

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

IRANIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE
FUND,

Plaintiff,

v.

MARCO RUBIO, in his official capacity as
Secretary of State, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 26-2375-ACR

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SECTION 705 STAY AND PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

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DECLARATION OF ALI RAHNAMA

I, Ali Rahnama, declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the following is true and correct. If called as a witness, I could and would testify as follows.

Background

1. I am an attorney, licensed to practice law in the District of Columbia since 2016. I earned my Juris Doctor from The George Washington University Law School in 2015 and a Master of Laws (LL.M.) from Columbia Law School in 2021.
2. I have devoted much of my legal career to immigration, refugee, civil-rights, and human-rights matters. From 2013 to 2017, I served as Director of Legal Services for the Iranian American Bar Association, where I established and ran a legal clinic providing support to underrepresented individuals; organized attorney teams at ports of entry to assist individuals affected by immigration policies; and helped lead the evidence-gathering effort for *Pars Equality Center v. Trump*, No. 17-CV-0255, 2017 WL 7201732 (D.D.C. July 19, 2017), challenging the constitutionality of Executive Order 13769, or the original travel ban.
3. Previously, as a law clerk at an immigration law firm, I assisted on asylum and other immigration matters and interacted directly with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In private

practice in Washington, D.C., I worked on immigration matters and with the U.S. Department of State and DHS on the legal process for the protection of refugees. I have taught constitutional and public international law as a part-time professor and through the George Washington International Human Rights Clinic and the Robert F. Kennedy Center, contributed to international human-rights work, including drafting due-process and mutual-legal-assistance provisions of the proposed Convention on Crimes Against Humanity submitted to the United Nations International Law Commission. I am a native speaker of Persian (Farsi).

4. I started serving at the Iranian American Legal Defense Fund (“IALDF”) as Interim Executive Director in 2025, after years of foundational work as a co-founder of the organization. In this role, I oversee IALDF's legal-services programming to protect and empower the Iranian American community. As our community has been seriously suffering in the past year due to the restrictive and targeted recent immigration policies, we have also focused on providing services to asylum seekers and noncitizens in immigration detention and removal proceedings.
5. As Interim Executive Director, I direct IALDF's case intake and analysis; prepare memoranda for the Board of Directors on potential immigration, civil-rights, and constitutional litigation; supported the Board in establishing the Case Review Committee that oversees IALDF's impact litigation and legal strategy; and lead our team in coordinating rapid-response protocols with volunteer attorneys and interpreters. I also manage IALDF's early-stage staffing, regulatory compliance, and development. Because I am fluent in Persian, I personally participate in intake conversations and in-person detention visits with many of the Iranian asylum seekers IALDF serves, and the facts set forth in this declaration are based on my personal knowledge, on information gathered through IALDF's legal-services work, and on my review of IALDF's records.
6. I submit this declaration to describe the concrete, ongoing harm that IALDF is suffering as a direct result of the unlawful disclosure of confidential, asylum-related records and information — information protected from disclosure under the asylum-confidentiality regulation, 8 C.F.R. § 208.6, and related provisions — to representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) and components

of the U.S. Department of State. As I explain below, this policy has directly impaired IALDF's preexisting ability to deliver the confidential legal counseling, asylum screening, detention representation, safety planning, public education campaign, and referral services that IALDF already provides to the people it serves.

IALDF's Mission and Scope

7. IALDF is a national nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering, protecting, and defending the Iranian American community — working to safeguard civil and political rights, eliminate discrimination, and create pathways for education and economic success — through advocacy, legal support, and community engagement.
8. IALDF is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and operates nationally. Among other activities, IALDF visits ICE detention centers in multiple states across the country and supports immigration detainees and asylum seekers with services directed at ensuring legal protection, including confidential intake and screening, connection to counsel, and related support.
9. IALDF is a leading civil-rights voice of the Iranian American community. Because most asylum seekers who have fled the Islamic Republic of Iran face grave persecution if returned — and because disclosure of their asylum claims poses an immense risk of harm to family members and associates still inside Iran — maintaining the confidentiality of clients' asylum status and asylum-related information is of the utmost importance to IALDF and to the people it serves. Confidentiality is not incidental to IALDF's legal services; it is a precondition to providing them.
10. Since its incorporation, IALDF has provided pro bono immigration and asylum legal services on a growing basis, with plans under development to expand its direct-representation capacity. This direct work is in addition to IALDF's extensive work connecting asylum seekers with local pro bono counsel — both through IALDF's intake system and by visiting ICE detainees directly, in person.
11. IALDF's legal-services team currently includes three attorneys and an outside team of four attorneys who serve on IALDF's Case Review Committee. IALDF also has a small staff of three seasonal interns and two other non-attorney full-time employees. IALDF works

closely with local pro bono counsels and local and national nonprofits to provide legal-services support on referred cases, along with interpretation and other support as necessary. IALDF provides all of its legal services pro bono. IALDF currently serves clients who reside or are detained in Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Colorado, New Jersey, Texas, and California.

12. Providing representation and legal support — including through referrals to local counsel — to clients at risk of removal has become a core component of IALDF’s work, particularly because the need for pro bono legal representation for Iranian asylum seekers has grown substantially since early 2025. Most IALDF clients have no or limited English comprehension, which makes navigating immigration detention and removal proceedings even more difficult. IALDF provides its services in languages clients understand, through staff with relevant language fluency or through interpreters.
13. Since 2025, IALDF has served a substantial number of clients in connection with removal and detention matters, including clients whom IALDF did not formally represent before the immigration court — who either had other counsel or proceeded pro se — but who received IALDF’s help and legal support. Given IALDF’s rapid growth in the past year and current immigration-enforcement trends, I expect IALDF to continue expanding both its direct and referral legal services to a larger group of clients facing removal in the coming years.

IALDF’s Regular Legal-Services Model Before the Challenged Conduct

14. Before the challenged disclosure policy came to light, IALDF’s regular legal-services model already centered on direct, client-facing work with detained Iranian asylum seekers. That model includes: (a) confidential intake and asylum screening, conducted in the client’s language; (b) in-person visits to ICE detention facilities to meet detainees, assess their cases, and build the trust necessary to obtain the sensitive facts an asylum or Convention Against Torture claim requires; (c) confidentiality counseling and safety planning; (d) preparation of, or assistance with, declarations and supporting evidence; (e) connection and referral to local pro bono counsel, with continued legal-services support; and (f) coordination of interpretation and related support.

15. In carrying out this model, IALDF has traveled to detention facilities in Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to meet detainees in person, and has spent hundreds of hours on the telephone with detainees and with their relatives and contacts in the United States. The ability to elicit complete and candid information from clients — including the details of the persecution they fled and the risks they face on return — is the foundation of every one of these services. One focus of our work has been to seek the release of Iranian asylum seekers detained by ICE and suffering from prolonged detention. This work is acutely time-sensitive. Gaining access to detained asylum seekers is itself difficult and slow, and arranging an in-person visit to an ICE detention facility can take days or longer to secure. At the same time, IALDF and the people it serves frequently receive only a few days' notice, if any, before a detainee is placed on a charter or commercial deportation flight to Iran, so that the window in which IALDF can identify an at-risk detainee, meet with the detainee, and take protective action is often measured in days or even hours. The conduct described below has created new obstacles and new barriers to our work and overall frustrated the mission of our organization.

How IALDF Learned of the Challenged Disclosures

16. During one of IALDF's detention-facility visits with Iranian asylum-seeker detainees, I learned that an official of the Islamic Republic of Iran had personally visited those detainees inside the facility, with visits facilitated by ICE, in order to pressure asylum seekers to return to Iran, a regime they ran away from. Based on what the detainees reported, the Iranian official knew that the detainees were asylum seekers with pending immigration matters of various postures and was aware of details of their cases. The detainees reported that they had not requested, and did not consent to, any meeting with the Iranian official; to the contrary, ICE summoned, assembled, and in some instances required them to appear before a representative of the very government from which they had fled, and several detainees told IALDF that they objected to, and were frightened by, being made to face him.
17. These facts indicated to IALDF that protected, asylum-related information about IALDF's clients and prospective clients, information shielded from disclosure to the very government from which they sought protection, was being, or had been, disclosed to

representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that ICE was facilitating direct access by an Iranian government official to detained asylum seekers. None of the detained asylum seekers with whom IALDF has met gave consent to the disclosure of their asylum applications or asylum-related information to the Islamic Republic of Iran or its representatives. Because the purpose and foreseeable effect of these disclosures and visits is to facilitate the return of asylum seekers to the country whose government they fled, the policy strikes at the core of the protection IALDF exists to provide.

Impairment of IALDF's Legal-Services Activities

18. The challenged policy directly interferes with IALDF's core legal-services activities by undermining the confidentiality on which those activities depend and by chilling the candor IALDF needs from its clients. Since learning of the Interest Section director's visits, IALDF has found that clients and prospective clients are more reluctant to disclose asylum-related facts, fearing that information they share could reach the Islamic Republic of Iran and endanger them, their families, or their associates inside Iran.
19. These fears directly impair IALDF's ability to deliver legal services. When clients withhold facts, IALDF's attorneys cannot obtain the complete information necessary to assess an asylum or Convention Against Torture claim, cannot prepare accurate declarations, cannot reliably evaluate the risk a client would face on return, and cannot give sound advice about the client's options. IALDF must then spend considerable additional time and effort attempting to repair client trust before it can do the substantive legal work at all.
20. The policy also complicates IALDF's detention-related work. Because detained IALDF clients and prospective clients are subject to consular-notification and detention practices, see 8 C.F.R. § 236.1(e), and because the government has caused or threatens to cause the disclosure of protected asylum-related information to a foreign government, IALDF must now conduct additional individualized risk screening, advise clients about the risk that their information or their detention may be disclosed to the Islamic Republic of Iran, prepare or consider emergency and protective filings, and engage in safety planning for clients whose family members and acquaintances remain exposed to retaliation inside Iran.

Operational Injury and Diversion of IALDF's Resources

21. As a direct result of the challenged policy, IALDF has had to change how it operates. IALDF has revised and redesigned its intake system to add hours of conversation with each detainee in order to determine whether the detainee has had any encounter with officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and how any such encounter has affected the detainee and the detainee's family members or acquaintances — all in addition to IALDF's ordinary intake regarding the client's case and detention conditions. These longer intakes are now a standard part of IALDF's screening.
22. IALDF has also been required to spend substantial staff and attorney time as a result of this unlawful disclosure policy that also facilitates forced deportations to the Islamic Regime in Iran, to deal with emergency (and unexpected) work in attempting to respond to and prevent those deportations, such as by drafting and filing UN complaints and TROs in federal court, as well as helping obtain expert declarations on country conditions to stop chain refoulement through third country removals.
23. IALDF has also been required to spend substantial staff and attorney time on new tasks generated by the policy: researching the governing law and case authority in order to advise detainees who fear that their information may be shared with the regime; conducting disclosure-risk screening and safety planning; extra traveling time to detention facilities in Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas; and spending hundreds of hours on the telephone with detainees and their relatives and contacts in the United States, to address the fallout from the policy. These have resulted in delayed intakes, lost client candor, additional visits, and matters IALDF could not accept.
24. These operational changes have measurable costs to IALDF, which I can quantify as follows. As a result of the additional disclosure-risk screening the challenged policy requires, each client intake and detention interview now takes approximately 20% longer than it did before. Also, in many cases, this issue adds additional days of visiting detainees as establishing the necessary trust has become a serious hurdle. Across IALDF's small legal-services team, I estimate that disclosure-risk screening, safety planning, legal research about the information-sharing policy, and related emergency communications now consume on the order of 5 to 10 additional attorney and staff hours per week — time

that was previously spent on substantive case work, educational campaigns, and connecting clients to pro bono counsel.

25. Because IALDF's capacity is fixed and its services are provided pro bono, this added work directly reduces the number of people IALDF can serve. The longer intakes and added screening mean that IALDF can take on meaningfully fewer new clients and conduct fewer detention visits than it otherwise could — I estimate a reduction of roughly 20% to 25% in new matters our team can absorb — and a growing share of our existing matters now require more intensive, time-consuming attention because of the disclosure risk. To absorb this work, IALDF has had to reassign attorney and staff time away from other parts of its program and the development of its community legal-resource materials. In addition, this work strains IALDF's ability to meet deliverables and requirements tied to its funding, emergency work the policy has generated, and the diversion of capacity puts at risk IALDF's ability to satisfy existing funder commitments and to secure future funding.
26. The challenged policy has also forced IALDF to change how it operates at a structural level. IALDF has revised its intake scripts and questions to add a dedicated module screening for any contact with Iranian government officials; expanded its staff and volunteer training and supervision to cover disclosure-risk counseling and safety planning; and modified its referral protocols so that local pro bono counsel are alerted to the disclosure risk when a matter is referred.
27. This is not generalized advocacy or mission-related spending. It is a concrete impairment of, and diversion of resources away from, the specific legal services — confidential intake, asylum screening, detention visits, and referral — that IALDF already provided to the people it serves before the challenged policy. The policy has made it harder, and in some instances impossible, for IALDF to deliver those preexisting services.

The Injury Is Ongoing and Imminent

28. The harm to IALDF is ongoing and imminent. IALDF continues to conduct intake and detention visits with Iranian asylum seekers on a regular basis, and it continues to encounter clients who fear that their information has been or will be disclosed to the Islamic Republic of Iran. So long as ICE and the Department of State continue the challenged disclosure and

access practices, IALDF will continue to incur the added intake time, screening, research, safety planning, and trust-repair burdens described above, and will continue to be impaired in delivering its legal services to the detained asylum seekers it serves and is imminently likely to serve.

Causation and Redressability

29. IALDF's operational injuries are directly caused by the challenged policy itself — the disclosure of protected, asylum-related information to representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and ICE's facilitation of an Iranian government official's access to detained asylum seekers — and not by independent third-party decisions or general immigration conditions. It is the disclosure and the facilitated access, and the well-founded fear they create among IALDF's clients, that have forced IALDF to lengthen its intakes, add disclosure-risk screening and safety planning, divert attorney time to legal research and emergency work, and alter its intake forms, scripts, training, and referral protocols.
30. These injuries would be redressed by the relief sought in this action. An order barring the challenged policy would directly reduce or eliminate IALDF's operational impairment: clients would have less reason to withhold asylum-related information, IALDF could return its intake, screening, and detention-visit processes to their prior form, and IALDF could redirect the staff and attorney time now consumed by disclosure-risk work back to the legal services it provides. Unlike a case in which the requested remedy would not reach the conduct causing the injury, the relief sought here is directed at the very disclosure and access practices that are impairing IALDF's services.
31. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on **July 14, 2026**, in Washington, D.C. .



Ali Rahnama
Interim Executive Director
Iranian American Legal Defense Fund

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SECOND DECLARATION OF ALI RAHNAMA

I, Ali Rahnama, declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the following is true and correct. If called as a witness, I could and would testify as follows.

Background and Purpose

1. I am the Interim Executive Director of the Iranian American Legal Defense Fund (IALDF), a legal-advocacy organization dedicated to defending the civil and human rights of Iranian Americans and Iranian nationals in the United States. I am also a member of IALDF's Board of Directors and counsel of record for Plaintiff in this action. I have direct, personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this declaration, and I am fluent in Persian (Farsi).
2. I submit this declaration in support of Plaintiff's Motion for a Stay Under 5 U.S.C. § 705 and for a Preliminary Injunction. Its purpose is to authenticate the declarations attached as Exhibits 2.A through 2.L, to explain how, when, and where IALDF collected them, and to summarize the accounts they contain of the detainees' direct encounters with officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran while in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
3. IALDF has been directly involved in monitoring and documenting the treatment of Iranian nationals detained in ICE facilities across the country, and in providing legal-protection

services to those detainees, including confidential intake and screening, connection to counsel, and related support. In that capacity, I have personally visited ICE detention centers in multiple states and have met with individual detainees in person.

IALDF's Collection of the Attached Declarations

4. During these detention visits, when circumstances permit, I collect declarations from detained individuals concerning the facts of their cases, the procedural posture of their immigration proceedings, and the conditions of the detention facilities in which they are held. I conduct these interviews in Persian, which I speak natively, or with the assistance of an interpreter, so that each declarant can understand and respond in a language he or she understands. Beginning in November 2025, in light of what IALDF had learned about Defendants' practice of sharing Iranian asylum seekers' confidential information with, and facilitating access by, officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, these declarations have also asked about, and recorded, any contact between the detained individual and officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
5. Each declaration attached to this declaration was prepared based on my interview of the declarant, was reviewed with the declarant before signing, and was signed by the declarant under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746. Each declarant confirmed that the contents of his or her declaration were true and correct and signed it voluntarily.
6. The declarants in Exhibits 2.A through 2.L are asylum seekers who fear the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Because public disclosure of their identities could expose them, and their family members and associates who remain in Iran, to the very retaliation, persecution, torture, and other harm that this action seeks to prevent, IALDF has redacted each declarant's name and other identifying information and refers to each declarant by initials only. IALDF is prepared to provide complete, unredacted copies of these declarations to the Court for review under seal or in camera upon request.

The Declarations Describe Direct Encounters with Officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran

7. The attached declarations describe a consistent pattern: while these asylum seekers were held in ICE custody, ICE facilitated their contact with officials of the Islamic Republic of

Iran, the same government from which they had fled, and those officials possessed detailed, non-public information about the detainees' identities, immigration proceedings, and asylum claims. I summarize the relevant accounts below.

8. Exhibits 2.A and 2.B (P.M. and S.O., collected at the Eloy Detention Center in December 2025) describe in-person visits inside the facility. Each declarant states that facility staff directed the Iranian detainees to report to a visitation area to meet a visitor described to them as the Iranian "Consul," who was in fact a senior representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Interest Section in Washington, D.C. According to the declarations, the official arrived with the detainees' names written down and possessed specific information about their detention status and immigration-court proceedings, and urged the detainees to return to Iran while minimizing the dangers they would face. In the case of Exhibit 2.A, the official told the declarant that her detained husband would be placed on a chartered deportation flight to Iran.
9. Exhibit 2.F (E.R.) describes two forms of compelled contact. In October 2025, while detained, ICE personnel required him to speak, by telephone, with a female representative of the Iranian Interest Section who was aware of his asylum claim and its posture and who urged him to return to Iran; when he refused, he was told that the U.S. would instead remove him to a third country in Africa. He was later transferred to another ICE facility where, on arrival, staff sought to have him meet in person with a representative of the Iranian government.
10. Exhibits 2.G, 2.H, and 2.J (A.M., N.Y., and N.A., collected at the Eloy Detention Center in June 2026) describe that ICE required groups of Iranian detainees to meet in person with a senior official of the Iranian Interest Section, who arrived with a list of the detainees' names, knew the posture of their asylum cases, and urged them to return to Iran, suggesting they would be safe absent judicial proceedings against them! The declarants state that ICE personnel arranged and compelled these meetings.
11. Exhibits 2.C, 2.D, and 2.E (L.V., O.P., and I.T., collected at the El Valle Detention Facility in June 2026) describe the declarants' concern that if the confidential information in their asylum applications, including their identities, religious conversions, political activities,

and the bases of their fear of the Iranian government, was disclosed by U.S. officials to the Islamic Republic of Iran, they fear that disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that they will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if they are to ever be returned to Iran, and it has exposed and endangered their family members and friend who remain in Iran to reprisal.

12. Exhibit 2.K (R.T.) describes a related form of pressure. R.T. states that although an immigration judge found her testimony credible and she remained eligible to reopen her case, in May 2026, ICE officers brought her and other detainees to an intake area and pressed her to sign what the officers described as deportation papers for removal to a third country (Africa), notwithstanding the ongoing status of her case. According to her declaration, when she refused, ICE officers physically forced her fingerprint onto the document, and ICE then began transferring her toward Louisiana for removal; her removal was halted only after counsel obtained a temporary restraining order.
13. Exhibit 2.L (C.Y.), a Woman, Life, Freedom protester, describes a coerced telephone call with the Iranian Interest Section. C.Y. states that, in or around December 2025, ICE facility staff brought C.Y. to the telephones in the visitation area for an incoming call and, when C.Y. objected to speaking with a representative of the Iranian government, ICE agent told C.Y. that there was no choice and that C.Y. would not be allowed to return to her housing unit (pod) until the call was answered. According to the declaration, the female Iranian Interest Section representative on the line knew C.Y.'s name and alien registration number and the details of C.Y.'s asylum case—including the basis of her asylum claim, and its procedural posture—and stated that she had C.Y.'s fear-interview transcript and entire case file in hand because ICE had sent it to the Interest Section.

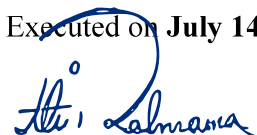
Authentication of the Exhibits

14. Each of the exhibits listed below is a true and correct copy of the declaration collected by IALDF on the date and at the facility indicated. Each declarant's name has been redacted, and each is identified by initials, for the protective reasons stated above:

Exhibit	Declarant	Date Collected	Detention Facility
2.A	P.M.	December 2, 2025	Eloy Detention Center, Eloy, Arizona
2.B	S.O.	December 12, 2025	Eloy Detention Center, Eloy, Arizona
2.C	L.V.	June 14, 2026	El Valle Detention Facility, Raymondville, Texas
2.D	O.P.	June 14, 2026	El Valle Detention Facility, Raymondville, Texas
2.E	I.T.	June 14, 2026	El Valle Detention Facility, Raymondville, Texas
2.F	E.R.	June 18, 2026	San Luis Regional Detention Center, San Luis, Arizona
2.G	A.M.	June 19, 2026	Eloy Detention Center, Eloy, Arizona
2.H	N.Y.	June 19, 2026	Eloy Detention Center, Eloy, Arizona
2.J	N.A.	June 20, 2026	Eloy Detention Center, Eloy, Arizona
2.K	R.T.	June 20, 2026	Eloy Detention Center, Eloy, Arizona
2.L	C.Y.	July 14, 2026	El Valle Detention Facility, Raymondville, Texas

15. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Executed on **July 14, 2026**, in Washington, D.C.



Ali Rahnama

Interim Executive Director

Iranian American Legal Defense Fund

EXHIBIT 2.A

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals, committees, commissions, or relevant bodies, and other courts in other jurisdictions:

I, [REDACTED] hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the following statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief:

Intro:

I hold a bachelors degree in industrial engineering. I owned a beauty salon in Tehran, and had a very comfortable life.

Asylum Claim:

Political: I was physically attacked by the ~~Islamic~~ Islamic Republic of Iran's ~~agents~~ agents in February 2023, during a Mahsa Amini Protest in Tehran.

Before this incident, during 2019 protests, my car was attacked, all windows broken, by the regime's forces, and car was confiscated.

Later, my popular instagram page was closed and I was taken to Shemiranat for interrogation. ~~My car was also~~

Between these two incidents, I have participated in ~~several~~ protests against the regime at least 10 times.

Christianity: In 2018, I was introduced to an Armenian Iranian woman, who introduced me to Christianity. She took me to Armenia to be introduced to her church.

In 2023, I was baptized in Istanbul, Turkey. After we went back to Iran, I felt the responsibility of inviting others to my faith.

In early summer 2024, I was stopped by Basij with my husband, [REDACTED] for my lack of hijab. My phone being in my husband's backpack was confiscated along with my husband. After being beaten and threatened for over two hours, ~~he~~ he was released but not before forcing us to open the phone. I had stored all the information, images, and videos about our protests, opposition to Islam, my christian faith, and my invitation of others to join my faith.

Our apartment was searched soon after and my husband and I ran away to Brazil, leaving Iran behind.

I was threatened for my life along with my husband's, sexually abused, and detained by the cartels at gun point in South America and Mexico.

I also became heavily sick with pneumonia in Mexico.

We were forced to cross the United States border fearing for our lives and were taken into custody by CBP.

Cause Status:

I passed the credible fear interview and was given a court hearing date of September 2025. The judge has denied my asylum claim, denied withholding of removal under INA 241(b)(3) and denied withholding of removal under CAT.

In his order, my judge has provided no explanation, and has just mentioned his denials. I have appealed this decision on ~~the~~ Our 2025. Solely basing my appeal grounds on the matters that I imagined the judge might have taken issue with, basically repeating my claims.

Due Process Concerns:

1. Judge: In the beginning of my hearing, Judge started by attacking my lawyer for his neglects in every case brought to the judge's court by him: screaming, reprimanding, angrily stating, why do you submit everything last minute. The judge stated that he is not going to consider anything submitted late. This is despite the fact that I had given these documents months before to my lawyer. My attorney sat down fidgety and nervous, and almost didn't participate in the hearing anymore. Seeing this situation, my head became foggy, seeing such a powerful man taking over me, it reincarnated my dad's memory beating me.

The judge also had strong biases against me, as he and the DHS attorney were there to get me and deny my claims rather than hearing my case.

■ The judge ~~started~~ started by saying my testimony during the court will be the only thing he would consider, after having beaten down my lawyer and demoralized me, triggering my ACE-related trauma.

One of his serious questions was about Marjan who invited me to Christianity and why she wasn't tortured. I explained that I was identified by the regime, not her. That was not enough for him as an explanation. I told him that the authorities searched my father-in-law's house looking for me, and even asked for me. His response was, why ~~was~~ is it that your father-in-law was not tortured. Seeing this, I became sure that my fate was already chosen before I had even entered the courtroom.

■ When I told him, I was sentenced to prison in Iran, he told me, you will only go to prison in Iran ~~for a few years~~ for a few years and be released afterwards. I mentioned that I will be tortured in prison in Iran. He said, not every prison in Iran does torture. ~~And so he ordered without explanation.~~ ■ And so he ordered without explanation.

Fears of Going Back:

If I go back to Iran, I will be imprisoned, and will be tortured to give the names of the people I was in Church with, and might be hanged with the charge of apostasy for changing my religion, and espionage for foreign governments for taking videos and images of protests.

Interference by Iranian Government Representative in U.S. Detention:
While detained, I experienced direct contact with representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which caused extreme fear and represents a grave security incident.

One day, facility managers told us, Iranian detainees — including me — had to report for a visit from the Iranian "Consul". Present were myself, [REDACTED], and several Iranian men. Later, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were taken to meet him as well.

The official was Mr. [REDACTED] from the Interests Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Washington, D.C.

When he entered, he had our names written down and possessed specific information about our detention status and court proceedings.

When we saw him I felt ~~like~~ cold; he looked like the regime guys, with that specific collar they wear, his demeanor, and the uncleaned soulless face. His appearance was identical to security/intelligence agents I have encountered in Iran ~~and I was not alone~~. Seeing him caused a physical reaction of fear and cold shock, because it reminded me of officers involved in repression in Iran.

In the beginning, some left as they saw him. Then I told him to leave us alone, he replied that nothing would happen to us. I sarcastically asked if "there are no more hidub problems now?" He replied that "even in the US, if you are Political, the same things can happen to you," clearly implying arrest, detention, and persecution - which is what the Iranian Regime does. I told him that in Iran, you do not have to choose politics; "your daily life becomes political."

I gave examples such as Aban 1398, where ordinary people rose up because of extreme economic pressure and were met with violence or even when we just went to the funeral of the people killed by the regime to pay respects.

He encouraged us to return to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Upfront, I told him to distinguish between Iran and the Islamic Republic. I said, I can't go back. The regime is the issue. I made clear that I only came to meet him because I thought he was an Iranian individual, not a regime representative.

When he came in, he had our names and A-numbers jotted down. He had specific info about our status and court details.

I asked him whether my husband was on a deportation ~~list~~ list. He said when the U.S. wants to deport people, they give us information and confer with us, and if Iran agrees, then it happens. I asked ~~them~~ them to check notes and saw that ~~my husband~~, my husband, will be on the removal flight to Iran on December 7, 2025. His life is in serious Peril. His knowledge of internal ICE scheduling was extremely disturbing and suggests improper communication between U.S. authorities and a foreign government known for torture.

At the end, we realized this is a mockery, as he even said there will be no Problem for you because hijab is freed now. So we left and went back to our Pbd.

fear of Return for my husband, [REDACTED] As I mentioned before the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran's, interest section told me, which was confirmed by the ICE officer at the scene, that my husband will be deported on December 7th 2025 on a new flight that will take Iranian detainees to Iran by a chartered flight. my husband, similar to me, will be subject to interrogation, torture, imprisonment, and possibly hanged for apostasy, for his change of religion to christianity and also for inviting other muslims to christianity, and for claiming asylum in the U.S, information of which were all shared by the U.S government with the Iranian Regime. this is in addition to his political activities for which he has been bodily harmed.

Declaration

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: 12.2.25
Location: [REDACTED] Detention center
Signature: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



EXHIBIT 2.B

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals, committees, commissions, or relevant bodies, and other courts in other jurisdictions:

I, [REDACTED], hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the following statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief:

Introduction:

I hold a bachelor degree in English literature. I started my master's degree in linguistics in state university, but was expelled due to improper hijab. Then I went to a private university and studied English teaching. I had worked since I was 19. I was a private English teacher, and the last two years of my presence in Iran, I had a dance and yoga studio. I made a good amount of money, more than my peers, and lived comfortably. I had a very close relationship with my parents and lived with them. It pains me the most to have had to leave them.

Basis For Asylum Claim:

Political: I have been a protestor of the regime increasingly since I was 18. As my brother was an active student protestor, I was also drawn into these activities. I have been beaten shot at by rubber bullets during the Mahsa Amini protests. I was detained for 3 days in Sep 2023 for my protests and my studio's instagram page which was full of yoga and dance videos that were against Sharia Laws. The story of my detainment starts with that. I was

stopped on the streets by the Regime Agents, a car cut my car off and when I stopped, two agents got in my car with their guns drawn and they took me. I was in solitary for 3 days in the notorious, "Petak-e-100" in Shiraz, Iran. After I was released, I was followed by the agents and received calls from the agents by blocked numbers. I was forced into hiding and my bank accounts was closed and my ID card usage was blocked in the government system. I decided to run away to Venezuela. In South America and Central America, I was abused sexually by the police, cartel, and traffickers, but I was able to get myself to Mexico. In Mexico, I was rubbed, threatened, and sexually assaulted and I decided to get myself to the U.S to save my life. I was also heavily sick when I entered the U.S, and was taken to hospital right away.

Status of Case:

I entered the U.S on March 22nd 2025. I was sent to St. Louis to federal court for crossing the border illegally. The judge dismissed the case. Then I was brought back to Yuma. I was interviewed for CAT on March 24th which was received positive. My first court hearing was on April 22nd 2025.

I had asked for medical parole in May which is still pending. The judge, [REDACTED] issued his order on Aug 15th, 2025 and my asylum case was denied pursuant to CLP rule. He found my evidence and testimony credible and persuasive. The judge approved withholding of removal for one. Since then I have filed motion to reconsider which was denied, and my bond request to be released was denied.

Specific Fears of Going Back:

I will be interrogated, tortured (as I have already been), detained I already have two-year sentenced and probably hanged for my political activity and activism.

Iranian Embassy Information:

One day, without explanation, facility administrators instructed several Iranian detainees including myself to gather in the visitation area. They told us we had a visit from the "Iranian Consul". The official was [REDACTED] a representative of the Interests Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Washington, D.C. Immediate fear spread among us. Many of us fled Iran to escape repression, political persecution, or religious harassment. His presence inside a U.S. detention facility

was terrifying. He looked exactly like regime intelligence operative - stiff posture, harsh facial expression, and the same type of shirt collar and unkempt style associated with IRGC or Ministry of Intelligence agents. The moment I saw him, I felt cold and sick. Others reacted the same way. He had our names written down and had specific, detailed knowledge about our immigration cases. When one of the detainees told him to leave us alone, he replied that "nothing will happen to you." When asked about hijab enforcement, he sarcastically commented, implying that political protests can cause persecution even in the U.S. He told us that the regime is different now and encouraged us to return to Iran, minimizing the real dangers people face. When detainees corrected him - distinguishing between Iran and the Islamic Republic - he ignored the distinction. During the meeting he handed me his business card and in front of him I wrote the word "blood washer" and showed to him. I have kept the card which is attached here.

Declaration

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: 12, 2, 2025

Location: [REDACTED] Detention Center

Signature: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

EXHIBIT 2.C

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals, Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction: [REDACTED]

I was born on April 12, 1990. ~~At that time~~ I am educated and had worked as technician of ATM machines and later own a company providing these services. I made a reasonable income and could have had a comfortable and productive life in Iran, if the regime didn't pose a threat to my life, forcing me to flee.

Status of case:

I am a christian convert. my brother is a pastor of Iranian church in Istanbul. I was baptised in Turkey ~~in Turkey~~ and since then I promoted christianity in Iran until I was ^{about 10} months before ~~being~~ found out about by the regime. ~~about 10~~ months before my escape, I had moved our underground church's place of meeting to my own apartment. I was captured and interrogated by the IRGC intelligence for my activities as a christian. the beating and tortures I have endured are still causing me serious medical issues here in detention, indeed multiplied by my

prolonged detention and condition.

Fear of Going Back:

I have serious fear of being sent back to Iran. That would be my death sentence. I fear that I would be executed, tortured, and seriously harmed. At least two members of my church have been arrested and tortured as far as I know. Since my detention I don't have updated ^{confirmed} news about their situation but I fear the worst for at least one of them.

Fear of Disclosure of Asylum Information to the Government of Iran:

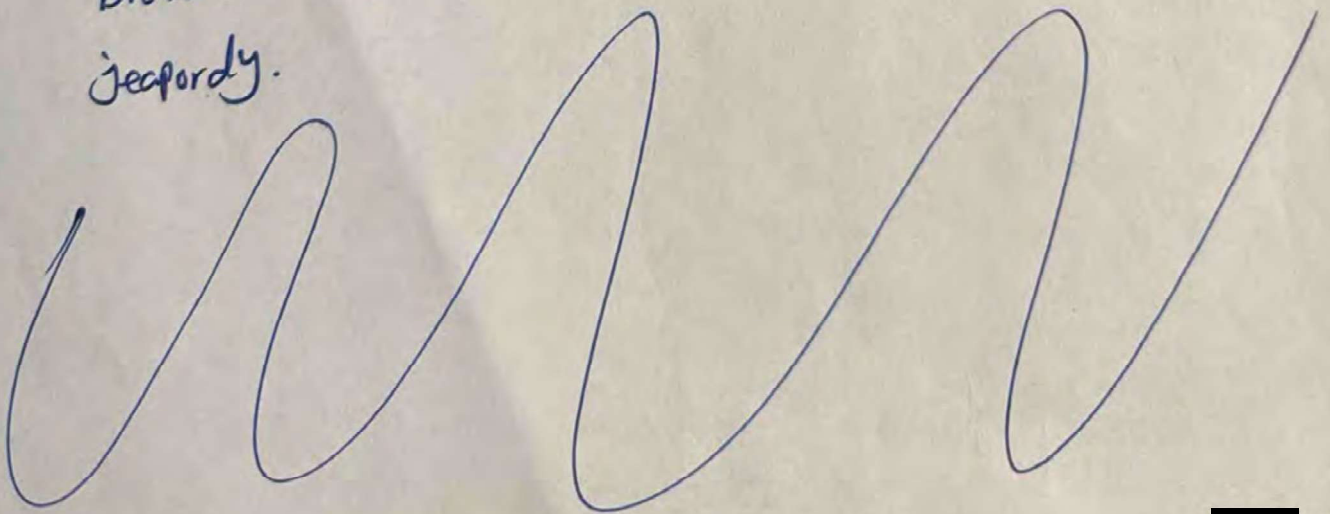
In connection with my immigration case, I have disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, opinions, religion, activities, and the reason I fear the Government of the Islamic regime in Iran.

I am currently an applicant for asylum and my case remains pending in appeals process before BIA. In the course of my application and claim process, I disclosed detailed information mentioned above in

reliance on the U.S. government's binding assurance that these information would not be shared with the Iranian regime or its agents.

I have been informed ~~that~~ information from my asylum application and detention records may have been disclosed by US ICE to the government of Iran or to the ^{~~Iranian~~} Interest Section in Washington, DC.

If the Iranian authorities have learned that I applied for asylum, and what I stated in support of my claim, I now face a new and independent danger that didn't exist before the disclosure; I have been identified to the very dangerous regime I accuse of persecution ^{AF} ~~and~~ putting my family and friend and Christian brothers and sisters plus myself in serious jeopardy.



Detention Condition in El Valle:

water here smells very bad. our bodies are always itchy. I have been taking antibiotics and my itching has gone away, which is a sign of how bad the water is. we all have red dots on our skin that one has also gone away on my body after I started anti-biotics.

The dental care here is unbelievably dangerous. any happening with teeth they only extract. the doctors have already extracted three of my teeth and have told me with extract another three when my antibiotics are over. I have always taken care of my teeth and visited dentists periodically my whole life.

I have sciatica issues due the tortures in Iran, and exacerbated by my ~~back~~ back problems and ~~the~~ orthopedic doctor here whom I visited have ordered MRI two times and ICE refused. I am scared of being disabled ~~from~~ ~~leg~~ in my left Leg.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 6/19/26

Location: GC Valle Detention Facility

Signature

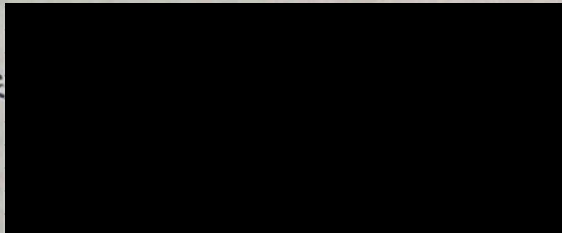
A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

EXHIBIT 2.D

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

*For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction*

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born on 08/31/1988. I earned my bachelor of law from Sari University and have a degree in directing/Acting. I have been a woman's rights activist from a young age.

Basis for Asylum claim:

My asylum claim in the U.S. has three basis; Political, ~~and~~ religious, and Part of Persecuted group. I have been ~~a~~ a writer, ~~and~~ actor, and director in many plays. as a result of one of these plays in ~~the~~ around 10 years ago, ~~for~~ which I was taken to court and receive 5 years of suspension ~~and stop~~ at all activities. basically the court ordered that I cannot legally work for 5 years. ~~After~~ after about 8-9 years I restarted my work and was again summoned for a play I wrote and acted in with a coworker who disappeared which caused my fear and as a result I ran away from Iran. [REDACTED]

(L)

I grew up in a family with my mom and sister believing in christ, changed their religion ~~at~~ years ago, and I have believed in christ ~~for~~ since I was a child and ~~never~~ was ^{not} able to believe in islam since I have known myself. I was baptised in Turkey about 4 years ago.

the reason I was summoned and forgotten again by the regime was the fact that the play I wrote and acted in was about a woman who has changed her religion.

my brother was arrested in 2009 during the green movement protests and imprisoned and tortured for 5 years. after his released he burned himself alive in protest to the regime's cruelty and his demand for freedom.

Fear of Going Back:

I am afraid that if I am sent back to Iran, I will be tortured or killed. I believe I would be picked up in the airport and will never be able to see light today again.

Disclosure of Information to the Government of Iran:

I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, and my case remains pending on appeal before BIA.

In connection with my immigration case, I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, political opinion, religion, and the reason I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I did share all that information in reliance on the U.S. government's duty to follow its law and assurances that this information would not be shared with the Iranian regime or its agents.

I have been informed that information from my asylum application and detention records might have been disclosed by the US government to the government of Iran, its agents, or to the ^{Iranian} Interests Section in Washington.

if the Iranian authorities have learned that I have applied for asylum in the US, and the information I have submitted in support of my claim, I now face a new and independent danger that did not exist before the disclosure.

the disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that I will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am to ever be returned to Iran, and it has exposed and endangered my family members and friend who remain in Iran to reprisal.

Because this danger arises from the US. Gov.'s own conduct while my case is still pending, it is directly relevant to my claim, supports an independent basis for protection, and must be considered in adjudicating my case

Detention Condition:

Medical:

two months after my detention, my period stopped. going to medical, after a while they told me it's because of stress, so wait. after a year in detention, I have been complaining to all the authorities here, and I still ~~hear~~ that they will take me to see a doctor. this is a very serious women's health issue that could cause me to never have children. ^{Also} there is an opening and big inflammation under my tongue that after months of waiting, I saw a specialist, I was told I am in need of surgery right away but ICE gives me no answer after a few months.

water is not drinkable, it smells and tastes very bad. we have a few detainees have ticks and no one is taking them to take care of it.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 14 June 2026

Location: El Valle Detention Facility

Signature: _____

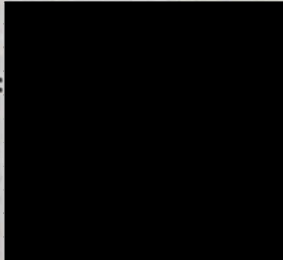


EXHIBIT 2.E

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

*For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction*

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born 12/09/1991. I hold bachelors degree in accounting and an MBA from Tehran University. I worked as a salesmanager at a paper and board sheets company. I lived comfortably and had a good income in Iran, I wouldn't leave Iran if my life was not threatend by the Iranian regime.

Status of Case:

the basis of my asylum claim is both Political, as a Participant in woman, life, Freedom movement and a christian convert who attended St. Mary Assyrian ~~the~~ school throughout my K-12 years.

~~and~~ I was arrested for carrying bibles in my mother's car and my phone ~~was~~ checked. [REDACTED] this led to arrest of two of my friends who have turned their apartment into [REDACTED] ①

home church, after that I ran away from Iran. Since then, my house was searched and my laptop and documents confiscated by the Iranian regime and I have been sentenced 25 years ~~in~~ in prison and lashes.

~~Before~~ [REDACTED] ~~Iranian regime~~. I entered the U.S. on April 8, 2025 and have been in detention since

Fears of Going Back:

I fear that if I am returned to Iran, I would be killed, definitely lashed and imprisoned for 25 years, ^{and} tortured. The regime has already clearly ordered me to torture and lashes.

Disclosure of Information to the Government of Iran

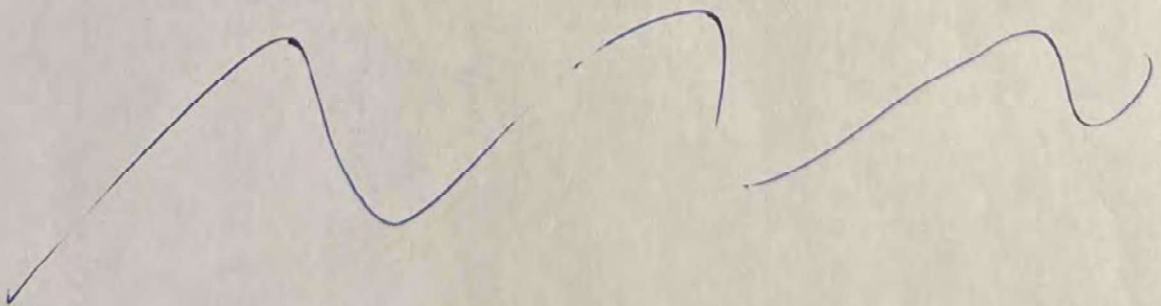
I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, based on very real fear of execution & torture based on my Political activity against the Iranian regime and my Conversion to Christianity.

In Connection with my immigration Case and asylum application, I have disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, friends, political opinion, religion, activities, and the reasons I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I have shared all that information in reliance on the obligations of the U.S. gov to follow privacy laws and its binding assurance that this information would not be shared with the Iranian regime or its agents. ~~where~~

I have been informed that information from asylum application and detention records ~~may have~~ [REDACTED] been disclosed by U.S. ICE or U.S. Government to the government of Iran or its agents, or Iranian Interest Section in Washington D.C. If Iranian authorities have learned that I have arrived in the U.S. applying for asylum, and what I have stated in support of my claim, I now face a new and independent danger that did not exist before the disclosure. I have been identified to the very government I fled from and sought protection against.

this disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that I will be ~~be~~ interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am ever returned to Iran, and worse, it has exposed my family members and friends and colleagues who remain in Iran to serious danger and reprisal.

Because this danger arises from the U.S. gov's own conduct while my case is still pending, it is directly relevant to my claims, supports ~~an~~ independent (sur plus) basis for protection, and must be considered in adjudicating my case.



I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: june, 14, 2026

Location: El valle Detention center

Signature: _____



EXHIBIT 2.F

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

*For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction*

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born on 06/10/1996. I worked as a children clothing sales Person in Iran.

Status of Case:

I am a christian convert from Islam. I lived in Turkey [REDACTED] and was baptized in 2017 in [REDACTED] Turkiye. I volunteered in my local church and invited others to christianity while in Turkiye.

I moved back to Iran in 2022 due to visa expiration. In Iran, I invited people to christianity, evangelizing. These invitations happened online and also on the streets discreetly. I spent a part of my income for these efforts [REDACTED] due to my deep devotion to christ and his way.

At the end of Summer of 2024, I was stopped by the Iranian police for speaking to a girl in a public park and my phone was searched. It revealed my pictures in church and my identity as a Christian. I was beaten up heavily as an infidel, but before being arrested I was able to fight my way out of the situation, plus the crowd that gathered ^{due to} the scene ^{made it hard for} ~~the police~~ the police. I ran away and was taken to a ~~local~~ local clinic and hospitalized under the story of being robbed.

When I ran away from this small city/Town in SW Iran, I went back to my parents house but told them I was in an accident. I was always scared of my dad. He is a religious zealot and ~~growing~~ growing up beat me for not praying according to Islam.

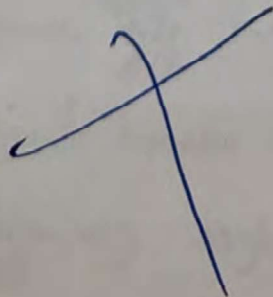
On Dec 28, my mom discovered my ^{clinic} ~~hospital~~ records and figured that I have lied to them. My dad checked with a friend's of his who worked in the ^{Judiciary} ~~police~~ to see if something happened that they know about. My dad's friend responded that they are in the process of getting an arrest warrant against me without any further explanation.

that's when I realized that I might have been identified by the government. [REDACTED] I reached out to my christian admin folks and realized that many have been arrested, and I was told to leave Iran immediately.

On Jan 2, 2025 I left Iran. A few days after I left Iran, our home was raided looking for me. That is when the officers told my dad that I am a dirty christian, and he realized that I have converted to christianity. My dad has also threatened my life for my faith. Our home was under surveillance afterwards.

Fear of Being Sent to Iran:

If I am sent back to Iran, I fear I will be tortured or killed by my dad and the Iranian regime.



Disclosure of Asylum Information to the Iranian Regime:

I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and Protection Under Convention Against Torture and my case remains pending before the Immigration Court.

In connection with my immigration case, I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, friends, Political opinion, religion, and reasons for which I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I provided this information in reliance on the confidentiality protections of the U.S. and international laws and norms, and my reliance on the U.S. Government's assurances that this information would not be shared with the Iranian Regime.

In OCT 2025, while in detention, I was taken by ICE to a phone booth and forced to speak with ^a~~the~~ representative of the Iranian regime ^{from}~~at~~ the Iranian Interest Section. The Iran regime agent knew about my asylum claim and where I was in ~~the~~ my asylum process. She told me

that my asylum case has been denied and that I should go back to Iran. I told her that I am a christian convert and have ~~been~~ a judicial case against me in Iran that her regime is pursuing against me. She told me that she doesn't care and that I should go back, and if I don't voluntarily go back, the U.S. will send me to Africa.

About three weeks after this call, ICE rounded up all Iranians in this detention facility, if I remember right six men and three woman, and transferred us to Otay Mesa Detention facility. ~~to meet with~~ when we got there, they told us we are meeting with a representative of the Iranian regime. I strongly refused ~~and~~ there and didn't go to the meeting. I was transferred back to San Luiz Detention Facility again and have been detained ~~here~~ here.

Now that ~~my~~^{the} [REDACTED] information about my asylum claim and detention records have been disclosed by ICE to the Iranian regime, I face a new and independent lethal risk and danger that did not exist in the same way before the disclosure: I have been identified to the very government I ran away from for my life. ~~and because~~ [REDACTED] this disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that I will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am ever returned to Iran, and it has exposed my acquaintances and brothers and sisters in Christ, who remain in Iran to reprisal. Because this danger arises from the U.S. Government's own conduct while my case is still pending, it is directly relevant to my claims, support an independent basis for protection, and must be considered in adjudicating my case.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 06/18/2026

Location: _____

Signature: _____

EXHIBIT 2.G

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

*For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction*

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born on 06/26/1984. I have a bachelor and masters degree in accounting. I worked as an accountant for over two decades, with a decent life, and would have stayed if it wasn't for the threat to my life by the regime.

Basis for Asylum Claim:

I am a christian convert from islam. I was baptised in 2011 and was part of an underground church ~~in [REDACTED]~~ [REDACTED] due to my belief, I was captured and sentenced to 80 lashes in 2023 which was temporarily suspended.

I ~~was~~ fired from my job with the pressure of the Iranian regime and forced to ~~sell~~ sell merchandise on the streets. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

In Fall of 2024, My apartment was raided and all of my notes, bibles, ~~and~~ and electronics confiscated. ~~I~~ I ran away from Iran about a week before ~~from~~ my court date on Dec 19, 2024.

Fear of Going Back:

If I am Sent back to Iran, I would be imprisoned, tortured, or killed due to my faith and activities.

Disclosure of Information to the Government of Iran:

I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, and my case remain pending on appeal before BIA.

In connection with my immigration case, I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, political opinion, religion, and the reasons I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I shared all of that information in reliance on the confidentiality protection of the U.S. and International laws and norms, and my reliance on the U.S. Government's

assurances that this information would not be shared with the Iranian Regime.

In about beginning of November, end of October, ²⁰²⁵ I was called by ICE along with other Iranian detainees, to go to the North Visiting section, and forced to meet with the Director of the Iranian Interest Section, [REDACTED] we were about 7 men, and 6 or 7 women detainees in the meeting.

he was trying to convince us to go back to Iran. he had a list of our names, and knew where we are in our asylum process. he said we should be ok to go back unless there is a judicial proceeding against us. I asked ICE to take me back to my Pod and left the meeting.

when I saw him I was disgusted with the U.S. government by forcing us to meet the Agents at the regime which told my Pod manager.

Now that the information about my asylum claim and detention records have been disclosed by ICE to the Iranian regime, I face anew and independent lethal risk [REDACTED]

and danger that didn't exist in the same way before the disclosure: I have been identified to the very government I ran away from for my life by the U.S. government.

This disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that I will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am to ever be returned to Iran, and it has exposed my acquaintances and family who remain in Iran to reprisal.

Because this danger arises from the U.S. Gov's
own conduct while my case ^{is pending}
~~is pending~~ it supports an independent basis for protection, and must
be considered in adjudicating my case.

Condition of facility:

water. A detainee was sick and ~~the~~ diagnosed with stomach worms due to water. Since then we don't drink from the fountain, and melt the ICE they give us which is very little. The ICE maker has a filter at least, that is why we trust it.

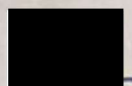
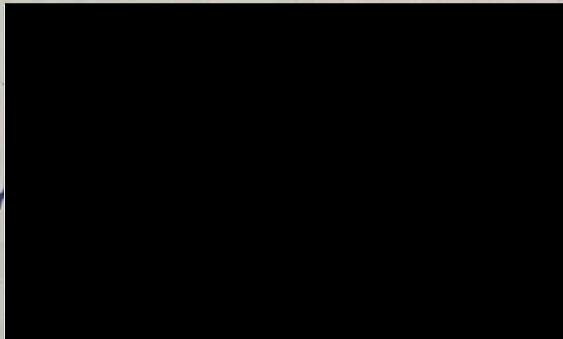
I have developed diabetes, cholesterol, hypertension, stomach acid issues, anxiety and ~~heart palpitations~~ heart palpitation, and depression.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 06.19.2026

Location: E Lay Detention Center

Signature:



(5)

EXHIBIT 2.H

DECLARATION OF

*For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction*

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born on 08/19/1991. I have a bachelors degree in Architectural Technology and was in the process of my master's degree that I ran away for my life from Iran and I was expelled from the University for my ^{religips} activities and belief. Before leaving Iran I made a very comfortable living and ~~would~~ would have stayed if my life was not in danger.

Basis for Asylum claim:

I am a christian Convert from Islam and ran away from the Iranian regime. when my house was raided by the regime police, they found bibles in my house. my wife and I were very active for women's right.

Fear of Going Back:

If I am sent to Iran, I would be tortured, executed, or interrogated for my christian faith and conversion from Islam.

Disclosure of Information to the Government of Iran

I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, and my case remain pending on appeal before BIA.

In connection with my immigration case, I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, Political opinion, religion, and the reasons I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I shared all of that information in reliance on the U.S. Government's duty to follow its laws and international law, and its assurances that this information would not be shared with the Iranian Regime.

In around end of OCT 2025^{orealy NOV}, about a month before my final hearing with the immigration court, I along with other Iranian detainees were forced into a general meeting by ICE to meet the Director of Iranian Interest section in Washington, D.C. [REDACTED]. This happened without my knowledge. [REDACTED] (2)

he came to the meeting at the general meeting area of our detention center to convince us to go back to Iran. He said he knows ~~the~~ about our cases and that the U.S. will keep you in a dungeon or send you to Africa. He said unless you have an open political case in Iran, you should be fine. I left the room asking ICE to take me back to my Pod.

Now that the information about my asylum claim and detention records have been disclosed by ICE to the Iranian regime, I face a new and independent lethal risk and danger that did not exist in the same way before the disclosure: I have been identified to the very government I ran away from for my life.

this disclosure has materially increased the chances that I will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am to ever be returned to Iran, and it has exposed my acquaintances and family who remain in Iran to reprisal.

Because this danger arises from the U.S. Gov's own conduct while my case, support an independent basis for protection, and must be considered in adjudicating my case.

Condition of Facility

the water and food here are very low quality. we can't drink the water and we melt the ICE we get.

the medical help is almost non-existent.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 6/19/26

Location: Eloy Detention Center

Signature:

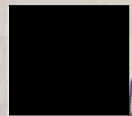


EXHIBIT 2.J

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born 11/07/2002. I was a psychology student at the time I was forced to flee Iran for the danger to my life.

Basis for my Asylum Claim:

I am a christian convert + from Islam and was baptized in Iran before [REDACTED] ~~in 2024, I was arrested by~~ starting my bachelors degree. As a student, I was always questioning my religious study Professors, and was scolded for it many times. In 2024, I was called to the office of the cultural and operational dean of my University to discuss my issues in these classes. At the meeting, he threatened me and held my body, put his hand on my mouth to rape me. right before he could force himself on me, I was able to push him back and run away. I pressed charges with my dad against him but they took me to detention pressuring me to drop the case otherwise they would press charges against me, during this I was also tortured. [REDACTED]

legal battle, they raided my house and found bible in my room, which they added to press charges against me.

I left Iran right after they raided my house to safety.

Since then, I have been tried in absentia for apostasy and sentenced to prison in Iran.

Fear of Going Back to Iran:

If I am to be sent back to Iran, I already have a Prolonged Sentence against me, and also afraid to be interrogated, tortured, and killed, and worst of all raped.

Disclosure of Information to the Government of Iran:

I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, and my case remain pending on appeal before BIA.

In Connection with my immigration case, I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, political opinion, religion, and the reasons I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I shared all of that information in reliance on the confidentiality protections of the U.S. (2)

and International laws and norms, and my reliance on the U.S. Government's assurances that this information would not be shared with the Iranian Regime.

At the end of 2025, I was called by ICE to go North Visit. I was forced, along with other Iranian detainees, to meet with the Director of the Iranian Interest Section, Mr. Mehrabadi.

He was here to convince us to go back to Iran. He had a list of all of our names, he even called on two of the detainees who hadn't showed up! After listening to him, [REDACTED] for about ~~45 min~~ ^{30-40 min}, I asked ^{the officers} ~~SAFE~~ [REDACTED] to take me back. There was an ICE officer with him and when one of the female detainees ask about her husband in a different facility, Mr. Mehrabadi asked the ICE officer to get information about him and where he is in his case as an asylum seeker. the ICE officer shared that ~~info~~ information with Mr. Mehrabadi on the spot.

Now that the information about my asylum claim and detention records have been disclosed by ICE to the murderous regime in Iran, I now face a new and independent risk of torture or persecution and danger.

~~that the information about my asylum claim and detention records have been disclosed by ICE to the murderous regime in Iran, I now face a new and independent risk of torture or persecution and danger.~~
~~disclosure.~~ [REDACTED]

this Disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that I will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am to ever be returned to Iran, and it has exposed my acquaintances and family who remain in Iran to reprisal.

Because this danger arises from the U.S. Gov's own conduct while my case is pending, it supports an independent basis for protection and must be considered in adjudicating my case.

Condition of Facility: here we have serious medical and dental neglect, and my tooth pain and stomach pain has been gone uncared for for almost a year.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 06/20/2026

Location: Eloy Detention Facility

Signature:

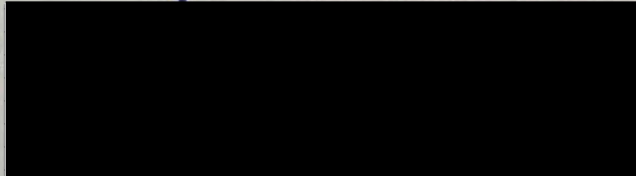
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EXHIBIT 2.K

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

*For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals,
Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction*

My Name is [REDACTED] (A# [REDACTED]). I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

I was born 11/28/1996. I was an IT student but left Iran to save my life before getting my bachelor degree. I worked as Arabic interpreter in hospitals and made a comfortable income, and would have never left my home and family behind if it wasn't to save my life from the Iranian regime.

Basis For Asylum Claim:

I am a christian convert. After the government suspected ^{me} ~~an~~, they raided our home and found bible and our christian notes. ~~we~~ I left Iran with my husband but our family home was raided looking for us.

Fear of Going Back:

I am afraid that I would be tortured or killed if I am ever to be returned to Iran.

ICE forced fingerprinting Incident:

I have been in detention since ²³Feb 2025, and received withholding of removal. the judge in his order to deny my asylum ~~that~~ writes that he believes me and finds my story credible, but denies ~~me~~ granting asylum status due to CLP Rule.

the CLP rule has been invalidated on May 7, 2026, creating a cause of action for me to reopen my asylum claim and receive full protection. ~~from the process~~ I was in the Process ~~to~~ to reopen my case with my attorney that ICE tried to take away that right by deporting me to Africa.

on May 31, 2026, I was called in to meet with two ICE officer around 11:30 pm. They took me into ~~meeting area~~ ^{a meeting intake area} with two other detainees, one of them named Lady. they were both deported. ~~in the meeting area~~ In the meeting area, it was me, two other detainees, two ICE officers, and two intake officers. in the middle of the area they took me to a table, ~~brass~~ me and the two ICE officers were standing around the table, they had ^{a few} ~~some~~ pieces of papers and asked me to sign them. I asked the two ICE officers, what these papers are. one of them responded that these are your deportation papers. he said that you would be deported to Africa.

then I said I refuse to sign. then he said, then
~~you can't~~ Put your finger print ~~on~~ on the document.
I said I won't. he said you have to. I said you
can't force me to do it, I refuse. He responded that
"I will ^{force} ~~take~~ you, this is my job." I said you can't.
He responded that do you understand what ~~the~~ the
word ~~force~~ force mean? I said I understand but you
can't force me, I will tell my lawyer. He left me and
said he needs to talk to his boss. He called his
boss on his cellphone. on the call he told the other
side the she is refusing, can I force her?
when he heard the response, he hung up and
walked to me. he took his handcuff off ~~the~~
turned my right hand and then left and ~~turned~~
me. ~~the~~ then he asked the other officer to bring
the papers, one held firmly my hand and finger and
the other held the paper. he literally forced my
finger print by ~~the~~ forcing my finger to a stamp
and then on a paper no matter how much I

tried to take back my finger. then ICE moved me to Louisiana to deport me to Africa. I was saved

from being deported by my lawyers ~~and~~ filing a TRO. the two detainees and the two intake officers witnessed the incident.

Disclosure of Asylum Information to the Government of Iran

I have been granted withholding of removal by an immigration judge as to Iran. I have also requested reopening of my asylum case as the cause of denial of my asylum claim, CLP Rule, has been invalidated.

In connection with my immigration case I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, political opinions, religion, and the reasons I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I provided that information in reliance on the Confidentiality Protections of the U.S. and International laws and norms, and the U.S. Gov's assurances that my information would not be shared with the Iranian regime.

I have been informed and believe that information from my protected asylum file might have been disclosed to the Government of Iran or its Interest Section in Washington, this creates an acute and specific danger. ~~this disclosure has~~ ~~materially increased the likelihood that I will be detained,~~ ~~interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am ever returned to~~ ~~Iran, and it has exposed my family members and acquaintances~~ ~~who remain in Iran to reprisal.~~ As this danger arises from the U.S. Gov's own conduct while my case is ongoing, it is directly relevant to my claims, supports an independent (sur place) basis for protection, and must be considered in adjudicating my case.

Condition at Facility:

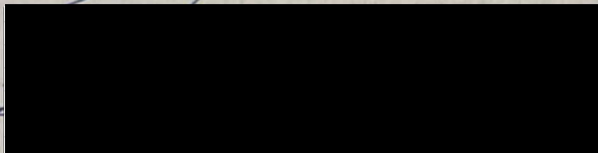
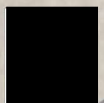
Condition at birth:
medical care is very low here. I have had a tendon issue
needing surgery for over a ^{Year} ~~Year~~ now. water and food are
very low quality.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: 06/20/2026

Location: Eloy Detention Center

Signature:

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.A small black rectangular redaction box in the bottom right corner.

6

EXHIBIT 2.L

DECLARATION OF [REDACTED]

For Submission to U.S. Courts, Immigration Authorities, International Human Rights Tribunals, Commissions, Committees, and Other Relevant Bodies or Courts of Competent Jurisdiction

My name is [REDACTED] I am over 18 years of age and competent to make this declaration. The facts stated below are based on my own personal knowledge, except where I indicate that a statement is made on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Introduction:

1. I was born on April 15, 1997. The date of birth on file in the U.S. is April 15, 1987 and is incorrect. The name on file in the U.S., [REDACTED] is also incorrect. My correct name is [REDACTED]. In Iran, I studied to become a pharmacist at Tehran University.

Basis for Asylum Claim:

Vienna, Austria [REDACTED]

2. I participated in the Woman, Life, Freedom protests in [REDACTED] in 2022.

In Iran, I participated in political protests in Tehran against the Islamic Regime in 2018. On June 2, 2018, while protesting against the Islamic Regime, I was detained on the street by a group of Islamic Republic riot police on motorcycles. Then, I was taken to a holding facility and held for 7 days, before being released on bail on June 9, 2018. On July 17, 2018, I was summoned to face charges of acting against national security, assembly and collusion, and propaganda against the state. Knowing that a heavy prison sentence was very likely, I escaped Iran on August 1, 2018. Since fleeing Iran, my family has continued to regularly be visited by agents of the Islamic Republic to ask about my whereabouts.

Fear of Going Back:

3. If I am sent back to Iran, I am afraid that I would be imprisoned, tortured, or killed due to my political activities.

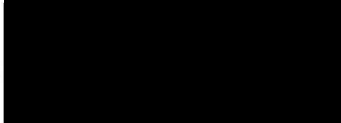
Disclosure of Information to the Government of Iran:

4. I am currently an applicant for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, and my case remains pending on appeal before the BIA. In connection with my immigration case, I disclosed detailed information about my identity, family, political opinion, religion, and the reasons I fear the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I shared all of that information in reliance of the confidentiality protections of the U.S. and International laws and norms, and my reliance on the U.S. Government's assurances that this information would not be shared with the Iranian Regime.
5. In or around December 2025, I was told by my pod officer that I have an incoming call for me. I was brought to the phones in the visitation area. I asked the officer, that was stationed by the phones, who was on the other line. This officer told me that it was the Iranian consulate. Upon learning this information, I told this officer that I did not want to speak on the phone, as I did not have any interest in speaking to the Iranian consulate or any Islamic Regime representative. In response, the officer told me I had no choice, and that I wouldn't be allowed to return back to my pod until I answered this call from the Iranian consulate. After being told this, I realized I had no choice and was forced to speak on the phone to the Iranian consulate.
6. A female representative of the Iranian Regime from the Iranian Interest Section was on the other line of this phone call. The representative of the Iranian Interest Section knew my name, my A number, and all the details of my asylum case, including the basis of my asylum claim, where I was in my asylum process, and even she told me that she had the entire transcript of my fear interview. The representative told me that, as we speak, she has my whole case file in her hands, and that this was all sent to them by ICE. I told the representative that I didn't want to talk to them and I hung up.
7. Now that information about my asylum claim and detention records have been disclosed by ICE to the Iranian Regime, I face a new and independent lethal risk and danger that did not exist in the same way before the disclosure: I have been identified to the very government I ran away from for my life. This disclosure has materially increased the likelihood that I will be detained, interrogated, tortured, or killed if I am ever returned to Iran, and it has exposed my family, friends, and acquaintances who remain in Iran to reprisal. Because this danger arises from the U.S. Government's own conduct while my case is still pending, it is directly relevant to my claims, support an independent basis for protection, and must be considered in adjudicating my case.

I declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, under the laws of the United States of America, and for all relevant international bodies and courts of competent jurisdiction, that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.

Executed on: July 14, 2026

Location: El Valle Detention Facility

Signature:  _____

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

IRANIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE
FUND,

Plaintiff,

v.

MARCO RUBIO, in his official capacity as
Secretary of State, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 26-cv-02375-ACR

DECLARATION OF CYRUS MEHRI

I, Cyrus Mehri, hereby declare under penalty of perjury, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the following is true and correct. If called as a witness, I could and would testify as follows.

Background

1. I am an attorney and a member in good standing of the bars of Washington, D.C., and Connecticut. I graduated from Cornell Law School in 1988, clerked for U.S. District Court Judge John T. Nixon in the Middle District of Tennessee, then joined Cohen Milstein Hausfeld & Toll in 1989. In 1998, I left Cohen Milstein to start my own firm.
2. My primary practice has been in the field of civil rights. I co-founded Mehri & Skalet, a firm of about ten attorneys, which is currently located at 2000 K Street NW, Washington, D.C. Our website is findjustice.com. I have been co-lead counsel in some of the largest race and gender discrimination cases in U.S. history. The hallmark of our settlements is programmatic relief that improves company policies and practices on a going forward basis. By way of example, in federal court in the District of Columbia, I served as co-lead counsel and court appointed class counsel in three successful gender discrimination class actions: *Brown v. Medicis Pharm. Corp.*, No. 13-cv-01345 (D.D.C.) (Leon, J.); *Carter v. Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC*, No. 09-cv-01752 (D.D.C.) (Kollar-Kotelly, J.) and *Augst-Johnson v. Morgan Stanley & Co., Inc.*, No. 06-cv-01142 (D.D.C.) (Kollar-Kotelly, J.). I have practiced in federal courts all over the country.

3. I am well-known within the Iranian American community in part because my firm, Mehri & Skalet, helped lead the legal and community effort by Iranian American organizations challenging President Trump's first travel ban in litigation that became known as *Pars Equality Center v. Trump* (D.D.C.) (Chutkan, J.) The case sought to protect Iranian Americans and other affected communities from the discriminatory and harmful effects of Executive Order 13769, commonly known as the first travel ban. In the challenge to that Executive Order, *Trump v. Hawaii*, 585 U.S. 667 (2018), we filed an amicus brief in the Supreme Court on behalf of Iranian American organizations, presenting evidence about the ban's real-world impact, including family separation and the government's ineffective waiver process. Our brief was cited favorably by four Justices: Justice Breyer, joined by Justice Kagan, relied on the brief's evidence regarding waiver denials, and Justice Sotomayor, joined by Justice Ginsburg, cited the brief in concluding that the waiver process was, in practice, "vanishingly rare" and arbitrary.
4. The U.S. State Department featured my profile in its publication *Faces of Successful Iranian Americans*, titled "Cyrus Mehri: A Lawyer with a Conscience."
5. In 2025, I co-founded the Iranian American Legal Defense Fund (IALDF) to advocate for and protect the Iranian American diaspora, a community of more than one million people in the United States. Iranian Americans are a high-impact immigrant community that has contributed profoundly to every sector of American life, including business, medicine, law, technology, the arts, academia, public service, and civic life. Members of the community have been especially influential as entrepreneurs and leaders in Silicon Valley, founders of small businesses, job creators, public-sector professionals, educators, physicians, attorneys, engineers, artists, members of the military, and first responders who serve communities across the country. Iranian Americans are also among the most highly educated immigrant groups in the United States, with a significant share holding graduate and professional degrees. Notwithstanding these contributions, Iranian Americans have faced persistent discrimination and exclusion, including being disproportionately harmed by travel bans, subjected to discrimination in the marketplace and public life, and, at times, targeted by hate crimes and bias-motivated harassment.

6. IALDF was launched on July 4, 2025, the 249th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. We chose that date deliberately: the Declaration's promise of liberty, equality, and opportunity reflects the ideals that drew generations of Iranian Americans to this country, while the American Founders themselves looked across world history, including to ancient Iran, for examples of governance, tolerance, and human dignity. We understood at the time of IALDF's inception that our community faced serious and growing challenges, but we could not have imagined how quickly the need for this organization would become urgent.

Mass Deportations of Iranians

7. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States have been adversaries since the 1979 hostage crisis and have had no formal diplomatic relations for nearly half a century. Yet, in late September 2025, we were stunned to learn that the U.S. government and the Islamic Regime had reached an agreement to work together to mass deport asylum seekers fleeing the Islamic Regime, including individuals who face risks of persecution, torture, and death if returned. This arrangement raises grave concerns under U.S. and international law prohibiting refoulement.
8. The principle of non-refoulement is the cornerstone of international refugee protection. It prohibits returning a person to a country where the person's life or freedom would be threatened, or where there are substantial grounds to believe the person would face torture or other irreparable harm. This obligation is binding on the United States under both treaty and domestic law. Internationally, Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, as incorporated through the 1967 Protocol, prohibits returning individuals to territories where their life or freedom would be threatened. In addition, Article 3 of the Convention Against Torture independently bars removal where there are substantial grounds to believe an individual would face torture. Congress codified these protections into domestic law through the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), including Section 208 of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1158, and Section 241(b)(3) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(3), as well as Section 2242 of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act (FARRA), and implementing regulations at 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.16–208.18 and 1208.16–1208.18. Together, these provisions require the United States to provide a meaningful opportunity to seek asylum, withholding

of removal, and CAT protection before removing individuals to countries where such risks exist.

9. The mass deportation flights to Iran violate each of these protections. The asylum seekers placed on these flights are precisely the individuals to whom non-refoulement protections most clearly apply: participants in the 2022 Woman, Life, Freedom movement; converts to Christianity and members of other religious minorities; and members of the LGBTQ community—each of whom faces a well-documented risk of imprisonment, torture, or execution upon return to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Removing these individuals to Iran without meaningful and individualized determinations of their protection claims breaches the United States’ binding obligations under Article 33 of the Refugee Convention, Article 3 of the Convention Against Torture, Sections 208 and 241(b)(3) of the INA, Section 2242 of FARRA, and their implementing regulations. Coordinating those removals with representatives of the very regime from which these asylum seekers fled compounds the violation.
10. Religious minorities, and particularly Christian converts, face especially grave danger if returned to Iran. The Islamic Republic has long treated conversion from Islam, underground church activity, and religious expression outside state-approved channels as threats to the regime. IALDF's investigation has confirmed that Christian converts are among the Iranian asylum seekers who have been deported or remain at risk of deportation.
11. I have worked closely with IALDF’s Interim Executive Director, Ali Rahnama, to address this human rights crisis. IALDF has submitted Freedom of Information Act requests to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. Department of State seeking records concerning the diplomatic, legal, and operational coordination underlying the removal, expulsion, or transfer of Iranian nationals from the United States to the Islamic Republic of Iran. In April 2026, IALDF filed a complaint in federal court in Washington, D.C., seeking declaratory and injunctive relief regarding these FOIA requests. We filed this case on July 7, 2026.
12. Led by Mr. Rahnama, IALDF representatives have visited ICE detention facilities and met with Iranian asylum seekers in several states including Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. I joined Mr. Rahnama on visits to ICE detention centers in

Folkston, Georgia to meet Iranian asylum seekers myself. Through those visits and related investigation, IALDF learned that many of these asylum seekers face grave risks if returned to Iran because they participated in the 2022 Woman, Life, Freedom movement, belong to religious minorities, converted to or promoted Christianity, or are members of the LGBTQ community. IALDF has also educated members of Congress about the mass deportation flights. Those efforts contributed to a public letter from twelve U.S. Senators to Secretary of State Marco Rubio raising concerns that the administration was returning individuals to a country where they may face persecution or torture, in violation of U.S. and international law. IALDF has raised similar concerns with human rights organizations, including Freedom House; filed urgent communications with the United Nations Committee Against Torture in connection with threatened removals; and worked with pro bono counsel on habeas petitions and related emergency litigation.

13. Tragically, the Islamic Republic of Iran remains one of the world's most repressive governments. Its record includes systematic persecution, arbitrary detention, torture, coerced confessions, denial of fair trials, executions, and brutal suppression of peaceful dissent. Recent nationwide protests in early 2026 were met with extraordinary violence, including reports of mass killings of tens of thousands, mass imprisonment, and the maiming or serious injury of countless protesters who sought basic dignity, freedom, and democratic change. The Islamic Regime publicly executed over 800 individuals this year alone, according to Iran Human Rights Monitor's June 2026 report. This repression is not only a human rights catastrophe; it is also the deliberate suppression of the extraordinary human capital of more than 90 million Iranians, whose talents and aspirations have been constrained by an authoritarian system that fears its own people.
14. The U.S. Department of State's own 2024 Country Reports, published on August 12, 2025, confirm this well-documented pattern of repression. In its most recent Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Iran, the State Department identified that the Islamic Republic of Iran executed hundreds of prisoners in 2024 alone, including many who confessed under torture and faced unfair trials. Some of those included a number of prisoners detained in connection with protests related to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement who were arrested, sentenced to prison and death, subjected to torture, or executed during the year. The State Department further identified serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary or

unlawful killings, enforced disappearance, torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, harsh and life-threatening prison conditions, arbitrary arrest and detention, serious restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, association, and religion, and the denial of fair trial guarantees. These official findings confirm that individuals returned to Iran—particularly political dissidents, religious converts, women’s rights advocates, protesters, and other perceived opponents of the regime—face a grave and foreseeable risk of persecution, imprisonment, torture, or worse.

15. Notwithstanding this documented pattern of repression, the United States government is coordinating with the Islamic Regime to carry out mass deportation flights to Iran. According to public reporting, the first deportation flight arrived in Tehran via Qatar in late September or early October 2025, and additional flights followed in December 2025 and January 2026. The January flight occurred just a couple of weeks after the Islamic Regime massacred tens of thousands of protesters.

The U.S. Government Has Provided Confidential Information to The Iranian Regime

16. During IALDF’s visits with Iranian asylum seekers detained by ICE, Mr. Rahnama met with individuals who reported that a senior official from the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Interest Section in Washington, D.C., had been permitted direct access to Iranian detainees in ICE custody. According to these detainees, facility personnel instructed Iranian detainees to meet with the Iranian Regime official who knew their names and possessed specific information about their detention status, immigration proceedings, and court cases. Detainees understood him to be encouraging return to Iran while minimizing the risks they would face. These accounts are consistent with IALDF’s broader concern that the U.S. government coordinated with representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran in connection with mass deportation flights and shared information concerning Iranian nationals facing removal to Iran.
17. On Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at approximately 12:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, I received an unsolicited and unexpected telephone call from the Senior Official of Iran’s Interest Section in Washington, D.C.

18. I had previously met in person with this individual on at least two occasions and spoken with him by telephone on a few occasions. Those interactions were approximately fifteen years ago in connection with a trip my father made to Iran who was visiting Iran for the first time in approximately 40 years. This Senior Official assisted my father to receive his Iranian Passport and with necessary paperwork and travel documentation.
19. During the telephone call on March 24, 2026, the Senior Official began by asking how my father was doing. I informed him that my father had passed away in 2022. He expressed condolences and then stated that he wanted to share with me his perspective regarding his visits to Iranian detainees held in ICE facilities and requested that we meet in person to discuss the matter further.
20. I made clear to the Senior Official that as a lawyer advocating on behalf of Iranian detainees seeking freedom from detention and asylum from the Iranian Regime, we were on opposite sides. I wanted him to understand that I was a lawyer investigating the very issue he wanted to talk about and that we were in adverse positions. I said words to the effect of: I am trying to help these asylum seekers obtain freedom from detention and protection in the United States; you are trying to take them back. He said “I understand” but that he wanted me to understand his perspective.
21. The Senior Official began by stating that he was visiting ICE detention centers in response to detainees asking for or needing help. The Senior Official disclosed that, approximately one year earlier, the U.S. State Department had instituted a new system and new policy concerning Iranian detainees. He stated that this change in policy was initiated by the U.S. Department of State reaching out to him, and that a meeting took place in Washington, D.C., under the auspices of the Embassy of Pakistan. At this meeting, according to the Senior Official, the State Department stated, in substance and effect, that the State Department wanted to “get rid of Iranian detainees” and asked the Islamic Regime for help.
22. The Senior Official stated that, pursuant to coordination between the Islamic Regime and the U.S. government, 150-160 Iranians were sent back to Iran and that many were asylum seekers.
23. The Senior Official stated that, pursuant to this new U.S. State Department-Islamic Regime policy, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Interest Section and ICE liaison officials met monthly

to review files of detainees and to select individuals for deportation including mass deportation flights. He indicated that this arrangement meant that the Islamic Republic of Iran had obtained the names and detailed information of Iranian asylum seekers—individuals who had sought protection from the very government now receiving their confidential case information.

24. The Senior Official stated that the last monthly in person meeting between the Interest Section and ICE occurred just before the war started on February 28, 2026.
25. The Senior Official stated that he maintained individual files on each detainee, including information about what was happening with their court hearings and legal processes. He also received copies of their final removal orders. Final removal orders often contain sensitive confidential information about asylum claims. He mentioned that he also helped detainees with their documents.
26. The Senior Official was trying to make the case that it was the asylum seekers themselves who were pushing him to help them return to Iran and that he was helping them either to self-deport or to go to a third country because their situation in U.S. detention was not tenable when ICE is keeping them in detention for a year or more. Contrary to his claims, IALDF's investigation reveals that many asylum seekers were coerced to meet with him while in ICE detention.
27. The Senior Official stated that he had visited ICE detention facilities in Florence, Arizona and in the San Diego, California area. He stated that he had plans to visit facilities in Louisiana, Chicago, and Texas, before the war started on February 28, 2026, which stopped those visits. He stated that he wanted to go to the bigger facilities that held more Iranian nationals.
28. As I pressed for more information during the call, the Senior Official became more cautious and began providing less information. Also at times he said, "I need to check my notes."
29. During the call, we discussed the number of detainees. The Senior Official stated that there were approximately 400 to 500 Iranian asylum seekers that ICE was detaining but approximately up to 4,000 Iranian nationals in total within the ICE system.

30. The Senior Official stated that he had helped ICE and the State Department to distinguish Iranian national detainees from other detainees. He made clear he was working in close coordination with ICE and the State Department.
31. The Senior Official disclosed that he had helped facilitate the deportation of approximately 150 to 160 Iranian nationals to Iran. He stated that these individuals were mostly between 30 and 40 years of age. He stated that he knew where each of these individuals was in the legal process.
32. The Senior Official stated that ICE was providing introductions for him to meet with these detained individuals at the facilities.
33. Our call lasted about twenty minutes, at the end of which the Senior Official insisted on meeting in person. I made no commitment at the time.
34. He confirmed my worst fears—that the U.S. government was working closely with the Islamic Regime, sharing confidential information, and deporting asylum seekers in coordination with the Islamic Regime. After the call, upon reflection, I concluded that I had a duty to gather more facts. So, the next day, I called the Senior Official and asked him to come to my office the following day, March 26, 2026.
35. On Thursday, March 26, 2026, the Senior Official came to my office at 2000 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. for an in-person meeting. Also present in the conference room were Ali Rahnama, a fellow board member and Interim Executive Director of the IALDF, and Richard Condit, a partner at my firm who specializes in whistleblower law.
36. The meeting with the Senior Official started at 3:00 p.m. and lasted about 75 minutes. He indicated that he was speaking with us frankly but “confidentially.” I informed him that what he told us could not be treated as confidential because Mr. Rahnama and I have key roles with the IALDF and that the IALDF has an ongoing investigation on behalf of asylum seekers fleeing the Islamic Regime. Nevertheless, during this meeting, the Senior Official provided detailed information about the following matters.
37. Expanding on what he had told me during our telephone call, the Senior Official provided additional details about the State Department’s outreach. He stated that approximately five days before the Iranian New Year (Norooz) in 2025, the second-ranking official at the

Embassy of Pakistan contacted the Iranian Interest Section to convey that the United States government wanted to speak with them. A meeting was subsequently arranged and held at the U.S. Department of State.

38. The Senior Official stated that the U.S. State Department representative at this meeting was described as the general director of the Middle East section. The Senior Official described this individual as being of Indian descent and a Georgetown University graduate.
39. According to the Senior Official, the State Department representative stated, in substance, that the U.S. government wanted to “get rid of all Iranians, illegals.” The Senior Official told me he became upset at this characterization and responded to the State Department representative by noting that Iranians came to the United States with money and innovation, that the number of undocumented Iranians should not exceed 4,000 to 5,000 out of a community of at least 1.6 million, and that the number of Iranian detainees was small relative to the number of ICE detainees from other nationalities.
40. The Senior Official stated that the State Department had conducted similar outreach meetings with other embassies as part of a broader effort to deport people.
41. The Senior Official stated that during the meeting he asked the State Department to provide a list of the detained Iranian nationals they wished to deport for the Interest Section to consider. He stated that the U.S. government representatives did not have a complete list but that, at the end of the meeting, a liaison provided approximately 150 names for his consideration.
42. The Senior Official elaborated on the monthly meetings he had described during our telephone call. He stated that at these monthly meetings, ICE brought documents pertaining to individual detainees and asked the Interest Section to consider those cases. He stated that, for each detainee, ICE provided their legal and immigration documents, including judge’s orders, applications, and—critically—asylum applications and related information. In other words, the U.S. government provided the Islamic Republic of Iran with the names, legal case details, and asylum information of Iranian nationals who had sought protection from the Iranian government.

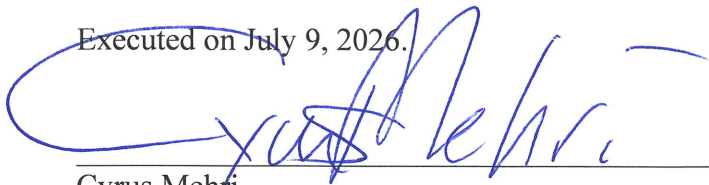
43. The Senior Official further stated that ICE initially mailed these document packages to the Interest Section but also had more recently begun delivering them in person. ICE officers, described as liaisons, would come to the Interest Section's office and hand the documents directly to the Islamic Regime's representatives. He stated that even as of the date of our meeting, the Interest Section received new cases by hand delivery.
44. The Senior Official stated that the Interest Section would then contact the individual detainees and ask them what they wanted to do. He stated that ICE provided introductions for him to meet with these detainees in person at the facilities.
45. The last in-person meeting with ICE, according to the Senior Official, took place in the month before the U.S.–Iran war began on February 28, 2026. He stated that although the monthly in-person meetings had stopped just before the war started, ICE continued to deliver document packages to the Interest Section. He stated that on the date of our meeting, March 26, 2026, he had received files on five detainees.
46. The Senior Official also stated that the current administration's detention policy represents a sharp departure from prior practice — including that of the first Trump Administration — under which Iranian detainees were typically released after approximately 90 days and then required to report for periodic check-ins. He explained that the current practice is designed to demoralize detainees to the point that they lose hope and agree to self-deport.
47. The Senior Official stated that detainees were approximately 80 to 90 percent newcomers to the United States who had been detained by ICE, with most having entered the United States in San Diego. Some had entered at Port Isabel, El Paso, or other entry points.
48. The Senior Official stated that the U.S. government had provided him with detailed information on approximately 300 to 400 Iranian detainees. The Senior Official further indicated that this information-sharing process remained ongoing notwithstanding the armed conflict that commenced on February 28, 2026, between the United States and Iran.
49. The Senior Official provided additional details about his visits to detention facilities. He stated that he traveled alone to these facilities, but that if he knew attorneys in those cities, he would sometimes go with them.

50. He stated that in Arizona, most of the Iranian detainees were newcomers, while at the facility near Palm Springs, California, the detainees had been in the United States for years and were generally more affluent.
51. The Senior Official stated that he had personally spoken to over 200 detainees.
52. The Senior Official stated that the first mass deportation flight departed from Alexandria, Louisiana, on approximately September 30, 2025, traveling through Qatar to Iran. It was originally supposed to carry approximately 120 deportees, but the Qatari government did not accept that number, and ICE had failed to provide passports or other travel documents for some detainees. Ultimately, approximately 50 to 60 individuals were deported on this flight. He stated that among the 50 to 60 deportees, two individuals visibly resisted leaving. He stated those two deportees cut their wrists with razors in protest and were taken to the hospital. He indicated that he met with the detainees prior to the mass deportation flights.
53. The Senior Official stated that the second mass deportation flight departed on approximately December 7, 2025. The flight was supposed to carry approximately 55 individuals but left with approximately 35 on board because ICE had misplaced detainee documents.
54. The Senior Official stated that the third flight, on approximately January 25, 2026, was supposed to carry approximately 51 to 52 individuals but because of a measles outbreak among the detained, ultimately 14 to 15 individuals departed.
55. The Senior Official stated that a fourth flight had been planned for the end of March but had not occurred due to the war.
56. The Senior Official stated that additional deportees were sent back on commercial flights.
57. The Senior Official stated that the U.S. government did not inform the Interest Section of the exact departure or arrival times for flights transiting through Qatar or Kuwait. He stated that on the first flight, ICE sent the detainees in “bad and nasty jail clothing.” For the second and third flights, the Senior Official stated that he personally purchased clothing from Costco for the detainees and gave them money to have upon arrival in Iran as some had no money or were from towns far from the capital Tehran. He stated that the detainees were handcuffed and shackled throughout the plane rides.

58. The flight routes, according to the Senior Official, were organized by ICE through Omni Corporation from the United States to the Middle East and then from there via Qatar and Kuwait airways to Iran. He indicated that Qatar will no longer be the intermediary country.
59. I specifically asked the Senior Official whether the U.S. government had asked Iran or its Interest Section to guarantee the safety or well-being of the returned asylum seekers upon their arrival in Iran. The Senior Official stated unequivocally that the United States did not ask for any protections for the deportees, did not provide any protocol regarding their treatment, and did not request any assurances whatsoever.
60. When I asked about the safety of individuals who had applied for asylum based on political persecution —such as Woman, Life, Freedom protesters— the Senior Official stated that “according to Iranian law, applying for asylum is not a crime.” However, he acknowledged that individuals who had “actually tried to convert people to Christianity” might face problems upon return, which, he acknowledged, could include imprisonment.
61. The Senior Official noted that many of the deportees on the flights had applied for asylum and that Christian asylum seekers in particular often crossed the U.S. border “holding a bible or something to show they are asylum seekers.”
62. When I asked specifically about participants in the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, the Senior Official stated that if a protester had “hurt a police officer or something,” they could face consequences, indicating again that this could include imprisonment.
63. When I asked about the safety of LGBTQ individuals upon return to Iran, the Senior Official stated that during a trip to Iran, he had asked Iranian officials at the foreign ministry about this issue. He stated that the officials told him such individuals were “fine” and referenced a park next to their building—Park Shahr—where he said police “protected them” under what he described as a “no ask, no tell” policy. He did not directly answer whether LGBTQ asylum seekers could face prosecution, imprisonment, or other harm under Iranian law if returned.
64. I asked the Senior Official on two separate occasions during the meeting whether there was any written agreement between the Iranian government and the U.S. government that prompted or governed this deportation process.

65. The Senior Official stated that there was no written agreement—“just a pressure by U.S. government that we have to accept these people.” He stated that the U.S. government told them they had two choices: either Iran takes the deportees including asylum seekers back or the U.S. government sends them to a third country. He noted that the U.S. government had in fact sent some Iranians to Panama.
66. He stated that under the Administration’s new policy, detainees are typically held well over a year, with many facing no apparent end to their detention. He stated that the current administration’s policy represented a fundamental departure from practice of all prior administrations including the first Trump Administration.
67. Based on the facts described above, the U.S. government’s conduct raises grave legal concerns in at least three fundamental ways. First, the U.S. government has permitted representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran—the very regime from which these asylum seekers fled—to gain direct access to Iranian asylum seekers held in U.S. immigration detention. Second, the U.S. government has shared confidential and highly sensitive information concerning those asylum seekers’ immigration proceedings and protection claims with representatives of that regime, raising serious concerns under U.S. asylum-confidentiality protections. Third, the U.S. government has coordinated mass deportation flights and other removals of Iranian asylum seekers to Iran without adequate safeguards against refoulement—the return of individuals to a country where their life or freedom may be threatened, or where they face a substantial risk of torture, persecution, imprisonment, or death. These actions are inconsistent with the protective purposes of U.S. asylum, withholding-of-removal, and Convention Against Torture laws. It also runs counter to America’s longstanding tradition dating back to founders such as George Washington and James Madison of upholding America as a home for those fleeing tyranny. Instead of America being a beacon of hope, the new policy, adopted in March of 2025 and implemented through periods of war and tenuous peace, betrays American values on its 250th Anniversary.

Executed on July 9, 2026.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cyrus Mehri", is written over a horizontal line.

Cyrus Mehri
2000 K Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

DECLARATION OF PASTOR RUBIK HOVSEPIAN

I, Pastor Robak I. Hoospianmer, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am over the age of eighteen and competent to testify to the matters set forth herein. I make this declaration based on my personal knowledge and, if called to testify, I would testify truthfully and competently to the facts stated below.
2. I am an Iranian Christian pastor, a former refugee from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a firsthand witness to the persecution of Christian converts by the Iranian regime.
3. In 1993, I fled Iran with my pregnant wife and two young children after being accused by Iranian authorities of evangelizing Muslims and inviting others to the Christian faith. I feared for my life and the safety of my family. I entered the United States in search of safety, freedom, and the ability to practice my Christian faith without fear of imprisonment or death.
4. I converted to Christianity at the age of fifteen. Since that time, I have devoted my life to Christian ministry and to serving persecuted believers, particularly Iranian converts from Islam.
5. After entering the United States, I established the Iranian Church of Los Angeles, where I have served continuously as pastor.
6. In the past three decades of my life in the US, I have raised my children to serve America and humanity. My son is a marine who was deployed to Afghanistan and my daughter is a physician.

Assassination of My Brother and State-Linked Religious Persecution

7. In 1994, my brother, Bishop Haik Hovsepian Mehr, was assassinated in Iran.
8. At the time of his murder, my brother served as the national leader of Protestant churches in Iran, a Bishop of the Assembly of God Church in Iran.
9. My brother's sole "offense" was his public and unwavering defense of Christian converts who were being persecuted, imprisoned, and threatened with execution by the Iranian authorities.
10. His assassination was carried out by Iranian fundamentalist terrorists acting in alignment with, and with the acquiescence of, the Islamic regime's policies toward Christian converts.
11. My brother's murder was not an isolated crime. It occurred within a well-documented pattern of targeted killings of Christian leaders in Iran. (See Exhibit A and B attached).
12. Documentary evidence concerning my brother's assassination and the persecution of Christians in Iran is publicly available, including in the documentary "*Cry from Iran.*"
13. The killing of my brother profoundly altered my life and permanently confirmed that Christian leadership and advocacy for converts in Iran carries a lethal risk.

Firsthand Knowledge of Systematic Christian Persecution

14. I personally witnessed the persecution of numerous Iranian Christian leaders and converts, including:

a. **Pastor Mehdi Dibaj**, who endured approximately ten years of torture in an Iranian prison and an additional two years in solitary confinement because of his Christian faith;

b. **Pastor Hossein Soodmand**, who was executed by the Iranian government and left behind a blind wife and four children;

c. **Mohammad Bagher Yousefi**, a former Iranian war soldier whom I personally pastored and disciplined in my own home. After I fled Iran, I learned that he was brutally executed by government authorities and hanged from a tree;

d. **Bishop Tateos Michaelian**, my long-time mentor and a senior leader in the Presbyterian Church, who was later murdered.

15. These men were not criminals. They were pastors, converts, and peaceful believers targeted solely because of their religious faith and activities.
16. Their deaths demonstrate a clear pattern of state-tolerated and state-directed persecution of Christian converts and church leaders in Iran. (See Exs. A–D).
17. Following the Iranian regime's intensified crackdown on Protestant and evangelical churches, church buildings affiliated with these communities have been systematically closed by the authorities. As a result, these churches have been forced to operate as home-based underground congregations. (See Exs. A–C).
18. Members of these underground churches face a constant and imminent risk of surveillance, arrest, interrogation, and imprisonment solely on the basis of their religious activity and conversion from Islam.
19. These underground evangelical churches reportedly include a high number of converts from Islam and are among the fastest-growing Christian communities in Iran, which has made them particular targets of government repression.
20. One member of these underground churches who has joined our congregation in the United States in the past 9 months has reported to me that Iranian authorities carried out a severe crackdown on members of her church community in Iran. According to her firsthand account, four individuals she personally knew were sentenced to approximately fifty years of imprisonment under extremely harsh conditions because of their Christian faith and church involvement.

Current Detention of Iranian Christians in the United States

21. At present, at least seven Iranian Christian men from my own congregation are detained in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities.
22. All of these men are converts from Islam who fled Iran due to credible threats, surveillance, or prior persecution.
23. Entire families of Christian converts have been devastated as a result of these policies.
24. Many of their families and children remain in extremely vulnerable conditions.
25. Based on my lived experience and decades of ministry, I firmly believe that deportation of these individuals to Iran would expose them to a high likelihood of torture, prolonged imprisonment, or death. (See Exs. E–F).

26. In more than three decades of ministry in the United States, the past year has been the most difficult I have experienced, as numerous members of my congregation—and other Iranian Christian converts with whom I am in regular contact—have been subjected to prolonged detention by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
27. I am also aware of Pouriya Mirzadeh, an underground evangelical pastor currently detained in immigration custody in Austin, Texas.
28. I am aware that the Director of the Interest Section of the Islamic Republic in Iran has visited these facilities and meeting with asylum seekers putting their lives in serious jeopardy if returned to Iran.
29. If deported to Iran, they would almost certainly face torture or execution.

Ongoing Risk to Iranian Christian Converts

30. The persecution I witnessed has not abated. It has intensified.
31. Converts from Islam are labeled “infidels” under Iran’s interpretation of Islamic law and are treated as enemies of the state.
32. Christian converts are routinely accused by Iranian authorities of being agents of Western governments or Israel, or of posing national security threats, regardless of any actual conduct.
33. According to United Nations experts and credible international reporting, prosecutions of Christian converts have increased sharply in 2025, including arbitrary arrests, violent interrogations, lengthy prison sentences, and severe physical and psychological abuse. (See Exs. A,B,D, and G).
34. I am aware, through public statements and reports attributed to officials associated with the Iranian Interests Section, that there are approximately 2,500 Iranian nationals currently detained in U.S. ICE facilities. (See Ex. I). Based on my pastoral experience, direct contact with detainees, and longstanding involvement with Iranian Christian asylum seekers, I believe that a significant number likely in the hundreds of these detainees are Christian converts.

Danger of Deportation to “Third Countries”

35. I am deeply concerned by reports that Iranian Christian converts are being deported either directly to Iran or to so-called “safe third countries,” including Uganda.
36. These countries are not safe for Iranian Christian converts.
37. The Iranian regime maintains influence and intelligence reach beyond its borders, placing deported believers in grave danger even outside Iran. (See Ex. H).
38. Deportation under these circumstances does not remove the risk of persecution; it merely displaces it.

Extreme Hardship Already Endured

39. Many Iranian Christian converts seeking asylum in the United States have already lost everything.
40. They risked their lives crossing jungles, rivers, and mountains to escape persecution.

41. Some were robbed, abused, or witnessed death along the way solely because they sought freedom to worship.

My Ongoing Ministry and Credibility

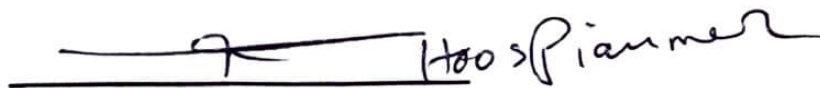
42. I have lived in the United States for more than thirty-three years.
43. Throughout that time, I have ministered in countless churches across the United States and internationally, sharing firsthand testimony regarding Christian persecution in Iran.
44. I have personally assisted hundreds of Iranian Christian converts in resettling safely in the United States.
45. My church in Van Nuys, California, currently serves a large congregation of Iranian Christian converts and their families.
46. I continue to pastor, support, and protect these believers to the best of my ability.

Conclusion and Plea for Protection

47. Based on my personal experience as both a victim and a firsthand witness of religious persecution in Iran, I unequivocally state that Iranian Christian converts face a clear and present danger if deported.
48. I respectfully urge that humanitarian relief, asylum protections, and safeguards against removal be granted to these individuals.
49. Allowing Iranian Christian converts to remain in the United States is consistent with America's constitutional commitment to religious freedom, human rights, and protection of the persecuted.
50. I am willing to meet with authorities, counsel, or adjudicators to provide further testimony or clarification regarding the matters stated herein.
51. U.S.-based Christian communities have been providing, and remain willing to continue providing, substantial assistance to Iranian Christian asylum seekers in order to support their lawful integration and resettlement in the United States.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on this 20th day of January, 2026,
at Burbank California



Pastor Rubik Hovsepian
Iranian Church of Los Angeles

EXHIBIT INDEX

Declaration of Pastor Rubik Hovsepian

Exhibit A

UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran

Source:

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-iran>

What it corroborates:

- Pattern and practice of persecution
 - Targeting of Christian converts and pastors
 - Arbitrary arrests, killings, and enforced disappearances
-

Exhibit B

USCIRF Annual Reports – Iran (Country of Particular Concern)

Source:

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
<https://www.uscirf.gov/countries/iran>

What it corroborates:

- Systematic religious persecution
- Heightened risk to converts from Islam

Exhibit F

UNHCR Guidance on Religion-Based Refugee Claims

Source:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/40d8427a4>

What it corroborates:

- Conversion as a basis for well-founded fear
 - Non-refoulement obligations
-

Exhibit G

NGO Reports on Persecution of Christian Converts in Iran

Sources:

Amnesty International
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/>

Human Rights Watch
<https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/north-africa/iran>

What it corroborates:

- Arrests, torture, executions
 - Family devastation and long sentences
-

Exhibit H

Transnational Repression & Third-Country Risk

Sources:

UN Special Procedures on Transnational Repression
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures>

Human Rights Watch – Transnational Repression
<https://www.hrw.org/topic/free-speech/transnational-repression>

What it corroborates:

- Iranian regime's extraterritorial reach
- Risk in "safe third countries"

Exhibit I

Number of Iranian nationals currently detained in U.S. ICE facilities

"Abolfazl Mehrabadi, the acting head of Iran's interests section in Washington DC, told the deportees at the departure airport that almost 2,500 other Iranians were in US immigration custody and were expected to be returned to Iran on special flights, according to the deportee."

Source:

Iran International, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202510033845>

Exhibit C

U.S. Department of State – International Religious Freedom Report (Iran)

Source:

U.S. Department of State

<https://www.state.gov/international-religious-freedom-reports/>

What it corroborates:

- Apostasy-related persecution
- Criminalization of conversion
- Surveillance and prosecution of house churches

Exhibit D

U.S. Department of State – Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (Iran)

Source:

U.S. Department of State

<https://www.state.gov/country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>

What it corroborates:

- Use of “national security” and “foreign influence” charges
- Arbitrary detention and torture

Exhibit E

UN Committee Against Torture – Iran (Non-Refoulement Risk)

Source:

Committee Against Torture

<https://tbinternet.ohchr.org>

What it corroborates:

- Substantial risk of torture upon return
- CAT-standard danger for religious converts



Iran: Background and U.S. Policy

Updated May 22, 2025

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R47321



R47321

May 22, 2025

Clayton Thomas
Specialist in Middle
Eastern Affairs

Iran: Background and U.S. Policy

Dynamics between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran have shifted in the past year: after Iran faced significant military and strategic setbacks in 2024, largely at the hands of Israel and the United States, U.S. and Iranian diplomats are now engaged in the first diplomatic talks in years over Iran's nuclear program. U.S. partners and adversaries are likely to consider the outcomes of that engagement in making future assumptions and policy decisions. Congress, which has overseen and shaped U.S. policy toward longtime adversary Iran, may use legislative policy tools to influence U.S.-Iran discussions and respond to their results.

Successive U.S. Administrations have identified several Iranian policies as challenges to U.S. interests, including the Iranian government's support for terrorist groups and other partners across the Middle East region (sometimes referred to as the 'axis of resistance'); Iran's missile and nuclear programs; its human rights violations; and its deepening ties with Russia and the People's Republic of China. Congress has played a major role in shaping U.S. policy toward Iran, including by authorizing extensive U.S. sanctions, reviewing past diplomatic agreements with Iran, and funding support to U.S. partners facing Iranian threats. Iran and the United States do not have formal diplomatic relations and have largely acted antagonistically since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 but have periodically participated in bilateral or multilateral negotiations. Opposition to the United States and its regional influence has been a defining feature of the Islamic Republic's identity and ideology since its establishment.

Iran-backed groups began a parallel campaign of attacks on Israeli, U.S., and other targets across the Middle East in the aftermath of the October 2023 attack on Israel led by Hamas (a longtime recipient of Iranian support) and the onset of the Israel-Hamas war. The United States and various U.S. partners sought to deter and respond to these attacks, including via military action. Iran directly attacked Israel on two occasions, and the United States and other U.S. partners contributed to Israel's defense. In 2024, Iran's regional position weakened significantly, raising questions about the future viability of the "axis of resistance": Israel severely degraded Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, and regime change in Syria removed a longtime Iranian ally. These setbacks, as well as the reportedly underwhelming performance and uncertain future of Iran's once-vaunted ballistic missile program, suggest that Iran's leaders may no longer be able to rely as much on these traditional asymmetric methods of Iranian power projection. The apparent degradation of some of Iran's regional allies, and the failure of these groups and Iran's own capabilities to deter direct Israeli military action against Iran and its allies, have sparked debate among Iranian policymakers about the future of Iran's strategic calculus, including its nuclear program.

Weeks after retaking office, President Donald Trump directed the imposition of 'maximum pressure' on the Iranian regime via sanctions, legal action, and other means to "end its nuclear threat" and abandon its support for terrorist groups. President Trump has threatened U.S. military action against Iran (and has increased the U.S. force posture in the region) while expressing his preference for a deal that ensures Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon. In April 2025, U.S. and Iranian officials began diplomatic talks around such a deal. President Trump in 2018 ceased U.S. participation in a prior multilateral accord, the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which imposed restraints on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for relief from most U.S. and international sanctions. The U.S. intelligence community continues to assess that Iran is not currently undertaking nuclear weapons-related activities, but that Iran could enrich enough uranium for more than a dozen nuclear weapons within weeks if it chose to do so. Iran's enrichment capabilities appear central to ongoing talks.

As of May 2025, President Trump has said the two sides are "close" to a deal. Depending on whether or not an accord emerges and its possible contours, U.S. and Israeli interests could align or diverge, particularly if Israeli officials (some of whom have reportedly favored military action against Iran) assess that the components of a U.S.-Iran agreement do not meet Israel's national security needs. In early 2025, President Trump reportedly discouraged an Israeli plan to strike Iran's nuclear facilities that may have anticipated U.S. support. Saudi Arabia and some other regional allies have expressed support for U.S.-Iran talks, perhaps a result of their own rapprochement with Iran in recent years.

U.S.-Iran diplomacy and the responses of regional and global actors to U.S. policy may prompt new issues, decisions, and debates for Congress. If talks lead to a formal agreement on Iran's nuclear program, current law requires the Administration to submit the accord for congressional review. Congress could assess a nuclear agreement on its merits and weigh whether or how to engage on other issues of congressional concern such as regional security and human rights. Congress could exercise oversight of executive branch actions (including the content and conduct of negotiations) and could consider measures supporting, opposing, or placing conditions on the relaxation or removal of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Were talks not to result in an agreement or to end acrimoniously, Congress could take action with respect to the authorization, costs, and possible outcomes of U.S. military action against Iran and questions related to U.S. support to Israel or other U.S. partners potentially threatened by Iran.

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Overview and Issues for Congress

The Islamic Republic of Iran, the second-largest country in the Middle East by size (after Saudi Arabia) and population (after Egypt), has for decades played an assertive, and by many accounts destabilizing, role in the region and beyond. Iran also derives influence from its oil reserves (the world's fourth largest) and its status as the world's most populous Shia Muslim country.

Figure 1. Iran at a Glance



Geography	Total Area: 1,648,195 sq km (636,372 sq. miles), 2.5 times the size of Texas
People	Population: 88,386,937 (17 th largest in the world) % of Population 14 or Younger: 23.3% Religion: Muslim 98.5% (90-95% Shia, 5-10% Sunni), other (Christina, Baha'i, Zoroastrian, Jewish) 1.5% (2020) Literacy: 88.7% (male 92.4%, female 88.7%) (2021)
Economy	GDP Per Capita (at purchasing power parity): \$21,220 (2024, 78 th in the world) Real GDP Growth: 3.3% Year-on-year Inflation: 37.5% Unemployment: 8% (2024 forecast) Major Export Partners: China (36%), Turkey (20%), Kuwait (6%), Pakistan (5%) Major Import Partners: China (28%), UAE (19%), Brazil (13%), Turkey (9%)

Source: Graphic created by CRS. Fact information (2024 estimates unless otherwise specified) from Economist Intelligence Unit, International Monetary Fund, and Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*.

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed Shah and ushered in the Islamic Republic, Iran has presented a major foreign policy challenge for the United States, with successive U.S. Administrations identifying Iran and its activities as a threat to the United States and its interests. Of particular concern are the Iranian government's nuclear program, its military capabilities, its support for terrorist groups, and its partnerships with Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The U.S. government has condemned the Iranian government's human rights violations and detention of U.S. citizens and others, and has wrestled with how to support protest movements in Iran. The United States has used a range of policy tools intended to reduce the threat posed by Iran, including sanctions, limited military action, and diplomatic engagement.

Congress has played a key role in shaping U.S. policy toward Iran, authorizing extensive U.S. sanctions, providing aid and authorizing arms sales for partners threatened by Iran, seeking to influence negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, and enacting legislation that requires congressional review of related agreements (the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, or INARA, P.L. 114-17). Much of that legislative activity was related to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which restricted Iran's nuclear program in return for relief from most U.S. and international sanctions; the Trump Administration ceased U.S. participation in the agreement in 2018 as part of its strategy to deploy "maximum pressure" against Iran. Biden Administration attempts to reestablish mutual compliance with the JCPOA foundered amid other developments, such as nationwide unrest in Iran and Iran's provision of weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine.

The October 2023 attack on Israel led by Hamas, an Iran-backed Palestinian Sunni Islamist group (and U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, or FTO), and subsequent attacks on U.S. forces and other targets by Iran-supported groups in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, have sharpened congressional attention on Iran's regional activities. Since summer 2024, Iran and the groups it supports have experienced key setbacks, including the killing of multiple Hamas leaders, major losses for Lebanese Hezbollah, the fall of the Asad regime in Syria, U.S. and Israeli strikes against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, and direct military exchanges between Israel and Iran in which Iran appears to have suffered greater harm than it was able to inflict on Israel.

In February 2025, President Donald Trump announced the imposition of "maximum pressure on the Iranian regime to end its nuclear threat, curtail its ballistic missile program, and stop its support for terrorist groups." The next month, he sent a letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei encouraging negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, reportedly setting a two-month deadline to reach a deal; talks involving U.S. and Iranian diplomats began in April 2025 and continued in May. During his May 2025 visit to the Middle East, President Trump said, "I think we're getting close to maybe doing a deal" but also said "we don't have a lot of time to wait." Changes in the pace and progress of talks could change President Trump's calculations regarding diplomacy and possible military action. Congress has not explicitly authorized the use of military force against Iran. The President has consistently expressed that he prefers diplomacy but is prepared to use force. The United States moved additional military assets into the Middle East region in early 2025.

U.S.-Iran diplomacy and the responses of regional and global actors to U.S. policy may prompt new issues, decisions, and debates for Congress. If talks lead to a formal agreement on Iran's nuclear program, the Administration would be required to submit the accord for congressional review under INARA. Congress could assess a nuclear agreement on its merits and weigh whether or how to engage on other issues of congressional concern such as regional security and human rights. Congress could exercise oversight of executive branch actions (including the content and conduct of negotiations) and could consider measures supporting, opposing, or placing conditions on the relaxation or removal of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Were talks not to result in an agreement or to end acrimoniously, Congress could face decisions about the authorization, costs, and likely outcomes of U.S. military action against Iran and questions related to U.S. support to Israel or other U.S. partners potentially threatened by Iran.

Depending on the contours of any agreement that might materialize, U.S. and Israeli interests could align or diverge, particularly if Israeli officials assess that Iran could reverse some of the setbacks it suffered in military exchanges with Israel last year, or that the components of a U.S.-Iran agreement do not meet Israel's national security needs. In early 2025, President Trump reportedly discouraged an Israeli plan to strike Iran's nuclear facilities that may have anticipated

U.S. support, though U.S.-Israel consultations on a possible strike may intensify given some reports about ongoing Israeli military preparations in anticipation that U.S.-Iran talks might stall.

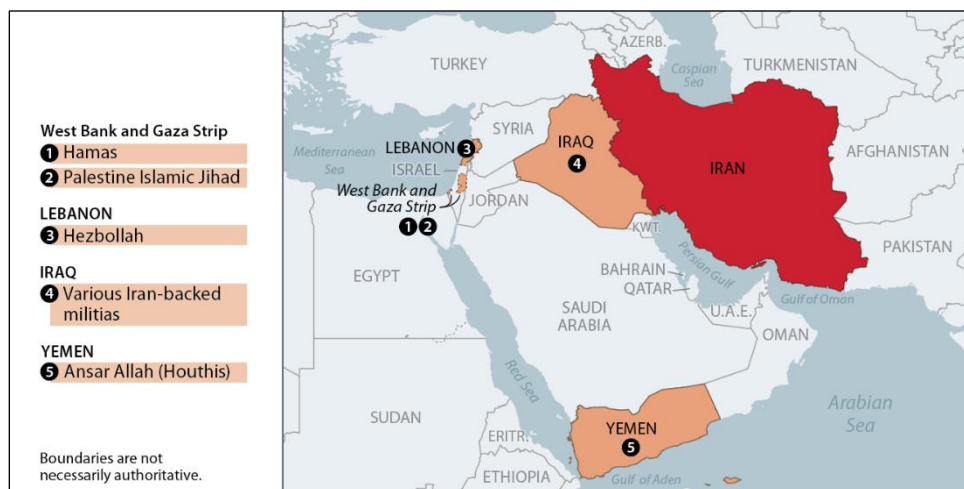
Iran's "Axis of Resistance" and Regional Conflict

Iran-backed groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iraq's armed Shia militias, and Yemen's Ansarallah/Houthis, are distinct in their motives and capabilities, but collaborate and sometimes refer to themselves as the "axis of resistance." At different times and in different contexts over a period of decades, these groups have threatened various U.S. interests. Since 2023, they have engaged militarily against U.S. forces and partners across multiple fronts to a degree not previously seen. Setbacks to Iran and the groups it supports, including military operations in 2024 and 2025 by Israeli and U.S. forces, appear to have altered the balance of power in the Middle East, though Iran-backed groups retain some capabilities and have demonstrated resilience in the past.

Background

To advance its priorities, such as reducing U.S. regional influence, defending Shia communities in other countries, and projecting power, Iran has pursued a strategy of backing political and armed groups in the Middle East (see **Figure 2**). Support for foreign partners, a pillar of the Iranian government's foreign policy since the 1979 founding of the Islamic Republic, has carried strategic benefits and risks for Iran. Iranian leaders might have seen supporting armed groups as a cost-effective way to project power, given that Iran lacks some key conventional military capabilities (such as modern fighter jets). Iran-backed groups often have been both relatively decentralized and "deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric" of the countries in which they have operated.¹

Figure 2. Selected Iran-Backed Groups



Source: Created by CRS, based on U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism* and other open sources.

¹ Andreas Krief, "Network model shows resilience as Iran-Israel clash expands," *Amwaj.media*, July 15, 2024; Renad Mansour et al., "The shape-shifting 'axis of resistance': How Iran and its networks adapt to external pressures," Chatham House, March 2025.

The sometimes-opaque nature of Iranian support for these groups may also allow Iran to attempt to deny responsibility for its beneficiaries' actions.² Nonetheless, the United States and others may still seek to hold Iran accountable, including for actions that Iran may not have specifically directed or approved in advance. For example, in March 2025, President Trump stated that attacks from the Houthis would be regarded as attacks from Iran and that Iran "will be held responsible, and suffer the consequences" of Houthi attacks.³

U.S. government statements have catalogued Iranian support to various armed groups, including the "funding, training, weapons, and equipment" that Iran has provided to them.⁴ Experts debate the nature of Iranian influence over these groups and their activities. Some contend that the groups are "mere appendages" of Iran that directly follow Tehran's orders.⁵ Others assert that these groups have their own origins and grievances, "varying degrees of autonomy," and "symbiotic" relationships with Tehran, and sometimes take actions independent of those of the Iranian government.⁶ The Intelligence Community's 2025 *Annual Threat Assessment* describes the axis of resistance as "a loose consortium of like-minded terrorist and militant actors."⁷

The Iranian government's support for regional groups is coordinated by Iran's **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**. The IRGC is a parallel military institution to Iran's regular armed forces, plays a major unofficial role in Iran's economy, and is responsible for regime security.⁸ The **IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF)** is the IRGC component "responsible for conducting covert lethal activities outside of Iran, including asymmetric and terrorist operations."⁹ Both the IRGC and the IRGC-QF are designated for U.S. sanctions under terrorism-related authorities, as are many of the Iran-supported regional armed groups below.

Attacks and Setbacks Since October 2023

In the aftermath of the October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, a number of Iran-backed groups began attacking Israeli, U.S., and other targets in unprecedented coordination.¹⁰ The United States, Israel, and various other U.S. partners have sought to deter and respond to these attacks, including via military action. Since summer 2024, this Iranian strategy has faced multiple setbacks, raising questions about the future viability of the "axis of resistance" and Iran's support for and relations with each group comprising it.

² Nakissa Jahanbani et al., "How Iranian-backed militias do political signaling," *Lawfare*, December 18, 2023.

³ Idrees Ali et al., "Trump vows to hold Iran responsible for Houthi attacks," *Reuters*, March 18, 2025.

⁴ State Department, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2023*.

⁵ Patrick Wintour, "As Middle East Crisis Grows, Does Iran have Control of its Proxy Forces?" *Guardian*, January 6, 2024.

⁶ Sara Harmouch and Nakissa Jahanbani, "How much influence does Iran have over its proxies?" *Defense One*, January 23, 2024.

⁷ Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, March 25, 2025. See also Erin Banco, "US Intelligence Officials Estimate Tehran Does Not have Full Control of its Proxy Groups," *Politico*, February 1, 2024.

⁸ National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), "Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," March 2022.

⁹ NCTC, "FTOs: IRGC." Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001, "Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism," 66 *Federal Register* 49079, as amended.

¹⁰ Amir Hossein Vazirian, "Iran's unification of the arenas campaign against Israel: Foundations and prospects," Middle East Institute, September 26, 2023; Raz Zimmt, "Unification of the arenas' might turn from an opportunity for Iran into a threat," Atlantic Council, March 22, 2024.

- In the **Gaza Strip and West Bank**,¹¹ the Iranian government has supported Hamas for decades, going back nearly to the group's inception in the late 1980s.¹² Iranian officials expressed enthusiastic support for the October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, but "did not orchestrate nor had foreknowledge of" the attack, per the Intelligence Community's 2024 *Annual Threat Assessment*.¹³ In July 2024, Israel killed **Hamas** political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, when he visited to attend the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. While Israeli officials and outside observers continue to debate the achievability of Israel's stated war aim of destroying Hamas's military and political capacities in Gaza, then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said in October 2024 that Iran could no longer effectively use Hamas in Gaza against Israel.¹⁴ In light of Hamas setbacks in Gaza, Iran has reportedly shifted some of its focus to supporting Palestinian militants in the West Bank.¹⁵
- In **Lebanon**, Hezbollah, backed by Iran since the group's founding in the 1980s and once seen as the "crown jewel" of Iranian foreign policy, began firing into Israel in support of Hamas on October 8, 2023.¹⁶ In September 2024 Israel killed longtime Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in an airstrike in Beirut, an attack that also killed an Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) general. Israel also launched ground operations against the group in southern Lebanon. After two months of fighting and the loss of significant manpower and parts of its arsenal, Hezbollah acceded to a U.S.- and French-brokered November 2024 cease-fire with Israel.¹⁷ Even as some Iranian officials hailed the agreement as a Hezbollah victory, Tehran reportedly pushed for the cease-fire to prevent the group's further weakening. Per some media sources, some in Hezbollah criticized Iran and other Iran-backed groups for not having done more to support it.¹⁸
- In **Iraq and Syria**, Iran-backed groups increased their attacks against U.S. forces after October 2023.¹⁹ Those attacks left dozens of U.S. troops injured and three

¹¹ Some Israelis and U.S. lawmakers refer to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria," the biblical names for the region. See the proposed Recognizing Judea and Samaria Act (S. 384 and H.R. 902) and Ephrat Livni, "U.S. Evangelicals Press for Annexation of West Bank," *New York Times*, March 10, 2025. The Department of State uses the term "West Bank" under regulations last updated in March 2024. See <https://fam.state.gov/FAM/05FAH03/05FAH030410.html>.

¹² U.S. State Department, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1986*, January 1988 and *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1989*, April 1990; Fabian Hinz, "Iran transfers rockets to Palestinian groups," Wilson Center, May 19, 2021; Adnan Abu Amer, "Report outlines how Iran smuggles arms to Hamas," *Al-Monitor*, April 9, 2021; U.S. State Department, *Outlaw Regime: A Chronicle of Iran's Destructive Activities*, September 2020.

¹³ ODNI, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, February 5, 2024.

¹⁴ "Israeli defence minister: Hamas, Hezbollah no longer effective proxies for Iran," Reuters, October 27, 2024.

¹⁵ Ben Caspit, "Israel sees surge in Iran weapons smuggling to West Bank via Jordan," *Al-Monitor*, January 7, 2025; "Iran struggling to support Hamas in Gaza as war resumes – Israeli intelligence center," *Iran International*, March 23, 2025.

¹⁶ Dana Khraiche, "Iran's 'crown jewel' has much to lose from a full-blown war with Israel," *Bloomberg*, November 17, 2023; Jeffrey Feltman and Kevin Huggard, "On Hezbollah, Lebanon, and the risk of escalation," Brookings Institution, November 17, 2023.

¹⁷ "Report: US 'side letter' to Israel pledges to share intelligence on Hezbollah activity after ceasefire, cooperate against Iranian threat," *Times of Israel*, November 27, 2024.

¹⁸ Susannah George et al., "After setbacks, Iran sees Lebanon cease-fire as chance to regroup," *Washington Post*, November 30, 2024; Giorgio Cafiero, "How Iran views the Hezbollah-Iran ceasefire in Lebanon," *New Arab*, December 3, 2024.

¹⁹ CRS Insight IN12309, *Iraq: Attacks and U.S. Strikes Reopen Discussion of U.S. Military Presence*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

- dead (in Jordan).²⁰ In response, the U.S. military conducted occasional airstrikes on Iran-linked targets in both Syria and Iraq, including some facilities used by IRGC personnel. Groups in Iraq also targeted Israel.
- In **Yemen**, the Iran-backed Houthi movement has claimed several drone and missile attacks against Israel, asserting solidarity with Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza. While many have been intercepted by Israeli or U.S. forces, some have struck Israel, leading to retaliatory Israeli airstrikes in Yemen.²¹ The Houthis also began attacking vessels in the Red Sea in November 2023, prompting U.S. and allied airstrikes against Houthi positions starting in January 2024.²² After an expanded campaign of U.S. strikes in Yemen began in March 2025, President Trump posted on social media that “while Iran has lessened its intensity on Military Equipment and General Support to the Houthis, they are still sending large levels of Supplies.”²³ In May 2025, the Houthis reportedly agreed to stop targeting U.S. warships (though a Houthi spokesperson said they will continue to target Israel) in return for a halt to U.S. airstrikes, an arrangement possibly encouraged by Iran.²⁴
 - In December 2024, **then-Syrian President Bashar al Asad** fled the country as his forces collapsed in the face of an offensive by armed opposition groups. Biden Administration officials and many outside observers attributed Asad’s downfall at least in part to what they said was the weakening of his main supporters Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia.²⁵ Iranian officials have said that after Asad’s ouster, which Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei blamed on an “American-Zionist plot,” no Iranian forces remain in Syria.²⁶ In January 2025, Syrian authorities reportedly banned Iranians from entering the country.

Iran also engaged in two direct military exchanges with Israel, in April and October 2024. In both cases, the United States and other partners helped counter Iranian missile and drone attacks on Israel. According to various sources, Israel’s October strikes substantially degraded Iran’s ballistic missile production capabilities and air defenses.²⁷

²⁰ Carla Babb, “US forces attacked 151 times in Iraq, Syria during Biden presidency,” VOA, November 17, 2023. U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), “Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder Holds a Press Briefing,” January 4, 2024. For a frequently updated collection of claimed attacks, see Michael Knights, Amir al-Kaabi, and Hamdi Malik, “Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

²¹ CRS Insight IN12391, *Israel and Houthis in Yemen: Attacks Highlight Regional Conflict Risks*, coordinated by Christopher M. Blanchard.

²² For more, see CRS Insight IN12301, *Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea: Issues for Congress*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

²³ Post available at <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114190034933659125>.

²⁴ Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Vivian Nereim, “Trump says the U.S. will cease strikes on Houthi militants,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2025; “Yemen’s Houthis say attacks on Israel not in US ceasefire deal in ‘any way,’” *Al Jazeera*, May 7, 2025.

²⁵ See, for example, “Remarks by President Biden on the latest developments in Syria,” White House, December 10, 2024.

²⁶ Maziar Motamedi, “What is Iran signaling since the fall of Syria’s Bashar al-Assad?” *Al Jazeera*, December 10, 2024.

²⁷ In December 2024, the United Kingdom’s chief of defense staff said that the Israeli attack “took down nearly the entirety of Iran’s air-defense system” and “destroyed Iran’s ability to produce ballistic missiles for a year,” an assessment echoed by a senior U.S. official the same month. “UK Defense Chief: Israel destroyed Iran’s ballistic missile production for a year,” *Iran International*, December 5, 2024; “Background press call on the situation in Syria,” White House, December 9, 2024.

Assessing Impact

Together, these setbacks cast doubt on the viability of Iran's strategy of putting pressure on, and deterring direct attacks from, Israel and the United States by supporting regional armed groups. Even before the December 2024 fall of the Asad regime, the apparent attenuation of Hamas and Hezbollah led some to argue that Iran's regional strategy had failed and that the axis "was more or less a propaganda fiction to enhance the prestige of the Islamic Republic."²⁸ For Iran, Hezbollah's weakening is damaging not just because Iran's most valued and supposedly powerful ally has lost most of its senior leaders, thousands of fighters, and as much as 80% of its once-vaunted drone and missile arsenal to Israeli operations, but also because that ally has failed to prevent or deter direct Israeli attacks, including on Iran itself. As one analyst assessed, events in 2024 showed that "[w]hile Iran will use its partners in defense of itself, the reverse is not true, and it is unlikely to go to war with Israel to save one of those partners."²⁹

The fall of the Asad regime in Syria arguably represents an even more critical blow to Iran's regional outlook; one Iranian observer described Syria as "the backbone of our regional presence."³⁰ In the aftermath of regime change in Syria, some in Iran, including former government officials, have publicly questioned the wisdom of Iran's past support for Asad and called for a new, less confrontational approach to the region.³¹ Iran's ability to rebuild Hezbollah is likely to be constrained in the aftermath of Asad's downfall, though much depends on the evolution of governing arrangements in Syria. One observer cautions that "Iranian arms smuggling has historically thrived in collapsed or weak state environments."³² During Asad's rule, Iran and groups it supports were able to threaten neighboring Israel directly from Syria, where they were often the target of Israeli airstrikes. Syria was also a key territorial link in Iran's provision of weaponry to militants in the West Bank.³³

Iran's Options

Tactically, Iran's regional activities going forward could focus more on partners in Iraq (where after discussions with the Iraqi government, the U.S. government announced in September 2024 that the U.S.-led coalition's military mission would end within a year) and Yemen. However, various factors could limit the effectiveness of these groups as alternatives to Hezbollah for Iran, including the resistance of some Iraqis to greater Iranian influence wielded via Iran-backed Iraqi militias; doctrinal and ideological differences between the Iranian government and the Houthis; and Iraqi and Yemeni groups' evidently smaller arsenals, local political and security constraints, and greater geographic distance from Israel.³⁴ The Houthis acceded to a May 2025 ceasefire with the United States but a spokesperson said they intend to continue attacks on Israel, while Iran-backed Iraqi groups reportedly debate how to calibrate their activities amid threatened Israeli

²⁸ Ben Hubbard and Alissa Rubin, "Facing a big test, Iran's 'axis of resistance' flails," *New York Times*, September 30, 2024.

²⁹ Dan De Luce, "Is Iran's 'axis of resistance' collapsing under Israeli attacks?" *NBC News*, September 30, 2024.

³⁰ Farnaz Fassihi, "In the Syrian regime's hour of need, its patron Iran makes an exit," *New York Times*, December 7, 2024.

³¹ Farnaz Fassihi, "The Syrian upheaval has Iranian leaders reeling, too," *New York Times*, December 13, 2024.

³² Michael Knights, "Don't assume Iran's supply lines to Hezbollah are cut," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 12, 2024.

³³ Farnaz Fassihi et al., "Iran smuggles arms to West Bank, officials say, to foment unrest with Israel," *New York Times*, April 4, 2024.

³⁴ Matthew Bey, "Iran grapples with a weakened axis of resistance," *Stratfor*, October 2, 2024.

strikes in Iraq, U.S.-Iran talks, and Iraq's November 2025 national election. Iran could also increase its efforts to foment instability in the West Bank by supporting militants there.

More fundamentally, the Iranian government continues to face a strategic conundrum: the regime has reportedly assessed that it could lose domestic and international legitimacy by not responding to Israeli attacks, but would be unlikely to prevail in the all-out war with the United States and/or Israel that forceful reprisals could provoke.³⁵ While Iran and the groups it supports retain some capability to counter or threaten regional rivals, their underwhelming military performance in 2024 has led some observers to predict that Iranian leaders may seek to advance the country's nuclear program as a more effective and reliable means of deterrence (see "Nuclear Program" below), particularly if U.S. and/or Israeli leaders attempt to press what they see as an advantage over a weakened Iranian regime.³⁶

U.S.-Iran Relations: Background and 2025 Nuclear Talks

U.S.-Iran relations have been mostly adversarial since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, an authoritarian monarch who was a close U.S. ally, and led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The United States and Iran have not had diplomatic relations since 1980, following the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis.³⁷

U.S.-Iran tensions continued in the following decade, punctuated by armed confrontations in the Gulf and Iran-backed terrorist attacks (including the 1983 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut). U.S. sanctions, first imposed in 1979, continued apace with the U.S. government designating Iran as a state sponsor of acts of international terrorism in 1984, an embargo on U.S. trade with and investment in Iran in 1995, and the first imposition of secondary sanctions (U.S. penalties against foreign firms that invest in Iran's energy sector) in 1996.

Bilateral relations briefly improved during the late 1990s, but tensions rose again in the early 2000s amid reports of heightened Iranian armed support for Palestinian groups and the revelation of previously undisclosed nuclear facilities in Iran.³⁸ The United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on Iran's nuclear program in response to concerns that the program could enable Iranian nuclear weapons development. Also during this time frame, Congress enacted major legislation significantly increasing sanctions on Iran, particularly on its oil exports. U.S. officials credited sanctions with bringing Iran to the negotiating table; multilateral talks around Iran's nuclear program culminated in the 2015 nuclear agreement (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA) that placed limits on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for relief from most economic sanctions.³⁹

President Donald Trump announced on May 8, 2018, that the United States would cease participating in the JCPOA, reinstating all sanctions that the United States had waived or

³⁵ "Iranian politics and strategy complicate response to Haniyeh killing," Soufan Center, August 20, 2024; Janatan Sayeh, "From 'harsh punishment' to 'tactical retreat' – time isn't on Tehran's side," *Long War Journal*, August 21, 2024.

³⁶ Michael Eisenstadt, "If Iran gets the bomb: Weapons, force posture, strategy," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 2024; Amos Harel, "As Syria collapses, will Iran go for the nuclear bomb to reclaim regional deterrence?" *Haaretz*, December 8, 2024.

³⁷ For an account of the crisis, see Mark Bowden, *Guests of the Ayatollah* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006).

³⁸ John Ghazvinian, *America and Iran: A History, 1720 to the Present* (Knopf, 2021).

³⁹ See, for example, U.S. Department of State, "Remarks on nuclear agreement with Iran," September 2, 2015.

terminated in meeting its JCPOA obligations. In articulating a new Iran strategy in May 2018, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that due to “unprecedented financial pressure” through reimposed U.S. sanctions, U.S. military deterrence, and U.S. advocacy, “we hope, and indeed we expect, that the Iranian regime will come to its senses.”⁴⁰ He also laid out 12 demands for any future agreement with Iran, including the withdrawal of Iranian support for armed groups throughout the region. Iran’s leaders rejected U.S. demands and insisted the United States return to compliance with the JCPOA before engaging on a new or revised accord.

From mid-2019 on, Iran escalated its regional military activities, at times coming into direct military conflict with the United States. Several Iranian attacks against oil tankers in the Persian Gulf and a September 2019 drone attack against Saudi Arabian oil production facilities further increased tensions. Those tensions spiked with the Trump Administration’s January 3, 2020, killing of IRGC-Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad, and Iran’s retaliatory ballistic missile strikes against U.S. forces in Iraq and subsequent attacks by Iran-backed forces in Iraq against U.S. targets.⁴¹ Iran also began exceeding JCPOA-mandated limits on its nuclear activities in 2019, per the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).⁴²

The Biden Administration initiated indirect talks with Iran over its nuclear program but discussions petered out amid other developments, such as nationwide unrest in Iran (see “2022-2023 Protests” below) and Iran’s provision of weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine.⁴³ In September 2023, Iran and the United States concluded a prisoner exchange, in connection with which the United States facilitated the transfer of \$6 billion of Iranian funds from South Korea (where they had been held as payment for pre-2019 exports of Iranian oil to South Korea) to Qatar.⁴⁴ In the wake of the October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel, the House passed legislation (H.R. 5961) that would have, among other provisions, directed the President to impose sanctions on any foreign financial institution that engages in transactions with the \$6 billion in Iranian funds. In testimony the following month, a State Department official said of the funds, “Not a penny of this money has been spent and these funds will not go anywhere anytime soon.”⁴⁵ Iranian officials continue to press Qatar to release the funds.⁴⁶

Developments under the Second Trump Administration: ‘Maximum Pressure’ and Negotiations

In February 2025, President Trump signed National Security Presidential Memorandum 2 (NSPM-2), which directs U.S. officials to impose “maximum pressure” on Iran to compel it to abandon its nuclear program and support for terrorist groups.⁴⁷ NSPM-2 directs the imposition and enforcement of sanctions, issuance of guidance to industry, pursuit of Iran’s diplomatic isolation, and legal steps against Iranian activities inside the United States. In signing NSPM-2 in

⁴⁰ “After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy,” Heritage Foundation, May 21, 2018.

⁴¹ For more, see CRS Report R46148, *U.S. Killing of Qasem Soleimani: Frequently Asked Questions*.

⁴² See, for example, IAEA Board of Governors, *Verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)*, November 11, 2019.

⁴³ Ishaan Tharoor, “Is the Iran deal worth salvaging?” *Washington Post*, August 26, 2022; Nahal Toosi, “‘Everyone thinks we have magic powers’: Biden seeks a balance on Iran,” *Politico*, October 25, 2022.

⁴⁴ The Administration issued a waiver permitting banks in several European countries to engage in the transfer of the Iranian funds from South Korea to Qatar. Lee, “The US moves to advance a prisoner swap deal,” op. cit.

⁴⁵ House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations holds hearing on Iran’s financial support of terrorism, *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, December 13, 2023.

⁴⁶ Jack Dutton, “Why is Iran urging Qatar to release \$6B in frozen oil payments,” *Al-Monitor*, February 20, 2025.

⁴⁷ White House, “National Security Presidential Memorandum/NSPM-2,” February 4, 2025.

February, President Trump said that he was “torn about” it, adding “hopefully, we’re not going to have to use it very much” and reiterating his preference for a “deal.”⁴⁸ President Trump also indicated that month that he would “much prefer a Verified Nuclear Peace Agreement” with Iran over military action, and that “We should start working on it immediately.”⁴⁹

At the same time, Trump Administration officials have consistently stated, as did their counterparts in previous Administrations, that “all options are on the table,” potentially including direct U.S. military action. In March 2025, President Trump threatened Iran with “bombing the likes of which they have never seen before” if “they don’t make a deal.”⁵⁰ Throughout spring 2025, the United States reportedly dispatched a “record-breaking” amount of U.S. military assets and materiel to bases across the region, including B-2 stealth bombers.⁵¹

In March 2025, President Trump said that he had sent a letter to Supreme Leader Khamenei saying “I hope you’re going to negotiate, because if we have to go in militarily, it’s going to be a terrible thing for” Iran.⁵² According to one media report, the letter included a two-month deadline for Iran to reach a new nuclear agreement.⁵³ Iranian officials sent mixed public signals regarding negotiations: some expressed openness to talks under certain conditions, while others cast doubt on the viability of negotiating with the United States.⁵⁴ In an April 8, 2025, opinion editorial in the *Washington Post*, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi pointed to Iran’s affirmation in the JCPOA that “under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons,” and argued that “the scope for trade and investment in Iran is unparalleled.”⁵⁵

On April 12, 2025, U.S. and Iranian diplomats met for the first such reported engagement in nearly three years. The talks were mostly indirect, with the host government of Oman as an intermediary. The meeting also included a reported face-to-face interaction between U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff and Foreign Minister Araghchi—the first such direct meeting between U.S. and Iranian diplomats since 2017.⁵⁶ The two sides met again in Rome (with Omani mediation) on April 19 and in Oman on April 26 and May 11.

While both sides criticize, and deny analyses that compare current engagements to, the JCPOA (see textbox below), talks appear to center on the same issues: Iran agreeing to potential restrictions on its nuclear program in exchange for the United States agreeing to reduce sanctions pressure on Iran.⁵⁷ Iran’s enrichment capability appears to be a crucial point: Special Envoy Witkoff said in May that “we have one very, very clear red line, and that is enrichment. We cannot allow even 1 percent of an enrichment capability.”⁵⁸ President Trump in a May 2025

⁴⁸ CQ Newsmaker Transcripts, “President Trump signs executive orders in the Oval Office,” February 4, 2025.

⁴⁹ Truth Social post at <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/113950996936674770>.

⁵⁰ “Trump threatens bombing if Iran does not make nuclear deal,” Reuters, March 30, 2025.

⁵¹ Avi Scharf, “Record-breaking U.S. deployment in Middle East amid Trump’s nuclear ultimatum for Iran,” *Haaretz*, April 2, 2025.

⁵² “Interview: Maria Bartiromo interviews Donald Trump on Fox News Sunday Morning Futures,” *Roll Call*, March 9, 2025.

⁵³ Barak Ravid, “Scoop: Trump’s letter to Iran included 2-month deadline for new nuclear deal,” *Axios*, March 19, 2025.

⁵⁴ “Iran ready for nuclear talks within framework of JCPOA: Deputy foreign minister,” Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, January 8, 2025; “Iran’s Khamenei says experience proves talks with US ‘not smart,’” Reuters, February 7, 2025.

⁵⁵ Seyed Abbas Araghchi, “Iran’s foreign minister: The ball is in America’s court,” *Washington Post*, April 8, 2025.

⁵⁶ “Iran seeks sanctions relief for nuclear limits in talks with U.S.,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 2025.

⁵⁷ “Iran seeks sanctions relief for nuclear limits in talks with U.S.,” *op. cit.*

⁵⁸ “‘This Week’ Transcript,” ABC News, May 18, 2025.

interview said his goal was “total dismantlement” of Iran’s nuclear program but that he’d be “open” to Iran having a “civilian” nuclear program.⁵⁹ Members have expressed a range of views, with some expressing support for the elimination of Iran’s enrichment capability.⁶⁰ In May 14, 2025, letters to President Trump, 52 Senators and 177 Representatives argued against “any deal that allows Iran to retain any enrichment capability.”⁶¹ For his part, the Iranian foreign minister has said “the issue of enrichment is non-negotiable,” while a close advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei said (in comments highlighted on social media by President Trump) Iran could agree to restrictions on its stockpiles of highly enriched uranium and on its enrichment levels as part of an agreement.⁶²

As of May 2025, the two sides have reportedly exchanged written proposals, and President Trump said in his visit to the Middle East that month that “I think we’re getting close to maybe doing a deal” but also said “we don’t have a lot of time to wait.”⁶³ The pace and progress of negotiations could shape the Trump Administration’s calculus regarding diplomacy and military action; the President has consistently expressed that he prefers the former but is prepared to carry out the latter. Congress has not explicitly authorized the use of military force against Iran. Negotiations, and the contours of whatever agreement emerges from them (if any), could also have implications for U.S.-Israeli relations, given some Israeli officials’ reported preference for a military strike (see “Outlook” below). In May 2025 testimony, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, referencing INARA, said “Congress has a right to weigh in on any deal and could actually reverse any deal.”⁶⁴

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015)

Many observers assess that U.S. and multilateral sanctions contributed to Iran’s 2013 decision to enter into negotiations that concluded in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between China, the European Union, France, Germany, Iran, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁶⁵ The JCPOA imposed restraints on Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for relief from most U.S. and UN Security Council economic sanctions. The agreement restricted Iran’s enrichment and heavy water reactor programs and provided for enhanced IAEA monitoring to detect Iranian efforts to produce nuclear weapons using either declared or covert facilities. The nuclear-related provisions of the agreement, according to U.S. officials in 2015, extended the nuclear breakout time—the amount of time that Iran would need to produce enough weapons-grade HEU for one nuclear weapon—to a minimum of one year, for a duration of at least 10 years.⁶⁶ In addition to the restrictions on activities related to fissile material production, the JCPOA indefinitely prohibited Iranian “activities which could contribute to the design and development of a nuclear explosive device,” including research activities. President

⁵⁹ “Read the full transcript: President Donald Trump interviewed by ‘Meet the Press’ moderator Kristen Welker,” NBC News, May 4, 2025.

⁶⁰ See, for example, “Congresswoman Tenney leads letter praising President Trump’s commitment to countering Iran’s nuclear proliferation,” April 11, 2025; “Chairman Lawler urges Trump Administration to redline Iranian nuclear enrichment,” April 16, 2025.

⁶¹ Morgan Phillips, “Republicans urge Trump to follow through on his plan to dismantle Iran’s nuclear capabilities,” *Fox News*, May 14, 2025.

⁶² “Iran’s FM says uranium enrichment is ‘non-negotiable’ after US says it cannot continue,” *Times of Israel*, April 16, 2025; <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114510779763360004>.

⁶³ Barak Ravid, “Scoop: U.S. presented Iran with nuclear deal proposal,” *Axios*, May 15, 2025.

⁶⁴ “House Foreign Affairs Committee holds hearing on FY 2026 State Department posture,” *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, May 21, 2025. For more on the legislative history of INARA and subsequent legislative action pursuant to it, see CRS Report R46796, *Congress and the Middle East, 2011-2020: Selected Case Studies*.

⁶⁵ Uri Berliner, “Crippled by sanctions, Iran’s economy key in nuclear deal,” NPR, November 25, 2013; Amir Toumaj, “Iran’s economy of resistance: implications for future sanctions,” AEI, November 17, 2014.

⁶⁶ “Background Conference Call by Senior Administration Officials on Iran,” July 14, 2015. U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz described this timeline as “very, very conservative” in an April 2015 interview (Michael Crowley, “Ernest Moniz: Iran Deal Closes Enrichment Loophole,” *Politico*, April 7, 2015). See also CRS In Focus IF12106, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons Production*, by Paul K. Kerr.

Trump announced in 2018 that the United States would “withdraw” from the JCPOA and begin reimposing formerly-lifted U.S. sanctions.⁶⁷ The IAEA reports that Iran began to diminish implementation of its JCPOA commitments in May 2019 until Tehran “stopped implementing them altogether” in February 2021.⁶⁸

Iran’s Foreign Policy

Iran’s foreign policy appears to reflect overlapping and at times contradictory motivations, including countering perceived threats from the United States and U.S. partners like Israel, with which Iran has seen “itself as locked in an existential struggle”;⁶⁹ positioning Iran as the defender of Shia Muslim communities and other groups that the Iranian government characterizes as oppressed, such as the Palestinians; advancing the revolutionary ideology of the Islamic Republic; and pursuing Iran’s geopolitical interests.⁷⁰

Relations with Middle Eastern States

Iran’s relations with many of its Middle Eastern neighbors have often been tense. The Islamic Republic’s leaders have perceived these countries’ close ties with the United States as threatening; Iran’s neighbors have viewed Iran’s revolutionary regime warily and at times with hostility, and underlying religious differences have strained ties. Much of this tension has focused on Saudi Arabia, which has long accused Iran of interference in its Shia minority community. In 2016, tensions boiled over, with the Saudi execution of a Shia cleric being followed by an attack on Saudi diplomatic facilities in Iran. The two countries severed relations and backed opposing sides in several civil wars or domestic power struggles, including in Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon.

Iran has since 2021 sought rapprochement with several regional powers, particularly Saudi Arabia. The two countries held talks throughout 2022 that culminated in a 2023 trilateral announcement, with China, that Iran and Saudi Arabia would reestablish ties.⁷¹ The two countries have reopened their respective embassies and have exchanged official visits, including an April 2025 visit to Tehran by Saudi Arabia’s defense minister. Saudi Arabia also welcomed the start of U.S.-Iran negotiations that month. Some analysts have attributed a perceived shift in Saudi official thinking since 2016, when the kingdom was reportedly skeptical of and opposed to the JCPOA, to Saudi reconciliation with Iran and concern that conflict involving Iran could disrupt the Saudi government’s domestic development initiatives.⁷²

⁶⁷ “Remarks by President Trump on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,” White House, May 8, 2018.

⁶⁸ *Verification and Monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in Light of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015)*, GOV/2025/8, February 26, 2025.

⁶⁹ ODNI, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, February 6, 2023.

⁷⁰ For example, Iran has supported Christian-inhabited Armenia, rather than Shia-inhabited Azerbaijan, possibly in part to thwart cross-border Azeri nationalism among Iran’s large Azeri minority. Borzou Daraghi, “Nagorno-Karaback: An unexpected conflict that tests and perplexes Iran,” Atlantic Council, November 9, 2020; Vali Kaleji, “Iran increasingly uneasy about threats to common border with Armenia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 14, 2022.

⁷¹ See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (@KSAmofaEN), “Joint Trilateral Statement by the Kingdom of #Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of #Iran, and the People’s Republic of #China,” X post, March 10, 2023.

⁷² Vivian Nereim, “Saudi Arabia opposed Obama’s deal with Iran. It supports Trump’s. Why?” *New York Times*, April 20, 2025.

Meanwhile, Iran has sought rapprochement with other Saudi-aligned Arab states from which Iran has been estranged in recent years, such as Egypt and Bahrain.⁷³ Iran has normal political and economic relations with other U.S. regional partners, including Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, and Oman.

Relations with Russia and China

Iran has acted to maintain and expand economic and military ties with Moscow and Beijing, reflecting what analysts describe as a “look East” strategy favored by Supreme Leader Khamenei.⁷⁴ In 2024, Iran formally joined the BRICS group of emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).⁷⁵ The economic impacts of Iran’s BRICS membership are likely to be minimal, at least in the short term, but Iranian leaders have characterized joining the group as a “strategic victory” that will buttress the Iranian government’s efforts to resist U.S.-led attempts to isolate and pressure it (including sanctions).⁷⁶

Iran and **Russia** maintain a multifaceted relationship, bolstered by a shared rejection of what they consider a U.S., or Western, led international order.⁷⁷ In the words of one analyst, “as long as the West builds on its pressure campaign against Russia and Iran, Moscow and Tehran are likely to pursue further integration as a collective response.”⁷⁸ Relations between Iran and Russia have grown significantly in the wake of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Iran’s drone program is at the heart of its growing military partnership with Russia: according to news accounts, Iran has transferred “at least 1,000 attack drones” and “dozens of multipurpose” drones to Russia, and the two countries have engaged in a “joint venture” at a factory in southeastern Russia that is producing hundreds of Iranian-designed drones.⁷⁹ In return, Iran has sought advanced fighter jets and air defense systems from Russia. Iran-Russia military cooperation has not been accompanied by a commensurate expansion of economic activity, though Russia and Iran have reportedly sought to cooperate on evading U.S. sanctions.⁸⁰

For the past several decades, the **People’s Republic of China** (PRC or China) has taken steps to deepen its financial presence in numerous sectors of the Iranian economy, as well as to expand military cooperation. China is Iran’s largest trade partner and the largest importer of Iran’s crude oil and condensates, despite U.S. sanctions; Chinese imports of Iranian oil reportedly reached new heights in 2024 (see CRS In Focus IF12952, *Iran’s Petroleum Exports to China and U.S. Sanctions*). In March 2021, Iran and the PRC signed a 25-year China-Iran Comprehensive Cooperation Plan “to tap the potential for cooperation in areas such as economy and culture and map out prospects for cooperation in the long run.”⁸¹ The United States has imposed sanctions on

⁷³ Khalil al-Anani, “Egypt and Iran: A quest for normalized ties amid significant obstacles,” Arab Center Washington DC, June 9, 2023; William Roebuck, “Bahrain and Iran aim to restore ties,” Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, July 2, 2024.

⁷⁴ Javad Heiran-Nia, “How Iran’s interpretation of the world order affects its foreign policy,” Atlantic Council, May 11, 2022; Pierre Pahlavi, “The origins and foundations of Iran’s ‘Look East’ policy,” Australian Institute of International Affairs, October 4, 2022.

⁷⁵ Farnaz Fassihi et al., “What to know about the 6 nations joining BRICS,” *New York Times*, August 23, 2023.

⁷⁶ “Deep dive: Iran hails invite to join BRICS, but few expect major dividends,” *Amwaj.media*, August 25, 2023.

⁷⁷ Hamidreza Azizi and Hanna Notte, “Russia’s Dangerous New Friends,” *Foreign Affairs*, February 14, 2024.

⁷⁸ Alex Vatanka, “Can the West stop Russian-Iranian convergence?” Middle East Institute, April 3, 2023.

⁷⁹ Joby Warrick, “Russian weapons help Iran harden defenses against Israeli airstrike,” *Washington Post*, April 15, 2024.

⁸⁰ Matthew Karnitschnig, “Iran teaches Russia its tricks on beating oil sanctions,” *Politico*, November 9, 2022; Tom Keatinge, “Developing bad habits: What Russia might learn from Russia’s sanctions evasion,” RUSI, June 2023.

⁸¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “Wang Yi Holds Talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif,” March 28, 2021.

a number of PRC-based entities for supplying Iran's missile, nuclear, and conventional weapons programs.

Iran's Political System

Iran's Islamic Republic was established in 1979, ending the autocratic monarchy of the Shah, and is a hybrid political system that defies simple characterization. Iran has a parliament, regular elections, and some other features of representative democracy. In practice, though, the government is authoritarian, ranking 154th out of 167 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2024 Democracy Index.⁸² Shia Islam is the state religion and the basis for all legislation and jurisprudence, and political contestation is tightly controlled, with ultimate decisionmaking power in the hands of the Supreme Leader. That office has been held by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei since 1989, when he succeeded the Islamic Republic's founding leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Prospects for leadership succession to Khamenei (born 1939) are unclear. Iran's top directly elected position is the presidency, which, like the directly elected unicameral parliament (the Islamic Consultative Assembly, also known as the *Majles*) and every other organ of Iran's government, is subordinate to the Supreme Leader.

In May 2024, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was killed in a helicopter accident, jolting Iran's political scene.⁸³ Raisi, a hardliner who was closely aligned with (and a potential successor to) Khamenei, had succeeded reformist president Hassan Rouhani by winning the June 2021 presidential election. Turnout in that election, in which several moderate candidates were barred from running, was the lowest in the Islamic Republic's history up to that point; slightly less than half (49%) of eligible Iranians voted. Turnout declined further to 41% in March 2024 parliamentary elections.⁸⁴ Raisi's presidency was characterized by a popular protest movement and violent crackdown at home (see textbox), and regional turmoil and escalating tensions with the United States abroad.

2022-2023 Protests

Iran has intermittently experienced popular unrest, focused most frequently on economic conditions but also reflecting other grievances with Iran's leadership. The government has often used violence to disperse protests, in which hundreds have been killed by security forces.

The September 2022 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who was arrested by Iran's Morality Police for allegedly violating Iran's mandatory hijab (head covering) law and died after reportedly having been beaten in custody, sparked another bout of nationwide unrest. In protests throughout the country, demonstrators voiced a broad range of grievances, with some calling for an end to the Islamic Republic and chanting "death to the dictator." In response, the Iranian government deployed security forces who reportedly killed hundreds of protesters and arrested thousands, and shut down internet access. In March 2024, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran issued its first report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, assessing that the Iranian government's "violent repression of peaceful protests ... led to serious human rights violations," including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, rape, and gender persecution.⁸⁵ The protest movement receded over the course of 2023 but the fundamental grievances that motivated the outbreak of unrest in September 2022 (and in previous years) remain unresolved, so further rounds of popular protests are possible. The protest movement apparently lacked an organized structure, a visible leader, and a shared alternative vision for Iran's future, arguably limiting its capacity to pose an existential risk to the Islamic Republic.

⁸² Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2024*, February 2025.

⁸³ CRS Insight IN12365, *Iran's President Dies in Helicopter Crash*, by Clayton Thomas.

⁸⁴ Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "Iran's Faustian 2024 elections: Statistics tell the story," Stimson Center, March 4, 2024.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Iran: Institutional discrimination against women and girls enabled human rights violations and crimes against humanity in the context of recent protests, UN Fact-Finding Mission says," March 8, 2024.

In response to the protests, the Biden Administration announced sanctions designations targeting Iran's Morality Police and dozens of other government entities and officials for their role in the crackdown; issued a general license to counter what officials described as Tehran's move to "cut off access to the Internet for most of its 80 million citizens to prevent the world from watching its violent crackdown on peaceful protestors"; and led a successful effort to remove Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women in December 2022.

Raisi's unexpected death triggered a snap election in which several candidates were permitted to run; they included a number of prominent hardline figures as well as Masoud Pezeshkian, who was a relatively unknown member of parliament. Many analysts saw those hardliners as closer to Khamenei's own views, but also speculated that Pezeshkian's lack of a "popular base" or "following within the regime structure" might make him an acceptable option for Khamenei.⁸⁶ Pezeshkian ran on a platform that included reengaging with the United States to secure the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Iran.⁸⁷ He is thus generally regarded as a moderate, though some argue against describing Pezeshkian, or any participant in the tightly-controlled official politics of the Islamic Republic, as such.⁸⁸ Despite his low profile, Pezeshkian was able to consolidate reformist votes and apparently boost voter turnout, advancing to the run-off election and then winning that race, defeating a hardliner 55% to 45%.

Pezeshkian's presidency has been dominated by regional conflict, including the killing of Hamas leader Haniyeh in Tehran just hours after Pezeshkian's inauguration. Moreover, his ability to decisively change the course of U.S.-Iran relations appears limited, given his lack of a political base and the ultimate decisionmaking power of the Supreme Leader.⁸⁹

Though the regime appears to maintain some popular support and has considerable repressive capabilities that it uses often, it has also lost legitimacy in the eyes of many Iranians.⁹⁰ Authoritarian regimes can be vulnerable when under stress, and assessing their stability or fragility can be difficult.⁹¹ The question of Supreme Leader succession could be a consequential and perhaps destabilizing moment for the Islamic Republic.

Iran's Military: Structure and Capabilities

Given the adversarial nature of U.S.-Iran relations and the centrality of various military-related entities in Iranian domestic and foreign policy, Iran's military has been a subject of sustained engagement by Congress and other U.S. policymakers.

⁸⁶ Shay Khatiri, "There are several Iranian presidential candidates, but only one Khamenei might want," Atlantic Council, June 21, 2024; Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi, "Iran under Masoud Pezeshkian: Aiming for change without rocking the boat," Chatham House, July 8, 2024.

⁸⁷ Pejman Tavahori, "Pezeshkian vs. Jalili: Women, morality police, culture," *Iran Wire*, July 2, 2024; Farnaz Fassihi, "Facing stark choices, Iranians vote in competitive presidential runoff," *New York Times*, July 5, 2024.

⁸⁸ Najmeh Bozorgmehr, "Iran's reformist candidate jolts presidential race with nuclear pitch," *Financial Times*, June 20, 2024.

⁸⁹ Mohammed Salih, "Pezeshkian and Iran's regional policy: Continuity and grappling with structural constraints," Foreign Policy Research Institute, July 26, 2024.

⁹⁰ Ali Alfoneh, "The regime in Tehran: Neither invulnerable nor on its deathbed," Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, October 17, 2023; Sanam Vakil, "Iran protests highlight its crisis of legitimacy," Chatham House, September 28, 2022.

⁹¹ "Deep dive: Iran elections highlight political rivalries, leadership succession," *amwaj.media*, March 5, 2024; "What America misunderstands about the Islamic Republic of Iran," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, June 7, 2024; Joseph Wright and Daehee Bak, "Measuring autocratic regime stability," *Research and Politics* 3 (1), 2016; Adam Przeworski, "Formal models of authoritarian regimes: a critique," *Perspectives on Politics* 21 (3), 2023.

Iran's traditional military force, the *Artesh*, is a legacy of Iran's Shah-era military force. The *Artesh* exists alongside the IRGC, which Khomeini established in 1979 as a force loyal to the new regime. Rivalries between the two parallel forces (each have their own land, air, and naval force components) stem from their "uneven access to resources, varying levels of influence with the regime, and inherent overlap in missions and responsibilities."⁹² While both serve to defend Iran against external threats, the government deploys the *Artesh* primarily along Iran's borders to counter any invading force, while the IRGC has a more ideological character and the more expansive mission of combating internal threats and expanding Iran's influence abroad.

Missiles

According to the U.S. intelligence community, "Iran has the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the region and continues to emphasize improving the accuracy, lethality, and reliability of these systems."⁹³ Per CENTCOM Commander General Michael E. Kurilla, Iran has aggressively developed its missile capabilities to achieve "an asymmetric advantage against regional militaries."⁹⁴ Iran has used its ballistic missiles to target U.S. regional assets directly, including a January 2020 attack (shortly following the U.S. killing of IRGC-QF Commander Soleimani) against Iraqi sites where U.S. military forces were stationed, and provides them to partner groups across the Middle East region.

Iran's medium-range ballistic missiles were assessed by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in 2019 to have a maximum range of around 2,000 kilometers; General Kurilla repeated that estimate in 2024 testimony.⁹⁵ U.S. officials and others have expressed concern that Iran's government could use its nascent space program to develop longer-range missiles, including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).⁹⁶ According to a congressionally mandated report issued by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in June 2023, "Iran's work on multiple space-launch vehicles... probably would shorten the timeline to produce an intercontinental ballistic missile, if it decided to develop one, because the systems use similar technologies"⁹⁷

In 2024, Iran twice used missiles to directly target Israel. In the first attack, Iran launched 36 cruise missiles and around 120 ballistic missiles; U.S. officials reportedly assessed that half of the ballistic missiles failed to reach Israel, and most that did were shot down.⁹⁸ In October, Iran reportedly launched around 180 ballistic missiles, of which around 30 impacted in Israel, causing limited damage.⁹⁹ In response to the second attack, Israel launched airstrikes on Iran, including some targeting Iran's missile program. Those strikes reportedly destroyed solid fuel production sites that could take up to a year to replace, meaning that "Iran cannot produce missiles," per a U.S. official in late 2024.¹⁰⁰

⁹² Defense Intelligence Agency, *Iran Military Power: Ensuring Regime Survival and Securing Regional Dominance*, 2019.

⁹³ ODNI, *Iran's Nuclear Weapons Capability and Terrorism Monitoring Act of 2022*, November 2024.

⁹⁴ Statement for the Record before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 13, 2023.

⁹⁵ *Iran Military Power*, op. cit. 43; "Two visions for the future of the Central Command," March 7, 2024.

⁹⁶ ODNI, *Annual Threat Assessment*, 2024.

⁹⁷ *Iran's Nuclear Weapons Capability and Terrorism Monitoring Act of 2022*, November 2024.

⁹⁸ Laurence Norman, "Iran attack demonstrates ballistic missile capabilities," *Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2024.

⁹⁹ "Remarks by President Biden before an interagency briefing on response to Hurricane Helene," White House, October 1, 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Barak Ravid, "Israel strike crippled Iran's military production, sources say," *Axios*, October 26, 2024; "Background press call on the situation in Syria," op. cit.

Iran's Missile Program and UN Sanctions "Snapback"¹⁰¹

In July 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2231 (UNSCR 2231), which, in addition to endorsing full implementation of the JCPOA, also contained provisions related to Iran's arms and missile development activities. Specifically, Annex B of the Resolution provides for a ban on the transfer of conventional arms to or from Iran (the conventional weapons ban expired in October 2020), and restricts exports of missile-related items until October 2023. UNSCR 2231 also includes provisions that effectively allow any "JCPOA participant state" to force the reimposition of UN sanctions, including the arms transfer and ballistic missile bans as well as broader asset freezes and travel bans, in a process known as "snapback."

In August 2020, the Trump Administration invoked the snapback provision in an attempt to extend the conventional arms embargo, but most other members of the Security Council asserted that the United States, having ceased implementing its JCPOA commitments in 2018, was not a participant and therefore did not have the standing to trigger the snapback of sanctions, and the conventional arms ban expired in October 2020.¹⁰² The Biden Administration reversed the Trump Administration's position on the snapback provision. On October 18, 2023, UN sanctions related to Iran's missile-related activities also expired; on the day of expiration the United States and 47 other countries issued a statement expressing their commitment to "take all necessary measures to prevent" the transfer of drones and related technology to and from Iran.¹⁰³

According to UNSCR 2231's provisions, Termination Day will occur on October 18, 2025. Accordingly, on that day, sanctions imposed pursuant to UNSCR 2231 are terminated and the Security Council "will have concluded its consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue" unless the snapback provision has been invoked. UNSCR 2231 and the snapback mechanism will cease to be operational after Termination Day.¹⁰⁴ The British, French, and German UN representatives wrote in December 2024 of their "determination to use all diplomatic tools to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, including using snapback if necessary."¹⁰⁵

Iran's Nuclear Program¹⁰⁶

U.S. policymakers have signaled concern for decades that Tehran might attempt to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's production of enriched uranium using its gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facilities is currently the main source of concern that Tehran is pursuing nuclear weapons. Gas centrifuges can produce both low-enriched uranium (LEU), which can be used in nuclear power reactors, and weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU), which is one of the two types of fissile material used in nuclear weapons. Iranian leaders claim that the country's enriched uranium production is only for Tehran's current and future civil nuclear reactors. According to official U.S. assessments, Tehran had a nuclear weapons program until late 2003.¹⁰⁷

According to IAEA reports, since the United States stopped performing its JCPOA commitments in 2018, some of Iran's nuclear activities, including its enriched uranium stockpile and number of enrichment locations, have exceeded JCPOA-mandated limits. The IAEA has also reported that the agency is unable to perform some JCPOA verification and monitoring activities. According to data reported in a March 3, 2025, statement from IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, Iran has increased its stockpile of enriched uranium containing 60% uranium-235 by

¹⁰¹ For more, see CRS In Focus IF11583, *Iran's Nuclear Program and U.N. Sanctions Reimposition*, by Paul K. Kerr.

¹⁰² "UNSC dismisses US demand to impose 'snapback' sanctions on Iran," *Al Jazeera*, August 25, 2020. For more, see CRS In Focus IF11429, *U.N. Ban on Iran Arms Transfers and Sanctions Snapback*.

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of State, "Joint statement on UN Security Council Resolution 2231 Transition Day," October 18, 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Danny Citrinowicz, "2025 will be a decisive year for Iran's nuclear program," Atlantic Council, November 20, 2024.

¹⁰⁵ Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4069486>.

¹⁰⁶ Material in this section is drawn from CRS Report R43333, *Iran Nuclear Agreement and U.S. Exit* and CRS Report R40094, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations*, by Paul K. Kerr.

¹⁰⁷ See also CRS In Focus IF12106, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons Production*, by Paul K. Kerr.

approximately 50% since the IAEA's previous report issued in November 2024.¹⁰⁸ Producing weapons-grade HEU (which contains approximately 90% uranium-235) from HEU containing 60% uranium-235 requires relatively little additional effort.¹⁰⁹

Regarding Iran's "breakout" time, then-Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns stated during an October 7, 2024 event that Iran could produce enough weapons-grade HEU for a nuclear weapon in "a week or a little more."¹¹⁰ Iran must also complete the other necessary steps for producing a nuclear weapon, which could take as much as a year. Until 2024, the U.S. intelligence community assessed that Iran had not resumed work on its weaponization research. But July and November 2024 reports from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) indicate that Iran may have resumed work on such research.¹¹¹

Strategic setbacks to Iran and its regional partners in 2024 appear to have shifted the discourse in Iran around the possible development of nuclear weapons. In March 2025 congressional testimony, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard reiterated the intelligence community's assessment that "Iran is not building a nuclear weapon and Supreme Leader Khamanei has not authorized the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003." However, Gabbard added that "[i]n the past year, we have seen an erosion of a decades-long taboo in Iran on discussing nuclear weapons in public, likely emboldening nuclear weapons advocates within Iran's decision-making apparatus."¹¹² Increasingly public discussion about weaponization could also, per one analysis, be a "theatrical ... warning to outside powers" as part of efforts to compel the United States to enter talks related to a new nuclear agreement.¹¹³ Some observers have suggested that, given the risk that Iran's moves toward nuclear weapons development could prompt U.S. and/or Israeli military action, Iran might take steps to edge closer to weaponization (e.g., withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) without actually developing nuclear weapons.¹¹⁴

U.S. Sanctions¹¹⁵

Since 1979, U.S. Administrations have imposed economic sanctions in an effort to change Iran's behavior, often at the direction of Congress. U.S. sanctions on Iran are multifaceted and complex, a result of over four decades of legislative, administrative, and law enforcement actions by successive presidential Administrations and Congresses.

U.S. sanctions on Iran were first imposed during the U.S.-Iran hostage crisis of 1979-1981, when President Jimmy Carter issued executive orders blocking nearly all Iranian assets held in the United States. In 1984, Secretary of State George Shultz designated the government of Iran a

¹⁰⁸ "IAEA Director General's Introductory Statement to the Board of Governors," March 3, 2025. *Verification and Monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in Light of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015)*, GOV/2024/61, November 19, 2024.

¹⁰⁹ James Landale, "Iran's uranium enrichment 'worrisome' – nuclear watchdog," BBC, December 6, 2024.

¹¹⁰ CRS In Focus IF12106, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons Production*, by Paul K. Kerr; "CIA Director Gets Candid about Today's Global Challenges," YouTube video, 34:00, posted by The Cipher Brief, October 8, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLQishfXtFs>.

¹¹¹ CRS In Focus IF12106, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons Production*.

¹¹² ODNI, *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, March 25, 2025.

¹¹³ "Iran's weakened position and the status of its nuclear option," IISS, December 2024.

¹¹⁴ Hamidreza Azizi, "Iran's shifting discourse on nuclear weaponization: Bargaining tactic or doctrine change?" Middle East Council on Global Affairs, November 6, 2024; Javad Heiran-Nia, "Iranian debate whether it's time to develop nuclear weapons," Stimson Center, November 8, 2024.

¹¹⁵ For more, see CRS In Focus IF12452, *U.S. Sanctions on Iran*, by Clayton Thomas.

state sponsor of acts of international terrorism (SSOT) following the October 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon. Iran's status as an SSOT triggers several sanctions including restrictions on licenses for U.S. dual-use exports; a ban on U.S. foreign assistance, arms sales, and support in international financial institutions; and the withholding of U.S. foreign assistance to countries that assist or sell arms to the designee. Later in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, other U.S. sanctions sought to limit Iran's conventional arsenal and its ability to project power throughout the Middle East.

In the 2000s, as Iran's nuclear program progressed, U.S. sanctions focused largely on trying to pressure Iran to limit its nuclear activities. Most of the U.S. sanctions enacted after 2010 were secondary sanctions on foreign firms that conduct transactions with major sectors of the Iranian economy, including banking, energy, and shipping. Successive Administrations issued Executive Orders under which they designated specific individuals and entities to implement and supplement the provisions of these laws. The United States has also, pursuant to various authorities, imposed sanctions on scores of entities held responsible for human rights violations.

In accordance with the 2015 JCPOA, the United States waived its secondary sanctions, including sanctions on Iran's exportation of oil and on its financial sector; the European Union (EU) lifted its ban on purchases of oil from Iran and Iranian banks were readmitted to the SWIFT financial messaging services system;¹¹⁶ and the UN Security Council revoked its resolutions that required member states to impose certain restrictions. The JCPOA did not require the lifting of U.S. sanctions on direct U.S.-Iran trade or sanctions levied for Iran's support for terrorist groups, its human rights abuses, or its missile and advanced conventional weapons programs. In 2018, the United States reimposed sanctions that had been waived pursuant to JCPOA implementation.

U.S. sanctions imposed during 2011-2015, and since 2018, have taken a substantial toll on Iran's economy. According to one assessment, economic outcomes in Iran "are determined primarily by the multiple negative consequences of sanctions."¹¹⁷ Some analysts, while agreeing that sanctions have an impact, also have argued that Iran suffers from "decades of failed economic policies."¹¹⁸

Sanctions appear to have had a mixed impact on the range of Iranian actions their imposition has been intended to curb. As mentioned above, some experts attribute Iran's decision to enter into multilateral negotiations and agree to limits on its nuclear program under the JCPOA at least in part to sanctions pressure. Other aspects of Iranian policy seen as threatening to U.S. interests, including its regional influence and military capabilities appear to have remained considerable, though are increasingly in question.¹¹⁹ The reimposition of U.S. sanctions after 2018 may also have contributed to Iran's growing closeness to Russia and China.

As part of its oversight responsibilities and to better inform legislative action, Congress has directed successive Administrations to provide reports on a wide array of Iran-related topics, including U.S. sanctions and their impact (for more, see CRS Report R48282, *Iran: Congressional Reporting Requirements*, by Clayton Thomas). Congress has also held numerous hearings focused primarily or in part on U.S. sanctions on Iran.

¹¹⁶ The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), based in Belgium, provides a financial messaging service to facilitate cross-border transactions, including payments involving multiple currencies. International energy-sector trade heavily depends on SWIFT services.

¹¹⁷ *Country Forecast: Iran*, Economist Intelligence Unit, August 2023.

¹¹⁸ Anthony Cordesman, "The Crisis in Iran: What Now?" Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 11, 2018.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, "New report reveals extent of Iran's growing Middle East influence," *Al Jazeera*, November 7, 2019; Ariane Tabatabai et al., "Iran's Military Interventions: Patterns, Drivers, and Signposts," RAND Corporation, 2021; Philip Loft, "Iran's influence in the Middle East," House of Commons Library (UK Parliament), March 23, 2022.

Activity in the 118th and 119th Congress

Congressional action in the 118th Congress targeted a number of Iranian government actions, including its crackdown on popular protests, its continued oil exports, and its support for terrorist groups across the Middle East. Dozens of measures related to Iran sanctions were introduced in the 118th Congress, with the House passing at least 13 of them.¹²⁰

Iran's April 2024 attack against Israel helped spur congressional action on a large emergency supplemental appropriations package (P.L. 118-50) that included a number of Iran sanctions-related measures:

- The Stop Harboring Iranian Petroleum, or SHIP, Act (Division J), which, among other provisions, directs the President to impose sanctions on persons the President determines have engaged in certain transactions related to Iranian petroleum exports.
- The Fight and Combat Rampant Iranian Missile Exports, or Fight CRIME, Act (Division K), which, among other provisions, directs the President to impose sanctions on persons the President determines engage in efforts to transfer missile-related technology to or from Iran.
- The Mahsa Amini Human Rights and Security Accountability, or MAHSA, Act (Division L), which, among other provisions, directs the President to review whether specified Iranian entities meet the criteria for designation under certain existing sanctions authorities.

In the 119th Congress, the House has passed one measure related to Iran, H.R. 1800, which would eliminate the sunset clause in the 1996 Iran Sanctions Act. Other legislation related to Iran in the 119th Congress includes

- The Enhanced Iran Sanctions Act of 2025 (H.R. 1422/S. 556, the former of which was ordered to be reported by the House Foreign Affairs Committee in April 2025), which would direct the President to impose sanctions on certain individuals related to Iran's oil exports;
- Resolutions affirming “threats to world stability from a nuclear weapons-capable Islamic Republic of Iran” (H.Res. 105/S.Res. 43);
- Resolutions supporting “the Iranian people’s desires for a democratic, secular, and nonnuclear Republic of Iran” (H.Res. 166) and the protection of “Iranian political refugees, including female former political prisoners, in Ashraf-3 in Albania” (S.Res. 145); and
- Resolutions calling on France, Germany, and the United Kingdom to invoke snapback sanctions on Iran (see textbox above) “as soon as possible” (H.Res. 139/S.Res. 81).

Beyond legislation, some Members in the 119th Congress have engaged in a number of public events related to Iran, including a February 26, 2025 event with the Iranian Women Congressional Caucus featuring Maryam Rajavi, head of the National Council of Resistance of Iran; an April 1, 2025, House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing entitled “A Return to Maximum Pressure: Comprehensively Countering the Iranian Regime’s

¹²⁰ See H.R. 589, H.R. 3033, H.R. 3152, H.R. 3774, H.R. 4691, H.R. 5826, H.R. 5921, H.R. 5923, H.R. 5947, H.R. 5961, H.R. 6015, H.R. 6245, and H.R. 6323.

Malign Activities;” and a May 8, 2025, event with the nonprofit group United Against Nuclear Iran featuring an Iranian drone.¹²¹

Outlook

As of May 2025, U.S. policy toward Iran appears to be at an inflection point: U.S.-Iran talks could result in a diplomatic accord or could fail to do so, perhaps leading to U.S. and/or Israeli military action against Iran. Negotiations could also continue for an extended period, perhaps in connection with a preliminary agreement. In any case, developments will likely have implications for Congress, including formal decision points for legislative action.

If the United States and Iran do reach a formal agreement, the Administration would be required to submit it for congressional review pursuant to the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 (INARA, P.L. 114-17). INARA directs that “Not later than 5 calendar days after reaching an agreement with Iran relating to the nuclear program of Iran, the President shall submit” the text of the agreement and various certifications; directs congressional committees to hold hearings “as appropriate” to review the agreement; and provides for expedited consideration of a resolution of disapproval (subject to a presidential veto) during a 60-day congressional review period.¹²² In evaluating a potential deal regarding Iran’s nuclear program and whether it advances U.S. national security interests, Members may consider various factors, including how Iran’s nuclear stockpiles, enrichment capabilities, and other aspects of its nuclear program are restricted; the temporal length of those restrictions; the mechanisms to verify Iran’s compliance; and the views of U.S. allies and regional partners.

One of the most important regional partners is Israel. Depending on whether or not an accord emerges and its possible contours, U.S. and Israeli interests could align or diverge, particularly if Israeli officials (some of whom have reportedly favored military action against Iran) assess that the “risk of inaction is greater” than the risks associated with military action.¹²³ Israeli officials might take that view if they assess that Iran could quickly move forward on nuclear weaponization, that Iran could reverse some of the setbacks it suffered in military exchanges with Israel last year (that reportedly destroyed most of Iran’s air defense and missile production capabilities), or that the components of a U.S.-Iran agreement do not meet Israel’s national security needs. Israeli officials have called for Iran to completely dismantle its nuclear program. However, according to one analyst, they likely do not expect full dismantlement from Iran, and they may hope that their advocacy leads to a stalemate in negotiations that leads the United States to examine “other options.”¹²⁴

Iranian leaders, as mentioned above, have publicly rejected giving up Iran’s ability to enrich uranium. Still, the Iranian government could assess that recent setbacks leave them little choice but to accede to what they may have previously considered as unacceptable restrictions on their

¹²¹ Shahriar Kia, “U.S. congressional caucus holds hearing on Iran: Lawmakers voice support for democratic change,” National Council of Resistance of Iran, February 27, 2025; House Foreign Affairs Committee: “A Return to Maximum Pressure: Comprehensively Countering the Iranian Regime’s Malign Activities,” April 1, 2025; “UANI displays Iranian Shahed-136 drone on Capitol Hill with Speaker Johnson and lawmakers,” United Against Nuclear Iran, May 9, 2025.

¹²² For a legislative history of INARA, and the several votes taken in Congress that demonstrated opposition to the JCPOA but not enough to block its implementation, see CRS Report R46796, *Congress and the Middle East, 2011-2020: Selected Case Studies*, coordinated by Christopher M. Blanchard.

¹²³ *Last Best Chance: U.S. Policy for an Israeli Strike on Iran*, Jewish Institute for National Security of America, April 9, 2025.

¹²⁴ Danny Citrinowicz, “Why Israel will resist any US-Iran nuclear deal,” Atlantic Council, April 28, 2025.

nuclear program, perhaps akin to Khomeini's acceptance of a 1988 cease-fire with Iraq, which he described as "more deadly than taking poison."¹²⁵ While the Iranian government has shown few signs of moderating or otherwise altering its foundational opposition to the United States and Israel, the regime has also at times prioritized self-preservation over ideology.¹²⁶

If talks, for whatever reason, break down, the likelihood of U.S. and/or Israeli military action against Iran's nuclear facilities could increase. In early April, President Trump said "Israel will obviously be very much involved" in such a military operation.¹²⁷ Later that month, he said that Israel would not drag him into a war, and that "If we don't make a deal [with Iran], I'll be leading the pack."¹²⁸ Earlier, according to news accounts, President Trump reportedly discouraged an Israeli plan to strike Iran's nuclear facilities that may have anticipated U.S. support.¹²⁹ One expert has written that a "preventative attack is unlikely to be a solitary event but rather the opening round of a long campaign," in part because Iran's nuclear infrastructure is widely distributed across the country and some sites are "hardened and buried," meaning that "residual capacity is likely to survive an attack."¹³⁰ Media reports in May 2025 indicate that Israeli officials may be preparing to "move fast" with an Israeli military strike if U.S.-Iran talks fall apart, with one report (citing an unnamed U.S. official) questioning whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might act without a "green light" from President Trump.¹³¹

Iranian leaders have pledged to retaliate against U.S. and/or Israeli military action, which could include Iranian attacks against U.S. military forces in the Gulf and elsewhere, against U.S. allies, or moves to close the Strait of Hormuz.¹³² Such moves could have implications for global energy markets and could hamper Iran's already troubled economy and undermine Iran's post-2021 attempts to reconcile and establish productive ties with its Gulf neighbors.¹³³

Congress might consider questions about the authorization of U.S. military force against Iran, other war powers issues, and U.S. support to Israel and other regional partners potentially threatened by Iran. In the 118th Congress, Senator Lindsey Graham introduced a joint resolution (S.J.Res. 106) to authorize the use of military force against Iran if the President determines that Iran "is in the process of possessing a nuclear weapon" or "possess uranium enriched to weapons-

¹²⁵ Robert Pear, "Khomeini accepts 'poison' of ending the war with Iraq; U.S. sending mission," *New York Times*, July 21, 1988.

¹²⁶ Ali Parchami, "An Iranian worldview: The strategic culture of the Islamic Republic," *Journal of Advanced Military Studies*, 2022; Karim Sadjadpour, "How Iran and Israel are unnatural adversaries," *New York Times*, May 8, 2024; John Raine, "Iran's strategic limbo," IISS, December 4, 2024; Masoud Zamani, "The ideological constraints of the Islamic Republic," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, December 6, 2024.

¹²⁷ "Trump says Israel would be 'leader' of military strike against Iran if Tehran doesn't give up nuclear program," Associated Press, April 9, 2025.

¹²⁸ "Read the Full Transcript of Donald Trump's '100 Days' Interview With TIME," *Time*, April 25, 2025.

¹²⁹ Julian Barnes et al., "Trump waved off Israeli strike after divisions emerged in his administration," *New York Times*, April 17, 2025.

¹³⁰ Michael Eisenstadt, "Attacking Iran's nuclear program: The complex calculus of preventative action," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 2025.

¹³¹ "New intelligence suggests Israel is preparing possible strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, US officials say," CNN, May 20, 2025; Barak Ravid, "Israel preparing to strike Iran fast if Trump's nuclear talks break down," *Axios*, May 21, 2025.

¹³² Ariel Cohen, "Iran threatens to hold global energy hostage," *Forbes*, October 14, 2024.

¹³³ Samia Nakhoul et al., "Exclusive: Stop Israel from bombing Iran's oil sites, Gulf states urge US," Reuters, October 10, 2024.

grade level.”¹³⁴ To date, no similar measure has been introduced in the 119th Congress. Members have debated the potential advantages and drawbacks of such a resolution.¹³⁵

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¹³⁴ Doreen Horschig, “Why striking Iranian nuclear facilities is a bad idea,” CSIS, October 25, 2024; Michael Eisenstadt, “With its conventional deterrence diminished, will Iran go for the bomb?” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 15, 2024.

¹³⁵ See House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing “A return to maximum pressure: Comprehensively countering the Iranian regime’s malign activities,” April 1, 2025.

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U.S. Relations With Iran

BILATERAL RELATIONS FACT SHEET

BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

APRIL 1, 2022

As a result of the Iranian takeover of the American Embassy on November 4, 1979, the United States and Iran severed diplomatic relations in April 1980. The United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran have had no formal diplomatic relationship since that date. Switzerland is the U.S. protecting power and provides limited consular services to U.S. citizens in Iran.

Iran has no embassy in Washington, D.C.

More information about the Islamic Republic of Iran is available from the Department of State and other sources, some of which are listed here:

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Algeria, which has handled Iranian diplomatic interests in Washington, has asked Iran to find another embassy to represent it because of what Algeria describes as Iranian interference in its affairs.

Last week Pakistan agreed to take over the Iranian Interests Section, and has asked the State Department to approve the change.

Iran has not had an embassy in Washington since 1979, when Iranian religious militants seized power and took dozens of hostages at the United States Embassy in Teheran.

Algerian diplomats say their problems with Iran began in January when Iranian political leaders began making statements supporting the Islamic Salvation Front during the first round of voting for the Algerian Parliament. The fundamentalist front seemed to be on its way to winning a majority when Algeria canceled further voting.

Algeria recalled its ambassador from Teheran and sent Iran's envoy home. The Islamic Salvation Front and other fundamentalist groups were later banned.

Pakistan, which is trying to improve relations with Washington after a cutoff of aid in 1990, says it does not believe that representing Iran will create problems. On the contrary, Pakistani officials say they can gain by serving as an intermediary between the United States and Iran, a role that Algeria played during the 1979-81 hostage crisis.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 8 of the National edition with the headline: Pakistan to Handle Iranian Affairs in U.S.

Iran 2024 Human Rights Report

Executive Summary

The Islamic Republic of Iran's already severe restrictions on human rights worsened in a number of areas during the year. The government executed hundreds of prisoners, including many who confessed under torture and faced unfair trials. There were new cases of violent enforcement of women's dress code restrictions. While some political prisoners, including persons detained in connection with protests related to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, were released from prison, other participants in the protests were arrested, sentenced to prison and death, subjected to torture, or executed during the year. Restrictions on religious freedom were severe during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: arbitrary or unlawful killings; disappearances; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest or detention; transnational repression against individuals in another country; serious abuses in a conflict; unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict by the government for its own use and use by terrorist groups throughout the region such as Iran-aligned militia groups in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and the former government of then President Bashar Assad in Syria; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including

violence and threats of violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and prosecutions of journalists, and censorship; restrictions of religious freedom; significant restrictions on workers' freedom of association; and significant presence of any of the worst forms of child labor.

The government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Life

a. Extrajudicial Killings

There were numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year. These included executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of "most serious crimes" or for crimes committed by juvenile offenders, as well as executions after trials without due process.

Media and human rights groups documented allegations of deaths in custody due to actions by security forces. In January, the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) reported law enforcement officials in Kermanshah tortured Kurdish-Iranian citizen Payam Abdi to death. KHRN reported police notified Abdi's family of his death several days after his arrest.

Although many individuals were reportedly executed during the year for

homicide, the law also provided for the death penalty in cases of conviction for attempts against the security of the state, outrage against high-ranking officials, *moharebeh* (which had a variety of broad interpretations, including “waging war against God”), and *fisad fil-arz* (“corruption on earth,” including apostasy or heresy, rape, adultery, recidivist alcohol use, consensual same-sex sexual conduct, working to undermine the Islamic establishment, cooperating with foreign agents or entities, or insults against the memory of Imam Ruhollah Khomeini or against the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic). Prosecutors frequently charged political dissidents and journalists with the capital offense of “waging war against God” and accused them of struggling against the precepts of Islam or struggling against the state upholding those precepts.

The government sometimes punished those found guilty of minor or nonviolent drug-related charges with death. The Abdorrahman Boroumand Center reported 58 percent of executions carried out between January and mid-August were for drug-related offenses. In April, NGO Amnesty International reported drug-related executions, often carried out in secret with no prior notification given to the family, made up more than half of the 853 executions in 2023. The Baluch minority accounted for 29 percent of drug-related executions despite being only approximately 5 percent of the population.

In August, authorities executed Reza Rasaei, who belonged to the Kurdish

and Yaresan ethnic and religious minorities, according to *IranWire* and other media outlets. Following his initial arrest, Rasaei was denied legal counsel and subjected to beatings, electric shocks, suffocation, and sexual violence. He gave a forced confession regarding his supposed participation in the killing of an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officer at a Woman, Life, Freedom protest, according to Amnesty International.

Members of marginalized ethnic communities, in particular the Baluch minority, were overrepresented among those executed. Of the 364 individuals the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center reported were executed between January and mid-August, minorities made up 27 percent. Nearly 10 percent of those executed were from the Baluch ethnic group. NGOs noted the real number of persons executed during the year was likely much higher than the government publicly acknowledged. Even for executions the government made public, officials often did not release information such as names, dates, or the crimes for which individuals had been executed.

Islamic law, as interpreted and applied by the country's judicial system, allowed for the execution of juvenile offenders, starting at the legal age of "maturity" (age nine for girls and 13 for boys). In September, the NGO Iran Human Rights reported the country executed 71 child offenders since 2010.

According to human rights organizations and media reports, the government carried out some executions by cruel and inhuman practices, including

public execution and hanging by cranes, in which prisoners were lifted from the ground by their necks and died slowly by asphyxiation. Iran Human Rights reported two unnamed men were publicly hanged in September for armed robbery. Adultery remained punishable by stoning to death, although the head of the judiciary instructed judges to impose a moratorium on stoning in 2002 and no stoning sentences were carried out since 2010.

b. Coercion in Population Control

There were no reports of coerced abortion.

The law directed authorities to prioritize population growth. These policies included measures such as outlawing voluntary sterilization and banning the free distribution of contraceptives by the public health-care system. The law also stipulated that content on family planning in university textbooks should be replaced with materials on an “Islamic-Iranian lifestyle,” with a framework drawn up in cooperation with religious seminaries and the Islamic Propaganda Organization.

c. War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Evidence of Acts that May Constitute Genocide, or Conflict-Related Abuses

In its March report, the UN’s Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran concluded that many of the government’s actions in response to the

Woman, Life, Freedom movement amounted to crimes against humanity. The UN's Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran published a report in July that characterized the government's actions in the 1980s as crimes against humanity and genocide, the latter committed against religious minority groups, in particular members of the Baha'i Faith. The U.S. government had not determined that crimes against humanity or genocide have occurred.

Section 2. Liberty

a. Freedom of the Press

The constitution provided for freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, except when deemed "detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public." According to the law, engaging in "any type of propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran or in support of opposition groups and associations" was punishable by three months to one year of imprisonment.

The nonbinding Charter on Citizens' Rights – signed in 2016 by then President Hassan Rouhani – acknowledged the right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression, including the right to seek, receive, publish, and communicate views and information, using any means of communication. The charter was not implemented as of year's end.

The government largely controlled the country's media. According to NGO Reporters Without Borders, the constitution protected press freedom but the 1986 press law enabled authorities to prevent journalists from "endangering the Islamic Republic" or "offending the clergy and the supreme leader."

The law provided for prosecution of persons accused of instigating crimes against the state, crimes against national security, or insulting Islam. Blasphemy was a criminal offense. The government severely restricted freedom of speech and of the press. Authorities used the law to intimidate or prosecute persons who directly criticized the government, raised human rights concerns, or questioned the government's enforcement of the morality code.

Authorities did not permit individuals to publicly criticize the country's system of government, supreme leader, or official religion. Security forces and the judiciary punished those who violated these restrictions, as well as those who publicly criticized the president, supreme leader, cabinet, or parliament.

The government monitored meetings, movements, and communications of its citizens and threatened individuals with arrest or punishment for the expression of ideas or images the authorities viewed as violations of the morality code.

In February, security forces raided the newsroom of the *Farda-e-Eghtesad* economic newspaper and prevented some journalists from leaving for days, according to NGO Reporters without Borders and other human rights organizations. Multiple journalists were subsequently arrested and then released, including Deputy Editor Ali Tasnimi. Police did not provide any information about why the newsroom was raided. The government-sponsored media outlet *Mizan* issued a statement that the raid and arrests were “not related to their journalistic and media activities.”

In March, a Tehran court sentenced political prisoner Shahriar Bayat to public hanging for “insulting the prophet,” according to human rights organizations and news outlets. Human rights organization Hengaw reported Bayat was initially arrested in 2022 in connection with his support for the Woman, Life, Freedom protests. Hengaw further reported police interrogators attributed several “incriminating” social media posts and images to Bayat, although Bayat denied any connection to the content.

Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure

The government and its agents harassed, detained, abused, and prosecuted publishers, editors, and journalists and members of their families, including those involved in internet-based media, for their reporting on topics considered sensitive by the government.

In February, a court sentenced journalist Saba Azarpeik to two years in

prison and a ban on social media activities for publishing “falsehoods, defamation, and threats,” following complaints from government officials regarding her reporting on the financial misconduct of government officials, according to reporting by Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), *IranWire*, and *Iran International*.

According to an April report by the NGO Defending Free Flow of Information, authorities prosecuted at least 91 journalists from January to March, sentencing 24 to a cumulative 14 years and seven months in prison, with fines totaling more than \$15 million. The most common accusation against journalists was “publishing lies to disturb public opinion.”

Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups

The government’s Press Supervisory Board regulated media content and publication, including the issuance of press licenses. The board sometimes revoked or did not renew press licenses in response to articles critical of the government or for those who were incarcerated for political reasons.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance reviewed all potential publications, including foreign printed materials, prior to their domestic release and could deem books unpublishable, remove text, or require edits. Independent print media companies existed, but the government severely limited their operations. During the year, the government banned, blocked,

closed, or censored publications deemed critical of officials. According to a report by the Tehran Electronic Trade Association, many of the most popular websites available via the global internet were inaccessible due to filtering or blocking by authorities. Many websites of popular international news outlets, the political opposition, ethnic and religious minority groups, and human rights organizations were inaccessible.

The government controlled cinema, music, theater, and art exhibits, and censored those productions it deemed to transgress Islamic values. According to the NGO Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), the nine-member film review council of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance – consisting of clerics, former directors, former parliamentarians, and academics – had to approve the content of every film before production and again before public presentation. Films could be barred arbitrarily from presentation even if all appropriate permits were received in advance. The government censored or banned films deemed to promote secularism and those containing what the government deemed to be un-Islamic ideas concerning women's rights, unethical behavior, drug abuse, violence, or alcohol.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance was required to approve song lyrics, music, and album covers to ensure they complied with the country's moral values, although many underground musicians released albums without seeking such permission.

In April, a court in Esfahan sentenced rapper Toomaj Salehi to death on charges of “spreading corruption on earth,” according to media reports. Salehi was initially arrested in 2022 after releasing lyrics that criticized the government for a “year of colossal failure” and sharing videos on his Instagram account in support of public protests. He was released on bail in November 2023 but was rearrested after releasing a video describing how he was tortured while in custody. His death sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court in June, charges against him were dropped in August, and he was released from detention in December.

In July, courts summoned 100 individuals in connection with cases against two Telegram channels and 500 Instagram accounts accused of promoting the boycott of the July presidential elections, according to media reports. The judiciary also filed charges against media outlets *Hashiye News* and *Bamdad-e-No* for “spreading false news” as part of their election coverage.

Private broadcasting was severely restricted since it required obtaining a rarely granted permit. The government maintained an effective monopoly over all television and radio broadcasting facilities through Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, a government agency. Radio and television programming, the principal source of news for many citizens, particularly in rural areas with limited internet access, reflected the government’s political and socioreligious ideology.

The government jammed satellite broadcasts, a continuous practice since at

least 2003. Satellite dishes were illegal but ubiquitous. Those who distributed, used, or repaired satellite dishes were subject to fines.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance severely limited and controlled foreign media organizations' ability to work in the country. Before granting visas, the ministry required foreign correspondents to provide detailed travel plans and topics of proposed stories. The ministry limited the ability of foreign correspondents to travel within the country and forced them to work with a local "minder."

The government censored publications that criticized official actions or contradicted official views or versions of events. The official Islamic Republic News Agency determined the main topics and types of news to be covered, and distributed topics required for reporting directly to various media outlets, according to the IHRDC. Categories of information that authorities singled out for censorship included discussions of women's rights, the situation of minorities, reports of government corruption, and references to mistreatment of detainees. Authorities also banned national and international media outlets from covering demonstrations.

Through arrests and imprisonments, officials routinely intimidated journalists into practicing self-censorship. Public officials often filed criminal complaints against newspapers, and the Press Supervisory Board referred such complaints to the Press Court for further action including possible closure, suspension, and fines. The judicial system and other government

entities often overtly censored journalists who had been imprisoned in the past.

b. Worker Rights

Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining

The law allowed workers to form and join independent unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct legal strikes, but did not prohibit antiunion discrimination. The law stated workers could establish an Islamic labor council or a guild at any workplace, but the rights and responsibilities of these organizations fell significantly short of international standards for trade unions.

The government did not effectively enforce all applicable labor laws protecting freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for workers. While labor unions were not explicitly forbidden by law, registration as a civil society organization was typically denied for independent labor unions.

The law required prior authorization for organizing and concluding collective agreements and for conducting strikes. In practice, the Ministry of Interior did not provide permits for conducting strikes, rendering them illegal. Private-sector workers could conduct “peaceful” campaigns within the workplace. The law did not apply to establishments with fewer than 10

employees.

The government severely restricted freedom of association and interfered in worker attempts to organize by arresting and jailing individuals for union activities, and restricted workers' right to collective bargaining. The law did not prohibit antiunion discrimination and did not require reinstatement of workers fired for union activity.

Penalties for violations of laws protecting freedom of association and the right to strike were less than those under other laws involving denials of civil rights. Penalties were rarely applied against violators. Courts often labeled strikes and labor protests as security threats.

The government harassed trade union leaders, labor rights activists, and journalists during crackdowns on protests and strikes. According to NGO and media reports, several trade unionists, including members of teachers' unions, petroleum industry workers' unions, and bus drivers' unions, were imprisoned or detained for their peaceful activism. Independent trade unionists were subjected to arbitrary arrest, tortured, and if convicted, subjected to lengthy prison sentences.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), a court sentenced labor activist Sharifeh Mohammadi to death for "armed rebellion against the state" following her December 2023 arrest. The arrest was communicated to Mohammadi's husband on July 4.

According to CHRI, labor councils, which consisted of representatives of workers and a representative of management, were essentially management-run unions that undermined worker efforts to maintain independent unions. The councils, nevertheless, sometimes could block layoffs and dismissals. There was no representative worker organization for noncitizen workers.

According to international media reports, security forces responded with threats, arbitrary arrests, and violence when workers attempted to organize or conduct strikes. Strikes and worker protests occurred across the country throughout the year, often prompting a heavy police response.

According to Zamaneh Media, security forces arrested dozens of union activists and members of labor organizations in the run-up to the May 1 International Workers Day. Despite threats from security officials that these prisoners could face new charges for engaging in activities for International Workers Day, 12 prisoners in Evin Prison issued a joint letter on labor rights.

Security forces attacked and arrested teachers who participated in rallies in several cities to mark Teachers' Day on May 2, according to human rights groups.

Forced or Compulsory Labor

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at

<https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Acceptable Work Conditions

Wage and Hour Laws

The law provided for a national minimum wage for all sectors of the economy. According to a January report by *Iran International*, the poverty line for Tehran residents was approximately 300 million rials (\$600) per month, while the monthly minimum wage was only 115 million rials (\$230). In March, the government announced a 35 percent increase in the minimum wage. Labor representatives criticized the small scale of the increase, as official statistics estimated annual inflation at 42.5 percent. Labor groups reported that even with the increase, the minimum wage was less than half of what would be required to support a family in Tehran.

The law established a maximum six-day, 44-hour workweek with a weekly rest day, at least 12 days of paid annual leave, and several paid public holidays. Any hours worked above that total entitled a worker to overtime pay. The law mandated a payment above the hourly wage to employees for any accrued overtime and stipulated that overtime work was not compulsory. The law did not cover workers in workplaces with fewer than 10 workers, nor did it apply to noncitizens.

Employers sometimes subjected migrant workers, most often Afghans, to abusive working conditions, including salaries below minimum wage, nonpayment of wages, and compulsory overtime. Migrant workers were

vulnerable to summary deportation.

According to media reports, many workers continued to be employed on temporary contracts, under which they lacked protections available to full-time, noncontract workers. These workers were ineligible for benefits or insurance and could be dismissed at will. By law, the length of employment contracts for all legally residing foreigners was set at one year, with the potential for extension.

Low wages, nonpayment of wages, and lack of job security due to contracting practices continued to contribute to strikes and protests, which occurred throughout the year, particularly among workers on temporary contracts.

Despite mandatory overtime being illegal, the government subjected nurses to mandatory overtime, leading to an increase in depression, suicide, and sudden death, according to a human rights organization. Security forces used excessive force to crack down on nurses who protested working conditions, according to media reports.

Occupational Safety and Health

Little information was available regarding labor inspections and related law enforcement activity. While the law provided for occupational safety and health (OSH) standards, the government did not effectively enforce the standards. The law stated inspections could be done day or night, without

prior notice, and that sanctions could be initiated. Inspections of family businesses required written permission of the local prosecutor. Inspectors could report violations to the labor department and issue a notice of violation to the violating enterprise. The law did not provide workers the right to remove themselves from a hazardous workplace without jeopardizing their employment.

Labor organizations reported hazardous work environments resulted in the deaths of hundreds of workers annually. Work-related incidents were most common in the construction sector, followed by heavy industry, mining, the service sector, small workshops, municipal services, agriculture, and animal husbandry.

Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement

Information was unavailable on whether penalties for OSH, wage, and hour violations were commensurate with those for similar crimes such as fraud or negligence. The government did not effectively enforce minimum wage, overtime, and OSH laws, and there were no reports of penalties being applied against violators. Responsibility for identifying unsafe situations rested with the technical protection and occupational health committee of workplaces designated by the Ministry of Labor. The number of labor inspectors was insufficient to enforce compliance.

In 2020, the Iranian National Tax Administration estimated the informal

economy to have reached 37.7 percent of GDP. The government claimed to enforce labor laws in the informal sector, while some NGOs reported it did not.

c. Disappearance and Abduction

Disappearance

There were numerous reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities. Plainclothes officials seized lawyers, journalists, and activists without warning, and government officials refused to acknowledge custody or provide information on them. In most cases, the government made no efforts to prevent, investigate, or punish such acts.

Political activist Ebrahim Babaei remained forcibly disappeared since 2021. According to media reports and NGOs, multiple persons disappeared during the protests in the fall of 2022 following the death of Mahsa Zhina Amini in the custody of the “morality police.” According to the NGO United for Iran, the whereabouts of Iman Valadbeigi and Reza Abbasi were unknown since they disappeared in 2023.

Prolonged Detention without Charges

Although the constitution prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention, the government generally did not observe these requirements. Detainees could appeal their detention in court but were not entitled to compensation for

arbitrary detention.

The government used house arrest without due process to restrict movement and communication. At year's end, former presidential candidates Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, as well as Mousavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard, remained without formal charges under house arrest imposed in 2011. While some media reports indicated President Masoud Pezeshkian had negotiated Karroubi's release, Karroubi reportedly remained under house arrest at year's end. Security forces restricted their access to visitors and information.

Authorities commonly used arbitrary arrests to impede alleged antigovernment activities. Plainclothes officers arrived unannounced at homes or offices, conducted raids, arrested persons, and confiscated private documents, passports, computers, electronic media, and other personal items without warrants or assurances of due process.

In July, mandatory hijab opponent Sepideh Rashnu was summoned to begin a prison sentence of three years and seven months in connection with her refusal to cover her head while riding a public bus in 2022, according to CHRI. CHRI reported Rashnu was charged on fabricated national security charges.

International media and human rights organizations documented dual nationals enduring arbitrary and prolonged detention on politically

motivated charges. Dual nationals, like other citizens, faced a variety of violations of fair trial guarantees and other human rights abuses, including lack of prompt access to a lawyer of their choosing, summary trials during which they were not allowed to defend themselves, and denial of timely medical treatment.

In July, Amnesty International reported Swedish-Iranian academic Ahmadreza Djalali was at grave risk of execution after exhausting all legal options to overturn his death sentence. Djalali was arrested and charged with espionage, a claim he denied, when he arrived in the country to deliver a lecture at the University of Tehran in 2016. Amnesty International characterized his trial as grossly unfair.

Pretrial detention was often arbitrarily lengthy, particularly in cases involving alleged violations of national security laws. Instances of unjust and arbitrary pretrial detention were commonplace and well documented throughout the year. According to HRW, a judge could prolong detention at his discretion, and pretrial detentions often lasted for months. In May, *IranWire* reported two women held in Evin Prison, Varisheh Moradi and Pakshian Azizi, went on hunger strikes to protest their detention without trial. The women were initially arrested in August 2023. Moradi was arrested on charges of “armed rebellion,” while Azizi was accused of “membership in antiregime groups.” Aziz was tried and sentenced to death in August.

d. Violations in Religious Freedom

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Section 3. Security of the Person

a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the constitution prohibited all forms of torture “for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information,” use of physical and mental torture to coerce confessions was prevalent, especially during pretrial detention, including in cases of detained protesters. NGOs and international media reported security forces and prison personnel tortured, beat, raped, and abused detainees and prisoners throughout the year.

Commonly reported methods of torture and abuse in prisons included threats of execution, rape, and sexual assault; threats of rape of prisoners or their family members; forced vaginal and anal examinations; sleep

deprivation; waterboarding; suspension; forced ingestion of chemical substances; deliberate deprivation of medical care; electroshock, including the shocking of genitals; burnings; the use of pressure positions; and severe and repeated beatings.

Authorities deliberately misled condemned prisoners and their loved ones into believing release was imminent, only to then carry out executions, according to human rights organizations.

Courts imposed corporal punishments, including flogging. Blinding, stoning, and amputation were legal means of punishment. At least 148 crimes were punishable by flogging, while 20 could carry the penalty of amputation.

In January, Kurdish-Iranian woman Roya Heshmati announced on Facebook that she had been lashed 74 times on January 3 following her conviction and sentencing for posting a picture on social media in which she was shown without a hijab, according to media reports. Heshmati reported officers flogged her shoulders, back, buttocks, and legs, and a woman officer forcibly placed a scarf on Heshmati's head during the punishment.

Human rights organizations frequently cited several prison facilities for their use of cruel and prolonged torture of political opponents, including Evin Prison in Tehran, Rajai Prison in Karaj, Greater Tehran Penitentiary, Qarchak Prison, Adel Abad Prison, Vakilabad Prison, Zahedan Prison, Esfahan Central Prison (Dastgerd), and Orumiye Prison. Wards 209 and Two of Evin Prison,

reportedly controlled by the IRGC, were particularly cited. Authorities also allegedly maintained informal secret prisons and detention centers outside the national prison system, where abuse reportedly occurred.

Human rights groups accused regular and paramilitary security forces such as the Basij of committing numerous human rights abuses, including torture, forced disappearances, and acts of violence against protesters and bystanders at public demonstrations. The government generally viewed protesters, critical journalists, and human rights activists as engaged in efforts to undermine the 1979 revolution and consequently rarely punished security forces for abuses against those persons, even when the abuses violated domestic law.

NGOs reported widespread police abuse of Afghans, especially undocumented migrants. According to some NGO reports, police frequently rounded up Afghan migrants at their workplaces and detained them for days or months, in some cases beating them or coercing them to hand over cash or belongings. In August, police detained a hearing-impaired Afghan boy, age 15, and pinned him to the ground, causing injuries that required medical treatment, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).

Impunity remained a widespread problem throughout all security forces. The attorney general was responsible for investigating and punishing security force abuses, but investigations often lacked transparency, and there were few reports of government actions to discipline abusers.

According to *IranWire* and human rights NGOs, guards beat prisoners during raids on wards, performed nude body searches in front of other prisoners, and threatened prisoners' families. Media and NGOs reported deaths in custody and prisoner-on-prisoner violence, which authorities sometimes failed to control.

There were reports security forces incited, perpetrated, or condoned sex-based violence. There were numerous reports of sexual abuse, rape, and threats of rape against prisoners and detainees. According to a July 15 statement by the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, six imprisoned women activists were arrested, threatened with rape and death, and tortured during interrogations. In May, a court upheld the prison sentences of the women: Forough Saminia, Shiva Shahsiah, Negin Rezaei, Azadeh Chavoshian, Matin Yazdani, and Jelveh Javaheri.

NGO PEN America reported 2023 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Narges Mohammadi collapsed and fainted after security forces repeatedly punched her in the chest following a prison yard protest against executions in August. She was subsequently denied timely medical treatment. After surgery to remove a suspected cancerous growth on her leg in November, Mohammadi was granted a 21-day release in early December, well short of the three-month home recovery time urged by her doctors. For a year prior to this release, Mohammadi had been denied contact with her family. At year's end, Mohammadi remained on medical release.

In most cases, authorities did not conduct credible investigations into allegations of inhuman conditions or suspicious deaths in custody.

There was no explicit law against female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). FGM/C was most prevalent in the provinces of Kurdistan, Hormozgan, West Azerbaijan, and Kermanshah, according to Radio Zamaneh. Equality Now estimated FGM/C prevalence was 30-50 percent in some communities. In a 2016 academic survey of women in one community in West Azerbaijan Province, more than 70 percent reported being victims of FGM/C. Activists said nongovernmental public awareness campaigns reduced the rate of FGM/C, but authorities had not supported these efforts.

b. Protection of Children

Child Labor

The law did not prohibit all of the worst forms of child labor and authorities did not effectively enforce the prohibitions that did exist. The labor law prohibited the employment of children aged 15 and younger. By law, teenagers ages 16 to 19 could be employed if they were evaluated by the government's Social Security Organization and found medically fit for work.

Labor laws limited working hours to 44 hours per week and required that children ages 15 to 18 work half an hour less per day than adults. Children working in the informal sector were not protected by labor laws. There

were no reports of violators of child labor laws being held accountable. There was limited information on whether penalties were commensurate with or less than those for analogous crimes.

Laws lacked clarity regarding the following: forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale of children or child sex trafficking; debt bondage and serfdom; forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring, or offering of a child for commercial sex, for the production of pornography, or for pornographic purposes; and the use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs.

Children's rights activists estimated there were approximately three million working children.

Child Soldiers

The U.S. Secretary of State determined Iran had governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces and government-supported armed groups that recruited or used child soldiers during the period of April 2023 to March 2024. See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Child Marriage

The legal minimum age of marriage was 13 for girls and 15 for boys, but girls as young as age nine could be married with permission from a court and their fathers. The law considered sex within marriage consensual by definition, including in cases of forced marriage. *IranWire* reported in May that the incidence of child marriage had been rising since 2019. According to HRANA, the Statistical Center of Iran reported in 2023 that at least 27,000 girls under the age of 15 were married in the prior year. According to the government's Registration Organization, in April 2022, there were 1,474 babies born to mothers ages 10 to 14. According to human rights organizations, the increase in child marriage was due in part to a government "marriage loan" program providing financial relief to poor families who wanted to marry off their girls.

c. Protection to Refugees

While the government cooperated with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in providing protection and assistance to refugees, it lacked an effective screening system to identify refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR reported in July that according to information available to the United Nations, as of 2022, the government recognized 761,000 Afghan refugees under a system known as *Amayesh*, through which authorities

provided refugees with cards identifying them as de facto refugees. The country also recognized 12,000 Iraqi refugees under a similar system known as *Hoviat*. A survey by the Ministry of Interior in 2022, locally called a “head count,” registered 2.6 million undocumented Afghan nationals in the country. These “head-counted” Afghans received slips that provided them a form of protection against refoulement, and UNHCR considered these individuals to be in “refugee-like” status.

Provision of First Asylum

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government had a system for providing protection to refugees. The right to seek political asylum was incorporated into the 1979 constitution, based on the 1963 “Regulation Relating to Refugees.” The regulation specified that asylum should be granted if the application had not been made in bad faith and the purpose of the application was not to seek employment.

The Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs, an agency under the Ministry of Interior, held legal responsibility for registering asylum seekers, processing asylum applications, and issuing refugee identification cards. In practice, during the reporting period, the National Organization for Migration (NOM) oversaw these procedures, despite the fact that the legislation formally creating NOM remained pending at the end of the year.

Amayesh cards enabled refugees to access basic services, facilitated the

issuance of conditional work permits, and served as a relative safeguard against arrest and deportation. NGO sources reported Amayesh cards, which were valid for only one year, were increasingly difficult to renew and could be prohibitively expensive for refugees to maintain, due to high annual renewal fees and reports of demanded bribes. Furthermore, NGO sources reported it was almost impossible during the year for newly arrived Afghans to apply for Amayesh status, even if they had valid protection concerns.

Resettlement

By law, refugees could obtain Iranian nationality if they had reached the age of 18, had resided five years in the country (continuously or intermittently), were not deserters from military service, and had not been convicted in any country of nonpolitical major misdemeanors or felonies. Additionally, refugees could naturalize through marriage to an Iranian national, although for male refugees this process was not automatic. In August, UNHCR reported that in 2023 it worked with the government to resettle 3,274 refugees to third countries and facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 460 Afghan individuals.

d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement

The law recognized Jews as a religious minority and provided for their representation in parliament. According to the Tehran Jewish Committee,

the country's population included an estimated 9,000 Jews.

Members of the Jewish community were reportedly subjected to government restrictions and discrimination. Government officials, including the supreme leader, president, and other top officials, routinely engaged in egregious antisemitic rhetoric and Holocaust denial and distortion. Supreme Leader Khamenei's social media accounts repeatedly contained antisemitic attacks and tropes. State-run media routinely claimed "Zionists" influenced Western nations on topics affecting Iran and blamed "Zionists," among others, for fomenting unrest in the country.

The government remained a major source of funding and support for Hamas, Hizballah, and the Houthis, all of which espoused antisemitic ideologies, including explicit calls for the killing of Jews.

According to NGO reports, school textbooks included content that incited hatred against Jews as part of the state curricula for history, religion, and social studies.

For further information on incidents of antisemitism in the country, whether or not those incidents were motivated by religion, and for reporting on the ability of Jews to exercise freedom of religion or belief, see the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

e. Instances of Transnational Repression

The government was alleged to have killed or kidnapped persons and used violence and threats of violence against individuals in other countries to force their return to Iran and for other purposes of politically motivated reprisal.

Extraterritorial Killing, Kidnapping, or Violence or Threats of Violence

Several Iranian journalists living and working in Europe reported violence or threats of violence directed by the Iranian government. In March, unknown assailants stabbed United Kingdom-based *Iran International* journalist Pouria Zeraati near his home in London, according to media reports. *Iran International* reported its journalists had faced threats from the Iranian government since 2022, including its Sweden-based journalist Mehran Abbasian, who was relocated to a safehouse after Swedish police identified “serious” threats against him in June. Abbasian told *Iran International* the Iranian government had ordered a criminal group to assassinate him and a colleague.

In October, authorities announced the execution of German-Iranian dissident Jamshid Sharmahd. Following German government condemnation, Iran backtracked and claimed Sharmahd died before the execution was carried out. Iranian authorities kidnapped Sharmahd in Dubai

in 2020 and forcibly took him to Iran, according to media reports. CHRI reported Sharmahd was subjected to torture and prolonged solitary confinement prior to his execution.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, or Coercion

The government employed a range of tactics to exert pressure on or exact reprisal against individuals located outside the country, including harassment, intimidation, and surveillance, according to multiple NGO sources. The government frequently threatened the Iran-based parents, siblings, and other relatives of individuals living outside the country.

In January, *IranWire* reported senior Iranian officials issued kidnapping and death threats against exiled Iranian soccer player Ali Karimi. Karimi, who lived in the United Arab Emirates, publicly supported the Woman, Life, Freedom protests. Reza Naqipour, who was head of the Office of Ceremonies at the Iranian Presidential Office and previously chief of security for the Iranian Football Federation, wrote on Instagram: “One day you [Karimi] will return the way that we like, not the way you like.” Naqipour also used the hashtag “RuhollahZam,” alluding to an Iranian journalist who was kidnapped in Iraq, brought to Iran, and executed.

Efforts to Control Mobility

The government denied consular services, including passport renewal, to Iranian citizens living outside the country who were deemed to be

opponents of the government. In February, *IranWire* reported Iranian embassies in Spain and Czechia refused to renew the passports of Iranians who participated in protests critical of the Iranian government or worked for foreign media organizations.

Bilateral Pressure

Iran reportedly sought the cooperation of Iraqi and Turkish authorities in securing the extradition of individuals considered hostile to the government, according to human rights activists. According to KHRN, in September, police forces affiliated with the Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan political party handed over Iranian-Kurdish asylum seeker Behzad Khosravi to Iranian authorities. Khosravi's family said Iraqi Kurdistan authorities informed them of the handover. The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran confirmed that Khosravi was a member and claimed he had been extradited by authorities in Sulaymaniya.



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GENEVA – UN human rights experts* today urged Iranian authorities to fully disclose the fate and whereabouts of individuals detained, forcibly disappeared or missing in the aftermath of the nationwide protests, and to halt all death sentences and executions related to the demonstrations.

“The true scale of the violent crackdown on Iranian protesters remains impossible to determine at this point,” the experts said. “The discrepancy between official figures and grassroots estimates only deepens the anguish of families searching for their loved ones and displays a profound disregard for human rights and accountability.”

Iranian authorities have acknowledged 3,117 deaths and approximately 3,000 arrests, whereas human rights organisations estimate these figures to be in the tens of thousands. The vast majority of those detained or killed are ordinary people, including children, from all provinces and diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as Afghan nationals, of which there are some 5 million living in Iran. They include lawyers who sought to represent protesters, medical professionals who treated the wounded, journalists, and writers, artists and human rights defenders who supported the protests.

Families across Iran remain unable to locate their relatives, whether they are among the injured in hospitals, held in detention facilities or among fatalities in forensic institutes. Many families of known detainees report being denied regular contact, heightening concerns for the safety of their loved ones.

“The prohibition of enforced disappearance and torture, and the protection of the right to life, are fundamental norms of international law which cannot be derogated in any circumstance including public emergency or political instability,” the experts said.

They warned that, in the absence of transparency, a devastating narrative starts to take shape, with unverified reports of burial sites and secret executions emerging.

“When a State refuses to account for the whereabouts of its people, others will fill that void — and the picture that emerges will define this period in Iran’s history,” the experts said. “The people of Iran have a right

to know what is happening in their own country. Without answers, we will assume the worst.”

Furthermore, the internet restrictions, now in their sixth week, continue to obstruct verification of conditions on the ground. Full connectivity is reserved for State-approved users. For the wider population, access is severely restricted, frequently dependent on expensive and difficult-to-obtain VPN services, leaving many cut off from reliable connectivity. Furthermore, security forces have been reportedly conducting street checks, during which individuals are stopped and their mobile phones searched for protest-related content, including social media activity, photographs and videos.

The experts noted that, within this void, State media have continued to broadcast what are widely regarded as forced confessions, and expressed concern about the labelling of protesters as “terrorists” in the legitimate exercise of their fundamental rights.

Moreover, in recent weeks, Baha’is have reportedly faced increased incitement and detention. Many detainees have allegedly been denied access to lawyers of their choosing, with reports of legal representatives, including State-approved counsel, prevented from meeting their clients. Against this backdrop, there have been some reports of protesters receiving severe sentences, including the death penalty. Serious concerns have also been raised regarding the treatment of detainees, including the heightened risks of gender-based violence in such context.

The experts called on Iranian authorities to immediately take the following actions: halt all executions and death sentences, including those linked to the protests; disclose the fate and whereabouts of disappeared persons; release all those arbitrarily detained during and after the protests, and guarantee their due process rights; restore full telecommunications access; and ensure independent, impartial, thorough and effective investigations and accountability for the human rights violations and

provide unimpeded access to international human rights monitors.

The experts remain in contact with Iranian authorities on these issues.

***The experts:**

- **Mai Sato**, the **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran**
- **Cecilia M. Bailliet**, **Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity**
- **Alexandra Xanthaki**, **Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights**
- **Morris Tidball-Binz**, **Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**
- **Margaret Satterthwaite**, **Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers**
- **Mary Lawlor**, **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**
- **Gabriella Citroni (Chair-Rapporteur)**, **Grażyna Baranowska (Vice-Chair)**, **Aua Baldé**; and **Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez**, the **Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances**
- **Nazila Ghanea**, **Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief**
- **Claudia Flores (Chair)**, **Ivana Krstić (Vice-Chair)**, **Dorothy**

Estrada Tanck, Haina Lu, and Laura Nyirinkindi, [Working Group on discrimination against women and girls](#)

- **Ms. Ganna Yudkivska (Chair-Rapporteur), Mr. Matthew Gillett (Vice-Chair on Communications), Ms. Miriam Estrada Castillo (Vice-Chair on Follow-Up), Mr. Mumba Malila, and Mr. Ethan Hee-Seok Shin, [Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#)**
- **Nicolas Levrat, [Special Rapporteur on minority issues](#)**
- **Margaret Satterthwaite, [Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers](#)**
- **Tlaleng Mofokeng, [the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health](#)**
- **Ana Brian Nougrères, [the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy](#)**
- **Gina Romero, [the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#)**
- **Richard Bennett, [the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan](#)**
- **Ben Saul, [Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism](#)**
- **Alice Edwards, [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)**

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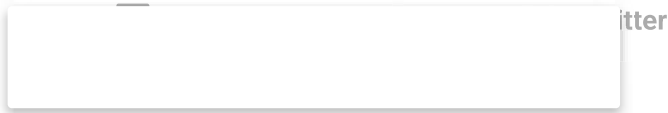
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Iran HRM Monthly Report– June 2026

July 4, 2026





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June 2026 was characterized by an intensified crackdown by the Iranian regime, primarily targeting political dissidents, protesters, ethnic minorities, and students, amidst a palpable fear of renewed nationwide uprisings. A staggering total of 141 executions were recorded, with the vast majority remaining unannounced by state media, highlighting a deliberate policy of obfuscation and intimidation. The regime's judicial and security apparatus continued to employ brutal tactics, including arbitrary arrests, severe prison conditions, torture, and capital punishment, to stifle any form of dissent.

The Execution Crisis: 141 Lives Lost in a Single Month

June 2026 witnessed a horrifying surge in state-sponsored killings, with Iran HRM documenting 141 executions. Of these, 132 executions were carried out without official announcement, a practice that deprives victims and their families of due process and public scrutiny. These unannounced executions included at least three women. The nine officially acknowledged executions included five individuals who were arrested during recent protests, underscoring the regime's use of the death penalty as a tool for political suppression.

Executions of Protesters

A significant portion of the executions were directly linked to individuals involved in the January 2026 uprising.

On June 16, Javad Zamani and Abolfazl Saedi, two young men from Shahroud, were executed after being labeled as 'armed leaders' of the January uprising. They faced charges including 'Moharebeh' (enmity against God) and 'corruption on Earth,' based on accusations such as drawing firearms, opposing the system, disrupting public order, damaging bank branches, and setting a police car on fire.

On June 3, Fathollah Avari, 42, arrested in Malard, was executed in Hamedan Prison. He was charged with involvement in the death of a State Security Force (SSF) major during the January

uprising in Hamedan.

On June 1, Mehrdad Mohammadinia and Ashkan Maleki were hanged in Tehran. They were branded as leaders of the recent January uprising and charged with “operational actions against national security,” setting fire to a Basij center and a seminary, destroying public property, clashing with SSF agents, and blocking streets. The Basij center in question, located at the Jafari Mosque in Kuy-e Nasr (Gisha), has been identified as a significant center of repression in western Tehran.

Mass Executions Across Prisons

Numerous group executions were reported throughout the month.

On June 21, at least six individuals—Isa Rahmani (36), Nematollah Barahouyi in Zahedan, Mirveis Khalilzadeh and Ebrahim Ahmadshahi in Shiraz, and Homayoun Noorzehi and Hossein Yousefzahi in Zabol—were executed.

On June 17, 14 prisoners were hanged across several cities, including Reza Nazif (28), Noorjalal Mojahed (27), and Esfandiar Sadri in Yazd; Fereydoun Varasteh in Shirvan; Ali Aghahosseini (38) in Maragheh; Rashid Arefi (38) in Borujerd; Khaleq Shahriari in Gorgan; Abdollah Jalali (25), Taher Shahouzehi and another unnamed prisoner in Zahedan; Aref Barahouyi (34) in Zabol; and Farzad Bahrami (36), Alireza Maleki and Ramin Bagheri in Hamedan.

Between June 13 and 16, at least 31 prisoners were executed, averaging one execution every three hours. This wave included Seyyed Akbar Bani-Hashem and Amir-Abbas Dekavand in Qezel Hesar Prison (among eight executed on June 13), Hassan Hosseini Narouei and Ali-Bakhsh Raeisi (27, Baluch compatriots) in Zahedan (among ten executed on June 14), Mohammad Amin Narouei and Balal Saadat-Jahani (Gorgij, 35) in Birjand (among eight executed on June 15), and Omar Shahbakhsh and Ghafoor Shahbakhsh (Baluch) in Yazd (among five executed on June 16).

On May 31 and June 1, at least 18 prisoners were executed. On May 31, 12 prisoners were hanged, including Parviz Valizadeh (27) in Zanjan, Aslan Amiri (33) in Arak, and ten in Shiraz, among whom were Saeed Dehghanzadeh, Borzou Mousavizadeh (30), Abbas Bayat (30), Ali Akbar Sarabi-Moghadam, Salar Sheikhi (29), three Baluch (Mohammad Osman Daneh-chin, Mohammad Sediq Baluchi, Qader Khodamoradi), and two Afghan nationals. On June 1, six

prisoners were executed, including Morteza Sadeghzadeh in Damghan, Hassan Tahmasebi and Kouhyar Abbasi in Qorveh, and Behnam Nemati (38), who was subjected to a public execution in Rasht.

Systematic Repression of Political Prisoners and Dissidents

The regime continued its intensified pressure on political prisoners, especially those affiliated with opposition groups or involved in protests.

Death Sentences for PMOI/MEK Supporters:

Yaghoub Derakhshan, 51, a supporter of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) held in Lakan Prison in Rasht, was sentenced to death for the second time in June 2026. He was initially sentenced in August 2025 on charges of 'Baghi' (armed rebellion) in sham trials conducted via video conference and without his chosen lawyer. Despite a referral for retrial, the Second Branch of the Revolutionary Court in Rasht, presided over by Mohammad Ali Darvish-Goftar, re-issued the death sentence, placing him in imminent danger.

Zahra Tabari, 68, an electrical engineer, also received her second death sentence from the Rasht Revolutionary Court. She was first sentenced in November 2025 on charges of 'armed rebellion' through PMOI/MEK membership after a ten-minute sham trial. The Supreme Court's referral for retrial led to the same criminal verdict by the Second Branch of the Revolutionary Court in Rasht in April 2026, which was communicated to her in June.

Pressure on Female Political Prisoners in Evin

Several female political prisoners in Evin Prison faced increased harassment, including the cutting off of their telephone access. Among those affected were:

Shiva Esmaeili (60), sentenced to 10 years and six months.

Marzieh Farsi (59), sentenced to six years.

Forough Taghipour (32), sentenced to six years.

Golrokh Iraee, sentenced to six years, previously serving six years.

Sakineh Parvaneh, sentenced to six years, previously imprisoned for three years.

Zahra Safaei (63), sentenced to five years, currently imprisoned for the third time, having spent eight years in the 1980s for supporting the PMOI/MEK.

Elaheh Fouladi, sentenced to five years.

Deplorable Conditions in Qezel Hesar Prison

Prisoners of the January 2026 uprising held in Wards 35 and 37 of Unit 3 in Qezel Hesar Prison are subjected to inhumane conditions. Many suffer from severe injuries, including broken bones and teeth, yet are crammed into wards lacking basic living and sanitary amenities. Ward 37, housing around 200 prisoners, reportedly lacks any cooling system in extreme heat, and running water is frequently cut off, with prisoners being forced to pay for water delivered by tankers.

Arbitrary Arrests and Disappearances

Milad Sajjadian, 32, a former political prisoner and PMOI supporter, was arrested in Shiraz. Following a hunger strike in protest, he was hospitalized and then transferred to Adelabad Prison. He has since been moved to an unknown location, and there is no information regarding his fate or whereabouts. He had previously served three years for supporting the PMOI.

Resistance and Calls for Justice: “No to Executions Tuesdays” Campaign

Despite the heightened repression, political prisoners inside Iran continued their acts of resistance. The “No to Executions Tuesdays” campaign entered its 127th consecutive week on June 30, with inmates in 57 prisons across Iran participating in coordinated hunger strikes.

The campaign condemned the regime’s reliance on executions as a primary tool of intimidation and highlighted the ongoing crackdown following the January 2026 protests.

The regime’s judiciary has acknowledged that 3,292 individuals have been arrested since January on accusations of “cooperating with the enemy.” Many of these detainees now face severe

judicial consequences, including death sentences or long-term imprisonment.

Regional reports further illustrated the repression: authorities in Sari reportedly opened 700 legal cases against January protesters, while in Mashhad, thousands of cases were filed.

The campaign reported that 140 people were executed during the Iranian month of Khordad (May 22–June 21), emphasizing that capital punishment remains a key tool for silencing dissent.

A poignant aspect of the campaign focused on the suffering of families denied the right to mourn. The case of Vahid Bani Amerian, a PMOI member and political prisoner executed in Qezel Hesar Prison earlier this year, was highlighted; his family, like many others, has not been informed of his burial location. The campaign denounced this practice as a continuation of punishment after death and a blatant violation of human dignity.

Prisons participating in the hunger strikes included Evin, Qezel Hesar, Greater Tehran, Qarchak, Adelabad, Zahedan, Rasht, Tabriz, Urmia, Sanandaj, and Kerman, among dozens of others, demonstrating the widespread nature of this organized resistance.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The human rights situation in Iran in June 2026 deteriorated drastically, marked by an unprecedented surge in executions, systematic repression of political prisoners, and a severe crackdown on students. The regime's fear of popular uprisings drives these brutal measures, as evidenced by the high number of executions of protesters and the broad suppression of dissent in universities and prisons.

Iran Human Rights Monitor (Iran HRM) strongly condemns the widespread and systematic human rights violations perpetrated by the Iranian regime. We urge the international community, including the United Nations, its relevant bodies, the Human Rights Council, and all human rights organizations, to:

- Immediately and unequivocally condemn the escalating wave of executions and call for an urgent halt to all capital punishment in Iran.
- Demand the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including those

sentenced to death for their participation in protests or their affiliation with opposition groups.

- Call for an independent international fact-finding mission to visit Iran’s prisons, particularly Evin and Qezel Hesar, to investigate the inhumane conditions and systematic torture.
- Pressure the Iranian regime to cease its brutal suppression of students and to respect academic freedoms and the right to peaceful assembly.

Silence and inaction only embolden the regime to continue its atrocities. Effective and urgent measures are imperative to hold the Iranian regime accountable for its egregious violations of human rights and to protect the lives and fundamental freedoms of the Iranian people.

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Third batch of Iranians deported by US to return home, Tasnim reports

By Reuters

January 26, 2026 9:44 AM EST · Updated
January 26, 2026



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DUBAI, Jan 26 (Reuters) - A third group of Iranians deported from the United States is returning home, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported on Monday, amid heightened tension between Washington and Tehran following Iran's crackdown on nationwide protests.

"These people, who have been under pressure to leave (the U.S.) for two months, made their return journey via Cairo



and Kuwait," Tasnim said. "Fourteen people arrived at Imam Khomeini International Airport on a flight today, and the rest will return in the coming weeks." Tasnim did not clarify the group's total number.

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Facilitation of the transfers has required an unusual degree of coordination between two adversaries. Last week, President Donald Trump [renewed warnings](#) to Tehran over the killing of protesters and any move to restart its nuclear program.

In September, officials said the U.S. had identified about 400 Iranians to be deported, with a first flight carrying 120 people returning to Tehran via Qatar’s capital.

A second group of 55 returned to Iran in December, with Iran's foreign ministry accusing Washington of conducting deportations on "political grounds and anti-migrant policies."

Reporting by Dubai Newsroom Editing by Ros Russell

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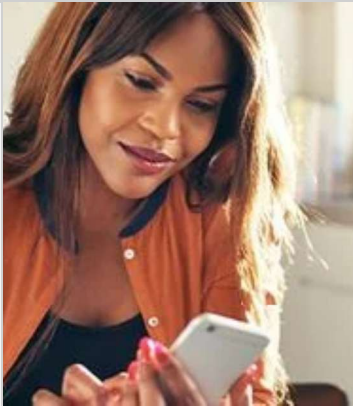


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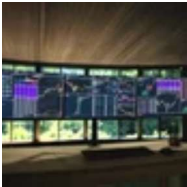
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Legal · July 14, 2026 · 1:01 PM EDT · 30 mins ago

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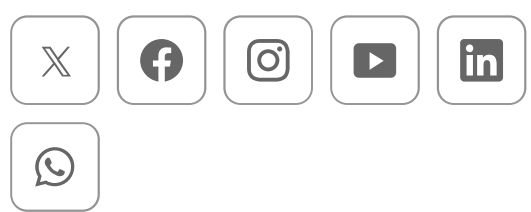
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U.S. Deports Planeload of Iranians After Deal With Tehran, Officials Say

The deportation flight is one of the clearest signals yet of the Trump administration's determination to expel migrants, even to places with harsh human rights conditions.



Listen · 6:46 min



By Farnaz Fassihi and Hamed Aleaziz

Sept. 30, 2025

The Trump administration deported a planeload of Iranians back to Iran from the United States after a deal between the two governments, according to two senior Iranian officials involved in the negotiations and a U.S. official with knowledge of the plans.

The deportations are one of the starkest signs yet of the Trump administration's determination to expel undocumented migrants, regardless of the human rights conditions of the countries they might be sent to.

Iranian officials said that the U.S.-chartered flight took off from a military airport in Alexandria, La., on Monday evening. It made a stop in Puerto Rico to pick up more deportees, then was headed to Doha, Qatar. And after that the deportees will be put on another chartered flight to Tehran.

On Monday, Abolfazl Mehrabadi, director of Iran's interest section in Washington, who was leading the coordination with American officials, said the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement department had informed Iran that 120 of its citizens would be on the flight. But on Tuesday, he said, the Iranians were told that 55 people were on the plane and that the rest would travel later.

Mr. Mehrabadi said that many of the deportees had been lingering for months in detention facilities, their asylum cases rejected, and that they had accepted voluntary deportation because the alternative would have been deportation to a third country like Sudan or Somalia.

"Iran's government does not like to see any Iranian in detention or lost in a third country, and they face no problems returning," Mr. Mehrabadi said.

He said there were about 300 Iranians in detention and about 2,500 facing threat of deportation from the United States.

For decades, the United States gave shelter to Iranians fleeing their homeland, which has one of the harshest human rights records in the world. Iran persecutes women's rights activists, political dissidents, journalists and lawyers, religious minorities and members of the L.G.B.T.Q. community, among others.

But earlier this year, the United States deported a group of Iranians, many converts to Christianity who face persecution at home, to Costa Rica and Panama. The expanding deportation campaign against undocumented migrants from many countries has prompted lawsuits by immigrant advocates.

The identities of the Iranians deported and their reasons for trying to immigrate to the United States were not immediately clear, but some details are trickling out.

Among them were a 30-year-old woman who is a Christian convert; a 36-year-

old man — the father of a newborn — who is an ethnic minority and political dissident in Iran; and a young man who had come to the United States with dreams of economic prosperity.

In the past several years, there has been an increase in Iranian migrants arriving at the southern U.S. border and crossing illegally. Many have claimed fear of persecution back home for their political and religious beliefs.

One of the deportees, the dissident, was being held in Houston, did not want to return, and was forced on the flight, according to his wife and his lawyer, Ali Herischi.

Mr. Herischi said that he also represented the Christian convert, and that both clients had crossed the border from Mexico. The man entered in February, accompanied by his pregnant wife, and the woman with her husband in October 2024.

Mr. Herischi asked that the names of his clients not be used, lest they face persecution in Iran.

He said he found out about the deportations by reading news reports, then got confirmation from a contact at ICE that his clients were among those sent home.

“Neither of my clients consented to deportation,” Mr. Herischi said. “They did not want to go, they did not sign anything. Their families are devastated.”

The dissident’s wife said in a telephone interview that the last time she spoke with her husband was on Saturday, and that he had had no indication that he would be imminently deported. She said she and the baby are out of detention and staying with family pending her asylum hearing.

Until now, the United States had only infrequently deported migrants to countries like Iran, in part because of a lack of regularized diplomatic relations. That forced American officials to either hold migrants in detention or release them into the United States. In 2024, The United States deported about two dozen Iranians, the highest total in years.

The State Department approached Iran's interest section in Washington about three months ago about coordinating the deportation of Iranian migrants, according to the two Iranian officials. Iran had to verify their identities and provide travel documents for some.

The two Iranian officials said the deportees included men and women, some of them couples. Some had volunteered after being in detention for months, and some had not, they said. The officials said that in nearly every case, asylum requests had been denied or the people had not yet had an asylum hearing.

The deportation marked a rare moment of cooperation between the United States and the Iranian government. Hossein Noushabadi, the director general of parliamentary affairs in Iran's foreign ministry, said on Tuesday that U.S. immigration authorities planned to deport 400 Iranians to Iran over the coming months.

The Iranians will be returning to a country where they may face not only government oppression but also an economic and energy crisis with plunging currency, sky-high inflation, unemployment, and water and power cuts. The economic situation appears certain to get worse with the return of U.N. Security Council sanctions that went into effect on Saturday.

The news that the U.S. government was working with Iranian government on deportations rattled some people in the diaspora. They warned that despite the guarantees by the Iranian government that the returnees would not be harmed,

security forces might still target them because they often acted independently.

“Given that the Iranian government is one of the most serious human rights violators in the region, deporting Iranian migrants from the United States to Iran requires extraordinary sensitivity,” said Omid Memarian, an expert on Iran’s human rights issues at DAWN, a Washington-based group focused on American foreign policy.

An immigration rights advocate said that distraught Iranians facing deportation had called the hotline for U.N.’s refugee agency seeking help.

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U.S. Deports Second Planeload of Iranians, Officials Say

The plane, carrying about 50 Iranians and other deportees, took off from Arizona on Sunday, under a deal the Trump administration reached with Iran two months ago.



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By Farnaz Fassihi

Dec. 7, 2025

The Trump administration deported a planeload of Iranian citizens on a chartered plane on Sunday, according to two Iranian officials familiar with the details, in just the second time the United States has ever done so.

The plane — carrying about 50 Iranian citizens, as well as deportees from Arab countries and Russia — departed from an airport in Mesa, Ariz., and will make stops in Egypt and Kuwait, said the two Iranian officials, who asked for anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The U.S.-chartered deportation flight for Iranians was the second of its kind, after the first took off in September, after months of negotiations between Tehran and Washington.

Iran and the United States have not had diplomatic relations since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and for decades the United States has provided refuge to Iranian dissidents, religious and ethnic minorities; members of the L.G.B.T.Q. community; and others fleeing persecution in their homeland.

But as part of the Trump administration's pursuit of mass deportations, it reached a deal with Tehran to coordinate the return of Iranian citizens facing deportation — currently estimated at about 2,000 people — and send them on chartered planes to Tehran. In the past, the United States deported Iranians individually on commercial planes.

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The identities of Sunday's deportees and their individual circumstances — including whether they had voluntarily accepted deportation or had been forced onto the plane — were not immediately clear. One of the Iranian officials familiar with the list of Iranians on the flight said they had entered the United States through the southern border, lingered in detention facilities for months and had their asylum requests denied.

The Department of Homeland Security did not comment on the flight. A U.S. official, who asked not to be named to discuss the issue, confirmed the flight had taken off on Sunday and described it as a routine deportation flight that included nationals from other countries, not just Iran.

One of the Iranian officials, who has worked closely with American officials on the transfer, said that Arab and Russian nationals would get off the plane when it landed in Cairo and that the Iranians would then travel on to Kuwait, where they would transfer to a chartered Kuwait Airways airplane for the final leg to Tehran.

Mojtaba Shasti Karimi, director of consular services for Iran's Foreign Ministry, told local news media on Sunday that Iran was expecting to receive about 55 deportees from the United States in the coming days.

Mr. Shasti Karimi said that those in the group had expressed their willingness to return home to Iran because of "the racist and anti-immigration policies," of the U.S. government and said Tehran had received reports of "inhumane" treatment of Iranians held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody.

As news reports of the possible flight began to circulate over the weekend, however, an Iranian-American U.S. lawmaker, Representative Yassamin Ansari, Democrat of Arizona, warned on social media that the flight could include "vulnerable individuals who could face persecution" if returned to Iran.

The Trump administration has said it plans to carry out the largest deportation in the country's history, targeting undocumented immigrants and those who had illegally crossed the U.S. border. The administration has also said that it would severely reduce the number of asylum cases it grants and limit them to white migrants from South Africa or English-speaking Europeans.

Iranians are among the citizens of 19 countries targeted in President Trump's travel ban. Their — and many others' — legal pathways to immigration have also been restricted following new limits Mr. Trump announced after the shooting of two National Guards members last month in Washington. The suspect in the shooting, which killed one of the soldiers, is an immigrant from Afghanistan.

The first flight of Iranian deportees departed in September and landed in Tehran in early October, by way of Qatar, and at least eight out of 45 people on the flight said they had resisted deportation, begging to not be sent to Iran because they feared for their lives. Two deportees on the flight to Tehran recounted their ordeals in detail, saying they had been beaten by immigration officials in the United States and in Qatar and dragged onto the plane.

Upon landing in Tehran in October, deportees said they were terrified, as they were questioned at the airport and made to fill out forms explaining why they had left Iran and sought asylum in America. Several of the deportees said they had been called in for interrogation by the intelligence wing of the Revolutionary Guards Corps.

The United States and Qatar both denied allegations of violence against the deportees or forcing them on the flights to Iran.

Hamed Aleaziz contributed reporting from Washington.

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