

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

21 August 2023 Index number MDE 13/7084/2023

# IRAN: HARASSMENT OF FAMILIES OF VICTIMS UNLAWFULLY KILLED DURING PROTESTS MUST END

The Iranian authorities are waging a ruthless campaign of harassment and intimidation against the families of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed by security forces during the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising to force them into staying silent ahead of the one-year anniversary of the nationwide protests and the killings of their loved ones.

Almost a year since the start of the popular uprising that engulfed the country following the death in custody of Mahsa/Zhina Amini in September 2022, the authorities have refused to hold anyone to account for the unlawful killings of hundreds of men, women and children by security and intelligence forces during their deadly crackdown on nationwide protests between September and December 2022. Instead, they have continued to conceal the truth about the real death toll; repeatedly denied responsibility for the killings; and refused to conduct thorough, independent and impartial criminal investigations to identify those responsible for ordering, planning and carrying out the killings.

In parallel, the authorities have orchestrated a cruel campaign of harassment and intimidation against victims’ families for seeking truth and justice, compounding their anguish and suffering in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. The authorities have subjected bereaved relatives to a catalogue of human rights violations including beatings, arbitrary arrest and detention, unjust prosecutions, and unlawful surveillance. The authorities have also denied the families the right to hold peaceful gatherings at their loved ones’ gravesites, have damaged and desecrated the graves of those unlawfully killed, and threatened to exhume victims and rebury them in unidentified locations. These violations are being perpetrated as part of a wider campaign of harassment against victims’ families that started in the immediate aftermath of the unlawful killings of their loved ones when authorities withheld victims’ bodies, threatened to bury victims in unidentified graves, and restricted funeral and commemoration ceremonies.

Victims’ families across the country are widely expected to be holding commemoration ceremonies for their loved ones on the one-year anniversaries of their deaths, amid fears that the Iranian authorities will respond with their usual tactics of brutal repression. Amnesty International calls on the Iranian authorities to respect the rights of families of victims and their supporters to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and to protect them against threats, harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and other reprisals.

Amnesty International also calls on the Iranian authorities to release family members of those unlawfully killed and other individuals detained for advocating for truth and justice, quash all convictions and sentences against them and others for peacefully exercising their human rights, and drop all charges against those facing reprisals for speaking out.

Given the systematic impunity rampant in Iran and no prospect of effective impartial investigations into the unlawful killing of hundreds of protesters and bystanders amid the unrelenting human rights violations against their families and supporters, Amnesty International calls on all states to exercise universal jurisdiction over Iranian officials, including those with command or superior responsibility, reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law committed during and in the aftermath of the uprising.

## METHODOLOGY

As part of its ongoing investigations into the lethal crackdown on nationwide protests between September and December 2022, Amnesty International has gathered scores of testimonies from primary sources across Iran in relation to the harassment of the families of victims who were unlawfully killed during protests.

This statement focuses on Amnesty International’s findings on the harassment and intimidation of victims’ families in the months after the killings took place, from the beginning of 2023 until August 2023. The organization will report its findings on violations that took place in the immediate aftermath of killings in forthcoming publications.

In this statement, Amnesty International has documented the cases of 33 victims' families who have been subjected to harassment and intimidation. They include families of 30 victims who were unlawfully killed during the protests; families of two victims who were arbitrarily executed in connection with the protests; and family of one victim who suffered torture and other ill-treatment while in custody and committed suicide upon her release from detention. The families affected are from 20 cities in 10 provinces – Alborz, Esfahan, Gilan, Khorasan-e Razavi, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Qazvin, Sistan and Baluchestan, Tehran, and West Azerbaijan. Amnesty International also gathered information about an incident that took place in June 2023 affecting dozens of other families in the provinces of Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan. The organization relied on information gathered from interviews with primary sources, as well as from statements made by victims' families on social media or in media interviews. Amnesty International believes that the number of families subjected to human rights violations is likely far higher given the unlawful killing of hundreds of individuals across the country and long-standing patterns of relentless harassment and intimidation against victims' families aimed at ensuring silence.

Amnesty International also reviewed photos of damaged or destroyed gravestones belonging to Mahsa/Zhina Amini and 20 other victims from 11 cities across the country. They include 11 men and six children who were unlawfully killed during protests; two men who were arbitrarily executed in connection with protests; and one woman who committed suicide following her release from detention during which she said she was repeatedly tortured. The images of these damaged graves are reproduced in the annex accompanying this document.

The organization also reviewed reports from independent human rights and media organizations based outside Iran.

## **PATTERNS OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST VICTIMS' FAMILIES**

Since the beginning of the popular uprising that erupted in September 2022, the Iranian authorities have covered up the real death toll of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed by security forces and consistently denied responsibility for the killings. Instead, they blamed deaths on "rioters" or claimed that some deaths resulted from suicide or accidents. In an attempt to obfuscate the truth, they also pressured relatives of those killed to appear in propaganda videos or to sign written statements propagating official narratives and publicly absolving authorities of responsibility in the deaths of their loved ones. Judicial authorities also dismissed complaints by victims' families without carrying out effective investigations.

In parallel, the authorities have subjected victims' families to increasing harassment and intimidation to instill fear among them and to silence their calls for truth and justice. In particular, victims' families have been subjected to harassment and intimidation for publicly condemning the killing of their loved ones by security forces, challenging official state narratives about their deaths, calling for accountability, holding memorials and other gatherings bringing together bereaved families, writing social media posts deemed critical of the authorities, and lodging official complaints about the killings of their loved ones.

The violations against victims' families include arbitrary arrest and detention; prosecution on vaguely worded national security charges, in some cases leading to prison and flogging sentences; summoning them for coercive interrogations by prosecutors or intelligence and security bodies; subjecting them to unlawful surveillance; threatening to kill or otherwise harm them and their surviving family members; denying them the right to hold peaceful gatherings; destroying or damaging the graves of their loved ones; and threatening to exhume victims' bodies and reburying them in unidentified locations.

The authorities have pressured many families who sought criminal investigations into the unlawful killing of their loved ones to accept "blood money" (*diyah*) from government funds pursuant to laws which provide for state-funded financial compensation in cases where the perpetrator may not be identified and apprehended. The authorities have threatened family members with reprisals if they refuse the "blood money" and instead continue to seek justice and accountability, and have indicated the futility of their efforts in achieving anything other than "blood money".

The authorities have also tried to cruelly bar victims' families from holding ceremonies at the gravesites of their loved ones, including on the occasion of their birthdays, and have subjected family members to unlawful surveillance, threats, summons and/or arbitrary detention ahead of planned events. Those families who have defiantly held gatherings have reported the heavy presence of security forces cracking down on ceremonies, subjecting people to physical surveillance by observing and taking pictures, violently beating and/or arresting family members and supporters.

Amnesty International has detailed below the cases of 22 victims' families from eight provinces across the country who have been subjected to abusive interrogations, arbitrary arrest and detention and/or unjust prosecution and sentencing in recent months. They include the relatives of **Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan**, **Abolfazl Adinezadeh**, **Aram Habibi**, **Artin Rahmani**, **Azad Hosseinpouri**, **Hamidreza Rouhi**, **Houman Abdollahi**, **Javad Heydari**, **Kamal Ahmadpour**, **Kian Piralak**, **Koumar Daroftadeh**, **Mahsa Mogooee**, **Majid Kazemi**, **Mehran Basir Tavana**, **Milad Saeedianjoo**, **Mohammad Amini**, **Reza Lotfi**, **Sarina Saedi**, **Shahou Bahmani**, **Shirin Alizadeh**, **Yahya Rahimi** and **Zanjar Aboubakri**. Of these cases, the authorities arbitrarily arrested one or several family members of at least 14 victims<sup>1</sup> in a violent manner between April and August 2023 and sentenced family members of at least four other victims<sup>2</sup> to imprisonment.

### ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN KURDISH-POPULATED PROVINCES

Amnesty International documented attacks on dozens of families from Iran's oppressed Kurdish minority in the Kurdish-populated provinces of Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, which according to the organization's ongoing investigations into the bloody crackdown on the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising, were disproportionately targeted by security forces using live ammunition and experienced particularly horrific levels of state-sanctioned lethal violence.<sup>3</sup>

Among those targeted is the family of 21-year-old **Houman Abdollahi**, who was shot with dozens of metal pellets and unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, on 7 December 2022. According to information obtained by Amnesty International from a primary source, the authorities have subjected his family to persistent harassment and intimidation because of their public advocacy for truth and justice. The source told Amnesty International that, in recent months, the authorities have raided the family's home in a violent manner during gatherings to commemorate his death, despite young children being present, and subjected family members in attendance to beatings and/or arrest. There was a heavy security presence during gatherings at his grave in a cemetery in Hassanabad and officials threatened relatives and supporters in attendance. The source added that the authorities have also tried to pressure and coerce the family to forgo efforts to seek justice and accountability and instead accept "blood money" (*diyah*) from government funds stating that it is not possible to identify and apprehend the perpetrator. The family have repeatedly refused, insisting on the identification and prosecution of the state agents responsible for Houman Abdollahi's killing. The family was eventually forced to abandon plans to lodge an official complaint following repeated threats by the authorities that they will be harmed if they continue their advocacy efforts.



*The father and mother of Houman Abdollahi at his gravesite ©Private*

<sup>1</sup> These cases concern the relatives of Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan, Abolfazl Adinezadeh, Artin Rahmani, Hamidreza Rouhi, Houman Abdollahi, Javad Heydari, Kamal Ahmadpour, Koumar Daroftadeh, Mahsa Mogooee, Majid Kazemi, Mehran Basir Tavana, Milad Saeedianjoo, Shirin Alizadeh, and Reza Lotfi.

<sup>2</sup> These cases concern the relatives of Aram Habibi, Mohammad Amini, Sarina Saedi and Shahou Bahmani.

<sup>3</sup> The Baluchi ethnic minority in Sistan and Baluchestan province was also disproportionately impacted by unlawful killings during the protests. Around 100 Baluchis were killed during and in the aftermath of protests in the province between September-December 2022. The deadliest day of the uprising took place in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan province, on 30 September 2022, when security forces unlawfully killed scores of Baluchi protesters, bystanders and worshippers during a violent crackdown after Friday prayers at the city's largest prayer site. Less information is currently available about the harassment of victims' families in Sistan and Baluchestan province.



The family of 16-year-old **Kourmar Daroftadeh**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan province, on 29 October 2022 and died the next day, have also faced harassment and intimidation. According to independent [media](#), on 16 August 2023, his mother and father, **Hajar Barzanji** and **Hassan Daroftadeh**, and four surviving siblings, **Jekaf Daroftadeh**, **Mardin Daroftadeh**, **Midia Daroftadeh**, and **Afsaneh Daroftadeh**, were arbitrarily arrested and detained for several hours and subjected to abusive interrogations.



*The picture on the left shows the father and mother of Koumar Daroftadeh at his gravesite, before his gravestone and headstone, seen in the picture on the right, were installed. ©Private*

The authorities have subjected to harassment the family of 32-year-old **Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Oshnavieh, West Azerbaijan province, in September 2022. On 9 July 2023, the authorities raided the home of his brother, **Soleiman Ghader Golvan**, in the middle of the night, and arbitrarily arrested him in a violent manner, according to a Kurdish human rights organization. The authorities shaved his beard as a form of humiliation and subjected him to beatings in detention until the next morning, when they took him to his brother's grave and then released him. He was left with severe injuries following his torture and had to get medical care in hospital.

In the months after the death of 21-year-old **Zaniar Aboubakri**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, on 27 October 2022, Ministry of Intelligence agents summoned his relatives for interrogation multiple times and warned them against holding memorial ceremonies. According to a primary source interviewed by Amnesty International, on one occasion, two intelligence agents who introduced themselves as "Abdi" and "Soleimani" threatened to arrest or even kill Zainar Aboubakri's sister. They also further threatened to exhume Zaniar Aboubakri's body and rebury him in a secret location if the family persists in speaking out.



*Relatives of Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan at his gravesite ©Private*





Mother and father of Zanibar Aboubakri at his gravesite ©Private

The family of **Azad Hosseinpouri**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, on 17 November 2022, have also faced harassment and intimidation. According to independent [media](#), on 13 July 2023, five members of his family were summoned by the authorities and interrogated by intelligence officials. They were released after several hours.

The authorities also punished the family of 25-year-old **Reza Lotfi**, whom security forces unlawfully killed on 19 September 2022 during a violent crackdown on protests in Dehgolan, Kurdistan province, for seeking truth and justice. According to reports from independent [human rights](#) and media organizations, on 17 April 2023, the authorities arrested his father **Kamal Lotfi**, and arbitrarily detained him in Kamyaran prison in the same province for nearly three months in reprisal for his public advocacy for truth and justice for his son. In the days following his son's death, Kamal Lotfi had released a video [statement](#), published on social media, firmly rejecting the authorities' narrative surrounding his son's death, and condemned a



Relatives of Azad Hosseinpouri at his gravesite ©Private

propaganda video broadcast on state media showing officials visiting the family in their home, stating that it was produced without their knowledge or consent. In prison, he went on hunger strike for several weeks in protest at his arbitrary detention. He was released on bail on 3 July 2023.

On 18 June 2023, the authorities also arbitrarily arrested **Abdollah Ahmadpour**, the brother of **Kamal Ahmadpour** who security forces unlawfully killed during a violent crackdown on protests Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, on 18 November 2022, according to [Kurdish](#) human rights organizations based outside Iran.



*The father of Reza Lotfi ©Private*



*The mother of Kamal Ahmadpour at his gravesite ©Private*

### **VIOLENT ARREST OF GROUP OF BEREAVED FAMILIES FROM KURDISTAN AND WEST AZERBAIJAN**

In an incident documented by Amnesty International, on 9 June 2023, security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained dozens of family members of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed during protests in cities across Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan provinces. Families of victims killed in Sanandaj, Divandareh and Dehgan in Kurdistan province had travelled to Saqqez, Kurdistan province, and Bukan, West Azerbaijan province, to hold gatherings with other bereaved relatives and to visit, amongst other gravesites, Aichi Cemetery in Saqqez where Mahsa Amini and several protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed during the crackdown on protests in Saqqez are buried.

According to two primary sources interviewed by Amnesty International about this incident, security forces stopped two minibuses carrying the families in Bukan, apprehended all passengers and subjected them to beatings, resulting in some relatives sustaining injuries. The authorities arbitrarily detained the female relatives and children until around midnight but held the male relatives for between seven to 10 days before releasing them on bail.

Information obtained by Amnesty International from the primary sources and reports from independent media organizations indicate that at least five family members have since been unjustly prosecuted and four sentenced to prison terms and flogging in relation to this incident. Their names and details are as follows:

**Ahmad Rahimi**, the father of 30-year-old **Yahya Rahimi**, who was unlawfully killed after security forces fired metal pellets at him during a violent crackdown on protests in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, on 8 October 2022, was arbitrarily arrested on 9 June 2023 and prosecuted in relation to the gathering, but he was acquitted due to his older age and medical conditions.



**Hashem Saedi**, the father of **Sarina Saedi**, a 15-year-old girl who died on 27 October 2022 after sustaining fatal injuries from beatings by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, has been sentenced to imprisonment and flogging. On 3 July 2023, Hashem Saedi was summoned for trial to Branch 101 of Criminal Court Two in Bukan, West Azerbaijan province. When he went to the court, officials there informed him that he was tried in his absence and that the court had already issued its judgement, convicting him of “disturbing public order” in relation to the gathering and sentencing him to six and a half months in prison and 40 lashes. Officials also told him he was convicted for mourning those killed and gathering at their gravesites. He remains at liberty pending his appeal.

The three other relatives who faced prosecution and sentencing in connection with the gathering are **Hassan Amini**, the brother of **Mohammad Amini**; **Arman Habibi**, the brother of 27-year-old **Aram Habibi**; and **Sediq Bahmani**, the father of 36-year-old **Shahou Bahmani**. These three relatives, whose loved ones were unlawfully killed during the authorities’ violent crackdown on protests in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, between 8 October and 17 November, have each been sentenced to six and a half months in prison and 40 lashes.



*The father of Sarina Saedi at her gravesite ©Private*



*The father of Shahou Bahmani at his gravesite ©Private*

### ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN ESFAHAN PROVINCE

The family of 19-year-old **Mahsa Mogooee**, who was unlawfully killed after security forces fired metal pellets at her in Fouladshahr, Esfahan province, on 22 September 2022, have faced harassment and intimidation because of their public advocacy for truth and justice, according to independent [media](#) reports. Her father, **Mohammad Ali Mogooee**, mother, **Efat (surname unknown)**, and brother, **Milad Mogooee**, were arbitrarily arrested on 16 July 2023 during a gathering for Mahsa Mogooee at her grave on what would have been her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. They were all released on bail on 7 August 2023.

The family of 36-year-old **Shirin Alizadeh**, who was unlawfully killed by the security forces while filming Basiji forces randomly shooting at protesters in Abbasabad, Mazandaran province, on 21 September, have also faced harassment and intimidation. The family resides in Esfahan, Esfahan province, where Shirin Alizadeh is buried. According to independent

media, her husband, **Kourosh Vaziri**, was arbitrarily arrested on 17 August 2023, a day after the authorities pressured the family to cancel a gathering they wished to hold for Shirin Alizadeh at her grave on 16 August 2023 to mark her birthday.



*The husband and son of Shirin Alizadeh at her gravesite ©Private*



*The mother of Mahsa Mogooee at her gravesite ©Private*

The authorities have also harassed and intimidated the family of 30-year-old **Majid Kazemi**, who was arbitrarily executed on 19 May 2023 alongside two other protesters, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi, after a grossly unfair sham trial in Esfahan province. According to media interviews and social media posts from Majid Kazemi's cousin, Mohammad Hashemi, the harassment and intimidation has been in reprisal for the family's months-long public campaign to stop Majid Kazemi's execution and for their efforts after his execution to hold memorial ceremonies for him and seek truth and justice.

Immediately after his execution, the authorities arbitrarily arrested one of Majid Kazemi's brothers, **Hossein Kazemi**, after summoning him to a morgue where they cruelly informed him that his brother was executed that morning and told him to identify his body. They took Hossein Kazemi to a cemetery where they dumped Majid Kazemi's body into a small grave that was not large enough to properly fit him and then arrested him. The authorities did not allow Majid Kazemi's family to hold a funeral ceremony for him; they permitted his family only one hour by his gravesite to mourn his death, amid the heavy presence of security forces. During that time, members of the paramilitary Basij force cruelly taunted his family and laughed at them, compounding their anguish. Just days later, when the family was attempting to hold a commemoration marking the third day of Majid Kazemi's death, the authorities arrested another of his brothers, **Mehdi Kazemi**. They subjected both brothers to enforced disappearance for a month by denying their family any information about their fate and whereabouts. During a media interview on 28 June 2023, Mohammad Hashemi described how authorities have subjected their family to intense harassment and intimidation:

**"Adding to the pain of the family caused by the horrific crime [of execution], the family has been under intense pressure from the authorities. That first day when we found out about the execution, they arrested his older brother...They did not allow us to hold a funeral ceremony for Majid. When we wanted to hold a memorial to mark the third day of his death, they warned the family that we could not go to his gravesite so the family held a memorial at home, but they did not even allow the family to mourn him at home. They raided his family home the night before the third day of his death and subjected his parents to beatings and arrested his sister and another brother. They released his sister after several days but kept his brothers in detention for a month for no reason at all. We still do not know why for one month, there was no news about them. They released the brothers on bail with threats and undertakings that they would remain silent."**



## ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN GILAN PROVINCE

The family of 30-year-old **Mehran Basir Tavana**, who was unlawfully killed by the security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Sowme'eh Sara, Gilan province, on 16 November 2022 and died several days later, have similarly faced harassment and intimidation. According to independent [media](#), his sister, **Mahsa Basir Tavana**, was arbitrarily arrested on 17 August 2023 and taken to an unidentified location, in reprisal for speaking out and seeking truth and justice.

## ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN KHORASAN-E RAZAVI PROVINCE

The authorities have also persistently harassed the family of 17-year-old **Abolfazl Adinezadeh**, who was unlawfully killed after security forces fired dozens of metal pellets at him from close range during a violent crackdown on protests in Mashhad, Khorasan-e Razavi province, on 8 October 2022.

According to a primary source interviewed by Amnesty International, in the week leading up to his birthday on 17 June 2023, the authorities carried out reprisals against his family after they announced a gathering at his grave to mark the day. A police official called his family to warn them against holding the gathering, while another member of the security forces called and summoned his father and one of his uncles for “a talk” at the office of the prosecutor in the town of Farouj, North Khorasan province, close to the cemetery where Abolfazl Adinezadeh is buried. The source reported that, on 16 June 2023, on the eve of his birthday, security forces stopped his sister, **Marzieh Adinezadeh**, and two paternal uncles, **Reza Adinezadeh** and **Musa Adinezadeh**, at a checkpoint set up outside Farouj and arbitrarily arrested them in a violent manner.



*The mother of Mehran Basir Tavana at his gravesite ©Private*

In a [video](#) shared on social media on 16 June 2023, Abolfazl Adinezadeh’s mother is seen by his grave stating, “They took my daughter.” Later the same day, security forces arbitrarily arrested his father, **Ali Adinezadeh**, in the town square in Farouj as he was publicly raising attention to his daughter’s arrest. On the same day, security forces descended onto the town of Najafabad, North Khorasan province, and arrested his mother, **Goldasteh Hosseini**, two maternal aunts, two maternal uncles, and a friend of Abolfazl Adinezadeh, from a family home. All the family members were taken to a detention centre in Farouj. The source told Amnesty International that, in detention, security forces beat several family members and an interrogator strangled Marzieh Adinezadeh by wrapping her headscarf around her neck while demanding to know the reasons for her criticism of the authorities and her social media posts about her brother.

Most of his relatives were released several hours later, around midnight, after being forced to sign undertakings not to gather at his grave for his birthday. Prior to their release, the head of the Ministry of Intelligence in Farouj, who was present during the arrest of his sister and uncles and was responsible for the torture and other ill-treatment of several family members in the detention centre, warned his two maternal uncles that they would be shot if they were seen in Farouj during the week after Abolfazl Adinezadeh’s birthday. The authorities held Goldasteh Hosseini, Ali Adinezadeh, Marzieh Adinezadeh, and Reza Adinezadeh overnight and transferred them to prisons in Farouj the next morning. His

mother and sister were transferred to Bojnourd prison, while his father and uncle were taken to Shirvan prison. All four were charged with “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security”, “spreading propaganda against the system” and “disturbing public opinion” before being released on bail on 20 June 2023.



*Abolfazl Adinezadeh's gravesite. On the left is his father, while on the right is the husband of unlawfully killed protester, Hananeh Kia ©Private*



## ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN KHUZESTAN PROVINCE

Amnesty International documented how authorities have carried out reprisals against three victims' families in Izeh, Khuzestan province, for their defiance of official efforts to deny the truth that security forces were responsible for unlawfully killing their loved ones. These are the families of nine-year-old **Kian Pirfalak** and 16-year-old **Artin Rahmani**, who were shot dead on 16 November 2022, and 23-year-old **Milad Saeedianjoo**, who was shot dead on 15 November 2022. The authorities have also carried out reprisals against the relatives for holding birthday gatherings at the gravesites of their loved ones.

According to public statements made by family members, on Milad Saeedianjoo's birthday on 1 March 2023, security and intelligence agents violently attacked his relatives who had gathered around his grave, arbitrarily arresting several family members from the cemetery, including his brother, **Omid Saeedianjoo**, and sister, **Zahra Saeedianjoo**. In a [video](#) filmed after the arrests, his mother and cousin revealed that the authorities had warned them not to hold a birthday gathering. Zahra Saeedianjoo was released several days later. In an [Instagram](#) post shared in early April 2023, she described her ordeal:

**"To the person who, on the birthday of my brother, Milad Saeedianjoo, grabbed my hair, tortured me with a baton, trampled on my brother's grave in front of my eyes, and drowned the cemetery in blood: What is the [court] verdict you have given yourself for all of this? It has been proven to me who is the murderer of my brother... Our family has not filed a complaint in any court in Iran... because there was no point in going to the murderer to file a complaint about the murderer..."**

On 9 July 2023, the authorities rearrested Zahra Saeedianjoo and subjected her to enforced disappearance for several days by refusing to inform her family about her fate or whereabouts. In a media [interview](#) published the day after her arrest, the family's lawyer, Hossein Ali Hatami, said that the authorities have opened two separate criminal cases against her and charged her with two counts of "spreading propaganda against the system" in relation to her advocacy for truth about and justice for the killing of her brother. Eight days after Zahra Saeedianjoo's arrest, the family [discovered](#) that she was being held in a detention centre in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, but the authorities continued to refuse them any information about her fate and denied them access to her. The authorities also summoned Zahra Saeedianjoo's family for interrogation and warned them that she would not be released unless she "cooperated" with them. She was released on bail on 9 August 2023.

According to independent media reports, the family of nine-year-old **Kian Pirfalak**, who was shot dead when security forces unlawfully fired live ammunition into the car in which his family was travelling, have faced relentless harassment and intimidation by the authorities for their public rejection of the official narrative about the circumstances surrounding his death. On the same day that Kian Pirfalak was killed, plainclothes security forces used unlawful lethal force during protests in Izeh, killing six other people, including two other children.<sup>4</sup> The authorities have since propagated a false narrative claiming that "terrorists" were responsible for the killings and have convicted and sentenced to death, [Mojahed \(Abbas\) Kourouri](#), following a grossly unfair trial, in relation to the incident leading to Kian Pirfalak's death. However, his family has publicly refuted claims that Mojahed (Abbas) Kourouri was responsible and have attributed the responsibility to security forces. In response, the authorities have orchestrated a disinformation campaign, flooding state media outlets with [various reports](#) and propaganda [videos](#) that seek to discredit Kian Pirfalak's mother and other relatives, claiming that they have lied about the identity of his killer.

The authorities have also summoned Kian Pirfalak's parents multiple times for questioning, including to the prosecutor's office, according to statements made by [family members](#) on social media, as well as reports from both independent and



*The sister of Milad Saeedianjoo at his gravesite ©Private*

<sup>4</sup> For details about another child, Artin Rahmani, who was unlawfully killed in Izeh on 16 November 2022 and harassment against his family, see page 13.

state media. On 21 January 2023, Kian Pirfalak's mother, **Zeynab (Mah Monir) Molayirad**, was summoned by the authorities and verbally told that she was suspended from her teaching job. Five days later, on 26 January 2023, Kian Pirfalak's paternal uncle, Mehrdad Pirfalak, posted the following text in an Instagram [story](#) along with a photo of his brother, **Meysam Pirfalak**, Kian Pirfalak's father, lying in a hospital bed with severe injuries sustained during the same incident that killed Kian Pirfalak:

**“During this time, when they [the authorities] have caused a great tragedy and unbearable stress for our family... and for the nursing and treatment of my brother, multiple people need to remain by his side 24 hours a day and we need calm and concentration in this chaotic situation, they [the authorities] have suspended my brother's wife [from her job] and issued a summons to her and my brother, who cannot even sit, bears deep wounds and has an incapacitated body that can only be moved with a stretcher.”**

Later that same day, 26 January 2023, in response to the widespread public criticism of the news about the summons, the authorities sought to justify the summons through an [announcement](#) by the prosecutor of Izeh, Mohammad Resalati, who insisted that Kian Pirfalak's parents had been “invited” by the authorities in relation to their investigation into the incident in which their son was killed and to identify the perpetrators.

In the days leading up to what would have been Kian Pirfalak's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday on 11 June 2023, security forces intensified their campaign of harassment and intimidation against his family in an attempt to stop a planned gathering at his gravesite. On his birthday, scores of security forces descended onto the cemetery in the village of Parchestan near Izeh where Kian Pirfalak is buried.

According to independent [media reports](#), on the day of the gathering, security forces in Parchestan fired live ammunition multiple times at his mother's 20-year-old cousin, **Pouya Molayirad**, leading to his death and invoking widespread condemnation from the Iranian public on social media. A [video](#) of the deceased body of Pouya Molayirad was shared on social media showing multiple gunshot wounds on his torso and right arm. A man can be heard in the video stating that security forces shot him multiple times. The next day, on 12 June 2023, Iranian state media [justified](#) the fatal shooting by claiming that security forces opened fire at Pouya Molayirad after he deliberately drove his car into two security officials who had been stationed in the village of Parchestan to “ensure security during Kian Pirfalak's birthday”. The state media claimed that his “terrorist actions” led to the death of an official, Mohammad Ghanbari, and injuries to another. This narrative has been strongly refuted by the Piralak family who maintain that the collision was accidental. According to [statements](#) by several family members, which have been shared on social media and acknowledged by state media, Pouya Molayirad was driving at high speed when he accidentally ran into the security official. According to the family's statements, he immediately stopped the car and exited his vehicle to turn himself in when security forces shot him multiple times with live ammunition.



*The mother of Kian Piralak at his gravesite ©Private*



According to independent media reports, the Pirfalak family have come under even more pressure since the killing of Pouya Molayirad. On 15 June 2023, state media published a short [video](#) of Pouya Molayirad's father, **Reza Molayirad**, in which he appears to be reading from a pre-written statement. In the video, he expresses regret and sympathy for the 11 June 2023 incident and the death of the security official, and states that a number of “profiteers and anti-revolutionaries from inside and outside Iran” had called for protests following the incident, which he strongly condemned. He never mentioned the killing of his son or reason for the gathering at the cemetery in his statement. Amnesty International believes that the statement was made under conditions of duress, given the intense pressure that the family has faced since Kian Pirfalak's unlawful killing and the well-documented pattern of statements extracted from victims' families by the authorities.

On 18 June 2023, around a week after Kian Pirfalak's birthday, Zeynab (Mah Mounir) Molayirad was summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence. Her Instagram account has since been shut down. Kian Pirfalak's uncle, **Sajjad Pirfalak**, was [arrested](#) the previous day, on 17 June 2023, and released on bail two weeks later, pending investigations.

The family of 16-year-old **Artin Rahmani**, who was shot dead by security forces on 16 November 2022 in Izeh, Khuzestan province, have also faced intense harassment and intimidation, including through summons and arbitrary detention, because of their calls for truth and justice and their public rejection of the official state narrative about the circumstances surrounding his death. On the same day that Artin Rahmani was killed, security forces unlawfully killed six other people, including Kian Pirfalak and one other child, Sepehr Maghsoudi; the authorities have since propagated a false narrative blaming “terrorists” for the killings, which the victims' families reject. According to statements made by Artin Rahmani's family on social media, the authorities arrested Artin Rahmani's uncle, **Fouad Choobin**, on 11 April 2023 and subjected him to enforced disappearance for 12 days by denying his family any knowledge of his fate and whereabouts.

On 14 April 2023, Artin Rahmani's mother, Hengameh Choobin, [posted](#) on her Instagram account that her brother, Fouad Choobin, had been violently arrested by plainclothes security agents who threatened him with a gun and beat him during arrest. On 26 April 2023, she [posted](#) on her Twitter account that after 12 days of having no information about him, the family had received a telephone call from Fouad Choobin on 24 April 2023 for the first time since his arrest. During this call, he told them that his nose and teeth were broken and that he had been forced to give “confessions” under torture, and to sign and put his fingerprint on statements that had been pre-written by the authorities. He also told them that he was being moved to Sheiban prison in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province.



*The mother of Artin Rahmani at his gravesite ©Private*

On 8 May 2023, she [posted](#) a statement on Twitter that the authorities were denying him medical care for a breathing problem and blocking his transfer to a hospital for treatment. She [posted](#) again on 8 June 2023, stating that their family has not heard from him for two days and that, according to information they had received from the prison, the authorities had beaten him and moved him in a violent manner, with his hands and feet in chains, to solitary confinement. He remains in detention in Sheiban prison.

In June 2023, Hengameh Choobin received a [letter](#) summoning her to the office of the prosecutor in Izeh on 27 June 2023, without providing any information as to the reason for the summons. On 1 July 2023, Hengameh Choobin [posted](#) on her Twitter account:

**“The authorities of the Islamic Republic killed my innocent son, imprisoned my brother and relatives, and summoned me to the prosecutor's office for the crime of seeking justice for the killing of my child in order to silence me. Citizens in Iran have no right to protest and any efforts to seek freedom are suppressed with great violence...What kind of freedom of expression is this that I, a grieving mother, do not**

have the right to cry out about my grief for my teenage son? Will the authorities and their mercenaries<sup>5</sup> tell me where I should go to seek justice? Should I go to a judiciary that is neither independent nor justice-seeking, a judiciary whose verdicts are issued according to the order of the security forces?"

### ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN QAZVIN PROVINCE

The family of **Javad Heydari**, a 36-year-old who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Qazvin, Qazvin province, on 22 September 2022, have also been subjected to repeated harassment and intimidation because of their public advocacy for truth and justice for his killing. His father, **Ali Panah Heydari**, and mother (Soraya Nemati), and brothers, **Mohammad Heydari**, **Hojjat Heydari**, **Mostafa Heydari**, and **Rouhollah Heydari** have all been arbitrarily arrested and detained multiple times, while his sister, **Fatemeh Heydari**, has been expelled from her work. Between 3 and 5 April 2023, the authorities arrested his mother, father and two of his brothers, **Mohammad Heydari** and **Rouhollah Heydari**, and detained them for several days before releasing them on bail.

In two separate tweets posted on 5 April 2023, his sister, **Fatemeh Heydari**, reported the arrest of her family members and threats made against her father by a prosecution official who warned that he would be imprisoned if the family did not change his son's gravestone, which depicts a dove flying defiantly in front of a rifle while releasing other doves. She wrote:

**"A few minutes ago, [the authorities] put handcuffs on my mother, father and brother, Mohammad Heydari, and arrested them. My other brother, Rouhollah Heydari, has been in detention since Monday [3 April]. And they killed another brother of mine, Javad Heydari. From our family, they have killed one person and imprisoned four people... The lead investigator in Branch 5 of the prosecution office in Qazvin told my father 'Either remove the stone or I will throw you in prison'."**



*The mother of Javad Heydari at his gravesite ©Private*

<sup>5</sup> The Persian word "*mozdooran*" used by Hengameh Choobin in her Twitter post is translated to English as "mercenaries". In this context, the word refers to agents who get paid by the Iranian authorities to support the system or to play a role in protest crackdowns.



## ATTACKS ON FAMILIES IN TEHRAN PROVINCE

Family members of 20-year-old **Hamidreza Rouhi**, whom security forces unlawfully killed on 17 November 2022 in Tehran, Tehran province, have also been targeted. On his birthday on 5 April 2023, security forces maintained a significant presence during peaceful protests and gatherings outside his home to mark his birthday in solidarity with his family.

According to reports from independent media and human rights organizations, following the gatherings, the authorities arrested several family members including his father, **Ali Rouhi**, and summoned his mother and siblings for questioning. Ali Rouhi was released on bail on 9 April 2023. On 11 July 2023, he was put on trial before a Revolutionary Court in Tehran on the charge of “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” in relation to the birthday gathering.



*A relative of Hamidreza Rouhi at his gravesite ©Private*

## DESTRUCTION OF GRAVES AND GRAVESITES

Amnesty International documented the destruction of the graves of Mahsa/Zhina Amini as well as 10 men – **Abbas Shafiee**, **Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan**, **Ali Abbasi**, **Amir Javad As’adzadeh**, **Arian Khoshgavar**, **Azad Hosseinpouri**, **Behnam Layeghpour**, **Nima Nouri**, **Sepehr Azami**, and **Zaniar Aboubakri** – and seven children – **Abolfazl Adinezadeh**, **Karvan Ghader Shokri**, **Kian Piralak**, **Mohammad Eghbal Shahnavaizi (Nayebzehi)**, **Salah Gamshahdzehi**, **Siavash Mahmoudi** and **Zakaria Khial** – who were unlawfully killed by the security forces during protests; two men, **Majid Kazemi** and **Mohsen Shekari**, who were arbitrarily executed in relation to the protests; and one woman, **Yalda Aghafazli**, who committed suicide following her release from detention during which she said she was repeatedly tortured. The images of the damaged gravestones of these 21 victims are available below in the annex accompanying this document.

Graves have been damaged with tar, paint and arson; headstones have been broken; and phrases on gravestones describing victims as “martyr” or stating that they died for the cause of freedom have been erased.

Sources with direct knowledge told Amnesty International that in some cases, victims’ families or other eyewitnesses were present when security forces damaged victims’ graves, such as the graves of **Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan**<sup>6</sup> and **Mahammad Eghbal Shahnavaizi (Nayebzehi)**<sup>7</sup>. In other cases, graves were destroyed following the authorities’ repeated threats to destroy graves if families fail to comply with their demands to change gravestones expressing support for the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising or depicting phrases that indicate the victims suffered unnatural deaths caused by political oppression. The Iranian authorities have a well-established record of desecrating and destroying, with complete impunity, the gravesites of political dissidents, protesters, and members of religious minorities.

The authorities have failed to conduct any investigations to identify the perpetrators and bring them to account, or to take measures to prevent the repeated destruction or damage to gravesites.

**Mahsa/Zhina Amini’s** family and family lawyer have reported on social media that her grave in Aichi cemetery in Saqqez, where a number of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed during protests are also buried, has been vandalised on multiple occasions in recent months.<sup>8</sup> On 21 May 2023, her brother posted a story on his Instagram account stating that the glass encasing the headstone of her grave had been smashed. On the same day, the family’s lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, posted four photographs on his Telegram channel showing the extent of the damage to her grave. The next day, on 22 May 2023, Mahsa/Zhina Amini’s mother posted on her Instagram account that the authorities had closed the door to the cemetery and were denying families entry.

<sup>6</sup> For details of the harassment of Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan’s family, including through damage to his grave by security forces, see page 4 as well as entry No. 14 in the annex.

<sup>7</sup> For a picture of Mohammad Eghbal Shahnavaizi (Nayebzehi)’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 17 in the annex.

<sup>8</sup> For pictures of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 1 in the annex.

During a media [interview](#) with Saleh Nikbakht, published on 22 May 2023, he said that, according to Mahsa/Zhina Amini's father, Amjad Amini, the authorities have refused to give permission to her family to secure her grave by installing a canopy around it and threatened to forcibly close the business of the welder who was due to construct the canopy.

On 24 May 2023, Saleh Nikbakht [posted](#) on his Telegram channel that, for the second time in two days, her grave had been vandalised, specifying that the rest of the glass was removed from her grave and that a crown, which stood atop the headstone, had been broken off and removed. In his post, he also called for the Saqqez municipality to be held to account for the repeated destruction of Mahsa/Zhina Amini's grave by stating:

**“These improper actions are being carried out in Aichi cemetery in Saqqez, which is part of the municipal area and, as such, the employees and guards of the municipality must be aware of such incidents. It is expected that the Saqqez municipality explains to the family of Zhina and the public whether they [the municipality] themselves were responsible for this and, if they were not, they should be held accountable for not knowing about such actions in a cemetery that falls under the municipality's premises.”**

Compounding the anguish felt by Mahsa/Zhina Amini's family, the authorities are planning to make substantial changes to Aichi cemetery that would make her grave less accessible to the public. Her grave has become a place where families of those unlawfully killed during the protests gather to find collective solace and solidarity and indicate their ongoing determination to seek justice. According to a media [interview](#) given by her cousin, Erfan Mortezaei, on 11 June 2023, the governor and municipality of Saqqez have announced plans to make changes to Aichi cemetery and the main road that runs through it. The changes, which would also involve blocking the car entrance to the cemetery and narrowing the road, are designed to make her grave, currently lying right next to the road, less accessible to visitors and removed from public view.

The grave of **Behnam Layeghpour**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Rasht, Gilan province, on 21 September 2022, has been damaged [multiple](#) times, including in March 2023 when [paint](#) was thrown onto his gravestone.<sup>9</sup>

In March 2023, the grave of 18-year-old **Nima Nouri**, who was unlawfully killed on 3 November 2022 during a violent crackdown on the commemoration ceremony of another killed protester in Karaj, Alborz province, was also [vandalised](#) and two plaques inscribed on it removed.<sup>10</sup> One of the plaques referred to Nima Nouri as “the son of Iran”, written in the colors of Iran's red, white, and green flag, while the other contained a poem which said:

**“I was supposed to live for 80 years but, at the age of 18, I was killed for the cause of freedom. Promise me that you will live freely instead of me.”**

In late March 2023, the grave of 42-year-old **Abbas Shafiee**, who was unlawfully killed on 3 November 2022 during a violent crackdown on the commemoration ceremony of another killed protester in Karaj, Alborz province, was vandalised and his picture and the ancient symbol of the Zoroastrian faith were erased from his headstone.<sup>11</sup>

The same month, the writing on the grave of 24-year-old **Ali Abbasi**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces on 3 November 2022 during a violent crackdown on protests in Semrom, Esfahan province, was also erased. The writing that was removed said “In the name of freedom” and “martyred for the cause of the nation.”<sup>12</sup>

In April 2023, the grave of 36-year-old **Amir Javad As'adzadeh**, who died in custody after being arrested and severely beaten by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Mashhad, Khorasan-e Razavi province, on 19 November 2022, was vandalised, with a poem on his grave painted over.<sup>13</sup> The last lines of the poem cherished his memory, saying he “had shown so much kindness to everyone” that his “name is still on everyone's lips everywhere”.

The grave of 16-year-old **Karvan Ghader Shokri**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan province, on 20 November 2022, has been vandalised several times. On 21 April 2023, his mother [posted](#) a picture of his grave on social media, which showed that brown paint had been thrown on

<sup>9</sup> For a picture of Behnam Layeghpour's vandalised grave, see entry No. 2 in the annex.

<sup>10</sup> For a picture of Nima Nouri's vandalised grave, see entry No. 3 in the annex.

<sup>11</sup> For a picture of Abbas Shafiee's vandalised grave, see entry No. 4 in the annex.

<sup>12</sup> For a picture of Ali Abbasi's vandalised grave, see entry No. 5 in the annex.

<sup>13</sup> For a picture of Amir Javad As'adzadeh's vandalised grave, see entry No. 6 in the annex.



his headstone. Less than three months later, on 13 July 2023, a [video](#) shared online showed that his headstone had been broken and destroyed.<sup>14</sup>

In May 2023, the grave of 21-year-old **Zaniar Aboubakri**, who was unlawfully killed by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, on 27 October 2022, was vandalised, with the word “martyr” being removed from his headstone.<sup>15</sup>

The grave of **Abolfazl Adinezadeh** has also been vandalised.<sup>16</sup> A primary source told Amnesty International that the authorities have subjected his family to harassment because of the slogan “Woman Life Freedom” engraved on his gravestone. On 7 March 2023 and 29 May 2023, his father and sister were summoned to the prosecutor’s office in Farouj and interrogated about their reasons for inscribing the slogan onto his gravestone. The prosecutor in Farouj has also warned his family’s lawyer that if the family does not remove the gravestone entirely, the authorities will destroy his grave with a bulldozer. On 8 June 2023, a week before Abolfazl Adinezadeh’s birthday on 17 June 2023, his grave was vandalised. Two [videos](#) of his [parents](#) standing next to his grave were shared on social media in which they said that the glass around his gravestone had been smashed and part of the marble stone which made up his grave broken off. His grave was vandalised again the week after his birthday.

On 18 June 2023, about a week after **Kian Piralak’s** family had gathered at his gravesite to commemorate his birthday,<sup>17</sup> his grave was vandalised and a [video](#) of his grave was shared on social media which showed that the glass encasing his headstone had been smashed.<sup>18</sup>

The gravesite of 24-year-old **Sepehr Azami**, who succumbed to his injuries and died on 6 December 2022 after security forces unlawfully shot him with live ammunition during a violent crackdown on protests in Karaj, Alborz province, on 3 November 2022, has also been vandalised.

In June 2023, a memorial tree that had been planted at his gravesite by the fathers of arbitrarily executed protesters, [Mohammad Mehdi Karami](#) and [Mohsen Shekari](#), and the mother of unlawfully killed protester, Shahriar Mohammadi, was destroyed, [according](#) to independent human rights organizations.<sup>19</sup>



*A memorial tree planted at the gravesite of Sepehr Azami by the fathers of two arbitrarily executed protesters and the mother of an unlawfully killed protester. ©Private*

<sup>14</sup> For a picture of Karvan Ghader Shokri’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 7 in the annex.

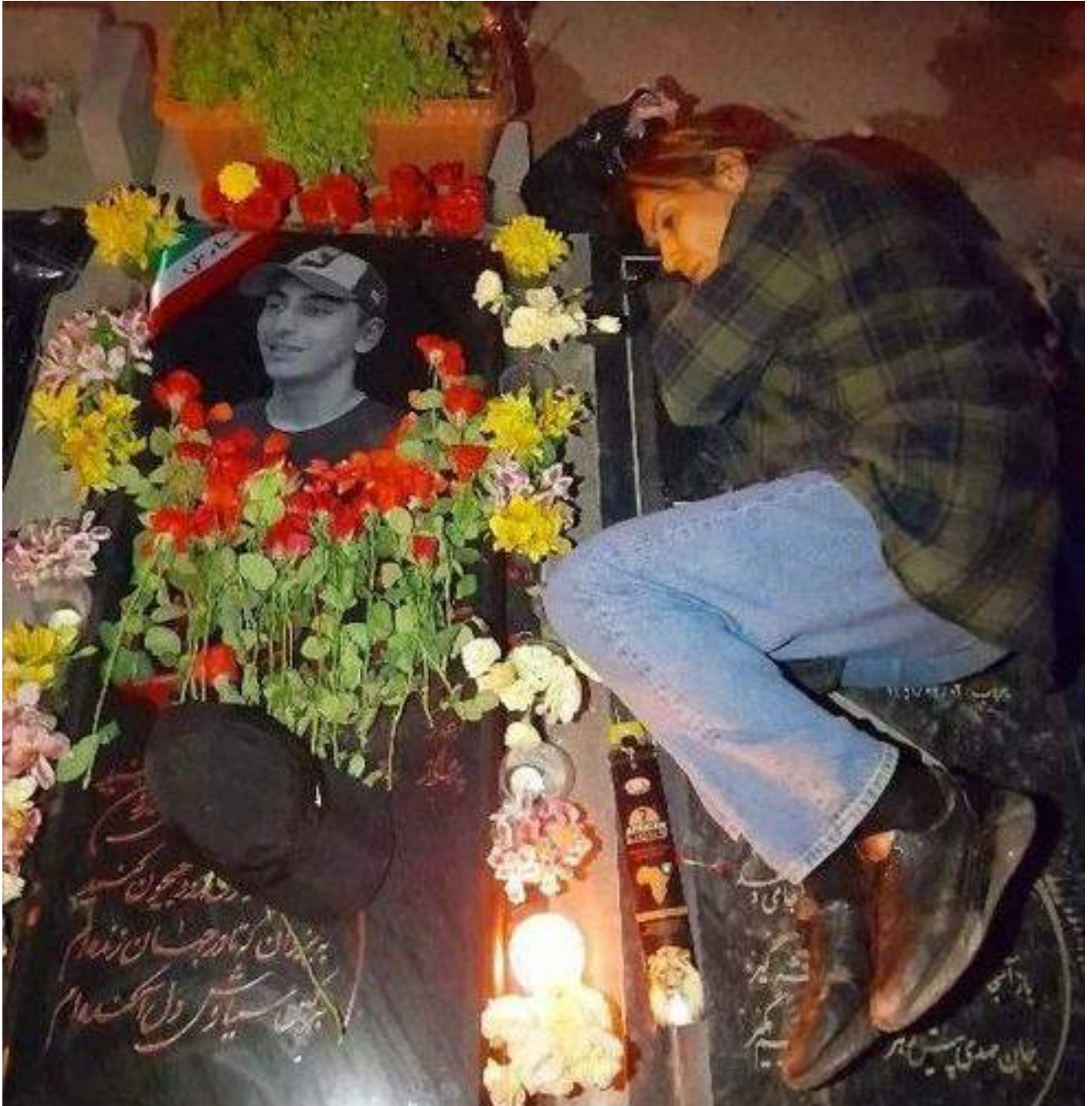
<sup>15</sup> For a picture of Zaniar Aboubakri’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 8 in the annex.

<sup>16</sup> For a picture of Abolfazl Adinezadeh’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 9 in the annex. For more details about the harassment of Abolfazl Adinezadeh’s family, see pages 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> For more details about the harassment of Kian Piralak’s family including at his birthday gathering, see pages 11-13.

<sup>18</sup> For a picture of Kian Piralak’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 10 in the annex.

<sup>19</sup> For a picture of Sepehr Azami’s grave and the memorial tree that was destroyed, see entry No. 11 in the annex.



*Siavash Mahmoudi's mother lying next to his grave. ©Private*

On 23 July 2023, the mother of 16-year-old **Siavash Mahmoudi**, who was fatally shot by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Tehran on 25 September 2022, posted on her Twitter account that his grave had been vandalised.<sup>20</sup> Posting a picture showing scratch marks on the picture of his face that is printed on his gravestone, she said:

**“By destroying the graves of children, you only show how stupid and ignorant you are. In the lines scratched onto his picture, I only see my child's beautiful eyes and his courage.”**

<sup>20</sup> For a picture of Siavash Mahmoudi's vandalised grave, see entry No. 12 in the annex.



In July 2023, the grave of 16-year-old **Zakaria Khial**, who was unlawfully killed during a violent crackdown on protests in Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan province, on 20 September 2022, was also vandalised and his headstone was broken in half.<sup>21</sup>

Security forces vandalised the grave of **Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan** on the morning of 9 July 2023.<sup>22</sup> On that day, security forces took his brother, Soleiman Ghader Golvan, whom they had arrested the previous day, to the cemetery where he is buried and cruelly destroyed his grave in front of him by smashing the gravestone and trampling on his grave.

The grave of 31-year-old **Azad Hosseinpouri** has also been vandalised. In June 2023, the word “martyr” was removed from in front of his name on his headstone.<sup>23</sup>

The grave of **Arian Khoshgavar**, who was killed on 17 November 2023 after being severely beaten by security forces during a violent crackdown on protests in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, has also been vandalised. In March 2023, when his family visited his grave for the occasion of the Persian New Year, they found that the cement which had been poured over his grave and left to dry had been trampled upon, leaving multiple large shoe prints on his grave.<sup>24</sup>

On 23 February 2023, plain clothes Basiji agents attempted to destroy the grave of 17-year-old boy **Mohammad Eghbal Shahnnavazi (Nayebzahi)**, who was fatally shot during a deadly crackdown on a protest in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province, which took place after Friday prayers outside a police station opposite a large prayer site on 30 September 2022, according to a Baluchi human rights organization based outside Iran. At around midnight on 23 February 2023, eyewitnesses saw plainclothes Basiji and Revolutionary Guards agents breaking the raised concrete structure surrounding the area of his grave. A video shared online several days later, on 27 February 2023, shows the damage to the concrete blocks and structure.<sup>25</sup>

On 20 January 2023, the gravestone of 27-year-old **Salaheddin Gamshadzehi**, who was fatally shot during a deadly crackdown on a protest in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province, which took place after Friday prayers outside a police station opposite a large prayer site on 30 September 2022, was vandalised and smashed into pieces according to a Baluchi human rights organization based outside Iran.<sup>26</sup>

Amnesty International has also documented damage to the graves of two individuals arbitrarily executed by the authorities in connection to protests.

The grave of protester **Majid Kazemi**, who was arbitrarily executed on 19 May 2023 alongside two other protesters, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi, after a grossly unfair sham trial in Esfahan province, was vandalised several weeks after his execution, according to a primary source interviewed by Amnesty International.<sup>27</sup>

On 7 June 2023, the authorities called Majid Kazemi’s family and warned them that they were not allowed to attend his grave to mark his birthday on 8 June 2023. When his family defied the order and went to his grave for his birthday, they were horrified to find that his gravesite had been set on fire and destroyed. On 23 June 2023, after his family planted flowers all over his grave, security forces immediately turned up to the cemetery and forced them to dig up all the flowers and remove them. The authorities have also barred his family from erecting a gravestone at his burial site.

During a media interview on 28 June 2023, Mohammad Hashemi said:

**“On Majid’s birthday, they [the authorities] set fire to his grave. If they really accept what they have done, why are they so scared and why do they put his family under so much pressure and deny their right to mourn his death? We want to put a stone on his grave, but they tell us we are not allowed. We, therefore, put a cloth over his grave, but they set fire to it. We put flowers on his grave, but they force the family to remove them. Last week, with much eagerness, the family spent five to six hours planting individual flowers on his grave, but [the authorities]**

<sup>21</sup> For a picture of Zakaria Khial’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 13 in the annex.

<sup>22</sup> For a picture of Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 14 in the annex. For details of the harassment of Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan’s family, see page 4.

<sup>23</sup> For a picture of Azad Hosseinpouri’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 15 in the annex. For details of the harassment of Azad Hosseinpouri’s family, see page 5.

<sup>24</sup> For a picture of Arian Khoshgavar’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 16 in the annex.

<sup>25</sup> For a picture of Mohammad Eghbal Shahnnavazi (Nayebzahi)’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 17 in the annex.

<sup>26</sup> For a picture of Salaheddin Gamshadzehi’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 18 in the annex.

<sup>27</sup> For pictures of Majid Kazemi’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 19 in the annex.

immediately came and forced them to remove all the flowers so that other people do not go and visit his grave. The area around the [cemetery] is very securitized; it is full of security cameras; they have closed off the roads and do not allow people to go there. Every time the family goes there, [security forces] harass them and fight with them. Several days prior to the 40<sup>th</sup> day of his death, [the authorities] called the family and warned that they were not allowed to go anywhere near the cemetery over the next week.”

On 14 April 2023, the father of protester **Mohsen Shekari** who was arbitrarily executed on 8 December 2022 after a grossly unfair sham trial before a Revolutionary Court in Tehran, posted on his Instagram account that his son’s grave had been vandalised by people who had poured tar over the writing inscribed on his gravestone.<sup>28</sup>

Amnesty International also documented damage to the grave of 19-year-old **Yalda Aghafazli**, a torture survivor who committed suicide several days after being released from detention in Tehran.<sup>29</sup> Her grave has been damaged on multiple occasions between January and August 2023. In January 2023, artwork depicting the victory sign with two raised fingers that transform into numerous flying doves was completely removed. On 3 January 2023, her father posted images of her damaged grave on Instagram, with the statement: “You have [damaged] my child’s gravestone three times, wiping away a piece each time.” On 10 January 2023, her father posted a video of her mother on his Instagram account in which she said:

**“My Yalda, they will not allow me to have your face and your symbol, your beautiful fingers, inscribed on your grave. They say they will break your gravestone. But I will keep your victory sign alive in any way I can through making a flower symbol or with an arrangement of beautiful flowers. As long as I am alive, these will also remain.”**

In April 2023, part of her headstone which contained a picture of her face was removed, but her family reinstalled it several days later. The picture on her headstone was damaged again in August 2023, when lines were scratched onto her face.

## **INTERNATIONAL ACTION NEEDED TO ADDRESS CRISIS OF IMPUNITY**

The human rights violations against families of victims unlawfully killed in the context of the “Woman Life Freedom” uprising are taking place within the context of a wider pattern of harassment and intimidation against the families of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed by security forces during and in the aftermath of successive protests since December 2017. The campaign waged by the authorities aims to deter survivors and families from seeking truth and justice and to punish them for their public calls for accountability.

Amnesty International considers that the mental anguish and distress caused to mourning families by such abusive practices violates the absolute prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

The organization reiterates its call for all states to exercise universal jurisdiction to criminally investigate and prosecute all officials including those in security, intelligence, prosecutorial and judicial positions suspected of ordering or committing torture and other crimes under international law, and issue arrest warrants when there is sufficient evidence. Investigations must include superiors who knew or should have known that a subordinate was committing or about to commit these acts but did not take all the reasonable and necessary measures within their power to prevent, repress or punish them.

---

<sup>28</sup> For a picture of Mohsen Shekari’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 20 in the annex.

<sup>29</sup> For pictures of Yalda Aghafazli’s vandalised grave, see entry No. 21 in the annex.



## ANNEX: VANDALISED GRAVES OF VICTIMS OF DEADLY CRACKDOWN ON IRAN'S "WOMAN LIFE FREEDOM" UPRISING

### 1. MAHSA/ZHINA AMINI



A picture of the vandalised grave of Mahsa/Zhina Amini, taken on 21 May 2023, with the glass encasing the headstone broken. ©Private





*A picture of Mahsa/Zhina Amini's grave after it was vandalised for the second time, on 23 May 2023, this time with the crown on the headstone broken off and removed. ©Private*

## 2. BEHNAME LAYEGHPUR



Behnam Layeghpour's grave. The picture on the left shows his gravestone before it was vandalised. The picture on the right shows his gravestone after it had paint thrown. ©Private



### 3. NIMA NOURI



Nima Nouri's grave. The picture on the left shows his grave with the two plaques. The plaque on the top contains a poem which said: "I was supposed to live for 80 years but, at the age of 18, I was killed for the cause of freedom. Promise me that you will live freely instead of me." The plaque on the bottom referred to Nima Nouri as "the son of Iran", written in the colors of Iran's red, white, and green flag. The picture on the right shows his gravestone after the two plaques were removed. ©Private

#### 4. ABBAS SHAFIEE



*The grave of Abbas Shafiee. The picture on the left shows his headstone with his picture at the top and an ancient symbol of the Zoroastrian faith at the bottom. The picture on the right shows his headstone after it was vandalised, with his picture and the symbol erased. ©Private*



## 5. ALI ABBASI



Ali Abbasi's grave. The picture on the left shows his grave before it was vandalised. It The same month, the writing on the grave of 24-year-old Ali Abbasi, who was unlawfully killed by security forces on 3 November 2022 during a violent crackdown on protests in Semirom, Esfahan province, was also erased. The writing that was removed said "In the name of freedom" and "martyred for the cause of the nation." ©Private



## 6. AMIR JAVAD AS'ADZADEH



Amir Javad As'adzadeh's grave. The picture on the left shows his gravestone, the bottom part of which contains a poem. The last lines of the poem cherished his memory, saying he "had shown so much kindness to everyone" that his "name is still on everyone's lips everywhere". The picture on the right shows his gravestone after it was vandalised and the poem painted over.

## 7. KARVAN GHADERSHOKRI



Karvan Ghader Shokri's grave. The picture on the left shows his headstone after it was broken in July 2023. The picture on the right shows his headstone after it had paint thrown onto it in April 2023. ©Private

## 8. ZANIAR ABOUBAKRI



Zaniar Aboubakri's grave. The picture on the left shows his headstone before it was vandalised. The writing at the top of his headstone contains his name, which is preceded with the word "martyr". The picture on the right shows his headstone after it was vandalised with the word "martyr" erased. ©Private



## 9. ABOLFAZL ADINEHZADEH



The vandalised grave of Abolfazl Adinezhadeh. The picture on the left shows his mother standing next to his vandalised grave, while the picture on the right shows his father standing next to it. His gravestone depicts a dove flying defiantly in front of a rifle and releasing other doves. The slogan "Woman Life Freedom" is printed at the bottom. The artwork on this gravestone also appears on the graves of several others who were unlawfully killed during the uprising, including that of Javad Heydari, whose case is documented above under the subsection titled Attacks on Families in Qazvin Province. ©Private

## 10. KIAN PIRFALAK



*Kian Pirfalak's vandalised grave. The picture is a still from a video taken of his grave which showed that the glass encasing his headstone had been smashed. ©Private*

## 11. SEPEHR AZAMI



*Sepehr Azami's gravesite. The picture on the left shows the memorial tree planted at his gravesite by the fathers of arbitrarily executed protesters, Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Mohsen Shekari, and the mother of unlawfully killed protester, Shahriar Mohammadi. The picture on the right shows the tree after it was destroyed. ©Private*



## 12. SIAVASH MAHMOUDI



Siavash Mahmoudi's gravesite. The picture on the right shows the grave of Siavash Mahmoudi before the vandalism, with his face printed in black and white at the top of his gravestone. The picture on the left is a screenshot from his mother's social media post, showing the scratch marks on his face. The text at the bottom says: "#Siavash Mahmoudi. The destruction of the picture on Siavash's grave." ©Private

### 13. ZAKARIA KHIAL



Zakaria Khial's gravesite. The picture shows the top part of his headstone broken off. ©Private



## 14. ABDOLSALAM GHADER GOLVAN



*Abdolsalam Ghader Golvan's gravesite. The four pictures, which show his destroyed gravesite, were all taken after his grave was vandalised by security forces in front of his brother. ©Private*



## 15. AZAD HOSSEINPOURI



Azad Hosseinpouri's grave. The picture on the left shows his headstone before it was vandalised. The writing in red lettering at the top of his headstone contains his name and precedes with "martyr". The picture on the right shows his headstone after it was vandalised with the word "martyr" removed from in front of his name. ©Private

## 16. ARIAN KHOSHGAVAR



*Arian Khoshgavar's grave. The picture shows his grave after it was vandalised with the cement containing multiple shoe prints ©Private*

## 17. MOHAMMAD EGHBAL SHAHNAVAZI (NAYEBZEHI)



*The grave of Mohammad Eghbal Shahnavaзи (Nayebzehi). The picture shows his gravesite after it was vandalised, with some of the bricks forming the raised concrete structure around his grave broken. ©Private*



## 18. SALAHEDDIN GAMSHADZEHI



Salaheddin Gamshadzehi's grave. The picture shows his gravestone smashed into pieces. ©Private

## 19. MAJID KAZEMI



Majid Kazemi's grave. The picture on the left shows Majid Kazemi's grave draped in red cloth, before it was vandalised. The picture on the right shows his grave on 8 June 2023, after it was set on fire overnight, with the cloth destroyed. ©Private



Majid Kazemi's grave. The picture on the left shows his grave just after his family planted flowers onto it and before the authorities forced the family to remove them. The picture on the right shows the most recent picture of Majid Kazemi's grave, taken on 30 June 2023. ©Private



20. MOHSEN SHEKARI



Mo  
tar



## 21. YALDA AGHAFAZLI



Yalda Aghafazli's grave. The picture on the left shows her gravestone including the artwork depicting the victory sign with two raised fingers that transform into numerous flying doves, before it was vandalised. The picture on the right shows her grave after the artwork was erased. ©Private



Yalda Aghafazli's gravesite. The picture on the left is from April 2023, when the heart-shaped part of her headstone containing a picture of her face was removed. The picture shows the pillar that remained afterwards. The family reinstalled a heart-shaped headstone several days later. The picture on the right is from August 2023 when lines were scratched onto her face on her headstone. ©Private