

# **Children in Crisis: Iran's January 2026 Massacre**



Addendum to Alternative Report on the Implementation of  
the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Islamic  
Republic of Iran Submitted by Iran Human Rights  
Documentation Center in June 2025

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## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Methodology .....	4
I. Background .....	4
II. Key Findings .....	5
III. Patterns of Violence .....	6
IV. Legal Analysis.....	7
V. Obligations of the International Community.....	8

## Executive Summary

This addendum to the Alternative Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Islamic Republic of Iran, submitted by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) in June 2025, offers a brief assessment of the effects of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s nationwide violent crackdown on civilian protests in January 2026—particularly on January 8–9 and the subsequent days—on the rights, protection, and well-being of children.

Beginning on January 8, 2026, Iranian authorities implemented a near-total digital blackout, and simultaneously blocked all incoming international telephone calls. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) also disrupted Starlink satellite communications and raided private homes to confiscate satellite television equipment, depriving civilians of independent access to information and obstructing external verification of events.

Despite these restrictions, corroborated evidence—including witness testimonies from citizens who fled Iran or maintained external communication, as well as visual evidence transmitted abroad—demonstrate a coordinated, systematic, and deliberate campaign of violence. Security forces—including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), police, Basij units, and reportedly heavily armed Iraqi militias—employed military-grade firearms, armoured vehicles, shotguns, and unidentified chemical agents.

A particularly harrowing case illustrates the scale of repression: a critically injured teenager feigned death to avoid being shot and was placed in a morgue in Tehran, where he remained in a bag among dozens of corpses for approximately three days. During this time, he heard cell phones ringing among the dead, smelled decay, and reported that groans from the wounded were often followed by gunfire, strongly indicating deliberate execution of injured individuals left unattended. He was eventually rescued by his family in severely deteriorated condition. This account is one of hundreds of similar incidents documented to date.

Reports indicate that thousands of unarmed protesters were killed nationwide, including children. Many more were critically injured—including hundreds blinded or permanently maimed—and thousands remain detained incommunicado, with no information regarding their conditions or whereabouts. Evidence shows injured individuals were forcibly removed from hospitals while still alive, often with medical equipment and left to die—most frequently from gunshot wounds to the head. Multiple reports also document protesters and bystanders being stabbed to death in streets or vehicles. Hospitals were repeatedly raided, and medical personnel threatened or assaulted, further obstructing life-saving care and prompting many injured civilians to avoid treatment, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

The IRI has systematically intimidated families of the deceased. Families were reportedly threatened that bodies would not be returned unless they paid exorbitant “bullet prices” or publicly declared that the deceased were regime supporters or Basij members. Authorities have also actively fabricated alternative narratives, portraying peaceful protesters as violent actors affiliated with the United States or Israel. Families refusing to repeat these narratives faced intensified pressure, while coerced statements—most recently from teenagers, as announced by officials—have been broadcast to reinforce propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Head of IRIB: We will soon broadcast the confessions of the ‘underage detainees*, IRAN INT. (Feb. 22, 2026), <https://www.iranintl.com/202602225179>.

State-sanctioned destruction and killings occurred in locations including the Old Bazaar of Rasht in Gilan Province, underscoring systematic and coordinated repression. Authorities imposed unofficial curfews and de facto martial law across multiple regions, restricting civilian movement, disrupting daily life, and raising concerns over shortages of essential goods. The IRI officials publicly threatened arrested individuals with the death penalty and harsh punishments, justified through Shia jurisprudence, while the conditions of detainees and political prisoners remain largely unknown—raising serious concerns that extrajudicial killings and patterns of mistreatment and torture could be repeated.

The scale, coordination, and deliberate nature of these actions indicate widespread and systematic attacks on civilians, meeting the threshold for crimes against humanity. Documented practices—including mass killings, abductions, targeted executions of the injured, attacks on hospitals, coercion of families, fabricated narratives, and systematic intimidation—constitute grave violations of international human rights and require immediate international attention to halt the campaign and hold responsible officials accountable.

## **Methodology**

This assessment is based on verified evidence, notwithstanding significant restrictions on communications and ongoing intimidation of victims and witnesses. It relies on corroborated open-source and visual intelligence (OSINT) transmitted abroad; testimony from medical professionals, victims’ families, and eyewitnesses; accounts from individuals who fled the country or maintained external contact; and statements issued by the IRI officials regarding the protests and the situation of children. Furthermore, the analysis incorporates comparative evaluations of weapon deployment, command structures, and historical patterns of state repression to provide a comprehensive understanding of the events and their implications for children’s rights and safety.

### **I. Background**

Protests began on December 28, 2025, in Tehran’s Grand Bazaar in response to severe economic hardship, including runaway inflation and soaring prices of essential goods. Within days, demonstrations spread to approximately 190 cities across all 31 provinces, evolving into nationwide political dissent. Participants—including the youth—demanded regime change, accountability, and respect for fundamental rights.

During the initial phase, authorities responded with mass arrests, intimidation, and the use of so-called less-lethal weapons, resulting in multiple deaths. By January 7, 2026, at least 25 fatalities, including children, had been confirmed, with additional unverified reports of further killings.

Following a nationwide call for protests on January 8, authorities imposed a near-total internet and communications blackout. Despite these restrictions, verified footage documented mass demonstrations across the country, with millions of protesters using slogans such as “Death to the Dictator” and “*Javid Shah*” (“Long Live the King”), signalling a decisive escalation in both public dissent and the state’s use of force.

## II. Key Findings

- Evidence indicates a coordinated, top-down campaign of violence, ordered by the Supreme Leader and directed by senior leadership of the Iranian government, targeting civilian populations nationwide.
- Preliminary estimates indicate more than 36,500 civilian deaths—primarily on January 8–9, 2026—including at least 200 children under 18 years of age.<sup>2</sup> Killings were reported in all 31 provinces, overwhelming morgues and forensic facilities, including the Kahrizak Forensic Medical Center in Tehran.<sup>3</sup> These figures remain provisional due to ongoing restrictions on access to evidence and witnesses within the country and require further verification, which is currently being conducted by multiple human rights organizations, including the IHRDC.
- Thousands of individuals—including minors—were arbitrarily arrested and are held incommunicado, without access to legal counsel or medical care; the whereabouts and conditions of many remain unknown.
- Security forces deployed military-grade weapons—including heavy machine guns, Kalashnikov rifles, sniper systems, and pellet shotguns. These weapons, alongside tear gas and impact munitions, were reportedly used to deliberately target vital organs, resulting in fatal or life-altering injuries.
- Snipers, surveillance drones, and coordinated targeting tactics were systematically used to identify and attack civilians, evidencing premeditated strategies to maximize casualties.
- Heavily armed Iraqi Shi'a militias, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (*Hashd al-Shaabi*), were reportedly deployed to assist the IRI forces, underscoring the organized and transnational nature of the repression.
- Hospitals were repeatedly raided, injured protesters abducted, and medical personnel threatened or assaulted, denying access to life-saving care and violating medical neutrality and Iran's legal obligations.
- Injured individuals were forcibly removed from hospitals while still alive, often with ongoing medical devices such as ECG leads, intubation tubes, or blood pressure cuffs visible, and left to die—most frequently from gunshot wounds to the head. Forensic evidence confirms gross deviations from medical and legal protocols.
- Families of killed individuals are subjected to intimidation and arrested and deceased protesters falsely portrayed as foreign agents or regime supporters, concealing atrocities.

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<sup>2</sup> *Over 36,500 killed in Iran's deadliest massacre, documents reveal*, IRAN INT. (Jan. 25, 2026), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202601255198>. See also *The Coordinating Council of Cultural Workers' Associations reported the killing of 200 students in the recent protests*, IRAN INT. (Feb. 8, 2026), available at <https://www.iranintl.com/202602086236>.

<sup>3</sup> *Iran's killing of protesters reached level rarely seen, emergent count shows*, WASHINGTON POST (Feb. 3, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/02/03/iran-protests-deaths-crackdown/>.

- The IRI imposed a near-total internet shutdown, disrupted communications, confiscated satellite equipment, and interfered with Starlink services in an effort to conceal atrocities.
- Detainees are reportedly held in overcrowded prisons or unofficial facilities nationwide, subjected to mistreatment, and systematically denied access to legal counsel and adequate medical care. Those not formally registered in official detention systems face particularly acute risks. Released detainees have reportedly been required to pay exorbitant bail amounts or additional unspecified sums as a condition of release.
- Thousands of detained protesters are being tried rapidly, often through online proceedings, with minimal procedural safeguards and without effective legal representation. Independent attorneys are largely barred, and government-approved lawyers frequently lack access to case files or meaningful participation. Security forces control case information, and systemic judicial corruption undermines fairness and accountability. Attorneys face harassment, arbitrary detention, and threats, while professional associations have reportedly failed to provide adequate support.
- Some detainees have reportedly suffered serious injuries or torture, and families are pressured to remain silent and conform to official narratives. Conflicting information regarding the fate of certain individuals has been circulated, with authorities reportedly denying or obscuring details concerning arrests, trials, and deaths. While independent verification is limited, these accounts are consistent with longstanding, documented patterns of systemic mistreatment, extrajudicial killing, and coercion of detainees and their families.

### III. Patterns of Violence

Reports describe attacks on students and school environments, including the violent intervention of security forces in educational settings to suppress peaceful student assemblies and the expression of political views.<sup>4</sup> Such actions constitute violations of children’s rights to education and to freely express their views, as protected under Articles 12 and 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Education Commission publicly acknowledged that one-third of those detained in connection with the protests are under 20 years of age and are students, underscoring the significant impact of the crackdown on young people.<sup>5</sup> Additional reports confirm that children were among the thousands arbitrarily detained during the crackdown. In some documented cases, minors were held alongside adults or in undisclosed facilities, raising serious concerns regarding unlawful deprivation of liberty and exposure to harsh conditions without due process.

Amnesty International has further reported that two children are among 30 individuals arrested during the January protests who face the risk of execution. In a public statement, the

<sup>4</sup> Danyal Babayani, *January 2026 Protests: Slain Students and Empty School Desks*, PERSIAN DEUTSCHE WELLE (Feb. 12, 2026), [اعتراضات دی‌ماه ۱۴۰۴؛ دانش‌آموزان کشته‌شده و نیمکت‌های خالی](#).

<sup>5</sup> *Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Education Commission: One-third of those detained are under 20 years of age and are students*, IRAN INT. (Feb. 19, 2026), <https://www.iranintl.com/202602196201>.

organization confirmed that these two 17-year-old children are currently being held in a juvenile correction and rehabilitation center.<sup>6</sup>

Civil society documentation, including petitions and public statements issued by *Daadkhast* and educational workers' associations in Iran—both affiliated with teachers—indicates a systematic pattern of violence directed against children and adolescents during the January 2026 nationwide protests.<sup>7</sup> These sources characterize the deaths, injuries, arbitrary arrests, and disruption of education experienced by children as direct consequences of the state's heavy-handed response. They further emphasize that the mounting toll on children reflects a deliberate suppression strategy targeting core elements of childhood well-being, including life, safety, education, and physical and psychological integrity.

Statements by educators' associations describe numerous child victims of lethal force, portraying empty school desks ("*nimkat-ha-ye khali*") as silent witnesses to lost lives, interrupted education, and fractured futures. These accounts identify child casualties by name and age—including children as young as 12, 13, and 15—in Tehran and other cities, demonstrating the breadth of the impact across provinces and age groups. Such testimonies indicate that the deaths and injuries of children were not incidental but formed part of a pattern of state-sanctioned violence depriving children of their fundamental right to life and security.

The overall evidence demonstrates a systematic pattern of violence against children, including killings, beatings, arbitrary detention, disruption of education, and psychological trauma. Documented practices—such as deaths resulting from live ammunition, routine arrests of minors, obstruction of educational activities, and exposure to violence in public and institutional settings—are consistent with findings regarding unlawful use of force and mass detentions.

#### **IV. Legal Analysis**

The IRI is legally bound by the CRC, to which it is a State Party, in addition to its obligations under customary international law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The violent suppression of the January 2026 protests constitutes serious violations of children's rights under the CRC. Over 200 children were reportedly killed, with many more injured, arbitrarily detained, or subjected to inhumane treatment. These actions breach the child-specific protections enshrined in the CRC, including the right to life, survival, and development (Article 6); freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (Article 37(a)); protection from arbitrary detention (Article 37(b)); the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24); and the principle that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3). The coordinated use of lethal force, targeting of injured children, and denial of urgent medical care constitute grave violations of these obligations.

Evidence indicates that these acts were part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population, meeting the threshold for crimes against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. State authorities—including the IRGC, police, Basij units, and allied militias—engaged in murder (Article 7(1)(a)), persecution on

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<sup>6</sup> *Amnesty International: Two children are among 30 protesters at risk of execution in Iran*, BBC PERSIAN (Feb. 20, 2026), <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cde4d2xe8jxo>.

<sup>7</sup> Official Daadkhast, INSTAGRAM, <https://www.instagram.com/officialdaadkhast/> (last visited Feb. 23, 2026). See also Kashowra, INSTAGRAM, <https://www.instagram.com/kashowra/> (last visited Feb. 23, 2026).

political grounds (Article 7(1)(h)), enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and other inhumane acts. The scale, repetition, and organization of these violations, combined with historical impunity and the absence of genuine domestic accountability, demonstrate a deliberate state policy that gravely endangers children.

The January 2026 events underscore the urgent need for Iran to fulfil its CRC obligations by adopting all appropriate legislative, administrative, and judicial measures to protect children from violence, ensure access to medical care, and hold perpetrators accountable (Articles 4, 19, and 39). The documented violations illustrate not only systemic disregard for children's rights but also the heightened vulnerability of children in the context of political repression.

## **V. Obligations of the International Community**

The Committee is called upon to take all necessary measures to address the systematic repression of the January 2026 protests in Iran. Documented acts—including mass killings, targeted use of lethal force, extrajudicial killing of the wounded, attacks on hospitals, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, coercion of families, and state-directed misinformation—meet the threshold for crimes against humanity under international law. Children have been among the primary victims, suffering death, injury, arbitrary detention, and psychological trauma.

Existing United Nations mechanisms, including the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, provide critical means to investigate, document, and address these violations. The Committee is urged to advocate for these mandates to be strengthened, fully supported, and adequately resourced, ensuring they have the authority, access, and protections necessary to conduct comprehensive investigations, preserve critical evidence, and report publicly on violations affecting children and other vulnerable populations. These mechanisms are essential for maintaining international scrutiny, deterring further abuses, and laying the foundation for accountability and justice.

In the absence of effective domestic accountability, the Committee and other relevant United Nations bodies have a central role in promoting protection and justice for children and other affected populations in Iran. Prompt, coordinated, and decisive international action is essential to uphold the Convention on the Rights of the Child, safeguard children and civilians, and prevent impunity from enabling further atrocities.