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Joint written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, Abshar Atefehha Charity Institute, Association of Iranian Short Statured Adults, Hazrat-e Fatemeh Zahra Charity Institute, Iran Autism Association, Iranian Thalassemia Society, Islamic Research and Information Artistic & Cultural Institute, Maryam Ghasemi Educational Charity Institute, Medical Support Association for Underprivileged Iranian Patients, Network of Women's Non-governmental Organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Society of Iranian Women Advocating Sustainable Development of Environment, The Association of Citizens Civil Rights Protection "Manshour-e Parseh", The Society for Recovery Support, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 May 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Iran UPR Outcomes

As an NGO based in Iran, we would like to discuss the following issues for the HRC Session on the adoption of Iran UPR outcomes: A) Afghan Refugees; B) Impact of unilateral coercive measures; C) Empowering women; D) Situation of children; E) Juvenile offenders and F) Drug-related punishments.

A) Afghan Refugees

Afghan nationals have consistently represented the largest immigrant population in Iran since the Islamic Revolution. In recent years, the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has led to a renewed surge in migration to Iran. This influx, coupled with the economic challenges Iran faces due to unilateral sanctions, has sparked widespread debate within Iranian society about the impact of Afghan immigrants on the country. Currently, an estimated 4.5 to 5 million Afghans reside in Iran. According to statistics from the United Nations Refugee Agency in Iran, approximately 3.8 million of these individuals are documented.

Education: Following a decree by the Supreme Leader, Afghan children have been permitted to attend public primary and secondary schools regardless of their residency status. In 2023-2024 academic year, approximately 695,000 Afghan children enrolled in Iranian schools, representing about 3.6% of the country's total student population. However, the limitations imposed by the reduced budgets of international organizations such as the UNHCR and the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures restricts the access of some Afghan students to education.

Health: According to the laws governing the Iranian health system, refugees and asylum seekers have unrestricted access to the health system. Many health services, especially in emergency cases, are provided free of charge to Afghan nationals in Iran, regardless of their document status. However, given the large population of Afghan nationals in Iran and their extensive economic problems, which the public and private sector actors are trying to effectively address.

B) Impact of Unilateral Coercive Measures

Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM)s have been increasingly used as a foreign policy tool to achieve political objectives against the sanctioned countries, to force them to change their political decisions or to enforce a regime change in these countries. However, the human rights impact of UCMs have been continuously exposing the target populations to unnecessary sufferings, systemically and systematically infringing upon all their economic, social and cultural rights. The human rights repercussions of UCMs have been widely condemned by the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council resolutions, in addition to numerous reports published by the UN ,(1) the research centers and academia as well as the human rights NGOs.

We are alarmed by the bitter reality that the sanctioning countries have always been intentionally ignoring or strongly denying the wide range of human rights violations caused by sanctions. What is even worse is the sanctioning countries attempts to shift the responsibility of human rights violations caused by sanctions to the shoulders of the sanctioned States or business enterprises, thus escaping the legal consequences of accountability for all the crimes and human rights violations caused by UCMs. The measures have continuously been violating all human rights including the right to life, to health, to food, to education, to work, to an adequate living standard and to development in all sanctioned countries.

C) Empowering Women

We have assessed the improvement of women's situation in terms of their access to: 1) education, 2) empowerment 3) legal support.

Education

Over 60 percent of college and university students are women. Also, 70 percent of Iran's university graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are women, (2) one of the highest rates globally.

Also, we need to mention the increasing presence of women working in the government institutions, and their participation in the academic settings. For example, the number of women employed in the government has increased from 34.64 percent in 2009 to 41.67 percent in 2018, which indicates an increasing trend in attracting women to government organizations. Also, in 2024, women faculty members constituted 31 percent of the whole members across the country, which was over 10 percent increase compared to 2009.

In addition, to address the situation of vulnerable women with education services, some training courses are being offered to women heads of households by various governmental and non-governmental institutions including: providing facilities programs, job and skills training; pre-marriage counseling and education and life skills; training the community for female heads of households to enter the labor market and training programs for financial self-sufficiency for women who run families.

Empowerment

Iran emphasizes women's empowerment in economic, social, and political spheres through legislation and national planning. Initiatives include insurance for housewives, support for female-headed households, and entrepreneurship training for rural and nomadic women (300,000 annually). (3)

Also, President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration has appointed over 190 women to managerial roles and aims to expand their leadership in provincial and municipal offices. (4)

Additionally, the Seventh National Development Plan prioritizes overcoming barriers to women's professional development, including support for home-based businesses despite sanctions.

legal support

Currently, numerous laws and regulations specific to women are being implemented. In addition to the provisions related to women in legal frameworks such as the Sixth Development Plan (2021 to 2027), the Charter of Citizens' Rights, the General Policies of Iran, and the Vision Statement of Iran, some laws have also been specifically approved to improve the situation of women. including the following:

- The Bill to Ensure the Safety of Women and Children against Violence (2015-2016);
- The Government Resolution requiring the Ministry of Sports and Youth to promote the health and well-being of women and girls through sports;
- Amendment to the Direct Tax Law: Tax exemption for female heads of households and self-employed girls;
- Amendment to the Law on Citizenship of Children Born from the Marriage of Iranian Women to Foreign Men

Recommendations:

- On the situation of Afghan Refugees, we emphasize that providing support to nearly five million Afghan citizens in Iran requires effective, timely and adequate international cooperation to contribute to Iran's resources and infrastructure as a sanctioned country. Many Afghan refugees and asylum seekers require enhanced access to essential services, including education and healthcare. At the same time, Iranian citizens also need support in these areas, while access to essential services is negatively impacted by Iran's economic sanctions and the current capacity to meet increasing demands.
- On Unilateral Coercive Measures, we call for strong international cooperation to eliminate and mitigate all adverse effect on population of sanctioned countries including Iran.
- We call on the United Nations to offer expert knowledge and guidance to the third States on how to avoid extraterritorial human rights violations in sanctioned countries.
- On the Situation of Women, we call on Iran to continue women's support in all aspects of life including their socio-economic status, their social participation and their presence in managerial positions.

1)UN Reports:

A/HRC/48/59; A/HRC/48/59/Add.2; A/HRC/45/7; A/HRC/42/46; A/HRC/36/44; A/HRC/33/48;
A/HRC/48/59; A/HRC/48/59/Add.2; A/HRC/51/33; A/HRC/51/33/Add.1; A/HRC/54/15;
A/HRC/55/42; A/HRC/57/55.

2)<https://en.irna.ir/news/85593064/Iranian-female-scholars-considerably-increasing>

3)<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/506686/Iran-highlights-empowering-women-in-all-aspects>

4)<https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2025/03/15/744460/Iran-Zahra-Ershadi-women-progress->