

**Sixty-eighth session**

Item 69 (c) of the provisional agenda*

Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives**Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [67/182](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-eighth session. The report reflects the patterns and trends in the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and provides information on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution, including recommendations to improve its implementation. In its resolution [67/182](#), the General Assembly called upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to address the substantive concerns highlighted in the previous report of the Secretary-General ([A/67/327](#)) and to respect fully its human rights obligations, in law and in practice, in relation to a number of specifically identified concerns.

* [A/68/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [67/182](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-eighth session. The report provides an update to the latest report of the Secretary-General to the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran,¹ and provides information on the progress made in the implementation of resolution [67/182](#). While the report focuses on the concerns identified in General Assembly resolution [67/182](#), it also highlights issues affecting economic, social and cultural rights.

2. The report draws further upon observations made by the United Nations treaty monitoring bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, various United Nations entities and international non-governmental organizations. It also refers to information from official State media.

3. During the reporting period, concerns about torture, amputations, flogging, increased application of the death penalty (including in public, and for political prisoners), arbitrary detention and unfair trials continued to be raised by United Nations human rights mechanisms. Freedom of expression and assembly remained curtailed, with further erosion of democratic space for political activities prior to the presidential elections of June 2013, and an intensified crackdown on journalists, human rights defenders and women's rights activists. Discrimination against minority groups persisted, in some cases amounting to persecution.

4. The new Islamic Penal Code, signed by the President on 1 June 2013, reduces the range of offences for which the death penalty may be applied against juveniles, but retains stoning as a punishment and prescribes capital punishment for some non-lethal crimes. The Government has engaged productively with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which reviewed the country's second periodic report in May 2013.

5. The Secretary-General visited Tehran in August 2012 to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement summit. During his visit, he met with the Supreme Leader, the President and other senior Government representatives and discussed a range of human rights issues, including the use of the death penalty, the rights to freedom of expression and association, and individual cases of concern. He also encouraged the Government to cooperate fully with international human rights mechanisms, in particular by inviting the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

II. Overview of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran

A. Civil and political rights

6. On 14 June 2013, Mr. Hassan Rouhani was elected as the new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, following a campaign featuring open and critical debates, and marking a positive sign of dynamism in the country's civil and political life.

¹ A/HRC/22/48.

Some 72.2 per cent of the 50 million eligible voters cast ballots. On 15 June 2013, the Secretary-General welcomed the reported high turnout and expressed his wish to remain engaged with the President-elect and the Iranian authorities on issues of importance to the international community and the welfare of the Iranian people.

7. However, the large-scale disqualification of candidates, including all women candidates, by the Guardian Council,² raised questions about the criteria and transparency of the vetting procedures and limited political participation. According to information received by the special procedures mandate holders, of the 686 individuals registered as candidates, only 8 were approved. Several candidates were apparently excluded on the basis of their involvement in the post-election protests in 2009, violating their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.³

8. In the days preceding the election, reports were received of intimidation of political activists, journalists, trade unionists and student activists, along with alleged restrictions on freedom of expression. According to reports, the Internet was virtually shut down, sending of text messages sporadically blocked, and reformist or opposition websites censored.⁴ Moreover, a large number of visa requests by foreign journalists were turned down and those on the ground had restrictions imposed on their movement outside the capital.⁵ Family members of BBC Persian staff working in London were also allegedly subjected to harassment and threats. On 13 June 2013, the BBC alleged that families of 15 of its staff were questioned by the Ministry of Intelligence and threatened with loss of jobs or pensions and travel bans.⁶

9. Furthermore, at the time of writing this report, the two main opposition leaders, Mehdi Karoubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, remained under house arrest, while hundreds of other political prisoners arrested following the post-election unrest of 2009 continued to be in prison for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of opinion, expression and association and peaceful assembly. In his remarks at the School of International Relations in Tehran, on 30 August 2012, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of opening up space for free expression and debate, and noted that restricting freedom of expression and suppressing social activism would set back development and plant the seeds of instability. The Secretary-General also noted that it was critical for the voices of the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran to be heard during the presidential elections and urged the authorities to release opposition leaders, human rights defenders, journalists and social activists to create the conditions for free expression and open debate. In their comments on this report, the authorities noted that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran guarantees freedom of expression and assembly and that the press is free to publish articles except those which disturb Islamic principles or public rights.

² The Guardian Council is a 12-member body of theologians and jurists, which vets presidential candidates.

³ Joint press statement of the special procedures mandate holders, 29 May 2013.

⁴ Report of the Committee to Protect Journalists, 8 May 2013; available from www.cpj.org/reports/2013/05/as-election-nears-irans-journalists-are-in-chains.php.

⁵ <http://en.rsf.org/iran-harassment-restrictions-and-12-06-2013,44766.html>.

⁶ BBC Persian, 13 June 2013; available from www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/06/130613_nm_bbc_staff.shtml.

10. As highlighted in his previous report to the Human Rights Council,⁷ the Secretary-General has repeatedly raised concerns relating to the protection of women's rights, in his reports to both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, as well as during his visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran. In his discussions with the Iranian authorities, he pointed to women's underrepresentation in public, political and professional life and urged the Government to adopt laws and policies that promote women's participation in decision-making positions. The Secretary-General is concerned that the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions may have been further exacerbated by more recent developments. Late in December 2012, Marziyeh Vahid Dastjerdi, the first and only female Minister since the 1979 revolution, was dismissed by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad following her criticism of the Government's handling of crises in the medical sector.⁸ On 21 May 2013, the Guardian Council disqualified all 30 women candidates for the presidential elections, arguing that Iranian law did not approve of a woman in the presidency. This ban on women as candidates for the highest office sent a negative signal regarding participation of women in public, political and professional life. The absence of women in the Guardian Council undermines the fairness and transparency of the process and leads to inherent gender discrimination in its decisions.

11. Gender inequalities and violence against women persist in law and practice. The revised Islamic Penal Code retains discriminatory provisions to the effect that a woman's testimony in a court of law is still regarded as half that of a man's, and a woman's life is valued as half that of a man's. Women's rights activists, female journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers continue to be subjected to intimidation, harassment, detention and, in some instances, travel bans. For instance, on 29 January 2013, Mansoureh Behkish, a founder and spokesperson of the Mourning Mothers (Madaran-e Azardar) movement was ordered to begin a six-month prison sentence in Evin Prison. She was arrested on 12 June 2011 and sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison on charges of "anti-government propaganda" and "activities threatening national security" in December 2011.⁹

12. While reports continue to be received of ongoing harassment against lawyers and human rights defenders, the Secretary-General welcomes some improvement in the situation of Nasrin Sotoudeh, who is currently serving a six-year sentence in Evin Prison. Ms. Sotoudeh was granted temporary leave on several occasions, in January, March and June 2013. On 4 December 2012, the Government lifted travel restrictions imposed on Ms. Sotoudeh's family, following her hunger strike in October 2012. The Secretary-General hopes that Ms. Sotoudeh will soon be released from prison along with several other prominent human rights activists and lawyers such as Mohammad Ali Dadkhah and Abdol Fattah Soltani.¹⁰

13. The Secretary-General is also concerned about alleged reprisals against individuals for their cooperation, or for establishing contacts with the United Nations human rights mechanisms or representatives. Since May 2011, at least three

⁷ A/HRC/22/48, para. 22.

⁸ Ibid., para. 23.

⁹ A/HRC/23/51, p. 48.

¹⁰ According to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, at least 32 lawyers had been prosecuted since 2009 and several prominent human rights defenders were detained (see A/67/369).

cases of reprisals have been recorded, including two for contacting the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. These include the case of three Afghan nationals, Mohammad Nour-Zehi, Abdolwahab Ansari and Massoum Ali Zehi, who were allegedly subjected to torture and threats of execution by hanging in mid-November 2012, in Ghezal Hessar Prison.¹¹ Furthermore, on 15 September 2012, Maryam Bahrman, an Iranian women's rights activist and member of the One Million Signatures campaign, was sentenced to an eight-month suspended jail term on the charge of "propaganda against the State". On 20 May 2012, a financial penalty of Rls 26 million was imposed on her for defaming the President and other State officials and for spreading misinformation about the "system" of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Her arrest and prosecution appear to be linked to her work as a women's rights activist and her participation in the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, in March 2011.

14. The revised Islamic Penal Code continues to provide capital punishment for a wide range of offences. While it reduces the number of offences for which the death penalty can be applied against juveniles, and increases judicial discretion in such cases, numerous other provisions run contrary to international standards. These include the imposition of the death penalty for crimes that do not meet the threshold of the "most serious crimes", the possibility of a broader interpretation of the category of security-related charges, the reinstatement of stoning as a punishment, and the application of diverse forms of corporal punishment, inter alia, amputation, flogging and crucifixion. Under the new Islamic Penal Code, the death penalty is provided for certain crimes, including adultery, incest, rape, sodomy, a non-Muslim party in same-sex relations, insulting the Prophet Mohammad and other great Prophets,¹² possessing or selling illicit drugs, theft for the fourth time, premeditated murder, *moharebeh* (enmity against God),¹³ *fisad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) and human trafficking. The death penalty could also be applied to crimes such as espionage and crimes against national security. In some instances, the scope of certain crimes has been expanded. For instance, *fisad-fil-arz* now includes crimes against the security of the State, spreading lies, operating or managing centres of corruption or prostitution, damaging the economy of the country, destruction and terror, insecurity and damages to public and private property and people, use of toxic and other dangerous substances. The punishment for *fisad-fil-arz* is execution by hanging. The definition of *moharebeh* appears to require only that the accused draw weapons for the purposes of causing terror or fear or breaching public security and freedom, and the death sentence could be imposed even where the conduct did not result in any death or injury. The national security-related charges or the vaguely defined offences of *moharebeh* and *fisad-fil-arz* have frequently been applied against Government opponents, and individuals arrested for political and human rights-related activities.

15. The Secretary-General remains troubled by the increased rate of executions that has been witnessed in the Islamic Republic of Iran for the fourth consecutive year. According to Amnesty International, a record 544 executions, including

¹¹ A/HRC/22/56.

¹² The Islamic Penal Code states that any person who insults the Prophet of Islam or other Great Prophets shall be considered as *Sabb-al-Nabi* and punished by hanging.

¹³ The Islamic Penal Code defines *moharebeh* as "drawing weapon on the life, property or chastity of people or to cause terror as it creates the atmosphere of insecurity".

314 executions acknowledged by official sources, were carried out in 2012. The actual figure could exceed 600, as many of the executions were allegedly carried out in secret.¹⁴ The majority of the executions were in relation to drug-related offences.¹⁵ In 2013, over 200 executions, including at least 30 public executions, have been recorded during the first six months of the year, including at least 56 in May alone. Many of those executions were allegedly carried out following proceedings that did not comply with international human rights law standards on fair trial and due process guarantees, provided in article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have consistently been advocating for the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances and urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to join this worldwide trend.

16. On 15 March 2013, in a press interview, Mohammad Javad Larijani, Secretary-General of the High Council for Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, acknowledged the high rate of executions and stressed the need to amend the laws. He noted that about 74 per cent of executions were related to drug-trafficking, which he added should not be considered as “serious crimes”.¹⁶ Despite this public acknowledgement, the aggressive campaign of drug-related executions has continued, with no evidence that the death penalty has contributed to the eradication of drug-trafficking in the country.¹⁷

17. The authorities have taken steps to restrict the imposition of the death penalty on juveniles. For instance, the Islamic Penal Code stipulates that juveniles under 18 who commit offences under the categories of *hudud*¹⁸ and *qisas*¹⁹ will not be sentenced to death, if the court decides, on forensic evidence, that the offender did not have adequate mental maturity and the ability to reason. Authorities have also encouraged *diyyah* (blood money) settlement between the family of the victims and perpetrators.²⁰ No execution of a juvenile was reported in 2012, and the latest execution was recorded in January 2013, when a 21-year-old man was executed for a crime he allegedly committed when he was 17 years old. The Secretary-General urges the authorities to fully abolish the death penalty for crimes committed by persons under 18 years of age, in accordance with the country’s obligations under article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and to establish a broader moratorium on the use of the death penalty pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/176.

¹⁴ http://files.amnesty.org/air13/AmnestyInternational_AnnualReport2013_complete_en.pdf.

¹⁵ The new Anti-Narcotics Law of 2011 provides mandatory death sentences for the heads of drug gangs or networks, but also for trafficking or possession of more than 30 grams of crystal meth, and other psychedelic substances such as crack and heroin.

¹⁶ www.euronews.com/2013/03/15/tehran-s-top-human-rights-official-says-some-iranian-laws-need-reforming/.

¹⁷ In their comments on this report, the authorities attributed a significant number of death penalty cases to drug-related offences and some to homicides; they state that this is considered a private right of the victim’s family and cannot be overruled by the judiciary. The Government noted that efforts by the Dispute Settlement Council, which encourages the families of the victim and the perpetrator to reach a settlement, prevented a number of the executions from being carried out.

¹⁸ *Hudud* constitutes crimes against divine will; applicable punishments include the death penalty, crucifixion, stoning, amputation of the right hand and, for repeat offences, the left foot, flogging, imprisonment and exile.

¹⁹ *Qisas* is retribution in kind, broadly similar to “an eye for an eye”.

²⁰ Proceedings against the life or physical integrity of the person are subject to the decision of the victim, who may ask for the guilty party to suffer the same treatment or accept financial compensation (*diyyah*) in case of murder or physical injury.

18. Of further concern is the retention of the punishment of stoning in the Islamic Penal Code.²¹ Although stoning is apparently not mandatory, and details about the method of execution by stoning have been omitted (such as the appropriate size of stones to be used; wrapping the convicted person in a white shroud (*kafan*), and burying the male adulterer in the soil up to his waist and a woman up to her shoulder), the retention of this penalty means its application is not precluded.²² United Nations human rights mechanisms hold the view that execution by stoning constitutes a form of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which is prohibited in international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified. The Human Rights Committee, which monitors the implementation of the Covenant, has concluded that stoning to death for adultery is a punishment that is grossly disproportionate to the nature of the crime.²³ The Secretary-General recommends that the Islamic Republic of Iran immediately prohibit the use of stoning as a method of execution.

19. The Secretary-General notes the continuing focus of special procedures mandate holders on allegations of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. From February 2012 to March 2013, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran sent 23 joint communications to the authorities concerning serious allegations of acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in detention, prolonged solitary confinement, extraction of confession under torture, deaths in custody, flogging and denial of medical treatment.²⁴ The Secretary-General urges the Iranian authorities to ensure that an inquiry is opened in each case of alleged torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in detention facilities, and that the perpetrators of such acts are prosecuted and punished appropriately. The Government should also ensure that effective reparation, including adequate compensation, is granted to every victim.

20. On 22 May 2013, Giti Marami, a 34-year-old woman who was convicted of adultery and sentenced to death, was reportedly flogged 100 times before her hanging in Gharchak Prison in Varamin.²⁵ On 7 February 2013, in Shiraz, a 29-year-old man, accused of theft and illicit sexual relations, had four fingers publicly severed with an amputation machine.²⁶ The Special Rapporteur on torture has long

²¹ The Islamic Penal Code explicitly provides that punishment for adultery is *rajam* (stoning). If the possibility of carrying out the stoning verdict does not exist, the sentencing judge may order execution by hanging pending final approval of the Chief Justice.

²² The last execution by stoning was carried out in July 2007, when a man was reportedly stoned to death in Qazvin.

²³ Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 20.

²⁴ Afshin Osanlou, a trade union activist, who was serving a five-year sentence, reportedly died from a heart attack in prison on 20 June 2013. Mr. Osanlou's family was not informed about his death until 22 June. Although the real cause of the death of Mr. Osanlou remains unclear, some sources allege lack of proper medical care as the reason for his death.

²⁵ On 6 May 2013, a 24-year-old man was publicly punished with 110 lashes in Abek city, Qazvin Province. Before his flogging, the victim was paraded in a humiliating manner in the city. See www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13920216000391.

²⁶ After the execution of the sentence, the Chief Prosecutor of Shiraz, while stressing the importance of hand amputation as deterrence to crimes of theft, warned that similar sentences for several other prisoners will be carried out in the near future. See www.jonoubnews.ir/showpage.aspx?id=42946.

concluded that any form of corporal punishment is contrary to the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.²⁷ In addition, the Human Rights Committee considers any form of corporal punishment such as amputation and flogging incompatible with article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.²⁸

21. Reports of ongoing serious discrimination in law and in practice against ethnic and religious minorities continue to be received. Since June 2010, over 300 Christians were allegedly arrested and detained throughout the country, including in Arak, Bandar Abbas, Bandar Mahshahr, Ardabil, Tabriz, Khorramabad, Mashhad, Hamadan, Rasht, Shiraz, Isfahan and Ilam. On 20 September 2012, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief publicly expressed serious concerns over the arrest and detention of hundreds of Christians, and about the atmosphere of fear in which many churches operate.²⁹ In his report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that at least 110 Baha'is were imprisoned in the country, mostly for acts including organizing religious gatherings and advocating for the right to education. Such cases run contrary to the country's obligations under article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees everyone's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.³⁰

B. Economic, social and cultural rights

22. As an upper middle-income country, the Islamic Republic of Iran has made notable progress in human development. Having one of the youngest populations in the world (54.8 per cent of its people are under 30), it enjoys a demographic window of opportunity with important development implications. The country is also on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals — notably under Goal 1 (eradicating extreme poverty), Goal 2 (achieving universal education), Goal 4 (reducing child mortality) and Goal 5 (reducing maternal mortality). The Government is committed to reducing both income and capability poverty and the country has witnessed a decline in extreme income poverty (\$1 a day) to around 1 per cent.

23. In addition, the country's human development indicators have substantially improved and the human development index value of 0.742 for 2013 places the country in the high human development category. This represents an average annual increase of about 1.4 per cent since 1985 (although the human development index growth rate for the period 2000-2011 has been just under 1 per cent).³¹ In this process, life expectancy at birth has risen for both men and women; more people have access to safe drinking water; maternal mortality has fallen from 150 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 21 in 2013;³² under-5 mortality fell from 54 per 1,000

²⁷ A/60/316, para. 28.

²⁸ See CCPR/C/IRN/CO/3.

²⁹ See A/HRC/22/48, para. 28.

³⁰ A/HRC/22/56.

³¹ *Human Development Report 2011*.

³² *World Health Statistics 2013* (Geneva, World Health Organization (WHO), 2013).

live births in 1990 to 22.5 in 2010; a total of 96.4 per cent³³ of all births are attended by skilled birth attendants; and primary health-care coverage in rural areas stands at more than 98 per cent.

24. The Islamic Republic of Iran has also made noticeable progress in women's education and health. The literacy rate among women aged 15 to 24 as compared to men of the same age increased from 96.1 per cent in 2000 to 99.2 per cent in 2012,³⁴ and the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education increased from 79.2 per cent in 1990 to 98 per cent in 2012.³⁵ The access of the poor to basic services has substantially increased: during 1991-2009 access to electricity by the poorest in rural areas increased from 66.6 per cent to 93.2 per cent and to piped water from 55.1 per cent to 83.6 per cent.³⁶

25. Although the main components of human development have improved significantly in economic terms, the country still faces challenges of unemployment, low labour productivity growth rates and sustained income inequality.³⁷ The Gender Inequality Index, as reported in the *Human Development Report 2013*, was 0.496 (ranking the Islamic Republic of Iran 107th). The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which reviewed the country's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in May 2013, raised serious concerns about the treatment of minority groups, discrimination between men and women, high unemployment of women and young people, lack of universal health insurance coverage, high level of poverty in certain underdeveloped regions, and legislation and policies on cultural freedom.

26. Much of the income and non-income poverty is in areas such as informal urban settlements; the informal sector of the economy; remote rural areas; among refugees; and encompassing groups such as people with disabilities, and female-headed households. The overall distribution of income, for instance, remains problematic, constraining overall access to improved quality resources and services. The Gini coefficient of income inequality, for instance, has stood above 0.4 for many years, with significant disparities between provinces, districts, urban centres and rural areas recorded.³⁸ The Government now is seeking to reduce inequality to a Gini coefficient level of 0.3 by the end of the period covered by the fifth Five-Year National Development Plan, in 2014.

27. Disparities among provinces and between rural and urban areas persist. The percentage of poor underweight children under 5 is higher in rural areas (13.7 per cent) than in urban areas (9.6 per cent). Furthermore, security issues exacerbate regional disparities in social development. Areas bordering Iraq and Afghanistan are affected by drug and arms trafficking and illegal migration. Some of those areas suffer from poor communications and a shortage of staff in the health and welfare sectors.³⁹

³³ Islamic Republic of Iran, Multiple Indicator Demographic and Health Survey, 2010; available from <http://iran.unfpa.org/IrMIDHS%202010%20Selected%20Reults.asp>.

³⁴ *State of the World Population 2012* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.12.III.H.1).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Statistical Centre of Iran, Statistical Research and Training Centre, report on available facilities and assets to households from 1991 to 2009 (2011).

³⁷ Statistical Centre of Iran, 2008; for productivity data see also *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.II.F.1).

³⁸ Various household income and expenditure surveys show the extensive differences.

³⁹ *Country Cooperation Strategy for WHO and the Islamic Republic of Iran 2010-2014* (WHO, 2011).

28. Equitable access to food, sanitation, health, education, information and services continues to be a challenge, as does sustained provision of social services as budgetary policy evolves. At the end of 2010, the country implemented drastic cuts to State subsidies on fuels, utilities and basic foodstuffs, with the aim of reducing economic distortions and waste, and implemented a system of \$45 per capita monthly cash transfers as compensation payment, reaching an estimated 96 per cent of the population,⁴⁰ in order to cushion the impact of the resulting price increases. Insurance coverage for less than half of the population, elimination of governmental subsidies, economic adjustment policies and privatization have significantly limited access to health care for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.⁴¹

29. Women's economic participation and employment have also decreased. Only 14.5 per cent of the female population is economically active, of which 16.8 per cent are either unemployed or seeking jobs. During its review of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed serious concerns about sexist restrictions on the access to university education, including bans on female and male enrolment, limited quotas for women in certain fields, as well as gender segregation in classrooms and facilities. The Committee also noted with concern the low participation of women in the labour force, which has been further declining, and the possibility for a husband to prevent his wife from entering employment upon receipt of a court order under the Family Protection Law. The International Labour Organization Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in a recent observation noted with regret the Government's inaction on repealing section 1117 of the Civil Code, which provides that a husband can prevent his wife from taking up a job or profession.⁴²

30. The Islamic Republic of Iran is experiencing rapid socioeconomic and demographic changes; its population recently surpassed 75 million. According to the 2011 census, the annual population growth rate is 1.3 per cent, the overall sex ratio is 102. Among other factors, the expansion of health facilities, the increased literacy rate, and improved living standards contributed to a rise in life expectancy for both women and men, to 73.2 and 70.5, respectively.⁴³ A need to absorb the younger generation into the labour market has placed pressure on the economy and resulted in an estimated overall unemployment rate of 12.4 per cent (19.6 per cent for women) in 2013. Official unemployment rates are much higher for young people (22.3 per cent for young men, 42.7 per cent for young women early in 2013). The search for better job opportunities underlies the increasing challenge of migration and rapid urbanization among the population.⁴⁴

31. The birth rate has decreased within a short time, dropping from 6.6 births per woman in 1977 to 2 births per woman in 2000 and to 1.8 births per woman in 2011 — that is, to under replacement level. Alarmed by the country's decrease in fertility, which is leading to an ageing population, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, encouraged families to have more children. In a reaction to the

⁴⁰ Mr. Adel Azar, Head of the Statistical Centre of Iran, speech in Parliament, 9 May 2011.

⁴¹ *Country Cooperation Strategy for WHO and the Islamic Republic of Iran 2010-2014*.

⁴² International Labour Organization, Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Observation adopted in 2012, concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

⁴³ Statistical Centre of Iran, 2011 Population and Housing Census.

⁴⁴ Statistical Centre of Iran, *Statistical Yearbook of Iran, 2009*; and summary report of the labour force survey, 2009.

leader's speech, the Ministry of Health announced that contraceptives, which used to be given out free of charge, will no longer be procured.

C. Economic sanctions and its impacts

32. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been facing increased international and unilateral sanctions in recent years due to the controversies surrounding its nuclear programme and human rights violations. Sanctions featured prominently during the presidential election campaign. The newly elected President has acknowledged the negative impact of sanctions and vowed to take appropriate measures to ease the sanctions regime.⁴⁵

33. While it is difficult to assess the direct impact of economic sanctions, which mainly target banking transactions, they have certainly affected every sector of society. Indirectly, sanctions have accelerated inflation rates, contributed to a drastic rise in the cost of commodities and energy, increased unemployment and shortages of necessary items, including medicines.⁴⁶ Women and the already vulnerable groups are especially hard hit. Since December 2011, the rial has been depreciated by over 80 per cent. In April 2013, the International Monetary Fund estimated that the country's economy contracted by 1.9 per cent in 2012, the first such decrease in more than two decades, and was expected to shrink by 1.3 per cent in 2013.⁴⁷ The Government recently drafted a bill to establish a programme to support low-income families and provide them with staple foods.⁴⁸ According to the plan, 17 million Iranians are to receive staple food-rationing cards. The administration is to allocate \$2 billion from the National Development Fund to support low-income families by providing them with staple foods.⁴⁹

34. Inflation and the cost of living have soared, partly in response to increasing sanctions. The Central Bank of Iran announced that inflation had reached 28.7 per cent. In the 12-month period that ended 19 January 2013, the inflation rate rose by 1.3 per cent compared to the previous year.⁵⁰ The prices of basic staple foods have been rising on a daily basis, making it difficult for the population to cope with the currency's devaluation.⁵¹ For instance, from 2007 to 2013 the cost of beef increased from \$1.33 to \$7.59, milk increased from \$0.15 to \$0.683, bread increased from \$0.09 to \$0.16, and rice increased from \$0.03 to \$2.18.⁵² Furthermore, the cost of

⁴⁵ The Islamic Republic of Iran acknowledged the negative impact on the realization of all aspects of human rights of unilateral and coercive as well as international sanctions in its 2010 universal periodic review. The country has also raised serious concerns about the imposition of sanctions, which have severely disrupted the distribution of medical and pharmaceutical supplies and interfered with the functioning of the health system; see the report of the Secretary-General on human rights and unilateral coercive measures (A/67/181).

⁴⁶ www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/05/us-iran-medicine-idUSBRE8B40NM20121205 and www.odvv.org/blog-38.

⁴⁷ <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/apr/16/report-iran%E2%80%99s-economy-shrank-2012>.

⁴⁸ www.tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/105078-iran-prepares-bill-to-assist-low-income-families.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ www.tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/105365-iran-inflation-rises-stands-at-287-central-bank.

⁵¹ www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/oct/01/iran-currency-rial-all-time-low and www.economist.com/node/21564229.

⁵² www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22765716.

housing rentals has doubled in some areas.⁵³ Unemployment has remained steadily above 10 per cent. Banking sanctions have also limited opportunities for Iranians to study abroad. Many families find it difficult to prove that they can transfer tuition fees, which has made some universities reluctant to register Iranian students.⁵⁴

35. Banking sanctions have also disrupted the transfer of funds for United Nations projects, the provision of technical assistance and procurement of equipment into the country. Banks are hesitant to make transfers even through humanitarian organizations that are exempted from sanctions.⁵⁵ Since it is also difficult to get hard currency inside the country and exchange rates on the ground are unfavourable, the costs of running United Nations projects have increased.

36. Women are significantly affected by the economic downturn resulting from sanctions as girls risk being withdrawn from school and women pushed out of the job market.⁵⁶ Economic pressures may also lead to an increased incidence of domestic violence and family conflicts, as men's inability to live up to social expectations can lead to depression and attacks on women.

37. Sanctions have also severely disrupted the distribution of medical and pharmaceutical supplies. Insurance companies face difficulties covering Iranian importers and exporters, and that in turn has diminished the availability of medical equipment and foreign-made drugs.⁵⁷ Drug imports into the country fell by 54.7 per cent from 21 March to 20 April, compared to the same period in 2012.⁵⁸ United States Department of Commerce data released on 8 February 2013 show that exports of drugs to the Islamic Republic of Iran have declined by half. Certain medicines can no longer be imported into the country and this has reportedly had a negative impact on the treatment of patients, especially those suffering from rare and chronic diseases.⁵⁹ In November 2012, the Iranian Health Ministry called on the Central Bank to earmark \$2 billion for importing drugs in response to the domestic drug shortage.⁶⁰ At the same time, health officials complained that the Government failed to supply the Ministry of Health with foreign currency for drugs and medical supplies for the first half of the year.⁶¹ On 8 December 2012, the Health Minister called on the Central Bank to provide foreign currency to import urgently needed medical drugs and equipment.⁶²

⁵³ www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ICAN-Brief-3.pdf.

⁵⁴ Currently, around 6,000 Iranians are studying at United States universities. See www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22799938 and www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ICAN-Brief-3.pdf.

⁵⁵ www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=519b138d5.

⁵⁶ www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ICAN-Brief-3.pdf.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ www.tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/107872-irans-medicine-imports-fall-by-54-percent.

⁵⁹ See A/67/181.

⁶⁰ www.tehrantimes.com/economy-and-business/107872-irans-medicine-imports-fall-by-54-percent.

⁶¹ <http://isna.ir/fa/news/91082012505>, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-22/world/35509868_1_health-care-crunch-health-committee-central-bank, and http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-11-22/world/35509868_1_health-care-crunch-health-committee-central-bank, <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/news/show/825703>.

⁶² On 27 December 2012, President Ahmadinejad sacked the Minister of Health, apparently for her call for drug price rises caused by sanctions. See www.presstv.com/detail/2012/12/27/280389/ahmadinejad-sacks-health-minister/, www.radiozamaneh.com/english/content/iranian-health-minister-calls-medication-money, www.cffsd.org/news/632, and www.jahannews.com/vdcdxz0xzyt0996.2a2y.html.

38. Hospitals reportedly have trouble providing vital drugs, such as anaesthetics.⁶³ Cancer patients have to search multiple hospitals and pharmacies to purchase expensive cancer drugs. Poorer patients, as a result, are forgoing treatment to avoid placing financial burdens on their families.⁶⁴ Patients with transplants, kidney dialysis, or other conditions also face interruptions or delays in medical treatment, which endangers their life.⁶⁵ An estimated 20,000 patients receive only enough medicine to cover a few days of their monthly needs.⁶⁶ Some officials in the health sector have also attributed the rise in mortality rates to shortages of medical supplies and essential drugs caused by sanctions.⁶⁷

39. Domestically produced gasoline is increasingly being used but it is of lower quality than imported gasoline, causing a decline in air quality, especially in Tehran.⁶⁸ The Ministry of Health reported that over 4,000 people died in Tehran due to air pollution during the last Iranian year (ending 19 March 2012).⁶⁹ According to the Yale University's Environmental Performance Index, the country ranked near the bottom, 114 out of 132 nations surveyed in 2012.

40. Sanctions are also believed to have a negative impact on the agricultural sector, which is suffering from limitations in obtaining needed inputs and technology. Sanctions have diminished the export of agricultural products and have decreased agricultural revenue, forcing rural populations to harvest more natural resources, putting further pressure on biodiversity and the environment.

III. Cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

A. Cooperation with the United Nations human rights treaty system

41. The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified five core international human rights treaties⁷⁰ and is a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It has not ratified other major treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, owing to perceived conflicts with Islamic rules and principles.

⁶³ www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/03/19/294341/antiiran-sanctions-lethal-for-patients/.

⁶⁴ www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/ICAN-Brief-3.pdf.

⁶⁵ www.odvv.org/storage/SWF_950/files/autumn%202012%20winter%202013.pdf and www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/sanctions-take-toll-on-irans-sick/2012/09/04/ce07ee2c-f6b2-11e1-8253-3f495ae70650_print.html.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Letter dated 26 November 2012 from the Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences to the Secretary-General.

⁶⁸ www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/134825.

⁶⁹ <http://ehsnews.org/air-pollution-killed-4460-in-tehran-last-year-mehr-says>.

⁷⁰ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

42. Cooperation with treaty bodies has improved in recent years. Reports of the Islamic Republic of Iran were examined by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (August 2010), the Human Rights Committee (October 2011) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (May 2013).⁷¹ Albeit delayed, those reports made possible an in-depth analysis of the human rights situation in the country.

43. In its concluding observations,⁷² the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern about the State party's discrimination against unrecognized religious communities other than those belonging to Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism; criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual activity and possible conviction to the death penalty; widespread and entrenched discrimination faced by members of the Baha'i community; restrictions on access to university education, particularly affecting women; low participation of women in the labour force and exclusion of women from certain public positions. Other concerns expressed include harassment, arrest and detention of labour rights activists; lack of universal health insurance coverage; the absence of criminalization of domestic violence; the low minimum age for marriage; the prevalence of child labour; the high levels of poverty in certain underdeveloped regions; the lack of formal ownership titles over houses and land; poor living conditions in regions traditionally inhabited by ethnic minorities; lack of access to education by children with disabilities and children of nomadic communities. Finally, the Committee was concerned that ethnic minorities, including the Kurds, Arabs, Azeris and Baluch, do not fully enjoy their right to take part in cultural life and that the *gozinesh* process⁷³ impairs their equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

44. During its examination of the report of the Islamic Republic of Iran in October 2011, the Human Rights Committee, in its concluding observations,⁷⁴ requested the country to provide information, within one year, on the implementation of its recommendations concerning inequality of women with regard to marriage, family and inheritance; the death penalty including executions of minors; and the independence of judges.⁷⁵ That information has not been provided at the time of writing of this report.

B. Cooperation with special procedures

45. During his mission to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Secretary-General encouraged the authorities to cooperate with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, notably the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and urged the Government to grant him access to the country. The Secretary-General regrets that the Special Rapporteur has still not been

⁷¹ While considering the second periodic report of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted with regret the delay in submission of the report, following its previous consideration in 1993, and requested the Islamic Republic of Iran to submit its third periodic report by 31 May 2018. The Committee also regretted that the State party did not provide adequate responses to some of the questions it had posed.

⁷² E/C.12/IRN/CO/2.

⁷³ The *gozinesh* process employs ideological screenings to regulate access to education and employment.

⁷⁴ CCPR/C/IRN/CO/3, para. 32.

⁷⁵ Ibid., paras. 9, 12, 13 and 22.

able to visit the country, as he believes this would be helpful to develop a dialogue on critical areas of concern. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not invited any thematic special procedures mandate holders since 2005, despite a standing invitation issued to all thematic mandate holders in 2002, and a pledge to invite two such experts during 2012. Specifically, the Secretary-General strongly encourages the Government to schedule visits for the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, as agreed to in principle by the Government.

46. The Secretary-General is also concerned about the low rate of replies to the large number of communications sent by special procedures mandate holders. In 2012, a total of 28 communications were sent to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the authorities responded to 8 only. A further 12 communications were sent during the first half of 2013, to none of which the authorities responded. The majority of the communications addressed concerns about torture, executions, arbitrary arrest and detention of journalists and human rights activists, harassment of family members of activists, custodial death, prosecution of religious minorities, unfair trials and ill-treatment, and denial of medical treatment.

C. Cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

47. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to raise human rights concerns with Iranian officials, including at meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Adviser to the President and Head of the Centre for Women and Family Affairs, the Secretary General of the High Council for Human Rights and the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Geneva. She also intervened with the authorities on a number of individual human rights cases, through private meetings, letters and public statements. These related mainly to the rights of women, the death penalty, and the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and peaceful assembly.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

48. The Secretary-General was pleased to have an opportunity to visit the Islamic Republic of Iran and appreciates the frank and constructive discussions held on human rights issues with the authorities. The Secretary-General looks forward to continuing and strengthening this dialogue with the Government and relevant stakeholders.

49. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General remains deeply troubled by reports of increasing numbers of executions, including in public; continuing amputations and flogging; arbitrary arrests and detention; torture and ill-treatment; and severe restrictions targeting media professionals, human rights defenders, lawyers and opposition activists, as well as religious minorities. The Secretary-General urges the Government to address the concerns highlighted in this report, and the specific calls for action requested in previous resolutions of the General Assembly, as well as recommendations of various human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review process.

50. The Secretary-General notes the reduced number of offences for which the death penalty may be applied against juveniles, and the significant reduction in such cases. He strongly encourages the Government to end once and for all the use of the death penalty against juveniles, which is prohibited under international law. The Secretary-General reiterates his call for the Government to institute a broader moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and to raise the age of criminal liability of children. He also calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to prohibit executions in public.

51. Noting the positive achievements the Islamic Republic of Iran has made against several economic and social indicators, the Secretary-General encourages the Government to continue addressing regional disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as discrimination against women and members of certain minorities. The Secretary-General is concerned at the reported impact sanctions are having on critical economic, social and cultural rights — particularly the right to health — and encourages the Government to allow independent experts, such as the relevant special procedures mandate holders, to examine and report more fully on these concerns.

52. The Secretary-General welcomes increasing engagement by the Islamic Republic of Iran with United Nations human rights treaty bodies, and encourages the country to promptly provide further information requested by the Human Rights Committee. The Secretary-General urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to follow up, in close consultation and cooperation with civil society, the concluding observations of the various treaty bodies, and to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

53. The Secretary-General regrets that, despite repeated requests for a country visit, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran has not yet been admitted to the country. The Secretary-General renews his call on the Government to fully cooperate in the fulfilment of the Special Rapporteur's mandate by inviting him to the country in the near future, as well as other thematic mandate holders in line with the country's standing invitation. The Secretary-General equally encourages the Government to strengthen cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, other relevant United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, as well as with civil society, with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
