

# Advisory Panel on the Question of Iran (APQI)

The humanitarian crisis



<b>Forum</b>	Advisory Panel on the Question of Iran (APQI)
<b>Issue:</b>	The humanitarian crisis
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<b>Position:</b>	President and Deputy President

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## Introduction

In recent years, Iran has been confronted with a myriad of pressing humanitarian crises. Ranging from an influx of Afghani refugees, to increased water scarcity and numerous other health care challenges, both political, environmental and economical consideration have over time culminated in a significant impact on the well-being of millions of Iranians. The recent influx of afghani refugees has strained much of the country's resources and infrastructure. Unable to host such sizeable populations, many refugees are left with little to no support as they deal with their displacement.

Worsening economic conditions have overtime only added to already existent domestic complications. By 2024, it is estimated that over half of the Iranian population will live under the poverty rate. Adding to the complexity, drought induced water scarcity has had far reaching effects, both agricultural and health care. The result has been increased political tensions, which in turn have brought with them an increase in human and civil rights violations, as the Islamic republic's regime seeks to stabilize the country and suppress any political resistance. Now, these worsening circumstances require exceptional attention. As a country of over 80 million people, the policies of the Iranian government and foreign influences alike greatly dictate the lives for millions of people in the region. A coordinated national and international effort is required to see these problems resolved, in an attempt to tackle the root causes of the crisis.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Humanitarian crisis

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Factors such as armed conflict, natural disasters, economic turmoil and political unrest threaten the health, security and well-being of a large segment of the population, creating urgent humanitarian needs

### **International sanctions**

Measures taken by one or more countries or international organizations to restrict trade, investment, or diplomatic relations with a target country such as Iran, usually in response to suspected violations of international law or security concerns.

### **Poverty**

A necessary condition of not having sufficient income or resources to meet basic human needs such as food, clean water, shelter, education, and health care.

### **Human rights violations**

Acts that violate fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals or groups recognized by international law, including violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights

### **Freedom of Expression**

A fundamental human right that includes the freedom to express one's opinions, ideas and beliefs without restraint, restriction, or fear of reprisal from authorities or others.

### **Displacement**

The forced displacement of individuals or communities from their homes or usual places of residence, usually as a result of armed conflict, persecution, natural disasters, or other emergencies, resulting in refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).

### **Access to healthcare**

The ability of individuals and communities to access and use health care, including medical advice, treatment, medication, and preventive measures, to maintain and enhance their health and well-being.

### **EDIB**



Equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging refer to the principle that every individual should have equal rights, fair treatment, and a sense of being valued and embraced within an organization. This concept emphasizes that no one should face disadvantages or discrimination based on their affiliation with a specific social or demographic group.

### **Suffragette**

A suffragist, particularly associated with the early 20th-century British movement led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, who advocated for women's voting rights.

### **Affirmative action**

When a government or organization takes affirmative action, it involves providing preferential treatment to women, black people, or other marginalized groups that have historically faced discrimination or unfair treatment, particularly when selecting individuals for job opportunities. The goal is to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, addressing past imbalances and creating more equal opportunities in the workforce.

### **International Human Rights Law (IHRL)**

International human rights law refers to the legal principles, rules and norms established internationally for the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all human beings, regardless of nationality, race, religion, sex or other characteristic. International human rights law is based on treaties, treaties, customary practices and the work of international organizations, aimed at ensuring respect for human dignity and preventing human rights violations worldwide.

### **Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG10)**

The 10th SDG, also known as the 10 Sustainable Development Goals, is one of the 17 United Nations Development Goals. It focuses on reducing inequality within and across countries. The goal aims to promote social, economic and political inclusion, ensuring equal access to basic rights, goods and services for all individuals regardless of status or circumstances SDG 10 seeks to address issues such as income inequality, discrimination and exclusion, aiming for a fair and just world for all.

### **Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC)**



The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) that advocates for human rights and justice from an Islamic perspective with a focus on raising awareness and campaigning against human rights violations, particularly those affecting Muslim communities worldwide. IHRC conducts research, provides legal assistance and conducts public consultations to promote human rights, social justice and equality in accordance with Islamic principles and international law.

## General Overview

### Refugee Crisis

As of 2023, Iran hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world. Over 750,000 refugees are now formally registered within the country, with the vast majority originating from either Afghanistan or Iraq. It is additionally estimated that since the unrest in Afghanistan back in August of 2021, more than a million Afghan refugees fled to Iran. Now, Afghan citizens in particular face coercion, as their mass displacement brings with it huge humanitarian complications. Given it being estimated that over 2.6 million undocumented refugees now reside in the country, it is only evident that the vast majority of Iran's refugee population does not enjoy proper access to fundamental social services, notably including education and proper access to employment. As most continue to reside in large urban centers, they become systematically victim to overcrowding and urban poverty. It is this growing urban poverty as a whole in Iran which has induced increased tensions between Iranian and Afghan populations. According to Amnesty International, women and children in particular account for the vast majority of Afghan refugees. Pertaining over 80% of all Afghan refugees nationwide, many of the refugees thus fall victim to child labor, assault and rape, and other forms of brutality. Governments and individuals alike regularly deny them the rights they hold under national and international law.

### Healthcare

The government of Iran has received considerable criticism for its vaccination policies and handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. With a limited capacity to effectively administer track and trace





techniques during a widespread influx of COVID cases, Iran's response to the pandemic back in 2020 was largely insufficient. The result has been a death toll of approximately 140,000 deaths. In an analysis on global fatality rates in the aftermath of the pandemic, John Hopkins University ranks Iran as the 4th worst country in the world, with an observed case-fatality ratio of just shy of 2%. The severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other economic considerations have left the country in a state of turmoil with regard to health care. Iran's response to the pandemic furthermore goes to illustrate the unintended destructive effects sanctions can have on an already struggling country going through a humanitarian crisis. In particular, in hindering Iran's access to international financing systems, sanctions have meant the country is unable to import and buy goods critical to an adequate COVID response. The result of continued economic pressure has been a prolonged deterioration of critical Iranian infrastructure.

## Water Crisis

One such piece of critical public infrastructure which has faced continued neglect, is Iran's water facilitation networks. Being a predominately arid country, prolonged droughts and exacerbated climate patterns have made water a scarce good within urban centers at times. In particular, declining water levels in the Karun, Karkheh and Zayandehrud rivers, accompanied by water mismanagement and overexploitation mean wetland environments within the country have seen a significant amount of shrinkage. In many cases, the Islamic regime consciously diverted rivers to provide water for the expansion of industrial activity. All things considered, ground water levels have continuously dropped by an average of 26 centimeters a year, and the country has lost a total of 200 million cubic kilometers of water storage over the last two decades. The worsening of water scarcity within the country has additional long-lasting effects, both humanitarian and socio-economic in nature. Traditional irrigation methods utilized by farmers immensely strain water supplies in the country. Thus, agricultural industries in particular come under a huge amount of pressure, as they attempt to tackle having little to no access to reliable sources of water for their irrigation systems. A lack of availability of clear, drinkable water additionally brings with it numerous health care challenges, as waterborne disease and poor sanitation may become prevalent.



## Political Tensions

Worsening living standards and economic circumstances have meant a rise in dissatisfaction with the functioning of the Islamic regime. As a reaction to a multitude of worsening circumstances within the country, including rising fuel prices, poverty, and government corruption, the Iranian Democracy movement organized protests across Iran back in 2019. In November of that year, these protests would escalate, turning into the biggest anti-government social unrest since the revolution of 1979. In what is now referred to as Bloody November, it is estimated that between 300 and 1500 citizens were killed. Similar forms of civil unrest would ensue in 2022, after the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody. As Political tensions rise, the government of Ebrahim Raisi continues to exercise unprecedented and unethical amounts of force, in its efforts to so called stabilize political conditions domestically. It is estimated that as many as 500 citizens were killed during these protests, and that possible as many as 20.000 were arrested. Following its fact-finding mission, the UNHRC has called for an end to the crackdown on peaceful protesters, executions and detentions. Sara Hossain, Chair of the Fact-Finding Mission reported: “The people of Iran, including women and girls, have fundamental rights to equality, truth, justice, accountability and reparations that must be upheld. We call on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to fully cooperate with our mandate and to ensure that all those affected have unhindered and safe access to providing evidence.”

## Major Parties Involved

### European Union (EU)

The EU has expressed serious concern about the humanitarian situation in Iran and its impact on vulnerable populations. The EU has stressed the importance of protecting human rights and ensuring access to assistance for those in need. In 2021, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to work with international partners to address the crisis and support affected communities. As of 2022, the total EU humanitarian support was €92.3 million. EU humanitarian aid provides vital assistance to the most vulnerable Afghani refugees in Iran and host communities.

### United States of America (U.S.A.)



The White House has monitored developments in Iran and expressed concern about the humanitarian situation on several occasions. Competition and monetary policy have been a point of contention for the U.S. economy with Iran, affecting the country's economy and exacerbating the crisis. In 2021, the U.S. government expressed a willingness to engage with Iran on humanitarian issues to ensure that necessary aid reaches those in need. However, it later on raised serious concerns about the human rights violations made by Iranian authorities during the Mahsa Amini protests.

### United Kingdom (UK)

The UK government has been very vocal about its support for human rights and has expressed concern about the humanitarian crisis in Iran. The UK has called for a multilateral approach to address the challenges facing vulnerable communities and will provide humanitarian assistance to support health, food security and other vital services. The House of Commons stated that Iran "challenges the values that underpin UK foreign policy."<sup>1</sup> In its Foreign Policy Committee. The values the Committee identified included restricting nuclear proliferation, promoting stability in the Middle East, protecting UK nationals overseas, and advancing human rights.

In the Integrated Review of Defence, Development, Security and Foreign Policy in March 2023 the UK government recently reaffirmed its fears over Iran's actions in the Middle East, which it has called "continued desperation". The UK reiterated its commitment to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

### The People's Republic of China (PRC)

As Iran's main economic partner, China has taken a keen interest in the country's humanitarian situation. In 2021, China reaffirmed its commitment to helping Iran solve the crisis and expressed its support for projects that promote stability and economic growth.

### The Russian Federation

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<sup>1</sup> UK, HC. "Researchbriefings.Files.Parliament.Uk." *UK House of Commons*, [researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2023-0117/CDP-2023-0117.pdf](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2023-0117/CDP-2023-0117.pdf).





Russia has followed developments in Iran and expressed a willingness to cooperate with other countries to address the humanitarian crisis. In 2021, Russia emphasized the importance of respecting Iran's sovereignty, and when providing provisions.

### The Government of Iran

The Iranian government has acknowledged economic challenges and humanitarian needs in the country. Navigating international relations and sanctions, the government has taken steps to address the crisis and accept international assistance in some areas to support the welfare of its citizens.

### Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
September 16 <sup>th</sup> 2022	Mahsa Amini dies in custody likely due to physical abuse by the Guidance Patrol, after her detention for not wearing a hijab, sparking massive protests.
November 30 <sup>th</sup> 2022	First of mass poisonings of schoolgirls.
April 8 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Increased security camera presence to enforce hijab-wearing law.
May 19 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Three men executed in connection to Mahsa Amini protests.
July 16 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Morality police continue arresting women without hijabs.

### UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The following is a list of relevant UN resolutions and involvement in the humanitarian crisis in Iran.

- Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, 24 December 2022 (OHCHR resolution S35/1)
- UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (July 20, 2015): This resolution endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.



- UN Security Council Resolution 1747 (March 24, 2007): This resolution-imposed sanctions on Iran, targeting its nuclear and missile programs in response to concerns about the country's nuclear ambitions.
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/178 (March 17, 2021): This resolution expressed concern about the situation of human rights in Iran, calling for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country.
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/184 (April 21, 2021): This resolution expressed concern about Iran's nuclear program and called for continued adherence to the JCPOA.
- UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/46/L.32 (March 23, 2021): This resolution addressed the situation of human rights in Iran, emphasizing the importance of promoting and protecting human rights in the country.
- UN Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/45/L.32 (October 6, 2020): This resolution renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, enabling continued monitoring and reporting on human rights issues in the country.

## Possible Solutions

The humanitarian crisis in Iran demands the immediate attention and concerted efforts of the international community. Wider economic challenges, political unrest and lack of access to basic needs have had a significant impact on vulnerable communities in the country. This UN report highlights possible solutions to ease the crisis and bring positive changes to Iran. Aid and humanitarian assistance are critical to mitigating the immediate impact of the crisis on vulnerable populations.

The international community must collaborate with NGOs and local partners to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of food, clean water, health services, and other basic resources to those in need. In addition, increased funding and support for humanitarian programs can help reduce the burden on affected communities. Lifting or easing economic sanctions in Iran could facilitate economic recovery and improve public access to resources. Targeted relief from sanctions, while



maintaining measures aimed at curbing nuclear proliferation, would allow Iran to meet its economic challenges and address the humanitarian crisis. The international community must continue to praise the protection of human rights in Iran.

Addressing issues of freedom of expression, discrimination, and access to justice can enhance the general welfare of society. Encouraging dialogue between the Iranian government and human rights organizations could improve conditions for vulnerable groups. There is a need to address the political tensions and conflicts that contribute to the crisis. Facilitate constructive and inclusive political dialogue within Iran and engage regionally

Supported economic development programs in Iran can create employment opportunities and increase the needs of the country's population. Encouraging foreign investment in sectors such as healthcare, education, and industry can contribute to long-term social and economic development. Investing in healthcare infrastructure and capacity building could improve Iran's ability to respond to health crises and epidemics. Cooperation with international health organizations can improve health care and increase access to medical resources.

Investing in skills development programs in education can empower Iranian youth and enhance their prospects. Knowledge exchange and capacity building can be promoted by promoting partnerships between educational institutions and international organizations. The humanitarian crisis in Iran requires a fully coordinated effort by the international community. By implementing the proposed solutions of humanitarian aid, easing economic sanctions, promoting human rights, political dialogue, supporting economic growth, strengthening health care systems and investing in education, we can work together to solve the crisis and bring about positive change in Iran. The United Nations is committed to working closely with the Iranian government, regional partners and international organizations to address humanitarian challenges and contribute to the well-being of all Iranians and in that spirit, delegates must seek diplomacy.

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## Appendix or Appendices



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