

12 November 2022

Committee Secretary

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Re: Human Rights Implications of recent violence in Iran

The protest movement for freedom in Iran has entered its eighth week. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has intensified its brutal crackdown on the peaceful protesters.

It has been reported that at least 277 individuals including 40 children have been killed by Iranian security forces and over 14,000 protesters have been arrested. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has condemned the unabated violent response by security forces against protesters and expressed concern about reports of arbitrary arrests and the killing and detention of children. The IRI will soon hold public trials for around 2,000 arrested protesters who may be sentenced to death after just one hearing.

The Australian Government, along with other members of the international community, have a responsibility to take concrete actions to ensure that the IRI is held accountable for its human rights violations.

The IRI is a gender apartheid regime. Iranian women have been subjected to systematic persecution for the past 43 years. There have been episodic protests and uprising resulting in hundreds of deaths. However, there is a crisis of impunity in Iran; each time these protests were violently suppressed by the IRI without any repercussions or accountability from the international community.

Given the severity of the ongoing violence and human rights violations perpetrated by the IRI, maintaining international attention is crucial. International attention and support are key to ensuring that the voices of the people who put their lives on the line for freedom are heard. Australia and the broader international community have a political and moral responsibility to stand with the people of Iran in their rightful demands to protest injustice without reprisal.

### **Recommended actions**

We request that the Australian government take the following actions:

- Impose Magnisky-style or other form of targeted sanctions, including financial asset freezing and introduce visa bans on people linked to the Iranian regime (including the members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), key security officials, Basiji Militia and the morality police).

Many governments around the world have imposed broad-based economic sanctions on Iran over the past few decades. These economic sanctions have resulted in collective punishment of the innocent Iranian people, without impacting the IRI. The economic sanctions, together with severe corruption and mismanagement of the heads of the IRI, have significantly damaged the Iranian economy and have caused unemployment and inflation rates to skyrocket, devastating Iranian people's lives.

On the other hand, Magnisky-style sanctions, freezing of assets and visa bans, directly target and punish the perpetrators of the violence against the people of Iran, without resulting in collective punishment of innocent people. Such actions are in line with targeted sanctions imposed by the Canadian government on the 3rd and 13th of October 2022 in response to the IRI's systematic human rights violations, including its persecution of women.

- Declare the IRGC a 'terrorist organisation' under the Criminal Code Act 1995.

The IRI is widely acknowledged as the world's preeminent sponsors of terrorism and the IRGC is its main arm in carrying out such activities both inside and outside of Iran. Iran's support and close ties with Hezbollah, which Australian listed as a terrorist organisation on 10 December 2021, have been widely documented. There have also been concerning reports that Hezbollah has been sending troops to Iran to crush protesters.

- Take steps to remove Iran from the UN's Commission on the Status of Women CSW

IRI is a gender apartheid regime. Australia should join other states, including Canada and New Zealand, who have called for the removal of Iran from the UN's Commission on the Status of Women. No government that carries out systematic violations of the human rights of women should play a role a body charged with protecting and promoting the rights of women.

- Immediately designate the ambassador and other representative of the Islamic regime in Australia, as "persona non grata" in protest to the illegal and inhumane treatment of protesters in Iran and only allow consulate level representation to remain.

Designation of the ambassador and other representative of the Islamic republic of Iran in Australia as "persona non grata", would send a strong signal to Iran that it cannot continue violating the human rights of its citizens with impunity. Reducing the presence of the Iranian Embassy in Australia to consulate level would also result in the removal from Australia of informers connected to the Iranian Embassy. The widespread surveillance and intimidation of Iranian Australians carried out by Iranian operatives in Australia was recently documented in detail by ABC's Background Briefing. Many of the signatories to this submission have been the target of such activities and have concerns for their safety and that of their loved ones living in Iran. It is due to such intimidation and fear of further reprisal that we have requested that the signatories to this submission remain anonymous.

- Forcefully and unequivocally demand the release of all prisoners of conscience in Iran.

It has been reported that more than 14,000 protesters have been arrested and detained in recent weeks. On 7 November, hardline Iranian parliamentarians urged the judiciary to “deal decisively” with the perpetrators of unrest. Some of those arrested have already been sentenced to death after just one trial. There is a real risk that we will see mass executions of protesters in Iran in the near future. Australia must use all diplomatic channels and levers at its disposal to place pressure on Iran to immediately release all protesters and prisoners of conscience and halt any further prosecution and punishment.

- Pass, sponsor and support a strong resolution against the criminal actions of the Islamic Republic both in the Australian Parliament and UN General Assembly and encourage counterparts in allied countries to take similar steps.

It may be that each one of these actions alone may have limited influence on the IRI to change its ways, but instituted together, they would maintain the very much needed international attention and pressure on the Iranian regime. The recommended actions would also encourage other governments around the world to follow in the footsteps of Australia to adopt similar measures to support the people of Iran. Australia and the international community must act decisively to ensure that the IRI understands that it cannot continue its human rights violations with impunity.

Sincerely