



## Rights and freedom

# Iranian regime accused of raping and violating protesters as young as 12

**Amnesty International report details 'harrowing' testimonies of survivors at hands of security forces following nationwide protests**

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Iranian security forces used rape and sexual violence to torture, punish and inflict lasting physical and psychological damage on protesters as young as 12 during the country's [nationwide protests](#) last year, a report says.

The [report by Amnesty International](#) is based on the testimonies of 12 women, 26 men, one girl and six boys who survived rape or other forms of sexual violence. Six survivors of rape were subjected to gang rapes by up to 10 male state agents, according to Amnesty.

Protests spread across the country after the [death in custody](#) of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, in September 2022 following her detention for allegedly breaking the country's strict dress code.

Security officials have arrested more than 19,000 people, and at least 500 protesters have been killed. These included children, according to human rights groups that have

documented the torture and sexual abuse inflicted on those arrested.

Some of the victims interviewed by Amnesty said they were sexually assaulted at the time of arrest, in police vehicles while they were being taken to detention, and while in detention. The report also details the accounts of two men who were raped with batons or glass bottles.



📷 People running from police at a protest after Mahsa Amini died. Security officials have arrested more than 19,000 people, with at least 500 protesters killed. Photograph: Anadolu/Getty

In February 2023, a [young Iranian woman told the Guardian](#) she was blindfolded, stripped naked and penetrated by an object. She was later treated for a vaginal infection, and believed the object used to rape her was a glass bottle.

“He kept touching me everywhere and then took an object and inserted it inside my vagina. He kept penetrating me with the object while with the other hand he was rubbing all over my body. I froze and was still in pain from the punches I had received during interrogation. I lay there for I don’t know how long. He then left.”

The report revealed that the perpetrators of rape and sexual violence included agents from the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), the volunteer paramilitary Basij force, which operates under the IRGC, and the Ministry of Intelligence, as well as branches of the police including the Public Security police, the police investigation unit, and special forces.

Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International’s secretary general, said: “The harrowing testimonies we collected point to a wider pattern in the use of sexual violence as a key weapon in the Iranian authorities’ armoury of repression.”

Mahdi Yaghoubi, 31, was arrested in November 2022 during protests in Tehran and told the Guardian how the security forces sexually assaulted him. “They touched and squeezed my genital parts to put me under pressure to confess,” he said.

“They didn’t do that to embarrass me, or rape me. They did that as a method of painful torture. They wanted me to suffer and feel the pain.

He added: “They used words like *begheyrat* [a man with no self-respect] to humiliate us for not protecting the honour of our sisters. All the men arrested were called this to provoke us and humiliate us.”

Yaghoubi managed to flee from Iran on the back of a lorry along with his sister, Mina, 32, who was also violently tortured in detention.

Several Iranian protesters who fled to Turkey during the protests were secretly treated for the trauma of sexual violence while in detention by a group of therapists.

One survivor, who still lives in Iran, told the Guardian. “I still see flashes of the security agents violently touching my breasts with the intention of hurting me. I may not be bruised any more, but I feel physically ill each time I think about the incident.”

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Hello to you, dear reader from Italy!

When the former Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha delivered his New Year message back in 1967, he pulled the cord marked “truth bomb”. “This year will be harder than last year,” he declared. “It will, however, be easier than next year.” I mean ... on the one hand: thanks for not sugar-coating it, Enver. On the other: way to kill the party buzz, you monster!

I don’t want to murder the atmosphere (or indeed any dissidents) by reminding you of the news year you’ve just lived through - or by warning you of the news year you’re about to live through. It’s not big, it’s not clever, and it’s sure as heck not seasonal.

But I will say, pointedly, that our reporting feels particularly necessary in dark times. [If you can, please help support the Guardian on a monthly basis from just €2, so as to keep it open for everyone.](#) I can’t tell you how much it would be appreciated. A free press is needed now as much as it has ever been - and on some days, more than it has ever been.

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With that, it simply remains is for me to wish you a very happy holidays, and a splendid new year. Goodness knows you’ve earned it.

**Marina Hyde**



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