

Iran: Death toll rising in 'alarming' crackdown on protests



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Death toll reaching at least 30 people, four of them children

Risk of further bloodshed amid a deliberately imposed internet black out

'The anger expressed on the streets shows how Iranians feel about the so-called 'morality police' and compulsory veiling laws' - Heba Morayef

The bravery of protesters facing a spiralling deadly response by the Iranian security forces after the death of Mahsa Amini reveals the extent of outrage in Iran over abusive compulsory veiling laws, unlawful killings, and widespread repression, Amnesty International said.

Evidence gathered by Amnesty from the past two nights of fresh violence in 20 cities and 10 provinces across Iran points to a harrowing pattern of Iranian security forces deliberately and unlawfully firing live ammunition at protesters.

With the death toll reaching at least 30 people, four of them children, Amnesty reiterates its calls for urgent global action, warning of the risk of further bloodshed amid a deliberately imposed internet black out.

On the night of 21 September alone, shootings by security forces left at least 19 people dead, including at least three children. Amnesty has reviewed photos and videos showing deceased victims with horrifying wounds in their heads, chests and stomachs.

"The rising death toll is an alarming indication of just how

ruthless the authorities' assault on human life has been under the darkness of the internet shutdown. "The anger expressed on the streets shows how Iranians feel about the so-called 'morality police' and compulsory veiling laws. It's high time for these discriminatory laws and the security forces enforcing them to be completely removed from Iranian society, once and for all. "UN member states must go beyond toothless statements, hear the cries for justice from victims and human rights defenders in Iran and urgently set up an independent UN investigative mechanism".

Amnesty has recorded the names of 19 people including three children shot dead by security forces on 21 September. The deaths of a further two people, including a 16-year-old bystander, have also been confirmed on 22 September. Further deaths are being investigated.

Echoing growing frustration at the international community's failure to take meaningful action to address successive waves of protest killings in Iran, the father of Milan Haghigi, a 21-year-old man killed by security forces on 21 September, told Amnesty:

According to eyewitness accounts, security forces involved in the deadly shootings include Revolutionary Guards agents, paramilitary Basij forces and plainclothes security officials. These security forces have fired live ammunition at protesters with the intention of dispersing, intimidating and punishing them or preventing them from entering state buildings. This is prohibited under international law which restricts the use of firearms to instances where their use is necessary in response to an imminent threat of death or serious injury, and only when less extreme means are insufficient.

In addition to the 19 people killed on 21 September, Amnesty has recorded the names of two other people killed by security forces in Dehdasht, Kohgiluyeh and Bouyer Ahmad province on 22 September, including a 16-year-old bystander.

Since nation-wide protests were triggered by the death in police custody of 22-year-old Mahsa (Zhina) Amini after being violently arrested by Iran's morality police in connection with

discriminatory and degrading compulsory veiling laws, Amnesty has recorded the names of 30 people killed by security forces: 22 men, four women and four children. Amnesty believes the real death toll is higher and investigating further.

Deaths were recorded in Alborz, Esfahan, Ilam, Kohgilouyeh and Bouyer Ahmad; Kermanshah; Kurdistan, Manzandan; Semnan; Tehran, West Azerbaijan provinces.

This province had one of the highest tolls on the night of 21 September with the death of at least three men and two children. They include Sadroddin Litani, Milan Haghighi and 16-year-old Amin Marefat in Oshnavieh; and Danesh Rahnama and 17-year-old Abdollah Mahmoudpour in the village of Balou.

A human rights defender shared with Amnesty the written account of a protester from Oshnavieh who described how on 21 September, Revolutionary Guards agents randomly fired live ammunition at protesters while they were attempting to enter the Office of the Governor. The protester said:

Amnesty reviewed a corroborating video showing a bullet hole in the back of Amin Marefat's dead body.

The father of the third victim from Oshnavieh, Milan Haghighi, told Amnesty that he died from fatal gunshot wounds including in his leg and torso.

According to information shared with Amnesty by human rights defenders with contacts on the ground, the deadly shootings in the village of Balou took place in front of the Basij headquarters there. Amnesty obtained a voice message from an eyewitness saying:

Two eyewitnesses from Dehdasht told Amnesty that 16-year-old bystander, Pedram Azarnoush, was shot dead on 22 September after Revolutionary Guard agents began repeatedly randomly firing live ammunition to disperse protesters. The same night, locals said security forces had killed a second man identified as Mehrdad Behnam Vasi.

One of the two eyewitnesses told Amnesty:

The eyewitnesses said the Revolutionary Guards forces had hidden among trees in a square in Deshdasht and faced no threat when they began shooting at chanting protesters.

Witnesses said several people also sustained serious gunshot wounds from security forces firing live ammunition, including a 13-year-old boy, Amirali Douhandeh, who was shot in the leg. They reported that security and intelligence officials have established a strong presence at Emam Khomeini hospital in Dehdasht, heavily guarding a section where injured protesters are being treated.

Information gathered about Garmsar, Semnan province points to a similar pattern of reckless shooting by security forces resulting in the death of at least one young protester, Mehdi Asgari, on 21 September in front of a police station.

In video footage purportedly of the incident, which was circulated online, protesters are seen coming under fire while throwing stones at the police station and kicking its entrance door.

Amid the sound of gunfire, two protesters are seen falling to the ground. A second video from the same incident reviewed by Amnesty shows one protester lying lifeless and bleeding on the ground.

At least six men and one woman are recorded as having been killed in this province. Their names are Mohsen Mohammadi killed in Ghaemshahr; Hannaneh Kia, Hossein Ali Kia and Mehrzad Avazpour killed in Noshahr; Mohammad Hosseinikhah killed in Sari; Milad Zare killed in Babol; and Amir Norouzi killed in Bandar-e Anzali.

A journalist reported that according to two friends of Hannaneh Kia, she was fatally shot on her way from a doctor's visit.

To investigate the ongoing protest crackdown, Amnesty has so far spoken to and received audio-visual evidence from 30 individuals including 10 eyewitnesses, six protesters and one

victim's relative as well as four human rights defenders and nine journalists outside in Iran who were in turn in contact with primary sources on the ground.

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Press Contacts

1. Press Office

press@amnesty.org

+44 (0) 20 7413 5566

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