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Written statement submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization 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.

[2 February 2026]

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

Requesting That Iran Take Immediate Steps To Stop The Persecution Of Christians

1. INTRODUCTION

Christians living in Iran are particularly vulnerable and suffer extreme persecution.⁽¹⁾ In its 2026 World Watch List, Open Doors ranked Iran as the 10th worst country for Christians.⁽²⁾ This ranking stems from the fact that house churches are routinely raided by authorities and Christians are frequently arrested.⁽³⁾ The persecution of Christians has escalated as recent protests against the government have taken place all across the country.⁽⁴⁾ Christians are among the most vulnerable and are often accused by authorities of fueling the protests and risk being arbitrarily arrested or killed.⁽⁵⁾

2. BACKGROUND

Civil unrest stemming from protests that began on December 28, 2025, is putting Christians at an increased risk of being targeted. Widespread demonstrations across the country have already led to the government's cracking down on protesters and dissent. This has resulted in the reported deaths of possibly more than 36,500 people.⁽⁶⁾ The reason the recent situation in Iran puts a bigger target on Christians is that the government already views Christians as a threat to national security. The government claims that Christians are under the influence of Western countries and are trying to destabilize the Iranian government.⁽⁷⁾ One Iranian shared that "the Iranian government is increasingly using the Christian minority as a scapegoat, accusing believers of inciting and leading these demonstrations."⁽⁸⁾

Since the protests began, there have already been reports that authorities raiding homes of Christians and accused them of providing "ideological fuel" for the protests.⁽⁹⁾ Human rights groups and churches have also reported that Christians have been killed, injured, or arrested by security forces.⁽¹⁰⁾ In fact, one Christian was arrested after he was seen talking to a group of shopkeepers.⁽¹¹⁾

The government's crackdown is only the most recent event that has led to Christians being persecuted in Iran. Unfortunately, Iran has a history of targeting Christians and arresting them for gathering to worship, sharing their faith with others, or simply possessing Bibles and other Christian literature.

3. VIOLATIONS

On January 14, 2026, it was reported that at least seven Iranian Armenian Christians were killed by Iranian forces because of the crackdown on widespread protests.⁽¹²⁾

In January 2026, at least ten Christians were arrested across three locations in Fars province.⁽¹³⁾ One Christian pastor shared that "[s]ecurity forces raided the homes of several believers, accusing us of providing ideological fuel for the street protests. Our people remain confined to their homes, yet the raids continue relentlessly."⁽¹⁴⁾

On December 23, 2025, a Christian woman was arrested.⁽¹⁵⁾ According to her indictment, her activities included praying, performing baptisms, and possession of Christian literature.⁽¹⁶⁾ Her husband was also arrested and charged with committing "Zionist activities."⁽¹⁷⁾

On November 16, 2025, two Iranian Christian converts began serving their two-year prison sentence after they were convicted of violating national security because of their involvement in a house church.⁽¹⁸⁾

On October 21, 2025, Tehran’s Revolutionary Court sentenced five Christians to prison for conducting activities related to their faith.(19) These activities included praying, carrying out baptisms, and distributing Bibles.(20)

On September 17, 2025, an Iranian court upheld the sentencing of five Christian converts.(21) Each Christian was sentenced to eight years in prison for participating in Christian training courses in Turkey, attending house-church meetings, and participating in online meetings.(22)

Following Iran’s twelve-day war with Israel in 2025, the government cracked down on its own citizens whom they accused of being spies.(23) Among those targeted were Christians who the government accused of spying for Israel and being “Zionist Christians.”(24) As a result of this crackdown, more than seventy Christians were arrested and accused of spying.(25)

In March 2025, two Christian brothers were arrested and sentenced to four years in prison for carrying out “propaganda against the state” and “gathering and collusion against national security.”(26) Specifically, authorities cited possession of Bibles and Christian literature as evidence of these crimes.(27)

4. REQUEST

Iran has an obligation under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to ensure that all its citizens have the “right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,” which includes the ability for its citizens to “either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”(28) This same right is likewise enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),(29) to which Iran is a party.(30)

Iran’s continued practice of targeting, arresting, and killing Christians for their faith is a shameful and direct violation of the most foundational human rights. It is imperative that Iran take immediate steps to reform its laws and practices to ensure that Christians are permitted to freely and publicly practice their faith without fear of persecution. If Iran fails to do this, the dangers facing Christians will only increase, especially in light of the ongoing civil unrest. No one should have to live in fear because of their faith.

(1) Unrest in Iran: How to Pray, OPEN DOORS (Jan. 25, 2025), <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/iran-protest-prayer/>.

(2) Iran, OPEN DOORS, <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/iran/>.

(3) Id.

(4) Souhail Lawand, Reports of Christian Casualties and Arrests Are Emerging as Mass Protests Continue in Iran, EWTN (Jan. 20, 2026), <https://www.ewtnnews.com/world/middle-east/reports-of-christian-casualties-and-arrests-are-emerging-as-mass-protests-continue-in-iran>.

(5) Id.

(6) Over 36,500 Killed in Iran’s Deadliest Massacre, Documents Reveal, IRAN INTERNATIONAL (Jan. 25, 2026).

(7) Unrest in Iran: How to Pray, *supra* note 1.

(8) Iranian Christians Scapegoated Amidst Protests, at Least Ten Arrested, BARNABAS AID (Jan. 6, 2026).

(9) Id.

(10) Lawand, *supra* note 4.

(11) Iranian Christians Scapegoated Amidst Protests, at Least Ten Arrested, *supra* note 8.

(12) Iran: Christians Call for Prayer as Protests Continue, CHURCH IN CHAINS (Jan. 15, 2026).

(13) Lawand, *supra* note 4.

(14) Id.

- (15) Prisoner List, ARTICLE 18, <https://articleeighteen.com/prisoners-list/> (last visited Jan. 20, 2026).
- (16) Id.
- (17) Id.
- (18) Iranian Christians Convicted on “National Security charges Start Prison Sentences, BARNABAS AID (Nov. 25, 2025).
- (19) Five Iranian Christian Converts Sentenced to Stiff Prison Terms, IRAN INTERNATIONAL (Dec. 17, 2025).
- (20) Id.
- (21) 5 Christians in Iran to Spend Several Years in Prison for Their Faith, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Oct. 10, 2025).
- (22) Id.
- (23) Targets on Their Backs: Iranian Christians Under Increasing Danger, MISSION NETWORK NEWS (Sep. 25, 2025).
- (24) Id.
- (25) Id.
- (26) Iran Country Dossier, OPEN DOORS 2026, https://www.opendoors.org/persecution/reports/Iran-Country_Dossier-ODI-2026.pdf.
- (27) Id.
- (28) G.A. RES. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights art. 18 (Dec. 16, 1966, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- (29) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 18, Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.
- (30) Ratification Status for Iran (Islamic Republic of), OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=81&Lang=EN.