

QUARTERLY REPORT

JANUARY-MARCH 2024

# IRAN: A HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON THE AZERBAIJANI TURKS IN IRAN



### **About the Foundation for Inclusive Society**

**T**he foundation for Inclusive Society (FIS), a nonprofit based in the United States, is dedicated to studying and empowering minority groups. Through conducting analyses and publishing reports on human rights and environmental issues, FIS strives to meet the needs of marginalized communities. Visit our official website, [www.inclusivevision.org](http://www.inclusivevision.org), to access our latest reports and publications. For inquiries, feel free to reach out to us at [secretary@inclusivevision.org](mailto:secretary@inclusivevision.org).

## Summary

This report covers human rights violations against Azerbaijani Turks in Iran during the first quarter of 2024 (January, February, and March).

In the realm of human rights violations, the first quarter of 2024 saw the apprehension of 48 individuals by authorities. Some of these individuals were released on bail while awaiting the conclusion of their legal proceedings. This report also provides updates on previously arrested cases, including exiling two individuals to a remote area.

9 individuals were summoned by security forces. Tragically, at least four individuals faced the gravest consequence, as they were executed by hanging under capital punishment sentences. A previous political prisoner passed away under suspicious circumstances.

Furthermore, 11 individuals received various penalties for their involvement in civil activities. Some of these people have been sentenced previously but their case is updated. Notably, a civil activist faced academic suspension, and the activities of at least two were halted. Additionally, one individual reported facing threats from security and police forces, further contributing to the distressing landscape. Moreover, four newborn children were denied ID certificates, compounding the concerning situation.



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# Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This report emphasizes human rights violations, with a particular focus on the Azerbaijani region of Iran. It highlights the alarming lack of access to human rights organizations in cities with Azerbaijani populations. Despite substantial evidence, the Iranian government persists in denying the existence of any human rights abuses in the country. By issuing quarterly reports, we aim to raise awareness and advance our efforts to assist these individuals who face severe injustice.

The report opens by addressing a prevalent issue: the arbitrary arrest and subsequent release of individuals in Iran. Later, it delves deeper into the circumstances of those sentenced within the Azerbaijani region, shedding light on their challenges, such as restricted access to legal representation, due process, and limited and inadequate access to human rights organizations. The subsequent section of the report focuses on the Iranian government's strategy of relocating prominent human rights defenders and activists to remote areas, effectively curbing their involvement in civil society initiatives.

The report discusses the contentious practice of capital punishment in Iran and its profound

implications. Amnesty International's resolute condemnation of this form of punishment is underscored, with a fervent advocacy for its abolition. Within the Iranian context, capital punishment carries significant weight, both as a legal recourse and a subject of intense debate. The prevalence of executions in Iran has drawn widespread criticism from international human rights organisations and advocates who argue that it violates fundamental human rights principles. Moreover, the report examines the societal and political factors that weaponize the use of capital punishment in Iran due to its application in cases related to political dissent and social activism.

It also scrutinises the contentious practice of capital punishment in Iran, highlighting Amnesty International's strong condemnation of this form of punishment and advocating for its abolition.

The report has also collected a list of individuals who were subjected to unlawful summoning practices orchestrated by Iranian Intelligence agents, strategically employed to intimidate political and social activists, thereby impeding their involvement in various endeavors as well. We scrutinize the severe repercussions faced by organizations and/or individuals perceived as opposition or anti-government entities, often resulting in various forms of suspension that severely curtail freedom of expression and association. The report has also dedicated a section to the disturbingly frequent government-initiated threats against individuals.

Conclusively, the report presents a crafted set of recommendations aimed at addressing the human rights violations outlined throughout the document. These recommendations are tailored to cultivate a society where citizens can freely exercise their rights without fear of reprisal. Through implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that meaningful change can be instigated, fostering a culture of respect for human rights in Iran. We've provided contact details for further inquiries or engagement regarding the report's findings. Special acknowledgment is extended to Turkan Bozkurt and Behzad Jeddi for their invaluable contributions to the preparation of this report.

## 1.2 Methodology

This section aims to provide an overview of the methodology utilised in the compilation of this human rights report, focusing on the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran during the period from January to March 2024. The following methodology was employed for the collection and analysis of the information featured in this report:

Objectives:

The primary aim of this report is to draw attention to specific instances of human rights violations experienced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. It sheds light on a spectrum of violations, including arrests and subsequent releases, forced exile cases, and instances where punitive measures, such as executions were disproportionately severe.

Additionally, the report extends beyond mere documentation by offering recommendations to address the documented human rights violations, targeting the promotion of accountability, justice, and the protection of fundamental human rights. By highlighting these violations and proposing actionable recommendations, the report aims to contribute to a discourse aimed at rectifying the injustices faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, advocating for the protection and promotion of their fundamental human rights, underscoring the urgent necessity for action to safeguard their rights and dignity.

## 1.3 Sources of Information and Data Collection:

The information presented in this report is the outcome of a network of Azerbaijani human rights activists within and outside Iran. These sources provide invaluable firsthand accounts, testimonies, and documented evidence of human rights abuses experienced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the gathered data, a meticulous process is followed. Multiple reliable sources including credible news reports, public records, and other reputable sources are consulted and cross-referenced. This multifaceted approach helps corroborate the information and establish its authenticity.

The data collection process for this report involved the effort of the network of Azerbaijani human rights activists inside Iran, comprising 16 dedicated individuals. These activists played a crucial role in collecting and disseminating information on human rights violations occurring in the Azerbaijani region of Iran.

Various sources were utilised to collect data, including eyewitness testimonies, accounts from the families of victims, published reports, and narratives shared by the protesters themselves. These sources provide firsthand information and personal experiences, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the human rights situation.

## **1.4 Data Analysis**

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the human rights violations faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, the collected data underwent a meticulous analysis and classification process. This ensured that the information was structured, allowing for a thorough overview of the violations.

The collected data was carefully examined and organised into distinct sections, each focusing on a specific human rights violation. This classification enabled a clear and comprehensive presentation of the violations experienced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the collected information, the Foundation for Inclusive Society employed rigorous verification methods. This involved cross-referencing the data from different sources and channels to establish consistency and accuracy. By adopting this meticulous approach, the Foundation for Inclusive Society aimed to present a reliable and accurate portrayal of the human rights violations faced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

Through the analysis and categorization of data, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation, shedding light on the various violations and their impact. This systematic approach strives to comprehensively understand the challenges and injustices the Azerbaijani Turkish community faces in Iran.

The collaborative efforts of the Foundation for Inclusive Society and Azerbaijani human rights activists and the careful verification process contribute to the credibility and integrity of the data presented in this report.



# PART TWO

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# Arrested and Released Individuals

## 2.1 Arrested and Released Individuals

In Iran, it is a frequent occurrence for individuals to be detained and subsequently released. These arrests often target human rights activists, journalists, religious minorities, and members of marginalized communities perceived by the government as posing a threat to the regime. Upon arrest, detainees often undergo interrogation, face an array of charges ranging from activism to espionage, and endure prolonged periods of detention without formal charges or access to fair trials. While some individuals may be released due to lack of evidence or international pressure, many others remain incarcerated, subject to mistreatment or torture. This repetitive cycle of arrests and releases underscores the persistent challenges to freedom of expression and human rights in Iran.

Law enforcement and intelligence personnel forcefully disrupted the peaceful protest organised by residents of Ghara Gheshlagh village in Salmas city, West Azerbaijan. The protest was aimed at opposing the construction of a salt factory in their locality. The authorities responded with excessive force, deploying tear gas and resorting to brutal physical assaults against the protestors. Hashem Rezaei, Yousef Matlabli, Tohid Maleki, Mehdi

Maleki, Rahim Talebi, Safar Rai, Gholam Maleki, Gholam Haghghat, Ghanbar Amani, Hedayat Amjadi, Moharram Haghighat, Morteza Tayyari, Tohid Akbari, Ahmed Parsa, Sosanbar Alipour, Samia Alipour, Elnaz Alipour, Saeedeh Ahmadi, Latifeh Moulai, Rabab Alipour, Sosan Ghafari were all arrested as a result.

On January 22, 2024, Mohammad Shabahati, an Azerbaijani civil activist, was released from prison after being arrested by security forces in Tehran on January 9, 2024. His initial arrest occurred during the nationwide "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests at Tehran University on December 7, 2022, where he was beaten by the security forces. He was detained for 33 days and released on temporary bail pending the conclusion of legal proceedings.

On January 17, 2024, Sina Banalizadeh, a civil activist and journalist residing in Ardabil, was released from Ardabil Central Prison after posting bail, pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. His arrest by security forces in Ardabil City on January 15, 2014, marked the beginning of his legal ordeal, though specific accusations remain undisclosed. Banalizadeh, known for his extensive work in social and environmental journalism, including collaborations with Fars news agency is regarded as one of the most active journalists in Azerbaijan. His dedication is evident in his travels across various Azerbaijani cities where he produces and shares video reports via his Instagram page.

On January 22, 2024, Mukhtar Ebrahimi was incarcerated in Maragheh prison after being sentenced to one year of imprisonment by the second branch of the Court of Appeal of East Azerbaijan province on charges of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran". Previously, the first branch of the Maragheh city court, led by Judge Jabari, had initially sentenced him to ten years of imprisonment for offences including "forming a group and activities against the regime" and "membership in channels and groups against the regime". However, following protests, the initial verdicts were mitigated.

Ebrahimi, a political science student, was apprehended by security forces in Maragheh on August 26, 2020. After 21 days, he was transferred to Maragheh prison and later released on bail pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. Despite suffering from kidney problems and requiring specialised medical attention, Ebrahimi's access to necessary medications has reportedly been obstructed by prison authorities, despite efforts by his family and the human rights organisation Hrana. This Azerbaijani activist has faced repeated arrests and imprisonment due to his involvement in civil and peaceful activities.

On February 24, 2024, Mortaza Parvin initiated a hunger strike in Evin prison to protest his unlawful detention. He ceased the hunger strike on March 9, 2024, following appeals from activists across various Azerbaijani cities who reached out to his family, urging him to end the protest. Parvin was arrested by intelligence forces in Ardabil city on February 6, 2024, and subsequently transferred to Evin Prison. In a brief conversation with his family, he disclosed that he had not been interrogated for four days and did not anticipate further interrogation. Additionally, he expressed that his back disc pain had exacerbated during his detention.

On February 5 and 6, 2024, a series of arrests occurred in various locations across Iran. Hosein Piri, Ayaz Seifkhah, and Bagher Hajizadeh were detained in Tabriz city, Suleyman Mohammadi in Ardabil, and Kamal Nouri in Eslamshahr, all apprehended by security forces.

Suleyman Mohammadi, upon arrest, was transferred to the detention centre of the Intelligence Department located in Evin Prison. He faces charges of "Association and conspiracy to commit a crime against internal/external security". On February 6, 2024, Abdolaziz Azimi Ghadim was apprehended by security forces in Qarchak city while returning from Qom to Tehran. Subsequently, he was transferred to ward 240 of Evin prison. Despite his detention, specific accusations against him remain undisclosed.

On February 6, 2024, Taher Naghvi, an Azerbaijani lawyer residing in Karaj city, was detained by security forces in Alborz. As of publication of this report, there is no information available regarding his current location or the specific charges against him.

On February 6, 2024, Saeed Jamalzadeh, a resident of Tabriz, was transferred to Evin prison. He was arrested by the security forces in Tabriz not long ago.

On February 7, 2024, Araz Aman, an Azerbaijani activist, was apprehended by intelligence forces in Tabriz. Two days prior, on February 5, 2024, a significant number of intelligence personnel attempted to forcefully enter the residence of this activist in a brutal manner by breaking the door lock. However, due to Aman's absence from home at the time, they were unsuccessful in making the arrest.

On February 12, 2024, Saeed Doostan was apprehended by judicial officers at the Ardabil city courthouse and subsequently transferred to the Evin Detention Center in Tehran. Doostan had been summoned to appear before the first branch of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Ardabil city, facing charges of "conspiring to commit a crime against internal/external security".

On February 17, 2024, Yorush Mehralibaglou was released from Tabriz Central prison after posting bail pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. His arrest on November 7, 2023, marked one of several instances due to his civil and political activities, though specific accusations remain undisclosed.

According to Yilmaz Mehralibaglou, Yorush's brother, he was apprehended by armed security officers in Gregar (Hadishahr) in East Azerbaijan, creating a climate of fear. On November 14, 2023, the family received a brief one-minute call from Yorush, during which he managed only to inquire about their well-being and announce his own safety before the call abruptly ended, leaving his family with limited information about his condition.

Upon inquiring about Yorush's situation and the reasons for his arrest at Branch 15 of Tabriz General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office on November 14, 2023, Judge Mousavi stated that Yorush Mehrlibiglou had been detained for at least 2 months.

On February 22, 2024, Ebrahim Rashidi was released from Meshgin Shahr prison after posting bail, pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. His arrest on December 30, 2023, by intelligence forces marked another instance of harassment due to his civil activities, a

pattern he has endured with previous summonses, threats, and arrests.

After completing interrogation on January 15, 2024, Rashidi was transferred to the Intelligence Department's detention centre in Ardabil City, following initial charges of "propaganda activity against the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran". Officials from the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Meshgin Shahr cautioned Rashidi's family against reporting his case. They warned that doing so could exacerbate his situation and advised against publicising any news about him.

On March 9, 2024, Vadud Asadi was released from Evin prison after posting bail until the end of the proceedings. Asadi was initially arrested on February 5, 2024. There is no further information about possible accusations against him.

On March 8, 2024, Ehsan Faidei was arrested by security forces in Tabriz city. There is no information regarding his whereabouts and possible accusations.

On March 13, 2024, Siamak Seifi, Milad Zainulabдини, Samad Heydari, Amin Taghizadeh and Amir Taghizadeh were arrested as they were leaving Sahand Stadium in Tabriz after a soccer match with Tractor Sazi team.

On March 13, 2024, Saeed Minaei was released from Tabriz prison after posting bail, pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. His arrest occurred on February 6, 2024, in Rasht city where he was apprehended by security forces.

On March 19, 2024, Abdullah Vahedi was released from Evin prison after posting bail, awaiting the conclusion of legal proceedings. His arrest took place on February 7, 2024, when he was detained by intelligence forces in Astara City.

On March 28, 2024, Ahad Saif Khah was released from Tabriz Central prison after posting bail, pending the conclusion of legal proceedings. He had been arrested on February 5, 2024, although no specific accusations have been disclosed.





**Mohammad  
Shabahati**

Tehran-Tehran



**Ebrahim Rashidi**

Ardabil-Meshkin Shahr



**Sina  
Banalizadeh**

Ardabil-Ardabil



**Mortaza Parvin**

Ardabil-Ardabil



**Vadud Asadi**

Rasht-Rasht



**Bagher  
Hajizadeh**

East Azerbaijan-  
Tabriz



**Ayaz Seifkhan**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Saeed Minaei**

East Azerbaijan -  
Bonab



**Abdullah  
Vahedi**

Astara - Gilan





**Araz Aman**

East Azerbaijan-  
Tabriz



**Saeed Doostan**

Ardabil-Ardabil



**Salar Taher Afshar**

West Azerbaijan-  
Urmia



**Yorush  
Mehralibaglou**

East Azerbaijan-Jolfa



**Ehsan Faridi**

East Azerbaijan-  
Tabriz



**Siamak Seifi**

Ardabil- Meshgin



**Abdolaziz Azimi  
Ghadim**

Tehran-Qarchak



**Ahad Saif  
Khah**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Mukhtar Ebrahimi**

East Azerbaijan-  
Maragheh



# Sentenced Individuals

## 3.1 Sentenced Individuals

Following their conviction in a court of law, certain individuals have been deemed guilty of a crime and subsequently handed down formal sentences. These sentences, determined by the judicial system, may entail imprisonment, fines, community service, probation, or other prescribed penalties.

On January 1, 2024, Yunus Gholizadeh's sentence in the second branch of the Court of Appeal of East Azerbaijan Province for the charge of "Disturbance of public order and peace (through participation in illegal gatherings)" was confirmed. Instead of imprisonment and whipping, he was ordered to pay a fine to the government fund. Gholizadeh's arrest by security forces occurred during a protest rally in Tabriz city on July 16, 2022. This was a peaceful protest to hold the government accountable for the drying of Urmia Lake.

On January 29, 2024, Shahab Bayat was summoned to Hamedan's sentence execution branch to begin serving a six-month prison sentence. Bayat, a civil and urban engineering student at Azad University of Hamadan had recently been convicted by the second branch of the Revolutionary Court of Hamedan, presided over by Judge Esmaili, on charges of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic".

Previously, on December 14, 2022, Bayat had received a three-year prison sentence from the Hamedan Revolutionary Court. But his sentence was reduced by the appeal court to six-month prison. He was released from Hamedan Central Prison in February of the following year upon completing his imprisonment. Bayat's legal troubles began on October 31, 2022, when he was arrested during the Women, Life, Freedom protest by forces of the Hamedan Intelligence Department. Subsequently, he was released on bail pending the conclusion of legal proceedings.

On January 30, 2024, the sentence of Reza Asgharian was upheld by the first branch of the Court of Appeal of East Azerbaijan province. Asgharian was sentenced to five months in prison for "insulting the leadership of the Islamic Republic" and fined for "propaganda activity against the Islamic Republic of Iran" in the court of first instance. His legal troubles began on August 7, 2021 when he was arrested by intelligence forces following the publication of posts on his virtual networks. Asgharian was released on September 9, 2021, after posting bail, pending the conclusion of legal proceedings.

On February 7, 2024, Meisam Shirini was arrested after visiting the 9th Branch of the Sentence Execution branch of the Urmia court and subsequently transferred to Urmia Central

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Prison to begin serving a one-year sentence. The charges against Shirini during the preliminary stage of the trial were "acting against the country's national security, shouting slogans, and participating in protests".

On November 16, 2022, Shirini was arrested by security forces in Urmia during the nationwide protests in Iran where he was subjected to physical violence. Following the interrogation process, he was moved from the IRGC intelligence detention centre to Urmia Central Prison and later released after posting bail.

On February 10, 2024, Esmail Ahmadi, a resident of Varzeghan, was sentenced to 9 months in prison and 70 lashes after being accused of multiple offences including "insulting the sanctities of Islam", "inciting people to commit crimes/crimes against internal/external security", "communication with enemy networks", "spreading lies", and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic system". Prior to this, on November 14, 2023, Ahmadi was summoned to appear at Branch 101 of the Criminal Court of Varzaghan.

Earlier, on August 21st, this Azerbaijani labour rights activist was detained by security forces in Varzaghan. This followed Ahmadi's previous arrest for protesting the working conditions of miners in the Sungun copper mine in East Azerbaijan. He was released on August 24 from Ahar prison, facing charges of "disturbance in public order" and "insulting the officials of the copper company" during the hearing in the prosecutor's office.

Salar Taher Afshar has faced numerous legal challenges due to his activism. Most recently, he was sentenced to six months in prison on charges of "assisting in propaganda activities against the Islamic Republic of Iran". This sentence came after his arrest by intelligence forces in Urmia and a summons to the Tabriz Intelligence Center for alleged "propaganda against the system".

Prior to this, Afshar was released on bail on December 23, 2023, after being arrested on December 19, 2023. His history of encounters with authorities includes previous arrests and imprisonments. On July 16, 2020, he was detained after being summoned to the Intelligence and Security Police of Urmia City (9 Pilleh) due to the protests against the aggression of the Armenian army into the Republic of Azerbaijan. Additionally,

on October 3, 2022, he was arrested by security forces in Kermanshah, reportedly while serving his military service there.

On February 17, 2024, Milad Jalili (Ilshan) was acquitted of the charge of "acting against national security by inciting people to riots and war and killing people". However, he was sentenced to 8 months in prison for "propaganda activity against the Islamic Republic of Iran through the performance of political rap music for the benefit of Pan-Turkish separatist convicts". He was released on January 29, 2024, after posting bail until the end of the proceeding process. Prior to this, on November 28, 2023, Jalili was arrested in Tabriz on accusations of "action against national security by inciting people to riots and war and killing people", as well as "propaganda activity against the Islamic Republic of Iran system through the performance of political rap music for the benefit of Pan-Turkish separatist convicts".

Jalili, known as a rapper in Azerbaijan, faced intimidation and physical violence during his arrest. On December 1, 2023, a group of rappers from Tabriz gathered in a city park to support Ilshan and other detained Azerbaijani activists, demanding their release through rap performances.

On February 17, 2024, Afshin Naziri received a comprehensive sentencing from the Pardisshahr Revolution Branch totaling 4 years and 9 months in prison along with additional penalties for three distinct charges. He was sentenced to 8 months for "propaganda activity against the Islamic Republic of Iran", 16 months for "insulting the Supreme Leader", and a substantial 33 months for "membership in a group or branch aiming to disrupt the country's security".

This environmental activist was detained by security forces on August 29, 2023, and subsequently transferred to Evin Prison in Tehran. Authorities have barred his family from visiting him, leaving them uninformed about his well-being. According to Naziri's sister who shared the news via Instagram, the neighbours noticed he was apprehended at his home by five individuals in civilian attire early morning. He was then taken to the prosecutor's office before being transferred back to Evin Prison. His arrest is believed to be linked

to his efforts to advocate for the preservation of Lake Urmia which is facing significant environmental challenges.

Elham Chobdar, a prominent advocate for LGBTQ rights in Urmia, faced a severe injustice when she was initially sentenced to death by the judicial system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This 26 years old's death sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court and she was released on March 13, 2023. She was later arrested in February to begin serving a three-year prison term in the women's ward of Urmia Central Prison. Alongside Sara (Zahra) Seddighi Hamdani from Sulduz (Naghadeh), she was charged with "promoting homosexuality", "promoting Christianity", and "communicating with hostile media with Islamic Republic" by the Revolutionary Court of Urmia in the summer of 2023. Despite the Supreme Court overturning their death sentences, Elham and Sara were both detained, with Elham being released on bail until further proceedings.

On March 12, 2024, the second branch of the Court of Appeal of East Azerbaijan province confirmed Karim Ismailzadeh's sentence of 6 months in prison. Subsequently, on August 17th, they were transferred to Branch 10 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Tabriz where bail orders were issued for each individual involved. Abdullah Ansari, Mehdi Nasirzadeh, and Ebrahim Rezaii were released on August 19th, 2023, after posting bail. However, Karim Esmaeilzadeh's release was delayed until September 28th, when bail was posted, pending the conclusion of the prosecution process from Tabriz Central Prison.

On March 12, 2024, Sahand Nourmohammadzadeh took a medical leave. Jafar Nourmohammadzadeh, his father, shared on his personal Instagram page concerning Sahand's recent struggle with vision issues. In his post, Jafar expressed his concern in these words: "Today, on October 4, 2023, marks one year since my son's arrest and subsequent sentencing to 16 years in prison, all because he kicked a trash can. Ten years of exile awaited him in Kahnuj prison at the peak of his youth. You destroyed all his dreams and due to psychological pressure, he is losing his eyesight. His right eye has a problem. Strangely, you talk about Islam and justice. Which justice? I want justice for my son."

Nourmohammadzadeh, detained during the Women, Life, and Freedom protests, received his verdict from Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, under the leadership of Judge Iman Afshari. His arrest occurred on October 4, 2022, amid nationwide protests on the Ashrafi Esfahani highway in Tehran. Initially, Judge Ali Mazloun from the 29th branch of the Revolutionary Court handed down a "death sentence" to Nourmohammadzadeh on the charge of "attempting to block the street and impede the movement of vehicles".

Ultimately, following proceedings at the twenty-sixth branch of the Tehran Revolutionary Court presided over by the same judge, Nourmohammadzadeh was exiled to Kohnuj in Kerman province for a decade on the charge of "engaging in warfare," and received a five-year sentence for the charge of "collusion". Additionally, he was sentenced to one year in prison for "disturbing public order," resulting in a total of six years of imprisonment. This sentence was subsequently upheld by the 39th branch of the Supreme Court. This Azerbaijani prisoner held in Rajai Shahr prison, was subsequently transferred to Kerman's Kahanouj Prison on August 10, 2023, to serve his 10-year prison sentence in exile.

Sahand's father has expressed grave concerns regarding the potential interference of security authorities in his son's sentencing, prompting him to call for an investigation by the head of the judiciary. According to Sahand's father, security agents prematurely announced the exile order for his son even before the judge had issued a ruling. In a firm protest against what he perceives as an unjust sentence, Sahand's father emphasised the severity of the punishment, which includes six years of imprisonment, ten years of exile, and even flogging for his son.

During a visit to the Moghaddas Court's Judgment Execution Branch, Sahand's father was troubled to learn from the judgement execution judge that the court's ruling was ambiguous. Consequently, he initiated a request to reopen the case proceedings under Article 474. This decision was prompted by a distressing pre-order call allegedly received from an individual purporting to be a security officer. This caller asserted that anyone admitting to "warfare" not only faced execution but also mandatory exile. Urging the head of the judiciary to conduct a thorough investigation into this alarming phone call, Sahand's father seeks clarity and justice for his son's case.

On January 14, 2024, the 35 years old Hamed Ghareh Oghlani commenced a hunger strike within the confines of Urmia prison. He was transferred to solitary confinement by the prison authorities. His protest stemmed from their refusal to grant him medical leave and essential treatment despite the aggravation of his illness.

This former student at Beheshti University and a political detainee, was relocated from the general ward of Urmia's central prison to solitary confinement. He is currently serving a 13-year sentence. Initially sentenced to death in December 2020 by Branch 2 of Urmia Revolutionary Court under the alleged charge of "warfare through membership in the Mojahedin Organization of Iran", was subsequently overturned by two out of three judges.

In a separate case, he received a cumulative sentence of 14 years and one month for various charges, including participation in military activities, attacks on Basij bases, anti-government propaganda, and insulting Khamenei, of which 13 years are enforceable. In February 2021, his sister, Hanieh Qaraoghlani, confirmed his 14-year sentence in the Supreme Court, decrying the lack of evidence and due process by sharing on social media: "They created a scenario without evidence, without documents, and recklessly, and my brother's sentence was confirmed in Branch 41 of the Supreme Court."

This political prisoner was tortured to obtain a forced confession, and his family was repeatedly summoned and pressured by the security institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran.





**Elham Chobdar**

West Azerbaijan-  
Urmia



**Yunus  
Gholizadeh**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Meisam Shirini**

West Azerbaijan-  
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**Karim  
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East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Hamed  
Ghareh Oghlani**

West Azerbaijan- Urmia



**Afshin Naziri**

Tehran - Tehran



**Milad Jalili  
(Ilshan)**

East Azerbaijan-Tabriz



**Esmail Ahmadi**

East Azerbaijan- Ahar



**Shahab Bayat**

Hamadan-Hamadan



## Exiled Individuals

### 4.1 Exiled Individuals

The Iranian government employs a strategy of relocating prominent human rights defenders and activists to remote areas within the country, effectively restricting their capacity to participate in and oversee social activities. This approach aims to diminish their influence and role in civil society initiatives by transferring them to distant and less reachable regions.

On February 17, 2024, Akbar Azad, a prominent Azerbaijani writer and activist, returned from leave, which he took due to his son's illness, to fulfill his mandatory residence sentence in Darreh Shahr city, Ilam. This sentence, lasting 2 years, began on November 16, 2023.

Relatives of Azad have revealed that before departing for Darreh Shahr to fulfill the mandatory stay period, he visited the law enforcement branch of Baharestan City. There, he reported the unlawful conduct and the probing of his beliefs by interrogators at the Darreh Shahr Intelligence Department to the judge of this branch. He made it clear that he would consent to prolong his forced stay in the city if such behavior ceased to occur. The judge granted his request to report to one of the police centers in Derreh Shahr city instead of

the intelligence department.

On August 29, 2023, he visited the Intelligence Office in Darreh Shahr for identification, experiencing a prolonged delay at the entrance before being transferred to a detention centre after approximately 4 hours. During approximately one hour of detention, facing



intense heat without proper ventilation and cooling, and deteriorating health, Azad was eventually moved to an interrogation room. Despite facing illegitimate actions by security forces, he refrained from answering both written and verbal questions. Protesting the illegal interrogation, Akbar Azad declared the illegality, stating, "Your interrogation is illegal and there is no freedom of speech for me to state my opinions without punishment. Due to this, I will not answer your questions verbally or in a written manner".

In an audio file, Azad shared insights into his conditions in exile, revealing harassment and mistreatment by intelligence officials in Darreh Shahr. On July 30th, around 19:30, expressing his objection, Azad left the Intelligence Office. According to judicial authorities, Azad is obligated to present himself monthly at the Intelligence Office in Darreh Shahr for signature and attendance, a provision exploited by security officials for unlawful harassment and attempted interrogation. This 67-year-old activist who has health problems such as diabetes was initially exiled to Darreh Shahr on June 11th, 2023. However, due to the se-

vere health condition of his son, who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis (MS), requires constant care, and uses a wheelchair, he returned to Tehran.

This Azerbaijani political activist, writer, researcher, translator, and member of the Iranian Writers' Association, as well as a member of the PEN Club in France, had a history of detention and conviction due to his peaceful activities.

On International Mother Language Day in February 2014, Akbar Azad, along with several other Azerbaijani activists, was arrested in Baharestan-Eslamshahr. Among these activists, Behnam Sheikhi, Hamid Manafi Nadarlu, Alireza Farshi, Akbar Azad, and Ali Babalu were each sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment and 2 years of exile in various cities. Following their prison terms, each of these four civil activists had been summoned to the courthouse to endure the exile residence sentence.

On February 5, 2024, Alireza Farshi Dizaj Yekanli was summoned to the first investigation branch of Baharestan city, Tehran province, to defend himself against accusations of 'Propaganda against the regime'. Subsequently, on March 5, 2024, he received electronic notification from the Judiciary stating the closure of the remaining portion of his 2-year mandatory residence sentence in Baghemolk city, Khuzestan province, inclusive of amnesty provisions.

On December 25, 2023, Yekanli revealed that the intelligence department had initiated a new case against him, accusing him of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran". This case was opened in the first investigation branch of the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Baharestan, Tehran province.

On September 4th, 2023, Yekanli had also received a phone call summoning him to the Cyber Police in Marand, East Azerbaijan. The officers from the Cyber Police in Marand requested his presence at the Marand Police Intelligence, under the command of Sergeant Rasti. Farshi refused to comply with the summons, citing perceived illegality.

It's worth noting that Alireza Farshi Dizaj Yekanli was previously released from Evin Prison after serving three years and three months of his four-year sentence, as part of the "Amnesty

and Reduction of Public Punishment" order. Initially, he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment and two years in exile by the 54th branch of the Tehran Court of Appeal. This sentence stemmed from his participation in the "World Mother Language Day" ceremony in Baharestan City, Tehran. Additionally, he received a three-year and six-month prison term from Branch 36 of the Court of Appeal of Tehran Province, on charges of "gathering and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the regime". His arrest occurred on July 21, 2019, leading to his incarceration in Evin Prison.

# Capital Punishment

## 5.1 Capital Punishment

While government news agencies claim that many of these individuals were executed for charges such as drug smuggling and murder, Amnesty International has strongly denounced the death penalty, considering it an inhumane sentence. This organization advocates for the abolition of all execution verdicts in Iran.

Ethnic minorities in Iran have a higher percentage of death penalty statistics compared to other parts of Iran. The research and monitoring of Iran Human Rights Organization shows that in 2023, at least 171 Baloch prisoners were executed which includes 21% of all executions in Iran.

On March 25, 2024, Abbas Aghaii, previously condemned to death for drug-related offenses, was executed in Tabriz prison.

On March 18, 2024, in Tabriz prison, the death sentences of a couple convicted of drug-related crimes were carried out. The man, named Yasin Zulfighari, was arrested alongside his wife in a joint case. However, details about the wife's identity remain undisclosed.

Both individuals were from East Azerbaijan-Jolfa.

On January 20, 2024, Hajar Atabaki's death sentence was carried out in Qazvin Central Prison. She had been previously convicted on charges related to drug crimes.

On March 24, 2024, Sara Tabrizi, a former political detainee in Iran, tragically passed away under suspicious circumstances. Her body, discovered in her father's residence in Tehran, raised concerns. Reports indicated that Tabrizi had endured significant psychological pressure from Iranian government security agents in the weeks leading up to her death. Just one day before her passing, she was summoned to Iran's Intelligence department.

Tabrizi's distressing journey began on November 16 when she, along with another individual, was detained by security forces at Tehran's International Airport while en route to England. Subsequently, she was transferred to Ward 29 of Evin Prison, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Intelligence, enduring about ten days of interrogation before being released on bail.

## Summoned People

### 6.1 Summoned People

Iranian Intelligence agents frequently engage in illegal summoning practices with activists. Despite Iranian law mandating official written summonses, these agencies often resort to informal methods such as telephone calls or verbal messages to communicate with individuals regarding their activities. This unlawful summoning tactic is aimed at intimidating political and social activists, thereby impeding their participation in various endeavours.

On January 16, 2024, Asena Shabani received a summons from the intelligence force to appear at the Intelligence department of East Azerbaijan-Tabriz. Regarding the telephone summons from the Tabriz city intelligence department as unlawful, Shabani declared her refusal to comply without a judicial order.

By February 12, 2024, it was reported that a case had been initiated against Shabani at the investigation branch of Tabriz General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office. The summons stemmed from her attendance at Yadgar Stadium during a Tractor FC vs Al-Sharjah soccer match as well as her participation in national ceremonies and meetings with recently released political prisoners associated with the South Azerbaijani National Movement.





**Asena Shabani**

East Azerbaijan-  
Tabriz



**Sayad  
Mohamadian**

Alborz- Karaj



**Behzad Dashti**

Ardabil-Ardabil



**Hamid Puroli**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Jalal Dehghani**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Behzad  
Khodabandelou**

West Azerbaijan-  
Qoshachay



**Sina Yousefi**

Germany-Berlin



**Peyman  
Ebrahimi**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Previously, on November 12 and December 23, 2023, Shabani's husband, Shahin Barzegar, an Azerbaijani civil activist, had also been summoned to the Intelligence Department of Tabriz. Like his wife, Barzegar considered the telephone summons from the Tabriz city intelligence department unlawful and asserted that he would not comply without a judicial order.

On January 29, 2024, Sayad Mohammadian received a phone call summoning him to the Karaj Information Office, where he was held for several hours. The reason for the summons and any potential accusations remain undisclosed.

On February 15, Behzad Dashti received a summons to appear at the intelligence department in Ardabil. Refusing to comply, Dashti deemed the phone call from the security forces of Ardabil illegal and declared that he would not attend any appointments without a judicial order.

Earlier, on September 11, 2023, security agents contacted Behzad Dashti's family in Ardabil city, urging them to discourage Behzad from participating in civil activities. The agents issued a direct warning, informing the family that if Behzad persisted in such activities, he would face severe treatment by security forces and risk arrest.

On February 21, 2024, Hamid Puorvali received a summons from the 15th Investigation Branch of Tabriz Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office, delivered through a notification from the Iranian Judiciary. His involvement traces back to July 16, 2022, during the Urmia Lake protests in Tabriz, where he was arrested. Subsequently, Puorvali was transferred to Tabriz Central Prison 8 and later granted temporary release on bail.

On February 21, 2024, Jalal Dehghani received a summons to appear before Branch 15 of the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Tabriz to address charges stemming from his involvement in the peaceful protests against the government's policies regarding Urmia Lake.

On March 4, Behzad Khodabandelou attended the third branch of the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Ghoshachai (Miandoab) to address accusations levelled

against him. Following an explanation of charges including "Advertisement in favour of groups or organisations opposed to the regime", "disturbing the public mind", and "propaganda against the regime", he was granted temporary release upon posting bail, pending the conclusion of legal proceedings.

Recently on March 5, 2024, Sina Yousefi was summoned to the first branch of the Revolutionary Court in Tabriz to defend against the same charge of "propaganda against the regime". On August 21, 2023, this lawyer and vice president of the Azerbaijan Human Rights Organization living in Germany, was summoned to Branch 20 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Isfahan (Complex 2) through an electronic notification on the Judiciary's online system. This was followed by sentencing on November 20, 2023, by the Sixth Branch of Isfahan Revolutionary Court, where Yousefi was sentenced to one year in prison for "propaganda against the regime."

Sina Yousefi posted an electronic notification on his Twitter account stating, "Due to my reports on the illegality of the judge's actions, I have been summoned by Isfahan General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office (also known as Isfahan House) on charges of propaganda against the system and disturbing the public mind."

During the nationwide Woman, Life, and Freedom protests in Iran on October 14th, Sina Yousefi took a significant step by announcing the establishment of a defense committee within the Human Rights Committee of the Bar Association in Iran. The purpose of this committee was to offer legal support to citizens detained during the 2022 protests. However, his activism led to his arrest by security forces on October 15th. Subsequently, he was released on bail which he remained on until the end of the judicial process on October 27th.

Previously, in a verdict issued by Branch 112 of the Criminal Court of Tabriz, Sina Yousefi was sentenced to 6 months in prison, subjected to a 2-year travel ban, and had his electronic devices confiscated, all on charges of "spreading lies in cyberspace". Additionally, Branch 112 imposed another sentence of 91 days in prison and a fine for the same charge. The mounting pressure forced him to leave Iran and seek refuge in Germany.

On 16 March 2024, Peyman Ebrahmi was summoned to Tabriz court. On December 15, 2023, Ebrahimi was sentenced to a total of 22 months and 17 days in prison by Branch 1 of Tabriz Revolutionary Court for "propaganda activity against the system of the Islamic Republic through publishing images and content against the system in cyberspace" and "insulting the position of the Supreme Leader".

Ebrahimi, a civil activist and Azerbaijani dance instructor was arrested by security agents on August 26, 2023, and despite numerous requests from his family and relatives, the investigator refused to accept the order and issue a release order. His trial was held on December 20, 2023, on accusations of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic" and "inviting chaos through cyberspace". On October 25, 2023, Ebrahimi was temporarily released from the central prison of Tabriz by posting bail until the end of the proceedings.

# Suspension

## 7.1 Suspension

Organizations or individuals perceived as an opposition or anti-government entity face various forms of punishment, including suspensions. These suspension penalties can manifest in different dimensions, such as employment suspension, activity suspension, academic suspension, and more. These measures severely restrict freedom of expression and association, curtailing citizens' ability to organize, advocate, and express dissenting opinions.

### 7.1.1 Activity Suspension

The Iranian government often resorts to suspending activities as a method to suppress dissent and control opposition movements. This tactic involves halting, either temporarily or permanently, activities that are perceived as undesirable or threatening to the regime. Organizations, media outlets, and civil society groups critical of government policies often face arbitrary suspensions, censorship, or even outright bans.

Due to his civil activism and protest against the deliberate drying up of Lake Urmia by the government, Mustafa Gholizadeh, an Azerbaijani athlete residing in Maragheh, was previously summoned and arrested by the police intelligence department. Recently, under pressure from security forces and the Maragheh prosecutor's office, his activity contract was canceled, and his rights were subsequently blocked.



On January 8, 2024, Ali Haji, a teacher and member of the Jolfa teachers union, received a six-month temporary suspension from service by the first-instance board for investigating administrative violations of education employees in East Azerbaijan province. The suspension was imposed due

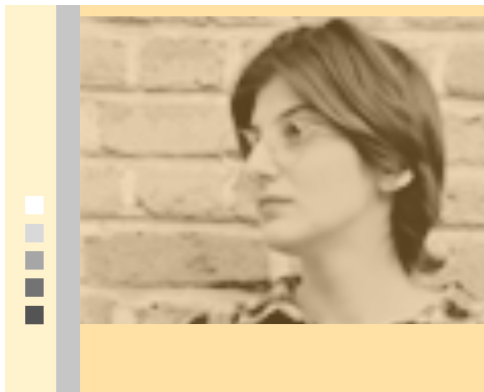


to Haji's publication of posts in support of imprisoned teachers and the nationwide protests of 2022, known as "Woman, Life, and Freedom," on the X account (formerly known as Twitter).

### 7.1.2 Academic Suspension

The Iranian government often resorts to suspending activities as a method to suppress dissent and control opposition movements. This tactic involves halting, either temporarily or permanently, activities that are perceived as undesirable or threatening to the regime. Organizations, media outlets, and civil society groups critical of government policies often face arbitrary suspensions, censorship, or even outright bans.

Narges Fadakar, a diligent Economics student at Urmia University in West Azerbaijan, admitted in 2019, has faced unjust barriers preventing her from continuing her education and accessing the university for nearly a year. Despite this prolonged period, no official verdict has been issued by the relevant committee.



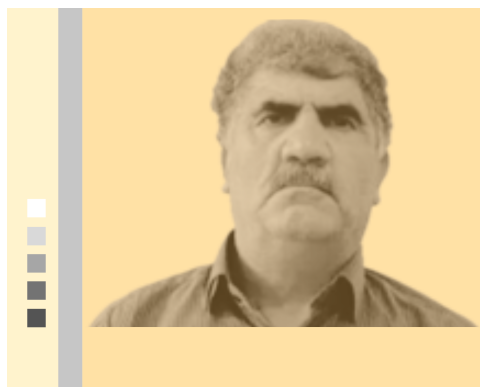
According to reports from student councils nationwide, on October 29th, 2022, the head of security at Urmia University summoned Fadakar to retrieve her student ID card. Since that date, she has been barred from entering the university, effectively blocking her access to education. Earlier, the university's disciplinary committee

verbally informed Fadakar that a proposed suspension verdict for four terms had been forwarded to the central committee of the Ministry.

### 7.1.3 Threatened

In response to protests concerning Lake Urmia in several Azerbaijani cities in Iran, there has been a notable increase in threats. The Iranian government employs various tactics, including threats, to deter activists from participating in activities perceived as opposition to the government.

Jabrael Pakrouh received a threatening phone call from the cyber police of East Azerbaijan-Tabriz. Prior incidents of violence inflicted injuries severe enough to necessitate three surgeries, primarily due to assaults by officers and blows to the head. Subsequently, Pakrouh required multiple admissions to the neurology department of Razi Hospital in Tabriz.



Despite the passage of time, he continues to experience blurred vision, lack of balance while standing and walking, hearing impairment, drooping of the right eye, muscle weakness, and disruption of normal life. This cruel behaviour has significantly impacted Pakrouh's health and well-being.

These three citizens were arrested simultaneously after being assaulted by officers from the 1st intelligence base of Tabriz and then transferred to the 14th police station of Tabriz. They were detained for a day without access to medical services or legal representation. Following their release and subsequent filing of a complaint against the offending officers, their case was brought to Branch 9 of Tabriz General and Revolution Prosecutor's Office for examination. Eventually, it was forwarded to the 108th branch of Tabriz Criminal Court under the chairmanship of Gholamreza Mokhtari Sarai.

Despite confirming the acts of violence committed by three police officers named Youssef Safarian Choplujah, Mohammed Alinejad, and Saeed Kurd Oladi against these citizens and sentencing them to pay fines, the citizens themselves were threatened. Shockingly, two of the three citizens were further sentenced to six months in prison on charges of "insulting and disobeying the orders of government officials".

# Ban on Issuing ID Documents for Children

## 8.1 Ban on Issuing ID Documents for Children

In Iran, the ban on issuing ID documents for children, particularly in marginalized communities, is a significant human rights issue. Denying children access to identification documents not only violates their fundamental rights but also poses serious obstacles to their access to essential services, education, and healthcare.

The civil registration office of Tabriz city has opposed the issuance of a birth certificate for an Azerbaijani child named Duygu, born on October 7, 2023.

Volkan Azarmi Rad, an Azerbaijani child born on January 26, 2023, in the city of Tabriz, continues to be deprived of essential documents such as his birth certificate and access to medical and social services, including insurance. This deprivation stems from the authorities' objection to his Turkish name. Rahman Azarmi Rad, Volkan's father, has encountered resistance from Tabriz's civil registry office and the court who cite cultural and religious reasons for opposing the name Volkan for their Azerbaijani child. A document issued by the 23rd branch of Tabriz General and Legal Court stated that "Volkan is a foreign name" and does not align with Iranian religious and Islamic culture. After an arduous struggle lasting



two years and three months, the family of Alp Aslan, an Azerbaijani child residing in Tabriz City, finally obtained a birth certificate for their child on January 27, 2024.

The civil registration office of Tabriz city has opposed the issuance of a birth certificate for an Azerbaijani child named Selin Ahani, born on March 2, 2024. Despite her birth, bureaucratic hurdles have prevented the timely acquisition of essential documentation for Selin, depriving her access to essential rights and services.

# Recommendations

## 9.1 Recommendations

The Iranian government must immediately halt the arbitrary arrests and detentions of individuals, especially political dissidents, human rights activists, journalists, and members of marginalised communities. Detainees should be granted full due process rights, including access to legal representation and fair trials.

Moreover, Iran does not enforce segregation laws in prisons located in minority regions. Ensuring strict compliance with laws and regulations governing the segregation of various types of crimes within Iran's prison system is paramount. This guarantees that individuals serving sentences are housed appropriately according to the nature and severity of their offenses, thereby fostering safety, security, and effective inmate rehabilitation. By segregating individuals convicted of different types of offenses, such as violent crimes, drug-related offenses, or white-collar crimes, authorities can better manage the prison population and offer tailored rehabilitation programs to meet the needs of each group. This approach aids in maintaining order within the prison environment and enhances the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system in facilitating rehabilitation and reducing recidivism.

Furthermore, it is crucial for the Iranian government to abolish the death penalty and enact a moratorium on all executions. Capital punishment represents a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights and goes against the inherent dignity and right to life of every individual. Abolishing the death penalty is essential for promoting and upholding human

rights standards in Iran and fostering a more just and humane society.

The Iranian government must uphold the rights to freedom of expression and association for all citizens, particularly those advocating for human rights and civil liberties. This entails respecting and safeguarding activists and dissenting voices from harassment, intimidation, and censorship.

Moreover, Iranian Intelligence agencies must strictly adhere to legal summoning procedures as outlined by Iranian law. Summonses should be formal, in writing, and delivered in accordance with due process rights. Any informal or unlawful summoning practices, such as telephone calls or verbal messages, must be immediately discontinued to ensure the protection of individuals' rights and the rule of law.

The Iranian government must refrain from imposing unjust suspensions, whether academic, civil activities or employment-related, based on individuals' political beliefs or activism. Equal access to education and employment opportunities should be ensured for all citizens, without discrimination or punishment based on their political affiliations.

To combat harassment and assault initiated by the government, Iranian authorities must take decisive action. Perpetrators of such acts should be held accountable, and victims should have access to avenues for seeking justice and redress.

Additionally, it is imperative that all children, regardless of their background or ethnicity, have access to identification documents. Denying ID certificates to newborn children constitutes a violation of their rights and can significantly impact their access to essential services and protections.

Through the meticulous collection and documentation of data regarding the human rights violations endured by the Azerbaijani people in Iran, our hope is to ignite a powerful wave of awareness and advocacy that transcends borders. By shining a spotlight on these injustices, we aspire to catalyze meaningful change and create a lasting impact in the lives of those affected. Through our unwavering dedication to amplifying their voices and advocating for their rights, we aim to empower the Azerbaijani community and pave the way for a future where their fundamental freedoms are respected and upheld. Together, we strive to build a world where human rights are universal, and where every individual, regardless of ethnicity or background, can live free from oppression and discrimination.

Contact Information

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