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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Joint written statement* submitted by Nonviolent Radical
Party, Transnational and Transparty, a non-governmental
organization in general consultative status, Women's Human
Rights International Association, a non-governmental
organization in special consultative status, Association of
World Citizens, International Society for Human Rights,
non-governmental organizations on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The United Nations must investigate the 1988 Massacre

In 1988, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran massacred 30,000 political prisoners.¹ The executions took place based on a fatwa² by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini targeting political prisoners affiliated to the main opposition group People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI or MEK) who remained loyal to the organization. Three-member commissions known as 'Death Commissions' were formed across Iran sending political prisoners who refused to abandon their beliefs to execution. The victims were buried in secret mass graves. The perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity. Many still hold senior positions in the Iranian government or judiciary.

Iranian society is today at urgent risk of further massacres, with top perpetrators of the 1988 massacre heading both the Executive and Judiciary branches in 2021. President Ebrahim Raisi was in 1988 Deputy Tehran Prosecutor and a member of the 'Tehran Death Commission' who sent thousands of political prisoners to their deaths, while Iran's new Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei supervised the mass executions of 1988 as the Judiciary's representative in the Intelligence Ministry.

UN Human Rights Experts Decry "Crime Against Humanity"

On 3 September 2020, seven United Nations Special Rapporteurs wrote³ to the Iranian authorities stating that the 1988 extrajudicial executions and forced disappearances of thousands of political prisoners may amount to "crimes against humanity."

The letter states that the families of the victims, survivors and human rights defenders are today the "subject of persistent threats, harassment, intimidation and attacks because of their attempts to seek information on the fate and whereabouts of the individuals and their demands for justice."

The UN human rights experts also expressed alarm at the destruction of mass graves and lack of investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators. "There is a systemic impunity enjoyed by those who ordered and carried out the extrajudicial executions", they said, adding: "Many of the officials involved continue to hold positions of power including in key judicial, prosecutorial and government bodies."

The UN experts stated that the failure of UN bodies to act over the 1988 massacre has "had a devastating impact on the survivors and families" and "emboldened" the Iranian authorities to "conceal the fate of the victims and to maintain a strategy of deflection and denial."

The UN experts suggested that the international community should "investigate the cases including through the establishment of an international investigation."

Letter By 152 Former UN Officials And Experts

On 3 May 2021, some 152 former UN officials and renowned international human rights and legal experts wrote⁴ to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, calling for a Commission of Inquiry into the 1988 massacre.

Signatories to the open letter include former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Irish President Mary Robinson, a former UN Deputy Secretary-General, 28 former UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights, and the chairs of previous UN Commissions of Inquiry on human rights in Eritrea and Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Distinguished legal professionals who signed the appeal include the former Chief Prosecutor of the UN International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, a former Special

¹ <https://iran1988.org/sunday-telegraph-khomeini-fatwa-led-killing-30000-iran/>.

² <https://iran1988.org/khomeini-decrees-execution-of-steadfast-monafeqin-mojahedin-in-prisons/>.

³ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25503>.

⁴ <https://iran1988.org/open-letter-to-un-seeking-commission-of-inquiry-into-irans-1988-massacre/>.

Prosecutor at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and the first President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

UN Secretary-General's May 2021 Report

In his 14 May 2021 report⁵ to the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UN Secretary-General stated:

“Prisoners of conscience, political activists, human rights defenders and lawyers are disproportionately excluded from temporary release. Some political prisoners have been in prison for years without a single day of furlough. For example, Maryam Akbari Monfared, who was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment for participating in protests in 2009, has been imprisoned for the past 12 years. Harassment against her increased after she filed a formal complaint, seeking official investigation into the 1988 executions of political prisoners, including her siblings.”

UN Special Procedures Letter Of May 2021

Ongoing rights abuses related to the 1988 massacre were also raised in a 27 May 2021 letter⁶ to the Iranian authorities by seven UN Special Procedures: the Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

The Special Procedures letter states: “According to reports, threats and harassment against Ms. Akbari Monfared in prison increased after she filed a formal complaint in October 2016 with the Prosecutor’s Office calling for an investigation into the executions of political prisoners, including two of her siblings, in 1988. A prison official reportedly told Ms. Akbari Monfared’s family that such complaints were of no use and that they would only result in her detention conditions being made increasingly difficult, and impeding her release.”

Amnesty International Says Perpetrators Of 1988 Massacre Must Be Investigated

Amnesty International in a statement⁷ on 19 June 2021 reiterated that Raisi had a key role in the 1988 massacre and should be “investigated for his involvement in past and ongoing crimes under international law, including by states that exercise universal jurisdiction.”

In a report issued in 2018, which documented past and ongoing crimes against humanity related to the prison massacres of 1988, Amnesty International identified Ebrahim Raisi as a member of the “death commission” which carried out the enforced disappearance and extrajudicial executions of several thousand political dissidents in Evin and Gohardasht prisons near Tehran between late July and early September 1988. Victims’ bodies were mostly buried in unmarked mass graves. The organization has, therefore, called for Ebrahim Raisi to be criminally investigated for the crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture in accordance with international law and standards, including by states that exercise universal jurisdiction.

According to international human rights law and standards, including the UN Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat

⁵ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/22>.

⁶ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26438>.

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/iran-ebrahim-raisi-must-be-investigated-for-crimes-against-humanity/>.

impunity, public officials who are personally responsible for gross violations of human rights, in particular those involved in security, intelligence and judicial sectors, must not continue to serve in state institutions. Those against whom there is evidence of involvement in crimes under international law must be criminally investigated.

UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Calls For International Investigation

On 29 June 2021, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Prof. Javaid Rehman, in an interview with Reuters⁸ called for an independent inquiry into the allegations of state-ordered executions of thousands of political prisoners in 1988 and the role played by Ebrahim Raisi as Tehran deputy prosecutor.

Rehman said that over the years his office has gathered testimonies and evidence. It was ready to share them if the Human Rights Council or another body sets up an impartial investigation. He said he was concerned at reports that some "mass graves" are being destroyed as part of a continuing cover-up.

"I think it is time and it's very important now that Mr. Raisi is the president (-elect) that we start investigating what happened in 1988 and the role of individuals," Rehman said.

A probe was in the interest of Iran and could bring closure to families, he said, adding: "Otherwise we will have very serious concerns about this president and the role, the reported role, he has played historically in those executions."

UN Must Launch Commission of Inquiry Into The 1988 Massacre

We urge the UN Human Rights Council to urgently challenge the impunity enjoyed by Iranian officials by supporting the call for an international investigation into the 1988 massacre.

We call on UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet to stop another massacre in the making by urgently establishing a Commission of Inquiry into the 1988 mass executions and enforced disappearances of thousands of political prisoners which constitute ongoing crimes against humanity.

HANDS OFF CAIN Fondation Danielle-Mitterrand - France Libertés Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (France) Justice for Victims of 1988 Massacre in Iran (JVMI) Association des femmes Iraniennes en France (AFIF) Comité de Soutien aux Droits de l'Homme en Iran (CSDHI) Association delle Donne Democratiche Iraniane in Italia Association of Anglo-Iranian Women in the UK IranLibero e Democratico (Italia) Iranian youth association in Switzerland Association de Réfugiés politiques pour les droits de l'homme – France Associazione Medici e Farmacisti Democratici Iraniani in Italia Association des jeunes Iraniens pour la démocratie et la liberté-Luxembourg Association IranRef (Belgique) Iranska Kvinnosamfundet i Sverige (Sweden) Anglo-Iranian Professionals Association of Iranian Political Prisoners-UK, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/exclusive-un-expert-backs-probe-into-irans-1988-killings-raisis-role-2021-06-29/>.