



ARTICLE 19 and PEN International Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of the Islamic Republic of Iran

***For consideration at the 20th session of the UN Working Group
in October – November 2014***

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Executive Summary

1. ARTICLE 19 and PEN International welcome the opportunity to contribute to the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process for the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran). The submission focuses on Iran's compliance with its international human rights obligations in respect of freedom of expression.
2. At Iran's first UPR, it accepted 14 recommendations in relation to the protection of freedom of expression under national and international law. Recommendations were also accepted to cooperate with United Nations special procedures and to follow-up to requests for country visits made by Special Rapporteurs. Regrettably, the government has not made any genuine efforts to implement these recommendations.
3. Since the last UPR, President Rouhani has entered office on the basis of making 45 reform-oriented promises, including in relation to freedom of ethnic languages, artistic freedom in the film industry and publications, freedom of speech and pluralism in the media, and the release of political prisoners. Bar a few token gestures, notably the release of journalist and lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, these commitments are so far no more than rhetorical. Iran has witnessed the highest number of executions in its history since January 2014 (officially 160), including for expression related crimes. Newspapers and websites have been closed, and regressive legislation proposed. The country still refuses to recognise the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran, and therefore his entry to the country is not permitted.
4. Additionally, there are long-standing concerns over the large number of writers and journalists in prison in Iran (currently more than 30), commonly held in poor conditions, without access to family, medical care and legal representation. Widespread reports of the use of torture or other ill-treatment against detainees and prisoners add to concerns for the welfare of those held. Trials commonly fall short of international standards of fairness.
5. This submission examines the following five key freedom of expression issues:
 - Restrictions on freedom of expression in the Iranian Constitution;
 - Restrictions on freedom of expression online;
 - Restrictions on the media;
 - Restrictions on writers and journalists;
 - Attacks on the cultural expression of minority groups.

Restrictions on freedom of expression in the Iranian Constitution

6. The 1979 Constitution of Iran (amended in 1989) gives apparent protection to the right to freedom of expression in Article 24, but simultaneously entrenches ambiguous qualifications on this right that do not comply with international human rights law, including Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified on 24 June 1975.
7. The Constitution allows the right to freedom of expression to be restricted if it is found to be ~~de~~trimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public (Articles 20 and 24), without these broad concepts being defined. This is reinforced by Article 40, which prohibits the exercise of constitutional rights in a manner which is ~~in~~jurious to others or ~~de~~trimental to public interests. The preamble to the Constitution targets similar vague restrictions at the media, which must ~~st~~rictly refrain from diffusion and propagation of destructive and anti-Islamic practices.
8. The Constitution also provides in Article 4 that all laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria, which is also advanced as the framework for interpreting the Constitution. The Guardian Council is given powers for interpreting Islamic criteria.
9. These provisions fail to protect the right to freedom of expression as required by international law, including in relation to freedom of the media, and lay the foundations for the institutionalisation of censorship. Firstly, the limitations are vague or framed too broadly, encouraging the arbitrary interpretation and application of the Constitution. Secondly, many of the purposes advanced through the limitations are not legitimate bases for restricting the right to freedom of expression, for example the purpose of shielding Islam from criticism. Thirdly, the Constitution fails to require that any limitation imposed on freedom of expression is necessary in a democratic society and proportionate.

Restrictions on freedom of expression online

10. The Iranian Government has developed a centralised system for Internet filtering, created institutions tasked with monitoring Internet use and censorship of content, engaged the Revolutionary Guard Corps in enforcing Internet content standards, and entrenched many of these practices through legislation in the Computer Crimes Law.

The Computer Crimes Law

11. The Computer Crimes Law, which was adopted by the Parliament in January 2010, is saturated with provisions that criminalise legitimate expression in the digital space, including draconian content-based restrictions designed to allow the State to exert unfettered control in the sphere where its authority is most frequently challenged.
12. Among the content-based restrictions targeting online expression that do not comply with international standards are the offences against ~~pu~~ublic morality and chastity (Articles 14 and 15) and the ~~dis~~semination of lies (Articles 16 . 18) that are engineered to ensnare all forms of legitimate expression. These include broad defamation and obscenity provisions that are antithetical to the right of freedom of expression. Essential elements of offenses are described with ambiguity and in vague and overbroad terms, giving the government unfettered discretion to pursue its own prerogatives above the interests of the public and the standards set by the international human rights law. International standards are clear that it is not necessary in a democratic society to create specific content-based offences for the digital space.

13. The Computer Crimes Law mandates severe sentences that penalise legitimate expression and offend the principle of proportionality, without defences for individuals acting in the public interest. The availability of the death penalty (Article 14) for crimes committed online against public morality and chastity is particularly abhorrent. Other sanctions include lengthy custodial sentences (Articles 14, 16, 18 and 27), excessive fines (Articles 1, 2, 3, 14, 16, 18 and 21), and judicial orders to close organisations (Article 20) and ban individuals from using electronic communications (Article 27). These penalties also apply to Internet Service Providers that fail to enforce content-based restrictions (Articles 21 and 23), incentivising the private sector to promulgate Iran's censorship culture.

The institutionalisation of online censorship

14. A number of regulatory bodies with extremely opaque structures have been founded since 2009 with mandates to restrict access to and use of the internet. These bodies can be divided into three tiers: the first constituting high-level policymaking councils; the second made up of executive decision-making bodies; and the third including a range of enforcement agencies.

Policymaking

15. The principle policymaking body is the Supreme Council on Cyberspace (SCC), which develops Iran's domestic and international cyber policies, with members including Iran's President and the Head of the Judiciary. This council is overseen by the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council (SCRC) which was set up in 1980, and the Supreme Leader is only person who can overrule their decisions. The SCRC is dominated by Islamic fundamentalists, based in the city of Qom, and made up of the clerical elites making strategic decisions influencing the Supreme Leader. The President of Iran is the ex-officio chairman of the Council.
16. The SCC established the National Centre for Cyberspace that allows gaining complete knowledge about the activities in cyberspace on a domestic and international scale and to decide on how the country must address arising issues.
17. Perhaps the biggest restricting measure so far has been the development of the national internet scheme, which is still a work in progress, and very much alive under President Rouhani's administration.
18. This Council has been criticized by the pro-government media in lacking transparency. Their response is always "our work is a matter of high national security which cannot be shared with the public and the media"

Executive decision-making bodies

19. This tier includes executive decision-making bodies such as the Committee Charged with Determining Offensive Content (CCDOC), and the Ministry of Information and Cultural Guidance (MICG).
20. The CCDOC identifies sites that carry prohibited content, communicates the standards to be used in identifying unauthorised websites to the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI), other major ISPs and the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and makes website blocking decisions. The public may ask the CCDOC to block or unblock a website via an online request form. The final decision will be made by the Committee. The precise number of blocked websites in Iran is not publicly available.
21. In January 2010, the CCDOC issued a list of Internet offences which would lead up to blocking a website. The list is very long and targets a wide range of areas, including anything that is contrary to "the public morals and chastity," "religious values" and

security and social peace, and anything that is hostile towards government officials and institutions or which facilitates the commission of a crime, including circumventing censorship or bypassing filtering systems. It also lists criminal content in relation to parliamentary and presidential elections.

22. The CCDOC is not independent of the Government but is an arm of the Executive. It is headed by the Prosecutor General, and its other members are representatives from 12 governmental bodies. Key members include the Chief of Police and representatives of the Ministries of: Intelligence; Islamic Guidance; and Communication and Information Technology. International standards require that the determination of what content should be blocked should only be undertaken by a competent judicial authority or body which is independent of political, commercial or other unwarranted influences to ensure that blocking is not used as a means of censorship.
23. The SCC and the CCDOC also have seven members in common, which allows for policy diffusion and institutional alignment.

Enforcement agencies

24. A number of enforcement agencies are responsible for taking action against offenders. Iran's Cyber Police unit (FATA), tasked with fighting digital criminals, is the most notorious. In the chain of command of internet censorship in Iran, FATA is the policing body that acts on information provided by the SCC and CCDOC.
25. FATA is believed to be responsible for the torture and death of blogger Sattar Beheshti. On 28 October 2012 he posted a blog defending human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was serving a six-year prison sentence. The following day, Beheshti reported on his blog that the authorities threatened me yesterday that my mother would wear black because I don't shut my mouth". On 30 October 2012, Beheshti was arrested at his home in Robat Karim (South Tehran). Writing on 31 October 2012 in a letter to the head of Evin Prison, he said: "Sattar Beheshti, was arrested by FATA and beaten and tortured with multiple blows to my head and body ... I want to write that if anything happens to me, the FATA Police are responsible". It is believed he died in custody on 3 November. On 6 November, his family were told to come and collect his body from Kahrizak coroner's office. There has been no investigation into his death, no person responsible has been brought to justice, and no redress has been provided to his family.
26. On 3 January 2012, FATA issued a set of 20 new rules that Internet Cafes had to abide by. The rules require businesses, including Internet Cafes, to record extensive identifying information of users. It also stipulates that Internet cafés are required to record the date/time each user accesses the Internet, the IP allocated to them, and log file of the websites they visit for at least six months. There is a prohibition on providing or recommending any type of circumvention tools and websites to users, or using and installing VPNs on computers in Internet cafés, and Internet cafés are required to set up 24-hour surveillance cameras, and to keep the videos for six months. Staff and managers should not allow more than one person on a given computer, except when users are unfamiliar with computers, and are thus accompanied by a friend or family member for assistance. The rules are clearly designed to intimidate Internet users and to crackdown on attempts to access and disseminate information anonymously, also providing FATA with the information they need to harass and arbitrarily arrest Internet users.

27. The Press Authorisation and Surveillance Commission issues licences allowing people in Iran to publish content online. The Commission requires all website managers, including those of bloggers, to officially register and seek licence for launching their websites. The website manager must provide personal details such as full name, telephone number and home address, national identity number and date of birth, and also the type of online content that will be produced. This is against the International standards which clearly state that internet users who post content online, including journalists and bloggers, should not be subject to registration requirements.

Restrictions on the media

28. The regulation of print media is provided predominantly by the Press Law (of 1986, amended in 2000) and the Islamic Penal Code (of 1991, ratified in 1996 and amended in 2013); as well as by other statutes such as the Theologians Law and the Public and Revolutionary Courts Procedural Law (of 1999). These laws very seriously restrict the role of the print media within society in a number of ways, especially through the following:

29. **State's imposition of the objectives for the media:** Under the Press Law, the press are obliged to enforce and pursue at least one of five legitimate objectives, including to campaign against manifestations of imperialistic culture and to propagate and promote genuine Islamic culture and sound ethical principles, and they must not undermine the realisation of the other goals or the principles of the Islamic Republic (Article 2). The press are obliged to restrict themselves to matters such as constructive criticism, while duly observing Islamic teaching and the best interest of the community, and content must be void of insult, humiliation and detrimental effects (Article 3). Similarly, the dissemination of any domestic and foreign news should take into account the best interests of the community (Article 5). ARTICLE 19 considers these provisions amounting to a serious interference with the editorial independence of media outlets.

30. **Content Restrictions:** The Press Law prohibits the publication of matters related to atheism, propagating luxury or extravagance, creating social discord or divisions, encouraging dissent against the security, dignity or interests of the State, publishing sensitive information without prior authorisation, insulting Islam or offending State and religious officials, libel, or quoting articles from the deviant press or parties opposed to Islam in such a manner as to propagate those ideas (Article 6). At the same time, the Law fails to define these terms, leaving them open to subjective and arbitrary interpretation.

31. **Criminal defamation and insult:** Criminal defamation still remains an offence in Iran, and is used to stifle criticism. Similarly, insult is prohibited in the Theologians Law and has been used to close publications. A number of the articles in the Theologians Law are vaguely worded; of particular concern is the prohibition of acts which customarily cause insult to the dignity of Islamic theory and the Islamic Revolution (Article 18), given its potential to suppress public discourse through the press.

32. **Licensing:** The Press Law also requires publishing houses and individuals to obtain a licence from the Press Supervisory Board (PSB), within the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, with a number of restrictions placed on who may apply for such a licence. All publications are also closely monitored by the Ministry through the requirement to submit an annual sealed ledger containing an outline of all revenues and expenditures, which the Ministry can inspect whenever it deems appropriate (Article 20). Additionally, each printing house must forward two copies of each publication, free of charge, to the

Ministry. This system has resulted in censorship, and self-censorship, in the media, art and literature. The exhausting bureaucratic hurdles associated with publishing and distributing publications in Iran have forced authors and publishers, in the best case scenario, to wait several months for their new books, novels and political essays to be granted permission to be published; while many renowned writers have ceased to seek publication. Those who write and publish in the Kurdish language face particular difficulties in obtaining publication permits.

33. **Harsh penalties:** The PSB is also responsible for addressing alleged violations of the Press Law and has the power to ban publications for such violations. Practice shows that the standard response to even an alleged violation of the Press Law is to suspend the publishing licence until the matter is resolved. Where a violation is found to have occurred, the licence is often cancelled. Furthermore the Penal Code provides for mandatory imprisonment terms for many violations of the Press Law. Anyone who explicitly violates any religious taboo in public shall be imprisoned or flogged, in addition to receiving specific punishment for the offence.
34. **Censorship:** Despite a formal prohibition of censorship in Iranian law, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), which is directly subordinate to the government, rigorously monitors articles written by journalists before they are published, in order to ensure that they are in line with IRNA's five governing principles, namely preservation of state secrets and national security; public morality; strengthening linguistic and religious solidarity; human dignity; and not publishing information prohibited by law. A wide range of independent and official reports allege that individuals, including media workers, are routinely summoned to government offices to be instructed or warned not to continue exercising their right to freedom of expression.
35. The Supreme Council of National Security (SCNS) has a mandate that requires it to censor official journalists, forbidding them from covering certain topics, such as the opposition, women's rights, LGBT rights, and minority rights (e.g. linguistic, ethnic and religious), all in the name of ensuring national security. These restrictions also apply to internet users. The SCNS is not required to provide proof of the specific threat of content to national security, nor are they required to balance any apparent threat against the public interest in freedom of expression. This is a clear violation of the right to freedom of expression, as it is not legitimate or necessary in a democratic society to limit expression, online or offline, on the basis that it relates to a controversial subject matter.
36. On 18 February 2014, the SCNS banned all media from publishing any news regarding the SCNS's activities and decisions, stating it is a criminal act. The media is only allowed to quote what the SCNS's Secretariat publishes first. This means that all news related to sensitive issues such as the nuclear deals, the Crescent Oil case, Iran-USA relations and Israel cannot be covered by the media, which is Rouhani's administration's first official restriction on the flow of information. This is a clear infringement of people's right to free information and defying Rouhani's promise of pluralism in the media.
37. **Broadcasting Restrictions:** Television and radio broadcasting are firmly controlled by a constitutionally entrenched State broadcasting monopoly which largely reflects the views of the Supreme Leader Khamenei and the conservative clerical establishment. Private, independent broadcasters are prohibited. Incoming foreign news is tightly restricted by a prohibition on satellite antennae introduced in 1995 and prior censorship provisions concerning all foreign publications. Although viewing of satellite channels is widespread and has been largely tolerated by the authorities, there are occasional crackdowns, as for example in the summer of 2006. A state broadcasting monopoly is clearly

inconsistent with the right to freedom of expression. International law protects not only expression itself, but also the means of communication and the use of censorship or the banning of satellite antennae or other information carriers is not legitimate.

38. The problems of the regulatory framework are compounded by a number of problematic judicial practices which further heighten the repressive impact of the legislative provisions and which intimidate both individual journalists and publishing houses. Press offences are heard by specialised Press Courts, which are empowered to impose criminal penalties on individuals and to order the closure of newspapers and periodicals. The authorities have also employed other courts, such as Islamic Revolutionary Courts, to prosecute publishers, editors and journalists for press activities, in apparent breach of the Constitution. Practice also demonstrates that over the past few years the judicial authorities have utilised the Preventive Restraint Law 1960 (directed at avoiding the recurrence of crimes such as hooliganism and murder) to temporarily ban newspapers for articles deemed to be contrary to the law. A number of temporary bans have reportedly been imposed on newspapers under the Law, some of which have lasted for more than three years, in the absence of any trial or court decision.

Repression of Writers and Journalists

39. Over 30 writers, journalists, and bloggers are currently imprisoned in Iran, many serving lengthy sentences, in poor conditions often amounting to ill-treatment. They include human rights activist and blogger Shiva Nazar Ahari, who is serving a four-year prison sentence for her human rights reporting and peaceful activism.
40. At least 18 of those writers currently detained are sentenced under vaguely worded national security legislation, which undermines their right to free expression as guaranteed under the ICCPR, to which Iran is a state party. They include leading journalist Bahman Ahmadi-Amouee, contributor to several reformist newspapers including Mihan, Hamshahri, Jame'eh, Khordad, Norooz, and Sharq and former editor of the now banned leading economic newspaper Sarmayeh. He was arrested along with his wife, journalist Jila Bani Ya'ghoub (later released) on 19 June 2009 and sentenced on 5 January 2010 to seven years and four months in jail, and 34 lashes, on vaguely worded national security charges. This includes five years for "gathering and colluding with intent to harm national security", one year for "spreading propaganda against the system", one year and 32 lashes for "disrupting public security" and four months for "insulting the president. In early March 2010, the sentence was reduced to five years in prison.
41. Women journalists and activists are at the fore-front of the struggle for human rights in Iran, and continue to face imprisonment and persecution in spite of the fact Iran accepted a number of recommendations pledging to support and enhance women's rights during its last UPR. Many have been forced into exile, such as Parvin Ardalan, editor and co-founder of the Campaign for One Million Signatures. Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi, co-founder of Defenders of Human Rights Centre, has been unable to return to Iran since 2009 to continue her work freely. Many more have been imprisoned in Iran in recent years. They include lawyer and journalist Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was released on 18 September 2013 after serving half of a six-year prison sentence; journalist Jila Bani Ya'ghoub, released on 23 June 2013 after completing a one-year prison sentence though is continuing to face a 30-year ban on journalistic activities; and human rights advocate and journalist Narges Mohammadi, released on bail on 30 July 2012 after serving 16 months of a six-year sentence.
42. Concerns about frequent use of torture and other ill treatment in prison remain unabated in the four years since the last review. Many political prisoners report that they have

been subjected to beatings, mock executions, prolonged solitary confinement, and sleep deprivation. Coerced confessions from detainees are often used and accepted as evidence by courts of law and allegations of torture are rarely investigated. Trials commonly fall short of international standards of fairness and there is widespread impunity for torture and other ill-treatment.

43. Many writers and journalists are suffering ill-health in prison and are frequently denied adequate medical treatment. They include blogger Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki who is serving a 15-year prison sentence for a series of critical blogs and founding an anti-censorship group known as Iran Proxy. He developed kidney disease whilst in prison, possibly as a result of torture, and has been suffering from related complications since April 2010. He underwent a kidney transplant in May 2011. He started a hunger strike on 9 August 2013 in protest at being denied medical leave, which he ended on 5 September 2013 after becoming critically ill.
44. Attacks by armed ethnic-minority opposition groups have resulted in increasing official suspicion and repression of writers and journalists from Iran's ethnic minorities. There is an alarming number of Kurdish, Azerbaijani and Arab journalists targeted for their critical reporting, peaceful activism and writings in support of minority cultural and political rights. At least seven journalists and writers from Iran's ethnic minorities are currently facing charges for their critical writings and political and cultural activism. Most are charged under vaguely worded national security legislation or Iran's Press Law, which is also widely used to ban publications perceived as critical by the authorities, and to prevent writers from publishing their work. They include Adnan Hassanpour, Iranian-Kurdish journalist, detained in January 2007 and charged with espionage and Moharebeh (enmity with God).
45. Poets and lyricists Fatemeh Ekhtesari and Mehdi Moosavi were arrested on 7 December 2013 and held in Section 2A of Evin prison, which is under the administration of the Intelligence Division of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and where torture and other ill-treatment of detainees is common. No formal charges against them were made known, although some reports suggest that they could have been held because of their lyrics, which have been performed by the Iranian singer in exile, Shahin Najafi. The two have previously made statements critical of the government and in support of pro-democracy movements, and have both been under escalating pressure in Iran. They were released on bail on 14 January 2014.
46. Writers facing persecution continue to flee Iran in large numbers, and many report continued harassment by the authorities towards family members who remain in the country.

Attacks on the cultural expression of minority groups

47. Iran is home to a large number of ethnic and linguistic minorities including Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Arabs, Baluch, Turkmens and Lurs. It is estimated that about 70 per cent of pupils entering primary school have a mother language other than Persian. Despite official statements that the teaching of minority languages for the study of literature is permitted, teaching of the full curriculum in anything but Farsi is not permitted. Furthermore, these minorities face difficulties in exercising their right to use their own languages in both private and public, despite the Iranian Constitution guaranteeing the right to freedom of cultural expression and linguistic diversity (Article 15), ethnic, religious (Article 26) and linguistic minorities (Article 19). Human rights defenders advocating for linguistic and cultural rights for minorities face discrimination and are regularly detained arbitrarily.

48. Hashem Shabani, Hadi Rashedi and three other Iranian Ahwazi-Arabs by the names of Mohammad-Ali Amouri, Mokhtar Alboshokeh and Jaber Alboshokeh founded the Dialogue Institute to promote Arabic Culture and Literature in Iran. They were mainly charged for organising events, conferences and educational courses, art classes and poetry reciting sessions in Arabic language. On 29 January 2014, Shabani and Rashedi were executed in Ahwaz for enmity with Godq although the exact date and place of the execution has not been verified. Throughout the proceedings they were denied the right to attorney. After international condemnation of the executions, the death sentence of the other three detainees was reduced to life imprisonment.
49. Farzad Kamangar, an Iranian Kurdish teacher, activist, poet and journalist, was executed on 9 May 2010 in Tehran's Evin Prison for enmity with Godq His lawyer, Khalil Bahramian, reported that none of the charges made against Farzad were supported by any evidence, including Farzad being a member of PJAK, a Kurdish nationalist group.
50. The imposition of the death penalty in response to acts of legitimate cultural expression is an egregious violation of the right to life as well as the right to freedom of expression. Indeed, the imposition of any criminal sanctions in this situation contravenes international standards on freedom of expression, particularly where individuals are imprisoned as a consequence of their actions.

Recommendations

51. In response to these concerns, ARTICLE 19 and PEN International call upon UN Member States to put forward specific and strong recommendations to address the dire situation for the right to freedom of expression in Iran, namely:

Co-operation with International Mechanisms

- Issue invitations to the UN Special Rapporteurs on Iran; on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; on torture; and on the independence of judges and lawyers

The 1979 Constitution

- Amend the 1979 Constitution to ensure full protection for all human rights, removing restrictions on the right to freedom of expression that are not compatible with international human rights law, including protections for religions and sacred values;
- Immediately repeal any law that permits the imposition of the death penalty under any situation, including in relation to an expressive act

Freedom of expression online

- Repeal the Computer Crimes Law in its entirety, and initiate comprehensive legislative and policy reform to:
 - Remove requirements for Internet users, including bloggers and journalists, to register with the Government or any agency, and repeal any measures designed to undermine online anonymity;
 - Ensure that decisions to block or restrict access to online content can only be taken pursuant to an order issued by a court or other competent body which is independent of any political, commercial or unwarranted influence;
 - Prevent the State from developing or applying content-filtering mechanisms for online content that are not controlled by end-users, since this constitutes unjustifiable prior-censorship;
 - Ensure that ISPs are not required to remove or restrict access to content without a valid court order. No government body, absent that order, should

place pressure on ISPs to remove or restrict access to content, or impose civil or criminal liability on ISPs if they fail to do so;

- Review the mandates of the Supreme Council for National Security and the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council to refrain from controlling and restricting the free flow of information online, and to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression in the digital space;
- Disband the regulatory bodies of the Supreme Council on Cyberspace, the Committee Charged with Determining Offensive Content and the Cyber Police Unit (FATA), since they are institutionally responsible for serious human rights violations;
- Initiate effective and independent investigations into alleged human rights abuses carried out by the FATA, ensure those responsible are held to account, and redress provided to survivors.

Media Freedom

- Review the system of media regulation and repeal all provisions that interfere with freedom of the media, and create and maintain an environment in which the media can work freely, effectively and independently from political influence.
- Abolish all criminal defamation provisions and replace them with appropriate provisions in the civil law; also abolish all excessive penalties for speech-related conduct;
- Abolish the licensing system for print media;
- Stop persecuting and targeting media workers and immediately launch an independent review of all cases of journalists imprisoned in connection with their professional work, with a view to release those wrongfully imprisoned;
- Ensure that no criminal charges are brought against journalists as a result of their professional activities or lawful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

Restrictions on writers and journalists

- Restore and protect the right of all writers, journalists, and bloggers in Iran to exercise their right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the ICCPR, to which Iran is a state party;
- Amend the Islamic Penal Code, which is used to criminalise freedom of expression and imprison writers and journalists
- Investigate all reports of torture and other ill-treatment in prison, and bring those responsible for abuses to justice;
- Respect and protect the right of writers and publishers in Iran to publish without fear of reprisals or government interference.

Freedom of expression rights of minority groups

- Ensure the right to freedom of expression is protected for all people, without discrimination;
- Protect the fundamental right of ethnic minorities to full freedom of expression by supporting linguistic diversity and the right to education in their native tongue;
- Ensure the independent and effective investigation of any incident where a person has been killed, intimidated and harassed for exercising their right to cultural expression, bringing perpetrators to justice and providing redress to survivors.