

end of the year, the government had yet to pass specific legislation prohibiting female genital mutilation.

Government Regulation No. 61/2014 on Reproductive Health, an implementing regulation to the 2009 Health Law, was issued in July 2014, restricting to 40 days the time period for rape survivors to access legal abortion. It was feared that this shortened timeframe would prevent many rape survivors from being able to access safe legal abortion.

DEATH PENALTY

No executions were reported. At least two death sentences were handed down during the year and at least 140 people remained under sentence of death.

-
1. Indonesia: Setting the agenda - human rights priorities for the new government (ASA 21/011/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/011/2014/en
 2. Prosecuting beliefs: Indonesia's blasphemy laws (ASA 21/018/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA21/018/2014/en

IRAN

Islamic Republic of Iran

Head of state: **Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei**
(Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran)

Head of government: **Hassan Rouhani (President)**

The authorities restricted freedoms of expression, association and assembly, arresting, detaining and prosecuting in unfair trials minority and women's rights activists, journalists, human rights defenders and others who voiced dissent. Torture and other ill-treatment remained prevalent and were committed with impunity. Women and ethnic and religious minorities faced pervasive discrimination in law and practice. Flogging and amputation sentences were reportedly carried out, some

in public. Executions continued at a high rate; juvenile offenders were among those executed. Judges continued to impose sentences of execution by stoning, although none were reported to have been carried out.

BACKGROUND

The June 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani as President raised hopes that his administration would introduce much needed human rights reforms, but little had been achieved by the end of 2014. Attempts by the administration to relax official controls on academic freedom, for example, prompted a backlash from conservatives within parliament.

Negotiations continued between Iran and the USA and other states amid persistent tensions over Iran's nuclear development programme and the impact on Iran of international financial and other sanctions. In November 2013, an interim agreement had brought Iran some relief from these sanctions in return for concessions on nuclear enrichment.

A Charter of Citizens' Rights proposed by the presidency and opened for consultation in 2013 remained in draft form throughout 2014. It failed to afford adequate protection of human rights, in particular the rights to life, non-discrimination, and protection from torture.

The UN Human Rights Council renewed the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran in March but the Iranian authorities continued to block visits to Iran by him or other UN Human Rights Council experts.

In October, the UN Human Rights Council considered Iran's human rights record under the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. The Council noted Iran's dire human rights situation and the authorities' failure to implement the recommendations they had accepted following the 2010 UPR. Iran withheld its position on all the recommendations made until the next

session of the UN Human Rights Council in March 2015.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The authorities maintained curbs on freedom of expression and the media, including by jamming foreign satellite broadcasting and closing media outlets. Authorities retained the mandatory dress code for women and the criminalization of dress code violations under the Islamic Penal Code. Opposition figures, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karoubi and Zahra Rahnavard remained under house arrest without charge or trial, despite their deteriorating health.¹ Scores of prisoners of conscience were serving prison terms for peacefully exercising their human rights. Among them were government critics, journalists, lawyers, trade unionists, student activists, and minority and women's rights activists.

The authorities continued to target journalists, who faced arrest, detention, imprisonment and flogging for critical reporting of the authorities.² In August, two photographers who criticized in writing a book of photographs published by a government official in the city of Qazvin, northwest Iran, were sentenced to floggings.

Online activists also faced prosecution. In May, a Revolutionary Court in Tehran convicted eight people on charges including "insulting religious sanctities" and "insulting the authorities" for posts on the website Facebook, and sentenced them to prison terms of between seven and 20 years.

Although the Supreme Leader, President Rouhani and other senior officials all used social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to communicate, the authorities continued to filter such websites. In September, a senior judiciary official instructed the Minister of Communications and Information Technology to take measures within a month to "block and effectively control the content" of social media websites after the circulation of jokes deemed offensive

to the former Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. The authorities said they had arrested 11 people in relation to the jokes.

In October, authorities in the cities of Tehran and Esfahan arrested protesters who were demanding an end to violence against women following a series of acid attacks against women in Esfahan. One of those arrested remained in detention at the end of the year. At least four journalists were also arrested in connection with their coverage of the acid attacks.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment, particularly during pre-trial detention, remained common, facilitated by routine denial of access to lawyers and the virtual impunity of perpetrators. Methods reported included prolonged solitary confinement, confinement in uncomfortably small spaces, severe beatings, and threats against detainees' family members. The authorities generally failed to investigate allegations of torture and prosecute and punish those responsible.

The authorities systematically denied detainees and prisoners access to adequate medical care, including for injuries resulting from torture or health problems exacerbated by harsh prison conditions.

A revised Code of Criminal Procedure passed in April failed to address the inadequacy of national laws to afford detainees effective protection against torture and other ill-treatment. It denied detainees access to lawyers for up to one week after arrest in cases concerning national security and some other offences, and provided no clear and comprehensive definition of torture conforming to international law.

State security and intelligence agencies operated their own detention facilities outside the control of the State Prison Organization, in breach of national law. Torture and other ill-treatment was common in these facilities. In some cases, the authorities subjected death row prisoners to enforced disappearance

by moving them to such facilities prior to execution.

Sentences of flogging and amputations continued to be imposed for a wide range of offences, including alcohol consumption, eating in public during Ramadan, and theft. These sentences were increasingly implemented in public.

In April, security officials assaulted prisoners held in Section 350 of Tehran's Evin Prison during a search of their cells, beating and injuring many of them. The authorities reportedly failed to investigate the incident or prosecute and punish the perpetrators.³ In August, authorities reportedly used excessive force against inmates of Ghezel Hesar Prison in the city of Karaj who protested against the transfer of 14 death row prisoners to solitary confinement prior to execution.

UNFAIR TRIALS

The judiciary continued to lack independence and remained subject to interference by the security authorities. Trials, particularly those before Revolutionary Courts, were largely unfair.

The new Code of Criminal Procedure enhanced detainees' access to lawyers but did not guarantee access from the time of arrest, required to help safeguard detainees against torture. The Code allowed prosecutors to prevent lawyers accessing some or all of the case documents against their clients if they determine that disclosure would impede "discovery of the truth", and in cases relating to national or external security, hindering the right to adequately prepare a defence. In August, Parliament's Judicial and Legal Commission submitted a bill proposing postponement of the Code's planned entry into force in October, due to the "existence of serious problems and barriers for [its] implementation". Additionally, the bill, in a regressive move, proposed amendments to 19 articles, which largely aimed to reverse the improvements made in the new Code including with regard to access to lawyers.

Courts continued to convict defendants in the absence of defence lawyers or on the basis of "confessions" or other evidence obtained through torture or other ill-treatment. In some cases, the authorities broadcast detainees' "confessions" on television before trial, breaching the presumption of innocence.

In September, the cabinet passed a Bill of Attorneyship, drafted by the judiciary, and submitted it to Parliament for approval. The draft bill discriminated against non-Muslims by disqualifying them from membership of the Board of Directors of the Iranian Bar Association, and threatened the independence of the Association.

DISCRIMINATION - ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

President Rouhani's appointment of a special adviser on ethnic and religious minorities did not result in a reduction in the pervasive discrimination against Iran's ethnic minority communities, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijanis, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen, or against religious minorities, including Ahl-e Haq, Baha'is, Christian converts, Sufis and Sunni Muslims.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities affected their access to basic services such as housing, water and sanitation, employment and education. Ethnic minorities were not permitted to use their minority language as a medium of instruction in education and were denied adequate opportunities to learn it.

Members of ethnic minority groups also faced a high risk of prosecution on vague charges such as "enmity against God" and "corruption on earth", which could carry the death penalty. The authorities secretly executed at least eight Ahwazi Arabs after they were convicted on charges that included "enmity against God" after grossly unfair trials, and refused to hand over their bodies to their families. By October, the authorities held at least 33 Sunni men, mostly members of the Kurdish minority, on death row on charges of "gathering and colluding against national

security”, “spreading propaganda against the system”, “membership of Salafist groups”, “corruption on Earth” and “enmity against God”. Converts from Shi’a to Sunni Islam faced increased persecution.⁴

In December, the authorities used threats of immediate execution and other punitive measures against 24 Kurdish prisoners who were on hunger strike in protest against conditions in Ward 12 of Oroumieh Central Prison, West Azerbaijan Province, where they and other political prisoners were held.⁵

The authorities subjected Baha’is to further persecution by closing down their businesses and destroying their cemeteries. Dozens of Baha’is remained in prison.

In September, the authorities arrested over 800 Gonabadi Dervishes at a peaceful protest held in Tehran in solidarity with nine imprisoned Gonabadi Dervishes who were on hunger strike. The hunger strikers had demanded that the authorities respect the civil rights of Gonabadi Dervishes and treat them as equal members of society.⁶

Dissident Shi’a clerics and others who expressed alternatives to the official interpretation of Shi’a Islam, as well as atheists, remained at risk of persecution, including arrest, imprisonment and possible execution.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Women remained subject to widespread and systematic discrimination in law and practice. Personal status laws giving women subordinate status to men in matters such as marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance remained in force.

Two population-related draft bills under parliamentary consideration threatened to reduce women’s access to sexual and reproductive health services, thereby affecting their rights to life, privacy, gender equality and the freedom to decide the number and spacing of their children. One draft bill aimed to prevent surgical procedures aimed at permanently preventing pregnancies by imposing disciplinary measures on

health professionals who conducted such procedures. The other bill sought to reduce divorces and remove family disputes from judicial decision-making, hence prioritizing preservation of families over addressing domestic violence. Neither law had been enacted by the end of the year. A proposed law to afford women protection against violence made no progress and the authorities failed to take steps to address violence against women and girls, including early and forced marriages, marital rape and domestic violence.

Women also faced restrictions on employment. Official statistics from September showed that the number of women in employment had fallen by 100,000 annually over the previous eight years. In August, the Head of the Public Buildings Office of the Police said that no women should be employed in coffee shops or traditional Iranian restaurants except in their kitchens, out of public view. In July, the Tehran Municipality reportedly prohibited its managers from recruiting women to secretarial and other administrative posts. Official efforts to create gender-segregated workplaces intensified.

Authorities had also banned women musicians from appearing on stage in 13 of Iran’s 31 provinces by the end of the year. In June, security authorities arrested women who participated in a peaceful protest outside Azadi Stadium, a Tehran sports venue, to demand equal access by women to sport stadiums.⁷

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

All sexual conduct between unmarried individuals remained criminalized.

The authorities continued to persecute individuals on account of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. The revised Islamic Penal Code maintained provisions criminalizing all consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. The Code made such

conduct subject to punishments ranging from 100 lashes to the death penalty.

Iranian authorities blocked and banned publication of any material discussing homosexuality or sexual conduct outside heterosexual marriages, using the Cyber Crimes Law's provisions on "crimes against chastity" and "sexual perversion".

Individuals who did not conform to stereotypical norms of femininity and masculinity continued to face discrimination and violence. Transgender individuals were denied legal gender recognition and were denied their rights, including to education and employment, unless they underwent gender reassignment surgeries. In February, Iran's official Football Federation barred seven women footballers from competition on grounds of their "gender ambiguity".

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The authorities continued to restrict the right to education, maintaining the exclusion of hundreds of students from Iran's universities because of their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression or other human rights, and systematically denying Baha'is access to higher education. Dozens of other students and academics, including some associated with the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education suppressed by the government in 2011, remained in prison. Efforts by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology to allow some banned students and academic staff to return to universities did not result in concrete measures to end arbitrary exclusions of students from higher education.⁸ Such attempts were opposed by conservatives within Parliament.

The gender quota system used by the authorities to reverse the trend towards greater participation by women in higher education remained in place, but saw some relaxation in the 2013-2014 academic year. Official policies aimed at keeping women at home pursuing "traditional" roles as wives and mothers continued.

DEATH PENALTY

Iran retained the death penalty for a wide range of offences, including vaguely defined crimes such as "enmity against God", and 2014 saw the authorities maintain a high rate of execution. Some executions were carried out in public.

Under the revised Islamic Penal Code, courts continued to impose death sentences for offences that did not meet the threshold of "most serious crimes" under international law, and others such as "insulting the Prophet of Islam", that should not be considered crimes.⁹

In many cases, courts imposed death sentences after proceedings that failed to respect international fair trial standards, including by accepting as evidence "confessions" elicited under torture or other ill-treatment. Detainees were frequently denied access to lawyers during pre-trial investigations.¹⁰

Scores of juvenile offenders, including some sentenced in previous years for crimes committed under the age of 18, remained on death row, and others were executed. Courts sentenced further juvenile offenders to death.¹¹ The revised Islamic Penal Code allowed the execution of juvenile offenders for *qesas* (retribution-in-kind) and *hadoud* (offences carrying fixed penalties prescribed by Islamic law) unless it is determined that the offender did not understand the nature of the crime or its consequences, or the offender's mental capacity is in doubt. International law prohibits the death penalty for children under 18.

The revised Islamic Penal Code also retained the penalty of stoning to death for the offence of "adultery while married". At least one stoning sentence was reported to have been imposed in Ghaemshahr, Mazandaran province; no executions by stoning were reported.

-
1. Iran: Release opposition leaders under house arrest three years on (MDE 13/009/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/009/2014/en
 2. Jailed for being a journalist (MDE 13/044/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/044/2014/en Iran: Iranian-American detained for journalism (MDE 13/065/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/065/2014/en
 3. Justice is an alien word: Ill-treatment of political prisoners in Evin Prison (MDE 13/023/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/023/2014/en
 4. Iran: No progress on human rights: Amnesty International Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, October-November 2014 (MDE 13/034/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/034/2014/en
 5. Iran: Alleged juvenile offender among 10 hunger strikers threatened with immediate execution (News story)
www.amnesty.org/en/news/iran-alleged-juvenile-offender-among-10-hunger-strikers-threatened-immediate-execution-2014-12-
 6. Iran: Hunger striking Derwishes critically ill (MDE 13/051/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/051/2014/en
 7. Iran: Jailed for women's right to watch sports (MDE 13/048/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/048/2014/en
 8. Silenced, expelled, imprisoned: Repression of students and academics in Iran (015/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/015/2014/en
 9. Iran: Facing death for "insulting the Prophet": Rouhollah Tavana (MDE 13/012/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/012/2014/en Iran: Death sentence for "insulting the Prophet": Soheil Arabi (MDE 13/064/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/064/2014/en
 10. Execution of young woman a bloody stain on Iran's human rights record
www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/execution-young-woman-bloody-stain-iran-s-human-rights-record-2014-10-25
 11. Iran: Juvenile offender at risk of execution in Iran: Rasoul Holoumi (MDE 13/040/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/040/2014/en; Iran: Juvenile offender nearing execution (MDE 13/0037/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/037/2014/en; Iran: Kurdish juvenile offender facing execution: Saman Naseem (MDE 13/049/2014)
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/049/2014/en

IRAQ

Republic of Iraq

Head of state: **Fuad Masum (replaced Jalal Talabani in July)**

Head of government: **Haider al-Abadi (replaced Nuri al-Maliki in September)**

There was a marked deterioration in human rights as armed conflict intensified between government security forces and fighters of the Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) armed group, which gained control of large parts of central and northern Iraq. IS fighters committed widespread war crimes, including ethnic cleansing of religious and ethnic minorities through a campaign of mass killings of men and abduction and sexual and other abuse of women and girls. Government forces carried out indiscriminate bombing and shelling in IS-controlled areas, and government-backed Shi'a militias abducted and executed scores of Sunni men in areas under government control. The conflict caused the deaths of some 10,000 civilians between January and October, forcibly displaced almost 2 million people and created a humanitarian crisis. This was exacerbated by the continuing influx of thousands of refugees from Syria, mostly to Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region. The government continued to hold thousands of detainees without charge or trial, many of them in secret detention with no access to the outside world. Torture and other ill-treatment in detention remained rife, and many trials were unfair. Courts passed many death sentences, mostly on terrorism charges; more than 1,000 prisoners were on death row, and executions continued at a high rate.

BACKGROUND

Armed conflict flared in January between government security forces and the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) armed