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Widespread abuses and show trials in Iran reminiscent of totalitarian regimes of 20th century



In its latest annual report on the state of human rights around the world, Amnesty International has outlined a portion of the Iranian regime's abhorrent rights violations in 2009, adding that the regime's show trials are "reminiscent of those associated with some of the most totalitarian regimes of the 20th century to punish those accused of leading the outburst of popular protest."

The prominent international rights group specifically mentions the regime's "long-standing patterns of repression," including widespread arrests, unlawful killings, rape and other forms of torture, executions, stoning, limb amputations, unfair trials, discrimination against women and minorities, and cruel, inhumane and degrading punishments.

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UN report documents al-Maliki government's gross rights abuses against Ashraf residents

"Iraqi armed forces drove recklessly at high speeds through gathered crowds, running over some of the individuals"

In a report to the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, UN officials documented a series of crimes committed by the clerical regime in Iran as well as Iraqi forces on July 28 and 29, 2009, against 3,400 unarmed members of the main Iranian opposition movement residing in Camp Ashraf near Baghdad.

The report echoes fears concerning the possibility of forcible return of Ashraf residents to Iran where they could face execution or torture.

UN officials are cited in the report for sending urgent appeals to the Iraqi government in this regard, including the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Chairperson of the UN Working Group on

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Protesters disrupt Ahmadinejad speech

Reuters, May 24 - Hecklers at an outdoor speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Monday shouted their concerns about unemployment, in a rare display of dissent in front of the hardline leader.

While Ahmadinejad addressed a crowd in the port city of Khorramshahr, in a speech marking the anniversary of a key battle in the Iran-Iraq war, several members of the crowd could be heard chanting: "Unemployment! Unemployment!"

The president's speeches are regularly carried live on Iranian TV where crowds more usually respond with slogans such as "God is Greatest" and "Death to America".

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Arbitrary Detention, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The report, which was circulated at the 14th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, documents the deadly attacks by the forces of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in July 2009, which were carried out with the collaboration of the terrorist Qods Force of the Iranian regime, against Camp Ashraf. In its 16-article detailed account, it particularly points to the hostage taking and torture of 36 Ashraf residents in addition to the raid, all of which are considered gross examples of crimes against humanity.

In his report, Anand Grover, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, criticized the Nouri al-Maliki government for not responding to his communications or the joint questions of the UN officials.

These UN officials sent out three separate urgent appeals protesting to the killing of Ashraf residents by Iraqi forces, the lack of timely access to medical treatment which contributed to a higher number of deaths, firing at ambulances when they were transporting patients, illegal detentions, ill treatment and abuses of 36 hostages and the prevention of their release despite definitive court rulings.

On October 1, the report says, the UN special rapporteurs underlined the excessive use of force by Iraqi security forces during the July 2009 in Camp Ashraf, which resulted "in the death of 11 residents of Camp Ashraf and the wounding of over 200."

"Iraqi armed forces also drove recklessly at high speeds through gathered crowds, running over some of the individuals," the report says. "25 individuals with injuries sustained from being hit or run over by vehicles."

They used "different means in order to disperse the crowd, including water canons, batons, batons with nails, metal rods, cricket bats, chains, sickles, axes, teargas and sound grenades. It was reported that the Iraqi security forces also made use of firearms against the camp residents and that the shooting was targeted."



"Iraqi security forces used firearms against the camp residents and that the shooting was targeted"

"Camp Ashraf ambulance shot at several times during the attack, as doctors were trying to take wounded to hospital"



The report particularly highlights the deliberate shooting of unarmed residents by Iraqi forces. Six of the 11 residents who lost their lives were killed by gunshots, while 23 of the hundreds of individuals injured sustained gunshot wounds. "It was reported that some of the dead were killed intentionally, having been struck by a single bullet to the head or chest."

The UN report also says that Iraqi security forces prevented Iraqi doctors from entering Camp Ashraf during the raid and for several days afterwards. Moreover, "The Camp Ashraf ambulance also was shot at several times during the attack, as doctors present in the camp were trying to take wounded residents to Camp Ashraf hospital."

"Furthermore, Iraqi armed forces allegedly took a large number of goods belonging to the residents including generators, fans, tables, chairs and cars," the report adds.

On August 7, 2009, the UN officials also sent an urgent appeal to the Iraqi government regarding the detention of 36 Ashraf residents. While in detention, the report says, these men were "beaten by the police with wooden truncheons and metal cables on their chests, heads and hands that resulted in seven people being seriously injured (broken arms, hands and fingers, and fractures of back and head bones)."

According to the report, the UN officials sent another urgent appeal on October 1, 2009, when the Maliki government refused to release the detainees despite court orders. At the time, they were being held at a police station in the town of Al-Khalis, Diyala Province, north of Baghdad, "despite a release order issued by the investigative judge of the criminal court of Diyala Province."

"The investigative judge confirmed on 16 September 2009 his previous ruling of 24 August 2009, ordering the release of these persons on the grounds that they had no charges to answer."

Even the public prosecutor had no objection to their release without charge, the report adds. "However, for unknown reasons, the local police authorities in the town of Al-Khalis continued to refuse to release the detainees. Police authorities have not provided any reason or legal justification for the continued detention of these persons."

Article 160 of the report lists the names of the 36 hostages the Iraqi government took from Ashraf, emphasizing that most of them are in a poor state of health and have been denied adequate medical treatment. Article 162, repeats for the third time, "The Special Rapporteur regrets that at the time of the finalization of the report, the Government has not transmitted any reply to his communication."

AI: Widespread abuses and ...



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The Amnesty International report dedicates a portion of its assessment of human rights in Iran to the 2009 mass protests by the Iranian people against the regime. Following the outburst of protests in June 2009, the report says, "Security forces, notably the paramilitary Basij, were deployed to suppress the protests by force, particularly after the Supreme Leader ordered an end to demonstrations on 19 June." The protests, however, continued to the end of the year, Amnesty adds, highlighting "significant days such as the religious festival of Ashoura on 27 December."

The report also specifically mentions the death of a young woman who became the symbol and rallying cry for the uprisings. "Neda Agha Soltan, aged 27, was shot dead in a Tehran street on 20 June during a demonstration."

Describing some of the methods used by the regime and its suppressive forces to perpetrate "unlawful killings," Amnesty International says, "The Basij and other security forces used excessive force against demonstrators, beating them with batons and riding motorcycles into them to cause injury. The authorities said 43 died in the protests but opposition sources said the true total was likely to be over 100. Hundreds were injured."

According to the report, in the latter half of 2009, "well over 5,000 people" were detained, most if not all were systematically denied access to legal representation, with many tortured and raped in prison. At least 12 died in custody, according to Amnesty.

"Compelling evidence emerged that a number of detainees, both women and men, had been raped and otherwise tortured in detention," the report says, adding, "Some detainees were taken to the Kahrizak detention center, south of Tehran, where they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated."

Meanwhile, in 2009, Iran also "maintained one of the highest rates of execution globally. At least 388 people were executed, including one man who was stoned to death."

The Iranian regime has been ranked as the number one executioner state on a per capita basis and the only one that still executes juveniles.

According to the report, "the election-related violations occurred against a background of severe repression, which persisted throughout 2009." It cites the ethnic and religious minorities, students, human rights defenders and women as the primary victims.

Mullahs' official says executions will not stop

State-run news agency ISNA on May 26 said that the Secretary of the Office of Human Rights in Iran, Mohammad Javad Larijani, said in a meeting with the Australian Ambassador that, "We do not endorse complete eradication the death sentence."

In a meeting with the Norwegian Ambassador he said, "Human rights is not a Western concept and the West cannot claim such a thing."

"The issue of human rights is a matter that relates to culture and civilization of various kinds and every civilization and culture has its own specific human rights values," he stressed.

His remarks, as Iranian regime's authority on human rights, clearly indicate that there can be no improvement in human rights situation in Iran and the clerical regime has to be dealt with firmly.



Morality police launch crackdown on clothing and hairdos

Los Angeles Times, May 25 - Iran's puritanical guardians of morality have stepped up their cultural war against those who dress too modern for their tastes, sharpening class and social tensions just two weeks before the anniversary of the nation's disputed presidential elections.

Days after Friday prayer leaders delivered fiery sermons in which they called for a clampdown on women dressing immodestly, morality police squads began cracking down on youngsters sporting figure-hugging outfits or hairdos deemed un-Islamic.

Despite the intensity of the clampdown in recent days, some doubt it will achieve much.

22 organs involved in suppression of women

In order to intensify the atmosphere of intimidation, the Commander of the Iranian regime's State Security Forces (SSF) in Tehran, Sajedi Nia, has said that women who are said to commit so-called "mal-veiling" will be videotaped and the tapes will be used as evidence in court.

Sajedi Nia also revealed the number of organs assigned to the suppression of women, saying, "Cultural issues are dealt with by cultural officials and 22 organs must take steps with regards to veiling and chastity."

Mal-veiling under Iranian regime is a crime

Mahmoud Zoqi, the city of Mashhad Prosecutor, has said that in recent weeks a number of women have been fined up to \$1,000 "for committing the crime of mal-veiling." Zoqi added, "Mal-veiling is considered a crime under law."

Among the numerous violations of freedom expression by the regime, Amnesty International notes the persistence of disruptions of communications, including mobile phones and internet, to prevent the flow of information.

The report also mentions inhumane sentences, such as hanging, flogging, stoning and amputation. In January, March, July and August, a total of 77 people were executed by the regime, the report says. "At least 11 people [have been] sentenced to die by stoning and at least 136 juvenile

offenders remained on death row" at the end of 2009.

While introducing the report, the Secretary of Amnesty International's branch in Germany, Monika Lueke, said, "The Iranian regime is frightening to me."

The German branch of Amnesty International has also released a statement calling for urgent action to prevent the execution of six people currently on death row charged with supporting the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), the main opposition movement.

Nuclear

Nuclear weapons program equipment disappeared - Diplomats

AP Associated Press VIENNA, May 28 — U.N. nuclear inspectors revisiting an Iranian laboratory to follow up on activities that could be linked to a secret nuclear weapons program recently discovered that some equipment believed used in the experiments has disappeared, diplomats said. One of the diplomats told The Associated Press that senior officials within the International Atomic Energy Agency — the U.N. nuclear watchdog — were concerned that the removal was an attempted cover-up. Two others confirmed that some apparatus had gone missing.

Russia rejects Ahmadinejad's appeal to support his nuclear fuel swap plan



MOSCOW, May 26 - President Ahmadinejad urged the presidents of Russia and the USA to support the Iranian-Turkish-Brazilian agreement on the exchange of nuclear fuel, saying it was "the last chance" to settle differences between Tehran and world powers. Speaking about Russia, he also noted that the two countries historically enjoy friendly relations, but "friendship implies mutual respect and protection of each other's rights". Kremlin aide Sergei Prikhodko told reporters on Wednesday, "Russia is invariably guided by its own long-term state interests." He stressed, "Of course, any unpredictability, any political extremism, non-transparency and inconsistency in making decisions that concern the whole international community" is unacceptable for Russia. "Those who speak on behalf of the friendly Iranian people" must remember that. "Nobody has ever managed to preserve prestige with the help of political demagoguery," he stressed.

France sees majority backing for Iran sanctions



May 21 - France expects a majority of UN Security Council members to vote for new nuclear sanctions against Iran which would stop Russia selling ground-to-air missiles to the Islamic republic, diplomats said Thursday, May 20. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said only three of the 15 members of the Security Council were holding out. Diplomats named the three as Brazil and Turkey, which on Monday signed a uranium enrichment deal with Iran, and Lebanon, whose government includes pro-Iranian politicians.

Merkel raises Iran sanctions in UAE talks



May 25 - German Chancellor Angela Merkel called in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday for the United Arab Emirates to exert its influence to encourage a nuclear-free Iran.

US lawmakers see Iran sanctions bill in late June



May 25 - The US Congress will pass in late June a package of economic sanctions on Iran that will "complement and augment" those under consideration at the United Nations, key US lawmakers said Tuesday. Senate Banking Committee Chairman Chris Dodd and House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman have been working to craft legislation aimed at piling pressure on Tehran to freeze its suspect nuclear program. "We remain fully committed to passing a package of tough US sanctions in the latter half of June," they said, adding: "We expect that our legislation will be taken up and passed by both bodies in that time frame."

Terrorism

U.S. and NATO forces commander: Afghan insurgents are being trained inside Iran and given weapons



May 30 - Afghan insurgents are being trained inside Iran and given weapons to fight security forces, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces said on Sunday, joining a rising drumbeat of criticism of Iran's role in the country. General Stanley McChrystal said coalition forces were working to stop Iran from giving material help to the Taliban who have stepped up the campaign to force foreign forces out of Afghanistan in a nine-year conflict.

"The training that we have seen occurs inside Iran with fighters moving inside Iran," he said at a news conference in response to a question on Iran's influence. "The weapons that we have received come from Iran into Afghanistan."

US General: "There is clear evidence of Iranian activity, in some cases of providing weapons and training to the Taliban"

The United States, battling a Taliban insurgency at its worst, has frequently accused Iran of providing some assistance to insurgents in Afghanistan, although Washington says it has not been nearly as important a factor as in Iraq, Iran's other neighbor, where U.S. troops are waging war.

In March, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen said there had been a significant shipment of Iranian arms to fighters in the southern province of Kandahar.

U.S. forces are preparing for an offensive in Kandahar, the spiritual capital of the Taliban, this summer in what is seen a turning point in the war to force the insurgents to the negotiating table for a settlement of the conflict.

McChrystal said, "There is clear evidence of Iranian activity, in some cases of providing weapons and training to the Taliban that is inappropriate"

Iraqi FM: Foreign powers, namely Iran, are playing an ever increasing role in Iraq

May 28 - The results of parliamentary elections in Iraq have been in dispute since the bloc headed by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki came a narrow second to the Sunni-backed bloc headed by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Mr Hoshyar Zebari, Iraqi Foreign Minister, does not believe that the US proposal for a grand coalition between Mr. al-Maliki and Mr. Allawi is feasible. "The difficulty is in deciding who will be in the driving seat," he said. The result of these internal divisions in Iraq is that foreign powers are playing an ever increasing role in deciding what happens in the country. Mr Zebari pointed to the growing role of Iran in Iraq.

Assassination of al-Iraqiya secular bloc lawmaker, disgrace for al-Maliki government

The assassination of Bashar Ahmad Hamed al Okaidi, a lawmaker from the Iraqiya bloc, in Mosul on May 24, was widely blamed on Nuri al-Maliki's government. Ussama Al-Nujaifi, an al-Iraqiya leader said, "The government is responsible for this ordeal. This happened due to government negligence. This is a criminal act that has targeted al-Iraqiya slate."