims include children as young as 10 and injured protesters and bystanders arrested from hospitals while seeking medical care for gunshot wounds, as well as human rights defenders including minority rights activists, journalists, and individuals who attended ceremonies to commemorate those killed during the protests. Hundreds have since been sentenced to prison terms and flogging and several to the death penalty following grossly unfair trials which were presided over by biased judges behind closed doors, frequently lasted less than an hour, and systematically relied on torture-tainted “confessions”.

“In the days following the mass protests, videos showing Iran’s security forces deliberately killing and injuring unarmed protesters and bystanders sent

shockwaves around the world. Much less visible has been the catalogue of cruelty meted out to detainees and their families by Iranian officials away from the public eye,” said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“Instead of investigating allegations of enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment and other crimes against detainees, Iranian prosecutors became complicit in the campaign of repression by bringing national security charges against hundreds of people solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, while judges doled out guilty verdicts on the basis of torture-tainted ‘confessions’. This litany of crimes and violations, committed with total impunity, has been accompanied by a wave of forced televised ‘confessions’ in state propaganda videos and grotesque statements from top officials who have praised intelligence and security forces as heroes for their role in the brutal crackdown.”

Amnesty International has recorded the names and details of more than 500 protesters and others, including journalists and human rights defenders, who have been subjected to unfair criminal proceedings in connection with the protests. Prison terms meted out to those convicted have ranged from between one month and 10 years for vague or spurious national security charges such as “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security”, “spreading propaganda against the system”, “disrupting public order” and “insulting the Supreme Leader”.

Of these, at least three, **Amirhossein Moradi**, **Mohammad Rajabi** and **Saeed Tamjidi**, were sentenced to death for “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) through acts of vandalism, and another, **Hossein Reyhani**, is awaiting trial on a charge carrying the death penalty.

More than a dozen known to Amnesty International have received flogging sentences, in addition to prison terms, and at least two have had their flogging sentences implemented.

The organization believes that the real number of individuals prosecuted and sentenced in connection with the November 2019 protests is far higher, given the large number of arrests carried out and the patterns of prosecution and sentencing in the country in cases of arbitrary arrests and detention involving intelligence and security bodies.

Amnesty International is urging member states of the UN Human Rights Council and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to address the prolonged, systematic impunity for gross violations of human rights in Iran,

including by supporting the establishment of a UN-led inquiry with a view to ensuring accountability and guarantees of non-repetition.

The organization is also urging all UN member states to forcefully call on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release anyone who continues to be imprisoned solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in connection with the November 2019 protests; quash all convictions resulting from unfair trials, including those that relied on statements obtained through torture or other ill-treatment; and hold those responsible to account.

Torture epidemic

Amnesty International's research found that there was widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment by police, intelligence and security agents and prison officials against men, women and children, both during arrest and later in detention.

Prosecution and judicial authorities failed in their legal obligations to conduct independent and impartial inspections of detention facilities, including those run by security and intelligence bodies, and to ensure that legal provisions banning the use of secret detention and torture and other ill-treatment against detainees are respected.

Torture was used to punish, intimidate and humiliate detainees. It was also routinely used to elicit "confessions" and incriminating statements, not just about their involvement in the protests, but also about their alleged associations with opposition groups, human rights defenders, media outside Iran, as well as with foreign governments.

The organization's research found that victims were frequently hooded or blindfolded; punched, kicked and flogged; beaten with sticks, rubber hosepipes, knives, batons and cables; suspended or forced into holding painful stress positions for prolonged periods; deprived of sufficient food and potable water; placed in prolonged solitary confinement, sometimes for weeks or even months; and denied medical care for injuries sustained during the protests or as a result of torture.

Other documented methods of torture included stripping detainees and spraying them with cold water, and subjecting detainees to extreme temperatures and/or bombardment of light or sound; forcible extraction of the nails from fingers or toes; pepper spraying; forced administration of chemical substances; using electric shocks; waterboarding; and mock executions.

Information received by Amnesty International from primary sources also reveals that interrogators and prison officials perpetrated sexual violence against male detainees, including through stripping and forced nakedness, sexual verbal abuse, pepper spraying the genital area, and administering electric shocks to the testicles.

One victim from Khorasan Razavi province who was subjected to waterboarding told Amnesty International:

“They [my interrogators] would drench a towel in water and place it over my face. Then they would pour water slowly over the towel, which made me feel like I was suffocating... They would stop... until I started to feel better and then they would start torturing me this way again. They also punched, kicked and flogged me on the soles of my feet with a cable.”

One man who was subjected to electric shocks recounted:

“The electric shocks were the worst form of torture... It felt like my entire body was being pierced with millions of needles. If I refused to answer their questions, they would raise the voltage levels and give me stronger electric shocks. I would shake violently and there would be a strong burning sensation coursing through my whole body.... The torture has had lasting effects on my mental and physical health. To this day, I still can't sleep at night.”

A victim from Tehran province who was suspended from his hands and feet from a pole in a painful method his interrogators referred to as “chicken kebab” told the organization:

“The pain was excruciating. There was so much pressure and pain in my body that I would urinate on myself... My family know that I was tortured, but they don't know how I was tortured. I feel choked with tears because there is no one here I can speak to.”

In all cases documented by Amnesty International, victims reported various forms of psychological torture to give forced “confessions”, including the use of degrading verbal insults and profanities; the intimidation and harassment of their family members; threats to arrest, torture, kill or otherwise harm their family members, including elderly parents or spouses; and threats to rape detainees or their female family members.

Enforced disappearances

Amnesty International's research shows that many detainees were subjected to enforced disappearance for weeks or even months while held in undisclosed

locations run by the security and intelligence bodies including the ministry of intelligence or the Revolutionary Guards. Other detainees were held in overcrowded prisons or police stations, military barracks, sports venues and schools.

Distressed relatives told the organization that they visited hospitals, morgues, police stations, prosecution offices, courts, prisons and other known detention centres to enquire about the fate or whereabouts of their loved ones, but the authorities refused to provide them with information and threatened them with arrest if they kept seeking information or publicly spoke out about them. In one case documented by Amnesty International, the authorities arrested a family member of two people who were forcibly disappeared for enquiring about their fate and whereabouts.

Amnesty International is aware of three ongoing cases of enforced disappearance, where the authorities continue to conceal their fate and whereabouts from their families. They include brothers **Mehdi Roodbarian** and **Mostafa Roodbarian** from Mahshahr, Khuzestan province.

Methodology

The organization's research involved in-depth interviews with 60 victims of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment or their relatives or close acquaintances; two protesters who were in hiding; and 14 other informed individuals; information received through written messages from several hundred others inside the country and analysis of video footage, official statements and court documents.

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