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Thursday, 11 November 2021

TO: All Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York

Your Excellencies,

The undersigned national, regional and international civil society organizations urge your government to support draft resolution A/C.3/76/L.28 on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is presented to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly at this session.

This annual resolution is an important opportunity for the General Assembly to address the situation of human rights in Iran, which in the words of the UN Secretary-General “**remains of serious concern, with no meaningful efforts made to improve compliance with international human rights law.**”¹

During this session, member states have been presented with ample evidence of the continued refusal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to put an end to and ensure accountability for widespread patterns of serious human rights violations. These include, as detailed in the reports of the UN Secretary-General and the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, violations of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; arbitrary arrest and detention; enforced disappearance; torture and other ill-treatment; unfair trials; unlawful use of lethal force against protesters; and discrimination, in law and practice, on the basis of sex, gender, religion and belief, ethnicity, political opinion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other status. The reports also show how the judiciary and security and intelligence bodies continue to routinely subject human rights defenders including environmentalists, women’s rights defenders, lawyers, trade unionists, and minority rights activists as well as journalists and media workers, protesters, political dissidents, artists and writers to intimidation, harassment, coercive interrogations, unfair criminal proceedings, lengthy prison terms, flogging, and, in some instances even the death penalty, solely in relation to the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Regarding Iran’s use of the death penalty at an alarming scale, the Special Rapporteur on Iran has stressed that “the structural flaws of the justice system are so deep and at odds with the notion of rule of law that one can barely speak of a justice system. The entrenched flaws in law and in the administration of the death penalty in Iran mean that most, if not all, executions are an arbitrary

¹ UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 3, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>

deprivation of life.”² In his latest report, the Special Rapporteur similarly noted that “the extent of concern regarding violations of the right to a fair trial in all death penalty cases raises the serious possibility that all death sentences implemented in the Islamic Republic of Iran, even for the “most serious” crimes, such as murder, may still amount to an arbitrary deprivation of life under international human rights law.”³

By adopting the draft resolution, states make clear that the international community expects the Iranian authorities to account for their serious and chronic human rights violations and bring their laws, policies and practices into compliance with Iran’s obligations under international law.

The adoption of the draft resolution is also an opportunity for the community of states to express concern about the systematic impunity that prevails in Iran for past and ongoing crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations. Despite numerous calls by the UN Special Procedures for effective, transparent and impartial investigations including into “the disproportionate and lethal use of force by State agents during the countrywide protests in 2019”,⁴ - “the shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 in January 2021”⁵, and “mass extrajudicial executions of political dissidents in 1988”⁶, both reports presented to the General Assembly stress that impunity prevails.⁷ The reports highlight that the prevalence of impunity has been accompanied by destruction of evidence, including bulldozing mass gravesites,⁸ and “harassment and criminal prosecution of families of victims calling for truth and accountability”.⁹

The undersigned civil society organizations share the serious concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran regarding “the absence of domestic remedies ... for gross human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran” and echo the call in his latest report on the international community to fulfil its “important role in ensuring accountability.”¹⁰ As stressed by the UN Special Rapporteur in his presentation two weeks ago, **“without the involvement of the international community, such grave violations will continue.”**¹¹

For all these reasons, we urge your government to take a principled stance against persistent and gross violations of human rights in Iran and the widespread and systematic lack of accountability, including by supporting draft resolution A/C.3/76/L.28. By this vote, your government will also send a message to the victims of serious human rights violations and the community of human rights defenders in Iran that the international community stands with them in their struggle for truth, justice and reparations including guarantees of non-repetition.

² “Iran: Death penalty used as political tool – UN expert”, 25 October 2021, accessible at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27705&LangID=E>

³ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 16 July 2021, A/76/160, para. 67, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/160>

⁴ UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 18, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>

⁵ UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 18, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>

⁶ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 16 July 2021, A/76/160, para. 10, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/160>; UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 19, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>

⁷ UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 17 - 19, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>; UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 16 July 2021, A/76/160, para. 8 - 13, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/160>

⁸ Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 16 July 2021, A/76/160, para. 10, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/160>; UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 19, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>

⁹ UN Secretary-General, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 5 August 2021, A/76/268, para. 19, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/268>. See also, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 16 July 2021, A/76/160, paras. 10 and 10, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/160>;

¹⁰ Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Report to the General Assembly, 16 July 2021, A/76/160, para. 8, accessible at: <https://undocs.org/A/76/160>

¹¹ UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, 27th meeting, 25 October 2021, accessible at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1x/k1xglrrbb1>

Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran (ABC)

The Advocates for Human Rights

All Human Rights for All in Iran

Amnesty International

Arseh Sevom

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ARTICLE 19

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

Balochistan Human Rights Group

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights

Center for Human Rights in Iran

Centre for Supporters of Human Rights

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort (ECPM)

Freedom from Torture

Human Rights Activists (HRA Iran)

Human Rights Watch

Impact Iran

International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Iran Human Rights

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

Kurdistan Human Rights Association - Geneva (KMMK-G)

Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN)

Minority Rights Group International

OutRight Action International

Reprive

Siamak Pourzand Foundation

World Coalition Against the Death Penalty