

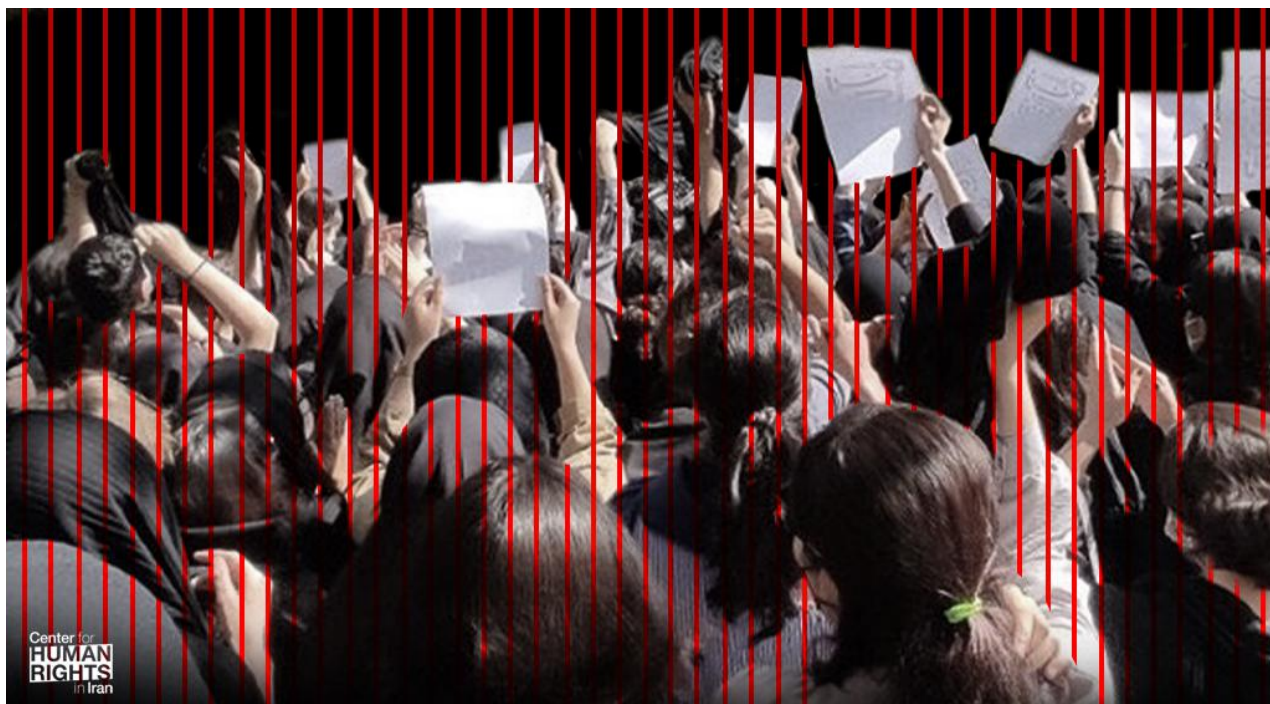
Related Posts

 iranhumanrights.org/2023/06/students-arrested-and-banished-professors-fired-in-latest-state-crackdown-in-iran/

June 1, 2023

June 1, 2023

Students Arrested and Banished, Professors Fired in Latest State Crackdown in Iran



University Officials Are Committing Major Rights Violations, Say Students

At Least 720 Students Arrested Since Protests Began in September 2022

June 1, 2023 – University students and professors in Iran are facing arrests, banishments and expulsions in a renewed state crackdown on their right to peacefully criticize state policies, according to research conducted by the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

University disciplinary committees at dozens of universities across the country are spearheading the crackdown, and students and professors have described to CHRI individual officials at the universities who have been particularly egregious rights violators and enforcers of the state’s crackdown. Those officials should be investigated by international human rights mechanisms such as the UN Human Rights Council’s Fact-Finding Mission on Iran.

“University officials and committees are operating as extensions of the Islamic Republic’s system of repression to crush the peaceful activism on campuses that has surged ever since the protests of the ‘Woman Life Freedom’ movement,” said CHRI Executive Director Hadi Ghaemi.

CHRI has identified over 720 students by name who have been arbitrarily arrested by state security forces since major protests erupted across Iran in September 2022 in response to the death in state custody of 22-year-old Jina Mahsa Amini shortly after she was arrested for her hijab. The actual number of student arrests is likely much higher.

“Governments worldwide should exert greatly increased diplomatic pressure on Iran to uphold its human rights obligations and allow protests, while university students and organizations across the world should raise their voices in support of Iranian students,” Ghaemi said.

Many students were released after being held for months without access to a lawyer, yet now are facing suspensions and “banishment,” a form of punishment traditionally meted out by Iranian courts where a person is sent to a remote village or city far from their home for an extended period of time to isolate them from their communities. The banishment of students by university committees is a new trend in the state-led bid to crush dissent in Iran.

Additionally, at least 60 professors have been expelled, suspended, forced into retirement, or had their salaries terminated for allegedly expressing support for the protests.

Freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly are fundamental human rights protected by numerous international human rights instruments, including the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR), to which Iran is a party.

“From hanging protesters and shooting them in the streets, to suspending university students and firing professors, Iranian authorities are stopping at nothing to vengefully punish young people for peacefully raising their voices against state repression,” Ghaemi added.

Two University Officials Lead Crackdown at Tehran’s University of Art

A crackdown beginning in November 2022 on peaceful protests at the Art University in the capital of Tehran saw university staff being fired for allegedly expressing support for students’ right to protest, and female students being banned from campus for allegedly refusing to abide by the state’s compulsory hijab laws. Other students were given zero grades on their exams to pressure them to stop protesting.

Two men—[Mohammad Reza Hosanaee](#), the university’s chancellor and [Hamzeh Borzouie](#), the head of university security—have been identified as leading the crackdown, according to sources who spoke to CHRI on the condition of anonymity to protect their security.

Mohammad Reza Hosanaee, who has [studied in Russia](#), was appointed as acting chancellor at the Art University in the winter of 2022. He is known for personally harassing female students on campus for their hijabs.

Hosanaee is also notorious among students and staff for enforcing gender segregation on campus, including by installing metal sheets at the entrance gate of the College of Applied Arts to prevent female and male students and staff from standing beside or even seeing each other.

A student at the university told CHRI another official is also responsible for violating students' rights to freedom of expression and assembly: the head of security, Hamzeh, whose influence in the suppression on campus is even greater than the university chancellor himself.

The allegations against Hosanaee and Borzouie have been corroborated by other sources, including in a letter by university students urging the country's minister of science to hold Hosanaee and Borzouie "accountable" for "illegal actions by security forces" at the university.

On November 7, 2022, a large number of Art University film and theater students received a zero grade in all their courses for boycotting classes to protest state repression, and were placed under academic probation for a semester. The university's chancellor, Mohammad Reza Hosanaee, publicly defended the decision and warned of future sanctions against students and academic staff.

"Based on the university chancellor's order, all teaching staff who supported the student protests on social media, or signed statements in solidarity, had their contracts terminated," an employee of the Art University told CHRI.

Many members of the academic staff decided to remain silent after being summoned to the disciplinary committee to avoid identifying their students, while some were fired for standing up for them.

"In the meantime, Dr. Behshid Hosseini, the dean of the College of Architecture, who met with Hosanaee to resolve student issues, was harshly treated and expelled from the university," said the university staff member.

The source added that when Dr. Hosseini [a female professor] defended the rights of the students to protest, and asked Hosanaee to hear them out, he replied, "I'm secretly filming unveiled students until the situation dies down and then I will send every one of them to the disciplinary committee."

Dr. Hosseini was fired soon after.

In addition, the head of the university's College of Visual Arts, Mohammad Reza Motarjemzadeh, was dismissed in February for supporting students' right to protests.

"About a month and a half ago, they asked the professors to submit their class attendance records; this was a very unusual request that violated the privacy of the professors," a former lecturer at Arts University told CHRI. "Despite my sympathy for the

student protests, I went to the classroom and did not teach any specific lesson. I did not record absences for anyone and handed in the list.”

The lecturer added, “A few days ago, I was informed that I and several others have been suspended from teaching and ordered to go to the disciplinary committee for an interview to reevaluate our qualifications. I know that the issue of controlling the veil and suppressing students is going to be raised again, and for this reason, I have resigned from teaching at the university.”

More recently, on May 30, the Art University’s security office banned 40 female students from entering the campus for either not wearing a hijab or refusing to wear one tightly.

UN human rights experts have described the Islamic Republic of Iran’s “criminalization of refusal to wear a hijab” as a “violation of the right to freedom of expression.” In addition, any denial of services based on hijab compliance is a major violation of basic economic and social rights.

Students at Tabriz Medical Sciences University Slapped with Suspensions, Banishment

The Tabriz Medical Sciences University is among dozens of universities that have seen so-called disciplinary committees conducting sham hearings wherein students and professors are treated as guilty with no chance of proving themselves innocent.

According to Section B, Article 16, of the university disciplinary committees’ executive regulations, issued in November 2022, committee punishments can include “change of student’s place of study,” though the recent banishments were issued unlawfully and appear to be the first recorded instances of university committees forcing students out of their provinces.

According to information received by CHRI, the students and professors were denied the ability to defend themselves in the brief hearings.

“The disciplinary committee meetings at the university were like [kangaroo] courts,” a student at the Tabriz Medical Sciences University told CHRI. “The students weren’t given the chance to defend themselves at all.”

“Each meeting lasted less than 15 minutes and was held for all the students in a single day,” added the student who asked for anonymity to protect their security against state reprisals for speaking publicly on the issue.

The student was referring to a crackdown that was waged on student activism at the height of chemical attacks targeting school girls throughout Iran, wherein students at the Tabriz Medical Sciences University staged a peaceful rally on March 7 protesting the Islamic Republic’s refusal to ensure the security of the schools, following which nearly 40 students were summoned to the university’s disciplinary committee.

On April 9, the committee issued rulings against 16 students: six were suspended for two semesters and 10 others for one semester. On May 21, Shargh newspaper reported that eight Tabriz Medical Sciences University students, in addition to being suspended, were also banished to other cities. Ultimately, 44 students at the university were banned from studying for one or more semesters, of which 33 took effect immediately and 11 other verdicts have been suspended.

CHRI's source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, added that the university's Media Board of Supervisors also banned an online broadcast produced by Tabriz medical students, the "Radical Page," for six months.

"I have been sentenced to two semesters of academic suspension and banishment to Oroumiyeh for participating in the gathering on March 7, 2023, which was in protest against widespread school poisoning!" tweeted medical student Elaheh Ashrafpour on May 22.

Protests Ongoing Despite Severe Punishments

The state's increasing repression has nevertheless so far failed to stem protests on other campuses in Iran.

There were protests at several universities across the country in late May against the suspensions of fellow students as well as the executions of street protesters.

On May 22, students from Tehran University's College of Psychology and Educational Sciences held a sit-in to protest the one-semester suspension by the university's Disciplinary Review Council of fellow student Ali Hajian.

Then on May 23, students at the all-female Shariati University in Tehran held a protest against state security forces beating one of their classmates because she was not wearing the hijab. The students chanted, "I'll beat anyone who beats my sister."

A day later, on May 24, students from the Faculty of Chemistry at Sharif University in Tehran held a sit-in to protest the politically motivated executions of street protesters Saeid Yaghoubi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Majid Kazemi. Student IDs were confiscated at this protest.

That day protests were also held at Jondishapour University in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, with students distributing photos of Yaghoubi, Mirhashemi and Kazemi, and posting them on the university's information boards. Below the photos, they wrote: "It's not a time for mourning, but a time for anger" and "The only way to salvation is to continue the path of revolution."

Students of Noshirvani University in Babol, Mazandaran province, and in many other universities, also wrote slogans on the campus walls urging other people to join the protests, including by quoting a statement by Navid Afkari, a wrestling champion who was

unjustly executed in 2020, saying that “Your silence means support for oppression and oppressors.”

This report was made possible from donations by readers like you. Help us continue our mission by making a tax-deductible donation.