



Home Office

# **Country Information and Guidance**

## **Iran: Prison conditions**

**Version 1.0**

**February 2016**

# Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained with this document; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

## Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, please [e-mail us](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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# Guidance

Updated 2 February 2016

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of Claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of being imprisoned on return to Iran and that prison conditions are so poor as to amount to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

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## 2. Consideration of Issues

### 2.1 Is the person's account credible?

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see sections 4 and 5 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing if there is reason to doubt an individual's true place of origin. (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### 2.2 Is the person reasonably likely to be imprisoned on return?

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must establish the likelihood that the person will be imprisoned on return, including if necessary whether the alleged offence constitutes an offence under Iranian law and, if so, is one which is likely to be punishable by a term of imprisonment (see [Penal Code](#) for prescribed penalties for criminal offences).
- 2.2.2 If so, decision makers must also consider whether the law is discriminatory or being disproportionately applied for Convention reasons, in which case the person may be entitled to a grant of asylum.
- 2.2.3 If the decision maker believes that the person is likely to face imprisonment on return to Iran, consideration must be given as to whether Article 1F of the Refugee Convention is applicable
- 2.2.4 For further information and guidance on the exclusion clauses, discretionary leave and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Discretionary Leave](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2.3 Is the person reasonably likely to face the death penalty on return?

- 2.3.1 Iran retains the death penalty and the crimes subject to capital punishment are identified in the Penal Code. Offences punishable by death include: murder; armed robbery; rape; blasphemy; apostasy; adultery; prostitution; homosexuality; drug-related offences and plotting to overthrow the Islamic regime, kidnapping, treason, espionage, terrorism, economic crimes, military offences. Consuming alcohol is forbidden for Muslims and usually punishable by lashes or fines but an offender caught for a third time can be sentenced to death. Girls above nine years of age and boys over 15 are considered adults under Iranian law and therefore can be condemned to death. (see [Penal Code](#) and [Death Penalty](#)).
- 2.3.2 Decision-makers must determine whether there is a real risk of the person being convicted and facing the death penalty on return to Iran.
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on the death penalty see [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

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## 2.4 Are prison conditions so poor that prisoners are at real risk of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- 2.4.1 Prison conditions in Iran are harsh and often life-threatening with severe overcrowding, poor ventilation, extreme temperatures, poor sanitary conditions including a lack of access to clean drinking water and a lack of sufficient toilet facilities. There is a serious lack of access to the appropriate medical care. In a number of cases sick prisoners have been denied adequate medical care, including medication. Food at some prisons has a low nutritional value and there have been reports of many detainees being malnourished. Authorities mixed violent and nonviolent offender populations. Political prisoners in some prisons are subject to forced labour.
- 2.4.2 Torture and mistreatment are also common within prisons in Iran. Whilst officials claim that no one is subjected to torture, detained prisoners often report forced confessions, prolonged solitary confinement, rape, physical and psychological torture and mock executions. There were reports of systematic rape of women prisoners as well as coerced virginity testing of female prisoners.
- 2.4.3 The government does not permit independent monitoring of prison conditions and sometimes prisoners were subjected to threats after they lodged complaints with the authorities. The Iranian authorities have frequently failed to conduct independent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment by officials, which has contributed to a pervasive culture of impunity.
- 2.4.4 Prison conditions in Iran are, in individual cases, likely to create a real risk of torture and/or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- 2.4.5 Decision makers must consider each case on its facts. For the factors to be considered and further information, see Section 3.4 of the [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

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2.5 If refused, is the claim likely to be certifiable?

2.5.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.5.2 For further information and guidance on certification, see the [Asylum Instruction on Non-Suspensive Appeals: Certification Under Section 94 of the NIA Act 2002](#).

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## 3. Penal Code

- 3.1.1 Iran's Penal code was adopted by the Legal Affairs Commission of the Islamic Consultative Assembly on Tuesday 30/07/1991. The penal code (book 1 and 2) can be found [here](#).

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## 4. Death Penalty

- 4.1.1 In information for 2015 the 'Hands Off Cain' website, undated, explained the legal position regarding the death penalty, stating:

'In accordance with Article 4 of the Iranian Constitution, Islamic law is "the essential source for all the branches of legislation", including civil and penal legislation. Offences punishable by death include: murder; armed robbery; rape; blasphemy; apostasy; adultery; prostitution; homosexuality; drug-related offences and plotting to overthrow the Islamic regime, kidnapping, treason, espionage, terrorism, economic crimes, military offences.'

'Iranian law imposes the death penalty for possession of more than 30 grams of heroin or five kilos of opium. Iranian authorities say that most of the people put to death in the country are convicted of drug-related crimes, but human rights observers believe that many of the people put to death in Iran for ordinary crimes, particularly drug crimes, may well be in fact political opponents. Under Iran's strict Islamic law, consuming alcohol is forbidden for Muslims and usually punishable by lashes or fines. An offender caught for a third time, however, can be sentenced to death'

'Under Iranian law, girls above nine years of age and boys over 15 are considered adults, and therefore can be condemned to death. Iranian authorities generally wait for young convicts to reach their eighteenth birthday before ordering their execution.'

The 'Hands off Cain' website also stated that 'Iran has the world's highest rate of execution by stoning, but no one knows with certainty how many people have been stoned in Iran.... According to a list compiled by the Human Rights Commission of the National Council of the Iranian Resistance, at least 150 people have been stoned in Iran since 1980.'

'The widespread executions which have taken place inside prisons all over the country are all carried out in secret, in groups, unannounced, extrajudicially, and arbitrarily. According to sources who have talked with the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, the group executions inside Vakilabad Prison are carried out by putting convicts in a line in a roofless hallway leading to the prison's visitation hall. The executions are carried out secretly, without the knowledge or presence of the prisoners' lawyers and families, who do not find out about the executions until one or several days later. Even the prisoners themselves are unaware of their impending execution until a few hours before it is carried out.... There were

also reports of secret and unannounced executions in 15 other Iranian prisons. The majority of the reports came from prisons in the Tehran/Karaj area: Evin, Ghezel Hesar and Rajai Shahr...'<sup>1</sup>

4.1.2 Amnesty International's report on 'Death sentences and executions 2014' published in April 2015 stated that:

'Iranian authorities or state controlled or state-sanctioned media officially announced 289 executions (278 men and 11 women). However, reliable sources reported at least 454 more executions in addition to those officially announced, bringing the total number of executions in 2014 to at least 743. Of those officially announced, 122 involved individuals convicted of drug-related offences and 29 were carried out in public. At least 81 death sentences were imposed. This figure included those that were officially announced and those that were not. In addition, at least 22 commutations were granted while at least 81 people were on death row at the end of the year.'

'Iran continued to carry out executions in secret. Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Nejad, of the Ahwazi Arab minority, were executed in secret in January 2014, following an unfair trial in 2012 which resulted in them being convicted of "enmity against God" and "corruption on earth." The authorities did not tell their families when they were executed and refused to hand over their bodies for burial.'

'Death sentences were generally imposed following trials that fell short of international fair trial standards. Defendants often had no access to lawyers during pre-trial investigations, and courts generally dismissed allegations of torture and admitted as evidence "confessions" obtained under torture.'

'Iranian courts continued to sentence people to death for crimes that did not meet the threshold of the "most serious crimes" and crimes not recognizably criminal offences under international human rights law.'

'The revised Penal Code allows the execution of juvenile offenders under qesas (retribution-in-kind) and hodoud (offences and punishments for which there are fixed penalties under Islamic law) crimes, unless the juvenile offender is found to have not understood the nature of the crime or its consequences, or if there are doubts about the offender's mental capacity.'<sup>2</sup>

4.1.3 The United Nations General Assembly report on the situation of human rights in Iran dated February 2015 noted that:

'On 28 October 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights publicly expressed serious concern at the large number of executions

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<sup>1</sup> Hands Off Cain. Iran, 2015.  
<http://www.handsoffcain.info/bancadati/schedastato.php?idcontinente=23&nome=iran> [Date accessed 3 November 2015]

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, Death sentences and executions 2014, April 2015,  
[https://www.amnestyusa.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=sl1S5ln8BE12IKSi362FwYxxU2waDTRV9B35cc\\_w6zU](https://www.amnestyusa.org/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=sl1S5ln8BE12IKSi362FwYxxU2waDTRV9B35cc_w6zU), [date accessed 3 November 2015]

in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and called upon the authorities to immediately institute a moratorium on the death penalty.’

‘In the majority of cases that involve capital punishment, due process guarantees were often violated in proceedings that fell short of international fair trial standards. This raises concern about the potential for wrongful conviction, which is unavoidable even for the most advanced and established judicial system. In the light of these concerns, the Secretary-General reiterates his call upon the Iranian authorities to restrict the use of and/or abolish the death penalty in law and practice, in particular when the judicial system is failing to guarantee international fair trial standards.’<sup>3</sup>

- 4.1.4 In March 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran told the Human Rights Council that: ‘ At least 753 individuals were reportedly executed in 2014 (the highest total recorded in the past 12 years). This includes the execution of 25 women and 53 public executions. Nearly half of all executions — 362 — were for drug-related crimes ... which do not meet the internationally accepted threshold of “most serious crimes” required for use of the death penalty.’<sup>4</sup>
- 4.1.5 The United Nations General Assembly report on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran of August 2015 stated concern about ‘the frequency of executions, especially for drug-related offences and of juvenile offenders ... ..There has been a steady upward trend in the number of executions from 2008 to 2015, with a peak of at least 750 in 2014. Executions for drug-related offences account for more than 70 per cent of all executions. At least 520 people were executed during the first half of 2015, including 384 for drug-related offences. On 8 May 2015, the special rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions publicly condemned the sharp increase in executions that had occurred despite serious questions about fair trial standards. They observed that, in many instances, executions went unreported by official sources and the names of prisoners were not published.’<sup>5</sup>
- 4.1.6 The same report continued: ‘While a circular banning public executions was issued by the former head of the judiciary in January 2008, the Secretary-General is disturbed about the persistence of the practice... Of the 520

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Secretary-General, 20 February 2015, [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_28\\_26\\_E\\_NG.doc](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Documents/A_HRC_28_26_E_NG.doc) [date accessed 14 December 2015]

<sup>4</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2015, A/HRC/28/70, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/550ff19c4.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]

<sup>5</sup> UN General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> session, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 August 2015 (A/70/352) available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55fc00854.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]

executions recorded in the first half of 2015, 28 were public. There were also reportedly 53 public executions in 2014.<sup>6</sup>

- 4.1.7 The report also stated: ‘there were reportedly 160 juveniles at risk of execution and at least 13 juvenile offenders were reportedly executed in 2014 and 1 in 2015.’<sup>7</sup>

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## 5. Prison overview

- 5.1.1 Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (IHRDC) report ‘Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, published on 18 March 2015 noted that:

‘Although Article 32 of the Constitution of the IRI states that detainees must be informed of the charges against them “as soon as possible”, pre-trial detention can last for weeks and months, especially for political prisoners. In December 2012, pre-trial detainees comprised 25.7% of the prison population according to the International Centre for Prison Studies [ICPS]. Most prisoners are imprisoned due to drug-related offenses. Over 70% of prisoners are said to be poor or come from poor families. Data collected by ICPS demonstrates a sharp increase in the rate of incarceration from 1993-2010.’

- 5.1.2 IHRDC also noted that in Evin: ‘the number of female prisoners is much smaller than the number of male prisoners, female prisoners are often placed in a general ward for women at Evin Prison. There are no separate wards for female political prisoners. Female political prisoners are placed next to individuals convicted of violent felonies including murder, robbery, and drug trafficking, who are often reported to be violent and abusive. Some former detainees report that prison authorities use the threat of relocation to the General Ward to scare political prisoners into cooperation.’<sup>8</sup>
- 5.1.3 The US State Department Human Rights country report for 2014 noted that ‘Women were held separately from men.’
- 5.1.4 The same report also noted that there were ‘reports of juvenile offenders detained with adult offenders’ and that ‘pre-trial detainees occasionally were held with convicted prisoners’. ‘Political prisoners were often held in separate prisons or wards, such as Wards 2A, 209, 240, and 350 of Evin Prison and Ward 8 of Gohardasht Prison, or in solitary confinement for long periods of

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<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> session, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 August 2015 para 11 (A/70/352) available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55fc00854.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, 70<sup>th</sup> session, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 August 2015 para 13 (A/70/352) available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55fc00854.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]

<sup>8</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 17 November 2015]

time... Human rights activists and the international media also reported cases of political prisoners confined with accused violent criminals.<sup>9</sup>

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## 6. Prison numbers

6.1.1 The IHRDC report of March 2015 noted that:

‘Although Iran’s Prisons Organization reports that there are 150,000 prisoners in the country, according to the International Center for Prison Studies, there were 217,851 persons held in Iran’s prisons in 2014. As of December 25, 2012, the official capacity of the prisons was 113,000. If these figures are accurate, the occupancy level at Iran’s prisons stands at 192.78%. As many as 22% of prisoners were between the ages of 19 and 25. Juveniles in turn make up one percent of the prison population. Only 3.5% of the prison population is female.’<sup>10</sup>

The US State Department Human Rights country report for 2014 noted that: ‘Overcrowding reportedly forced many prisoners to sleep on floors, in hallways, or in prison yards. There were reports that overcrowding within Evin Prison had worsened over the past year. [...] Authorities mixed violent and nonviolent offender populations.’ The report also noted that ‘Official public statistics on the prison population were limited. There were no reports on the adequacy of or of any steps to improve recordkeeping or whether the penal system employed prison ombudspersons to respond to complaints.’<sup>11</sup>

6.1.2 The National Council of Resistance of Iran reported in December 2014 that:

‘Asghar Jahangir, Director General of Iran’s Prisons Organization, said in an interview with the regime parliament’s website: “The number of prisoners is double the capacity of the country’s prisons. This overcrowding has disrupted educational activities for prisoners.’ He went on to note that: “Over 70% of those imprisoned in Iran are under the age of 40 years old.”

‘According to international statistics, countries around the world have an average of 148 people in prison per 100,000 of the population, but in Iran the figure is 271 per 100,000. Experts say the true number of prisoners in Iran is even higher than the official figures because those in many secret IRGC prisons all around the country are not counted.’<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> US State Department, 2014 Country Report on Human Rights practices- Iran, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236598> [accessed 2 November 2015]

<sup>10</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 3 November 2015]

<sup>11</sup> US State Department, 2014 Country Report on Human Rights practices- Iran, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236598> [accessed 2 November 2015]

<sup>12</sup> National Council of Resistance of Iran, Iran: Prison population 21 times higher since revolution, 5 December 2014, <http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/human-rights/17629-iran-prison-population-21-times-higher-since-revolution> [accessed 9 November 2015]

- 6.1.3 According to figures compiled by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research there were 56,650 individuals in pre-trial/remand imprisonment in Iran in 2014. The same source also noted that ‘there were 6,880 female prisoners in Iran in 2014.’<sup>13</sup>
- 6.1.4 The ‘Hands off Cain’ website stated that ‘IHR’s sources estimate that there are 20,000 prisoners in Vakilabad, though the prison only has the capacity to house 4,000 inmates. According to eyewitnesses, in some of the wards the prisoners have to sleep on the steps and in the corridors.’<sup>14</sup>

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## 7. Physical conditions

### 7.1 Overview

#### 7.1.1 The US State Department Human Rights country report for 2014 noted that:

‘Prison conditions reportedly were often harsh and life threatening. There were reports that some prisoners committed suicide as a result of harsh conditions, solitary confinement, and torture to which they were subjected... Prisoner hunger strikes in protest of their treatment were common.’

‘Prison authorities often refused medical treatment for injuries that prisoners reportedly suffered at the hands of abusers and for illness due to the poor sanitary conditions of prison life.’

‘Prisoners generally had access to visitors weekly, but authorities often revoked this privilege along with telephone and other correspondence privileges. It was not known whether prisoners could practice religions other than Islam while incarcerated.’

‘During the year several prisoners, especially political prisoners, went on hunger strikes to protest prison conditions. The health of some prisoners on hunger strikes deteriorated quickly.’<sup>15</sup>

#### 7.1.2 The UN Human Rights Council report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran published on 12 March 2015 noted that: ‘On 20 November 2014, at least 24 Kurdish prisoners in Ward 12 of Urumia Central Prison (in the West Azerbaijan Province) reportedly embarked on hunger strikes to protest insufficient prisoner segregation and inadequate access to medical treatment. Some of the prisoners are convicted of vaguely defined national security charges. An example of a few of the security charges are distributing pamphlets and statements to commemorate International Mother Language Day, posting

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<sup>13</sup> The Institute for Criminal Policy Research, World Prison Brief- Iran, undated, <http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/iran> [date accessed 10 November 2015]

<sup>14</sup> Hands Off Cain. Iran, 2015. <http://www.handsoffcain.info/bancadati/schedastato.php?idcontinente=23&nome=iran> [Date accessed 21 December 2015]

<sup>15</sup> US State Department, 2014 Country Report on Human Rights practices- Iran, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236598> [accessed 2 November 2015]

articles on social networks, contacting Kurdish opposition websites, distributing political pamphlets and cooperating with or joining opposition parties.<sup>16</sup>

- 7.1.3 In its March 2015 report IHRDC stated ‘Many former prisoners report unhygienic conditions as a result of overcrowding in prisons, which results in prisoners sleeping on hallway floors, shortages of prescription medicines in prison medical clinics, and a lack of access to necessary medical treatment, which has resulted in the untimely deaths of several prisoners. Despite the numerous reports attesting to the poor conditions in Iranian prisons, the government describes prison conditions as satisfactory.’<sup>17</sup>
- 7.1.4 The same report noted the Special Rapporteur’s concern ‘about reports of insufficient or nonexistent access to medical services for detainees, and insufficient segregation practices in prisons. Between April and December 2014, the Special Rapporteur and other thematic mandate holders transmitted five communications concerning the deteriorating health conditions of 16 detainees in urgent need of specialized medical care outside prison. Some of these individuals were reportedly at risk of dying due to inadequate medical attention.’<sup>18</sup>
- 7.1.5 In September 2015 Amnesty International reported in relation to the death in custody of trade unionist and prisoner of conscience Shahrokh Zamani that ‘Amnesty International has documented a number of cases where sick prisoners have been denied adequate medical care, including medication, and have been refused medical leave, to which they are entitled under Iranian prison regulations.’
- 7.1.6 The report continued ‘Cleric Sayed Hossein Kazemeyni Boroujerdi, a 57-year-old serving an 11-year prison sentence on charges related to him advocating the separation of religion and state, suffers from a number of illnesses, including diabetes, asthma, Parkinson’s disease, kidney and heart problems, as well as severe pain in his legs and waist. He has not been provided with the medical treatment he requires, even though prison doctors said in February 2014 that he needed to be hospitalized outside of prison. In August 2015, he said: “I have experienced all kinds of torment to the point that I have lost all of my health... my legs are becoming paralysed, my eyes are becoming blind, my lungs are in danger of failing, my heart is on a path to a heart attack.”

Anti-death penalty activist Atena Daemi, sentenced to 14 years in prison for her peaceful human rights activities, has had a number of health problems

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<sup>16</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/550ff19c4.html> [accessed 3 November 2015]

<sup>17</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 21 December 2015]

<sup>18</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 12 March 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/550ff19c4.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]

since her arrest in October 2014. In August 2015, she suffered from fatigue and headaches. After weeks of delays in which she was not provided with medical care, she was taken on 14 September 2015 to a hospital outside of Evin Prison for diagnostic testing, the results of which determined she suffers from stress and anxiety.

...Blogger Mohammad Reza Pourshajari, serving a one-year imprisonment sentence on the charge of “spreading propaganda against the system”, suffers from diabetes, prostate ailments, and sciatic and lumbar pains. In an open letter that was posted online in September 2015, he wrote that the prison conditions and the torture and psychological pressure, which he has endured while in prison have contributed to him developing several medical conditions. In 2012, he suffered a heart attack while serving a previous prison sentence. The authorities refused to comply with a doctor’s recommendation that he be given medical leave for treatment outside of prison and, instead, forced him to complete the term of his sentence in prison.’<sup>19</sup>

- 7.1.7 Amnesty International’s report also stated ‘Section Three of Tabriz Central Prison houses between 700 to 800 people, including drug users, and convicted rapists and murderers in three poorly ventilated, bug-infested rooms and with only 10 toilets between them; some prisoners sleep on the floor. Amnesty International has also received numerous reports about severe overcrowding, extreme temperatures, unsanitary facilities and inedible food in other provincial prisons, including Kermanshah’s Dizel Abad Prison, Shiraz’s Adel Abad Prison and Mashhad’s Vakilabad Prison.’<sup>20</sup>

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## 7.2 Evin prison

- 7.2.1 The IHRDC report of March 2015 noted that:

‘The quarantine ward at Evin suffers from serious overcrowding and, as a result, is known for having especially unhygienic conditions, in violation of the Prisons Regulations and international standards.’

‘In 2010 opposition sources reported that political prisoners in Ward 350 of Evin Prison were subject to forced labor as prison authorities planned the construction of expanded prison facilities for the overcrowded prison. It is believed that political prisoners have been forced to assist with the construction of the newly expanded sections, a practice that would be consistent with reports from elsewhere in the country in recent years. The ICHRI also reported that political prisoners in Ward 350 were used for forced labor, as they were forced to clean the hallways and prison bathrooms.’

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<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International ‘Death of trade unionist must trigger action to tackle appalling prison conditions’ 25 September 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/.../MDE1325082015ENGLISH.pdf> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International ‘Death of trade unionist must trigger action to tackle appalling prison conditions’ 25 September 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/.../MDE1325082015ENGLISH.pdf> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

'After the 2009 election, ICHRI reported that Ward 350 at Evin suffered from overcrowded conditions, poor hygiene, low quality food, and limited access to medical treatment.'

'Ward 240 [of Evin prison] houses 700 to 800 solitary confinement cells. Solitary confinement cells lack natural light, and artificial light is on 24 hours a day, exacerbating the psychological pressure of solitary confinement. Former prisoners that spent time in both wards 209 and 240 noted that conditions in Ward 240 were harsher than in Ward 209. Reports describe more aggressive guards and interrogators and former prisoners add that they were unable to see anything outside their cells or hear anything besides the sounds of their own voices in Ward 240. Several prisoners described the small solitary cells as resembling coffins.'<sup>21</sup>

7.2.2 The US State Department Human Rights report covering 2014 noted that: There were reports that medical staff at Evin Prison routinely mixed a variety of medications into a common solution, which they distributed to inmates with little regard to individual medical conditions, leading to side effects that included heart attacks. Food at some prisons reportedly had low nutritional value, leading some prisoners to bribe guards for more nutritious alternatives.'<sup>22</sup>

7.2.3 Human Rights Watch reported on the situation of several women detained at Evin prison and found that one detainee Bahareh Hedayat, a women's and students' rights defender, who was sentenced in May 2010 to 10 years in prison, was not allowed to get adequate medical treatment outside of prison for serious gynecological problems.<sup>23</sup>

7.2.4 Amnesty International reported in September 2015 that 'Retired university professor Hossein Rafiee, jailed for his writings, said from prison earlier this year that the cells in Section 8 of Evin Prison were infested with beetles and other insects, and that he slept on the floor of his cell, which housed 28 prisoners in an area of around 20 square metres, but contained only 18 beds. Hossein Rafiee has also said that Section 8 has only five toilets and showers for over 200 prisoners.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 18 November 2015]

<sup>22</sup> US State Department, 2014 Country Report on Human Rights practices- Iran, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236598> [accessed 2 November 2015]

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Watch, Iran: Free Women Activists, 7 March 2014 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/07/iran-free-women-activists> [date accessed 11 December 2015]

<sup>24</sup> Amnesty International 'Death of trade unionist must trigger action to tackle appalling prison conditions' 25 September 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/.../MDE1325082015ENGLISH.pdf> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

### 7.3 Rajaeeshahr/Gohardasht

- 7.3.1 In an interview with IHRDC, a Kurdish Sunni prisoner held at Rajaeeshahr described the conditions inside the prison. He indicated that several Kurdish Sunni prisoners were suffering from serious medical conditions and were not provided adequate medical care. In addition, this source told IHRDC that due to a lack of access to clean drinking water, the majority of inmates in the ward, including many who were previously healthy, have developed kidney stones. The report also cites another Kurdish Sunni prisoner as telling IHRDC 'that the prison authorities often threaten death row prisoners with the implementation of their sentences in response to alleged contacts with the media or requests for better conditions.'<sup>25</sup>
- 7.3.2 The same report stated 'Rajaeeshahr Prison has 6,000 prisoners and holds numerous political prisoners, many of whom suffer harsh treatment and are routinely denied medical attention.'<sup>26</sup>
- 7.3.3 In September 2015 Amnesty International reported in relation to the death in custody of Shahrokh Zamani that ' The political prisoner ward of Raja'i Shahr Prison is the only section of the prison without telephone privileges. Some of the prisoners there use contraband mobiles to contact their families, particularly those whose families live too far away to visit regularly. Amnesty International has received reports that prison authorities installed signal-jamming devices to prevent the use of mobiles. Many prisoners, including Shahrokh Zamani, reported that they suffered from nausea and headaches when the jamming devices were activated... Shahrokh Zamani's death in prison shines a light on the appalling detention conditions and lack of medical care given to prisoners in a criminal justice system that also imprisons individuals for the peaceful exercise of their rights. Many prisons, including Raja'i Shahr Prison, are severely overcrowded and have inadequate food and poor sanitation, all of which may cumulatively exacerbate prisoners' preexisting medical problems or contribute to new health problems. Furthermore, Amnesty International's research shows that detainees are sometimes denied access to adequate medical care, including access to specialized care.'<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 18 November 2015]

<sup>26</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 18 December 2015]

<sup>27</sup> Amnesty International 'Death of trade unionist must trigger action to tackle appalling prison conditions' 25 September 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/.../MDE1325082015ENGLISH.pdf> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

## 7.4 Qezel Hesar Prison

- 7.4.1 IHRDC noted that: ‘Qezel Hesar is the largest prison in Iran in terms of volume of prisoners, and the number of prisoners held there is reportedly three times its capacity.’
- 7.4.2 The same report quotes activist Ali Kantoori who was a former prisoner of Qezel Hesar, describing ‘[B]eing taken to Andarzgah (Ward) 3, hall 5, which had 28 rooms, each about six square meters and holding ten prisoners.’ He described ‘unhygienic conditions in the overcrowded prison. For example... the prison was infested with lice and there were only four or five showers for more than 200 prisoners. Officials told prisoners they could only shower every other day for three minutes, but in reality they could only take a shower once a week due to the high number of prisoners...’ The report continued ‘According to Kantoori, there was no heating or air conditioning in Qezel Hesar. Each hall was permitted to send up to five people to the prison medical facility at the discretion of the person in charge of the medical facility. Medicine and health services were scarce.’
- 7.4.3 The same report cites the case of blogger Mohammad Reza Pourshajari, who was ‘denied leave to seek medical treatment and suffered two heart attacks while imprisoned at Qezel Hesar. In addition, prison officials reportedly told Pourshajari that they would no longer provide the medication he needed for his high blood sugar.’
- 7.4.4 The IHRDC report further cites Shahla Azad, a member of the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) arrested in 1983, as saying ‘that she was subjected psychological torture at Qezel Hesar when she was forced to listen to her husband being beaten and tortured in the same room while she was blindfolded.’<sup>28</sup>
- 7.4.5 The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s in-year update on Iran dated July 2015 noted that:
- ‘In March, Dr Hassam Hashemi, the Minister of Health, visited Qezel Hesar prison in Karaj. Following his visit, he said that the hygiene and health conditions in Iran’s prisons were awful. According to the Minister, Tuberculosis, HIV and infectious diseases are common among prisoners at Qezel Hesar. He also said that Qezel Hesar should have twice the amount of space to house the number of prisoners currently in detention there.’<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 23 November 2015]

<sup>29</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Islamic Republic of Iran - in-year update July 2015, 15 July 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/islamic-republic-of-iran-in-year-update-july-2015/islamic-republic-of-iran-in-year-update-july-2015> [accessed 4 November 2015]

## 7.5 Women's prison (Qarchak/Qerchak)

### 7.5.1 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's in-year update on Iran also noted that:

'Prison conditions in Iran were also a particular cause for concern in the first half of 2015. In February, the Vice-President for Legal Affairs, Mr Elham Aminzadeh, and the Vice-President for Women's and Family Affairs, Ms Shahindokht Molaverdi, inspected Gharchak women's prison. A number of the prisoners reportedly told the visitors that Gharchak prison was "very unhealthy, inhumane, and unbearable". Ms Farghadani reportedly began a "wet" hunger strike to protest at her transfer from Evin Prison to Gharchak. She reportedly said that if she was not returned to Evin she would continue her hunger strike, even if it led to her death.'<sup>30</sup>

### 7.5.2 The National Council of Resistance of Iran report on the 'Execution of two women prisoners in Qerchak Prison' dated 4 June 2015 noted that:

'The Qerchak Prison that is known as "End of the world" among female prisoners is a deserted poultry farm that has been turned into a prison for women in 2011. The deplorable hygienic and nourishment condition and lack of medical care has turned this prison into a concentration camp. This prison holds around 40 women whose children are also held with them in this unbearable condition.'<sup>31</sup>

### 7.5.3 The IHRDC report on the 'Campaign For The Protection of Women Prisoners' noted:

'Located in barren outskirts of Tehran, Qarchak prison can best be described as hell on earth, where prisoners are deprived of all human dignity. It is a place where its inmates have expressed they would rather be executed than to live in those conditions. The inmates are tucked away from society and civilization in old livestock warehouses where it is difficult for family members to visit and the world to witness the inhumane conditions. Qarchak prison has seven wards, each with the capacity to hold beds for about 100 inmates. Currently, each ward is home to close to 300 prisoners. These wards have cement walls, stone floors, and vinyl shingles as roof. In the courtyard, the stench of manure fills the air, and the pungent smell of livestock still lingers. Inside each ward, there are four rows of triple bunk beds adjacent to the walls and in the center of the room. The height of the bunk beds is so low that the prisoners cannot sit on their beds.'

### 7.5.4 The same report also noted that: 'The absence of any ventilation has led to a serious health risk as particles arising from sewage and feces have brought on the respiratory distress of many inmates. Two open toilets and two showers are shared by over 300 inmates. As such, many prisoners opt to

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<sup>30</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Islamic Republic of Iran - in-year update July 2015, 15 July 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/islamic-republic-of-iran-in-year-update-july-2015/islamic-republic-of-iran-in-year-update-july-2015> [accessed 4 November 2015]

<sup>31</sup> National Council of Resistance of Iran, Iran: Execution of two women prisoners in Qerchak Prison, 4 June 2015, <http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/ncr-statements/women/18429-iran-execution-of-two-women-prisoners-in-qerchak-prison> [date accessed 24 November 2015]

use the space between the beds or the common areas to relieve themselves. Three self-service meals are offered in this prison on a daily basis. However, food is in shortage and many still go hungry or wait to eat the scraps left by others. A “meal” typically consists of two loafs of stale bread and a potato or a small amount of pasta. There are visible signs of serious malnutrition among the minor inmates... The purposeful sounding of excruciatingly loud sirens at night further agitates the inmates and cause [sic] terrorizing stampedes in the dark.’<sup>32</sup>

- 7.5.5 Iran Freedom noted that: ‘The notorious Qarchak prison in Varamin, southeast Tehran, lacks any ventilation or air conditioning devices and lacks the basic human needs. Water cut off in this prison has created inhumane conditions for the women inmates during the scorching summer heat and the fasting month of Ramadan Since Thursday, June 18 [2015], the prison officials have also begun using loudspeakers threatening to flog the women prisoners if they are seen eating or drinking during the fasting hours of Ramadan.’
- 7.5.6 The report continued ‘Qarchak-Varamin Prison is housing some 1200 women prisoners who allegedly committed a variety of crimes. To step up pressure on female political prisoners, the clerical regime transfers them to this prison keeping them in deplorable condition.’<sup>33</sup>
- 7.5.7 In September 2015 Amnesty International reported that ‘Cartoonist and activist Atena Farghadani, sentenced to 12 years and nine months in prison for her artwork and association with families of those killed in the crackdown following the 2009 presidential elections, has a pre-existing lymphatic condition, which the conditions of prison have exacerbated. She requires constant medical check-ups. Atena Farghadani’s mother has said that when she is taken to these examinations, prison guards verbally abuse her daughter and that the ordeal of such trips has placed her daughter under a great deal of psychological pressure. In February 2015, Atena Farghadani went on a hunger strike to protest her transfer from Evin Prison in Tehran to Gharchak Prison, Varamin, south of Tehran. Gharchak Prison has no special section for political prisoners, who are housed with violent offenders in the same prison ward. The conditions of Gharchak Prison are also poor: its facilities are unhygienic and there is insufficient heating in the winter months. Atena Farghadani’s lawyer has stated that she suffered a heart attack while on hunger strike.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Campaign For The Protection of Women Prisoners, undated, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/news/press-statements/3375-campaign-for-the-protection-of-women-prisoners.html> [date accessed 18 November 2015]

<sup>33</sup> Iran Freedom, Iranian regime cuts off water supply in women’s Qarchak prison, 24 June 2015, <http://iranfreedom.org/news/women/942-iranian-regime-cuts-off-water-supply-in-women-s-qarchak-prison> [date accessed 18 November 2015]

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International ‘Death of trade unionist must trigger action to tackle appalling prison conditions’ 25 September 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/.../MDE1325082015ENGLISH.pdf> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

- 7.5.8 More information on specific prisons and their wards can be found at the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre website in an article titled 'Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran', 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html>

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## 8. Accountability and monitoring

- 8.1.1 The US State Departments Country report on Human Rights Practises for 2014 noted that:
- 'The government did not permit independent monitoring of prison conditions.'
- 'Prisoners and their families often wrote letters to authorities and, in some cases, to UN bodies to highlight and protest their treatment. The UN special rapporteur reported that authorities sometimes subjected prisoners to threats after accusing them of contacting his office.'
- 'There were no reports on the adequacy of or of any steps to improve recordkeeping or whether the penal system employed prison ombudspersons to respond to complaints.'
- 'Prisoners were able to submit complaints to judicial authorities, but often faced censorship and retribution for doing so. Authorities did not initiate credible investigations into allegations of inhumane conditions. Families of executed prisoners did not always receive notification of their deaths.'<sup>35</sup>
- 8.1.2 IHRDC stated in its March 2015 report that 'The government does not allow the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran to visit the country and independently monitor its prisons; nonetheless reports from witnesses and former political prisoners provide a glimpse into the harsh prison conditions in Iran.'<sup>36</sup>
- 8.1.3 According to the Amnesty International report "Justice is an alien word": Ill-treatment of political prisoners in Evin Prison dated 15 May 2014, 'In the past, the Iranian authorities have frequently failed to conduct independent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and other serious abuses by officials, and to bring those responsible to justice, in breach of Iran's obligations under international law. This has contributed to a pervasive culture of impunity which fuels continuing serious human rights violations.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> US State Department, 2014 Country Report on Human Rights practices- Iran, 25 June 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236598> [accessed 2 November 2015]

<sup>36</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 21 December 2015]

<sup>37</sup> Amnesty International, "Justice is an alien word": Ill-treatment of political prisoners in Evin Prison , 15 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5379b5e14.html> [date accessed 25 November 2015]

## 9. Torture and mistreatment of persons in custody

### 9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1 In his report of March 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in Iran stated: 'Interrogations allegedly lasted several hours, during which time interrogators usually attempted to coerce detainees to confess in writing to certain activities, and/or to sign other documents. In nearly all cases, former detainees reported having been subjected to torture or ill-treatment during interrogation and detention. In 90 per cent of cases, former detainees claimed that their interrogators had subjected them to psychological abuse, including prolonged solitary confinement, mock executions, threats to life, sexual harassment, threats to family members, harsh verbal abuse and threats of rape and other torture. Some 76 per cent also alleged that their interrogators physically abused them in the form of severe beatings to the head and body, often with a baton-like object. Some reported having been subjected to suspension and pressure positions, sexual molestation, electric shocks or burning.'<sup>38</sup>
- 9.1.2 The Peoples Mojahedin Organization of Iran note in their report 'Evin prison: the hell on earth' dated 22 April 2014 that: 'In Iran, intellectuals, writers, activists and detainees use the term "white torture" to refer to the use of incommunicado solitary confinement or as its known as (enferadi). The conditions of solitary confinement used against political prisoners are designed to break the resolve of detainees such that they capitulate and agree to confess and videotaped, signed confessions, and give information regarding their political affiliations and associates. Prisoners are held in solitary cell blocks, many in secret detention centers, often underground, with 24/7 artificial illumination. They are denied communication with other prisoners and access to attorneys, family members, and medical professionals.'<sup>39</sup>
- 9.1.3 According to the Amnesty International report "Justice is an alien word": Ill-treatment of political prisoners in Evin Prison dated 15 May 2014:
- 'On 19 April 2014, 74 prisoners held in Section 350 addressed a letter to the Prosecutor of Tehran in which they described what had occurred at Evin Prison on 17 April and listed alleged breaches of Prison Regulations committed by security officials and prison guards, including beatings of prisoners resulting in injuries that had been documented by prison medics. They asked the Prosecutor to initiate a prompt judicial investigation...

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<sup>38</sup> UN HRC Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mar. 14, 2014 p 55-56, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/25/61 [date accessed 21 December 2015].

<sup>39</sup> People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, Evin prison: the hell on earth, 22 April 2014, <http://www.mojahedin.org/newsen/27926/Evin-prison-the-hell-on-earth> [date accessed 10 November 2015]

Iran's Prison Regulations require that any disciplinary measures permitted under the Regulations, such as periods of solitary confinement, may be imposed only after the relevant authorities have followed procedures that have established a prisoner's guilt. Under Article 174 of the Regulations, alleged offences by prisoners must be investigated by a Disciplinary Council composed of judicial and prison officials. If the Disciplinary Council finds the accused prisoner guilty but only by majority vote, it may only impose one of the punishments listed under Article 175, such as "deprivation of visits up to three occasions, deprivation of prison leave up to three months, exclusion of being considered for release on probation up to 20 days, and detention in solitary confinement for a maximum of 20 days." Note to Article 175 stipulates that the Disciplinary Council can only impose up to one third of either of the prescribed penalties. Imposition of more than one third of the penalties requires the confirmation of the prison's supervisory judge. Article 169 of the Regulations specifically prohibits "Imprecation, swearing, using indecent language, corporal punishment of the accused or convicts, and imposing violent, excruciating or humiliating punishments, in all penal institutes and prisons" in Iran.<sup>40</sup>

9.1.4 Politico reported on an interview with Farzad Madadzadeh, a 30-year-old opposition activist who fled Iran:

'He said that after Rouhani's election in 2013, more political prisoners had been jailed, conditions in prison worsened and the number of executions rose dramatically as the new regime sought to stave off the risk of a popular uprising fueled by increased access to outside information.[...] During his detention Madadzadeh said he was routinely beaten, blindfolded and pressured to incriminate himself for terrorist activities. He was also placed in solitary confinement for four months as part of an interrogation regimen that lasted 15 hours per day. Several other political prisoners subjected to similar treatment broke under the pressure, agreed to confess to various crimes on TV and were executed.'<sup>41</sup>

9.1.5 The Daily Mail online reported in October 2015 on an interview with Farzad Madadzadeh. The report quoted Farzad Madadzadeh saying of prison guards "They would torture with electric shock batons and a lot of people were burnt with cigarette lighters on their back. Somebody was beaten so hard on the ear that he went deaf. I have some hearing problems myself because of all the beating on my ear. No real doctor was allowed to come in and treat us. They tortured the prisoners to death by depriving them of any medical treatment.' Two of his friends, political prisoners who had taken part in the uprising, were sentenced to execution. The men told him the interrogators pulled out their fingernails. One suffered a broken back during

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<sup>40</sup> Amnesty International, "Justice is an alien word": Ill-treatment of political prisoners in Evin Prison , 15 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5379b5e14.html> [date accessed 25 November 2015]

<sup>41</sup> Politico, Iranian dissidents warn human rights worse under Rouhani 10 October 2015 <http://www.politico.eu/article/iranian-dissidents-human-rights-worse-rouhani/> [date accessed 25 November 2015]

interrogation and did not receive medical treatment, another was raped by a male guard - prompting him to make false confessions'.<sup>42</sup>

- 9.1.6 Amnesty International reported in October 2015 that imprisoned cartoonist Atena Farghadani 'was forced to undergo a "virginity and pregnancy test", prior to her trial for a charge of "illegitimate sexual relations" for shaking hands with her lawyer...In a note written by Atena Farghadani leaked from prison... she says the judicial authorities took her to a medical centre outside the prison on 12 August 2015 and forced her to submit to the tests, purportedly with the purpose of investigating the charge against her...Coerced "virginity testing" is internationally recognized as a form of violence and discrimination against women and girls.'<sup>43</sup>

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## 9.2 Evin prison

- 9.2.1 IHRDC noted in their article on prisons in Iran that:

'According to officials, no one is subjected to torture inside Evin. But in contrast former prisoners often report harsh interrogations, forced confessions, psychological torture, and physical torture, solitary confinement, and rape.' The same report continued 'Interrogations are carried out while detainees are held in abusive detention conditions. The detainees are faced with torture and threats of torture, and use of other coercive techniques to force them to confess.'

- 9.2.2 'The use of psychological torture, as described by individuals formerly held in Ward 2A [of Evin prison], causes lasting trauma for many prisoners which can endure even after their release from prison. The use of psychological torture not only contravenes the IRI's commitments under Article 5 of the UDHR and Article 7 of the ICCPR, but also violates the Iranian Constitution as well the Prisons Regulations, which mentions the prisoners' health in three different provisions.'<sup>44</sup>The report gave details of Wards which function as separate prisons within Evin: 'Prisoners detained here are not included on official lists of prisoners. Detainees in this ward are not permitted to have visitors. Prison guards sometimes punish prisoners in Ward 2A by preventing detainees from going to the restrooms, which are located outside the cells.'<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Daily Mail online, 'Daily Mail interviews recently-escaped Iran political prisoner' 10 October 2015 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3267387/Electrocution-rape-drug-induced-confessions-Political-prisoner-reveals-reality-brutal-torture-hangings-Iran-s-notorious-jail-months-escape-Europe.html> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

<sup>43</sup> Amnesty International 'Imprisoned cartoonist subjected to forced 'virginity test'' 9 October 2015 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/iran-imprisoned-cartoonist-subjected-to-forced-virginity-test/> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

<sup>44</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 18 November 2015]

<sup>45</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Campaign For The Protection of Women Prisoners, undated, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/news/press-statements/3375-campaign-for-the-protection-of-women-prisoners.html> [date accessed 21 December 2015]

9.2.3 The Peoples Mojahedin Organization of Iran note in their report 'Evin prison: the hell on earth' dated 22 April 2014 that:

'Ward 209 and 325 are known as the political sections of the Evin Prison. Most of the detainees in these sections are political prisoners related to the PMOI/MEK (Peoples Mojahedin Organization of Iran) who are against the ruling regime in Iran. Prisoners are interrogated, and in many cases tortured, held without charges, raped, and subjected to solitary confinement.'

'Torturing in Evin, like in other prisons in Iran is a legal method to break down the political prisoners. Almost 71 kinds of tortures are reported by political prisoners who were personally victims of these brutal methods.'

'Interrogations are carried out while detainees are held in abusive detention conditions. The detainees are faced with torture and threats of torture, and use of other coercive techniques to force them to confess. The interrogations carried out in Evin prison as well as other unauthorized detention centers throughout the country, demonstrate the very political nature of the crackdown: those targeted were detained because they acted as the main platforms for student movements... Interrogations served as the principle means to fabricate criminal files and charges, coerce confessions, and make threats against prisoners' families, colleagues, or political associates.'

'Girls in Evin Prison are systematically raped by the guards and their torturers. The sexual assault against prisoners are not confined to girls; from teenagers to aging women, all female prisoners are constantly exposed to this savage treatment. Many women prisoners loss their sanity as a result of being raped repeatedly by the guards.'

'Evin Prison is one of the most infamous and notorious prisons in the world. Beatings, torture, mock executions, rape and brutal interrogations are the every day routine in this place.'<sup>46</sup>

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### 9.3 Rajaeeshahr/Gohardasht

9.3.1 IHRDC noted in their report of March 2015 that:

'In 2010, videos and pictures from inside Rajaeeshahr Prison were released on the website HRANA, sparking outcry over the rape, torture, and severe mistreatment of prisoners at Rajaeeshahr. Mohsen Beikvand, a young political prisoner who was one of the victims in the videos was subsequently transferred to solitary confinement and eventually killed in prison after describing the brutality to which he was subjected.'

'In Ward 8, which is administered by the MOI, prisoners are kept in solitary confinement. One political prisoner, Mohammad Reza Pourshajari, who was arrested in 2010 and imprisoned for the content of his weblog, noted that he

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<sup>46</sup> People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, Evin prison: the hell on earth, 22 April 2014, <http://www.mojahedin.org/newsen/27926/Evin-prison-the-hell-on-earth> [date accessed 10 November 2015]

was beaten and tortured daily in this section of Rajaeeshahr, and that he was threatened by a mock execution in which he was taken to the gallows and made to stand on a stool, thinking he was going to be hanged.<sup>47</sup>

- 9.3.2 More information from IHRDC on specific prisons and their wards can be found [here](#)

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<sup>47</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Rights Disregarded: Prisons in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 18 March 2015, <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000574-rights-disregarded-prisons-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html> [accessed 24 November 2015]

# Version Control and Contacts

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

## Clearance

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