

# The Situation of LGBT+ Children in Iran

## Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

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**6Rang (Iranian LGBT+ Network)** is a lesbian-led organisation working for an Iran in which every LGBT+ person can live openly, safely, and without fear.

6Rang is dedicated to eliminating homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIES).

Founded after the first gathering of Iranian lesbian and transgender individuals in 2010, 6Rang has since developed a broad network of more than 200 LGBT+ individuals, most of whom are based inside Iran. 6Rang is also a member of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). 6rang is also a member of the Eurocentralasian Lesbian\* Community ).

To achieve its mission, 6Rang pursues capacity-building and empowerment, documentation of human rights violations, and research-based advocacy and campaigning.

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## I. Introduction

1. This submission is presented by 6Rang (Iranian LGBT+ Network) for the fourth periodic review of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. It highlights the human rights violations experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) adolescents in Iran, underscoring issues that require urgent attention.
2. The information contained in this submission is drawn primarily from four research projects conducted by 6Rang over the past five years, as follows:
  - “It’s a Great Honour to Violate Homosexuals’ Rights”: Official Hate Speech against LGBTI+ People in Iran (December 2017); and its follow-up report, Silencing Protests: Official Hate Speech against LGBTI+ People as a Tool of Suppression (March 2023).
  - Hidden Wounds: A Research Report on Violence against LGBTI+ People in Iran (2020).
  - Straitjacketed Identities: Reparative Therapy in the Systematic Medical Abuse of Iran’s LGBTI+ People (May 2023).
  - War on Bodies and Minds: Gender Persecution of LGBTI+ Protestors in the Context of the 2022–23 Iran Uprising (September 2023).

6Rang has also incorporated information provided by XYZ LGBTI+ individuals, documented through Rainbow 24/7 — a 6Rang project that monitors and maps violence on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.

## II. General Principles Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

3. In Iran, LGBTI+ adolescents are subjected to systemic discrimination in virtually all spheres of their lives, rooted in both their actual and perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. As confirmed by the UN Human Rights Committee, a key driver of this situation is the Iranian Penal Code, which criminalises consensual same-sex relations and prescribes punishments ranging from flogging to execution (Articles 233–240).<sup>1</sup> These provisions are also applied to minors, since Iran sets the age of criminal responsibility at nine lunar years for girls and fifteen lunar years for boys (Article 147).

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<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights Committee. *Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran*. CCPR/C/IRN/CO/4, 23 November 2023, para. 14. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/ccprcirnco4-concluding->

4. LGBT+ adolescents are additionally subjected to discrimination through the enforcement of compulsory dress codes. Police, Basij paramilitary forces, school staff, and other authorities routinely use these regulations as a pretext to harass, intimidate, or detain individuals whose appearance they deem “improper” or “un-Islamic.”
5. Under Article 638 of the Penal Code, teenage girls and women who appear in public without a headscarf or without loose-fitting clothing can be fined or imprisoned. Although this law discriminates against all girls and women, it disproportionately harms female adolescents (and adults) who do not fit traditional gender norms—for instance, those who prefer short hair, reject compulsory dress and headscarves, or choose clothing typically associated with men.
6. The same article also provides for flogging for conduct deemed “religiously forbidden” (*haram*) or otherwise “offensive to public morals”, a category that is interpreted to include so-called “cross-dressing”. As a result, male adolescents (and adults) who wear make-up or express themselves in ways stereotypically perceived as “feminine” are exposed to various forms of violence, including arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as torture and other ill-treatment.
7. In the aftermath of the nationwide “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests (2022-2023) triggered by the death of Jina Mahsa Amini in the custody of the morality police, social resistance has led to a relative loosening in the day-to-day enforcement of mandatory hijab rules and other appearance-related regulations.<sup>2</sup> However, these legal provisions remain fully in force and continue to be applied at the discretion of authorities whenever they choose. Moreover, enforcement remains strict in state-run institutions, including schools, healthcare centers, hospitals, and government offices. 6Rang has documented numerous cases in which these laws and regulations continue to be used against LGBTI+I+ adolescents, particularly within educational settings.
8. Of concern in the area of discrimination are also states policies and practice that allow, and indeed promote, harmful “reparative therapies” such as electroshock therapy, psychoactive medications and shaming techniques, that seek to “correct” children’s sexual orientation and gender identity.
  - **Abolish the death penalty for consensual same-sex sexual conducts, particularly when they are committed by individuals under 18.**
  - **Prohibit the imposition and execution of all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, such as flogging, for same- sex sexual conducts, particularly when they are committed by individuals under 18.**

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<sup>2</sup> To learn about the protests, please see the reports published by the UN independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>.

- **Repeal all laws that impose mandatory veiling on girls and ensure that children are not criminalized or punished for modes of clothing deemed to be in violation of Islamic dress codes.**
- **Take effective measures, including enacting or rescinding legislation, to prevent and eliminate discrimination against children on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.**
- **Ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children are not subjected to “reparative therapies” or otherwise ill-treated on account of their sexual orientation or gender identity.**
- **Take effective measures, including enacting or rescinding legislation, to ensure that LGBTI+ adolescences are not discriminated against, in law or practice, on account of their sexual orientation or gender identity and that they enjoy their human rights on an equal footing with others.**

### **III. Best Interest of the Child (Article 3)**

9. In Iran, the best interests of LGBT+ children are routinely subordinated to the preservation of a rigidly gendered social order. Public life is extensively segregated by gender, and an individual’s assigned sex determines a wide range of rights and restrictions, including what clothing they may wear, the schools they are permitted to attend, where they may sit on public transportation, which sports facilities they can enter, and even which doors they may use to access government buildings. State policies and practices across the family, education, labor, employment, and political spheres are deeply rooted in gender stereotypes and actively reinforce narrow, traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity.

10. Students who do not adhere to mandatory gender-specific dress codes, or whose gender expression deviates from socially enforced norms of femininity or masculinity, face a significant risk of suspension or expulsion. Verified reports gathered by 6Rang show that lesbian and gay adolescents have been subjected to disciplinary action—and in some cases expelled—when school administrators become aware of their same-sex attraction or relationships. It is also common for students to be pressured into meeting with school-approved psychologists, many of whom employ “reparative” or conversion-therapy practices, including the prescription of psychoactive medications typically used to treat conditions such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

11. Transgender students also face severe forms of coercion: they are often required to undergo sterilization and other invasive medical procedures before being allowed to obtain identity documents that reflect their gender identity. Parents are frequently urged by school staff to discipline their children or take them to medical professionals for “treatment” when they display gender-nonconforming behavior. These practices

constitute clear violations of children’s right to self-determination.

- **Review all legislation and administrative measures to ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is reflected therein and implemented in all actions concerning children.**
- **Ensure that the best interests of LGBT+ children are not disregarded for the sake of maintaining a strict female-male binary.**
- **Allow transgender adolescents to determine their gender identity and obtain matching identification documents, without the requirement to undergo gender reassignment surgeries.**

#### IV. Right to Life (Article 6)

12. Iran’s Penal Code prescribes the death penalty for specific forms of same-sex sexual conduct. Under Article 234, the receptive (“passive”) partner in so-called “sodomy” (*livat*) must be sentenced to death, while the insertive (“active”) partner faces the death penalty if he is married and has access to his wife for sexual intercourse, or one hundred lashes if he does not. “Sodomy” (*livat*) is defined in Article 233 as the penetration of a man’s sexual organ, to or beyond the point of circumcision, into the anus of another man. Where penetration does not occur, a lesser offense—*tafkhez*—may be applied, punishable by one hundred lashes; this offense is defined in Article 235 as placing a man’s sexual organ between the thighs or buttocks of another man. A fourth conviction for *tafkhez* results in a mandatory death sentence.
13. Sexual conduct between women is criminalized as *mosaheqeh*, defined as “one woman placing her sexual organ on another woman’s sexual organ,” and is punishable by one hundred lashes (Articles 238–239). As with *tafkhez*, a fourth conviction carries a mandatory death sentence.
14. The penalties outlined above also apply to individuals under the age of 18, as Iran’s Penal Code sets the age of criminal responsibility at nine lunar years for girls and fifteen lunar years for boys (Article 147). Since the adoption of the revised Penal Code in May 2013, a narrow exception to the death penalty may be considered for juvenile offenders if the court determines that they did not comprehend the nature of the offense or its consequences, or if there are doubts regarding their mental capacity (Article 91).
15. Advocacy for the rights of LGBTI+ people in Iran can result in capital charges. In October 2021, activists Zahra (Sareh) Sedighi-Hamadani and Elham Choubdar were arrested and accused of “promoting homosexuality” and “spreading corruption on earth”. They were tortured and coerced into false

- confessions, while state media wrongly alleged involvement in trafficking. In August 2022, the Revolutionary Court in Urumieh sentenced both women to death.<sup>3</sup>
16. In September 2022, nine UN Experts urged the Iranian authorities to halt the executions, confirming that the women had been sentenced to death for supporting the human rights of LGBT+ people.<sup>4</sup>
  17. Their death sentences were overturned by the Supreme Court in March 2023, and both women were released on bail of 1 billion tomans each, although their case was sent back for retrial. Following the retrial, Elham Choubdar received a three-year prison sentence and was re-arrested in February 2024 to serve it in Urmiah Central Prison. Under mounting pressure, Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani fled Iran in mid-2023, while Elham returned to prison to complete her sentence.<sup>5</sup>
  18. The death of Jina Mahsa Amini in September 2022, following her detention by the morality police for alleged improper hijab use, sparked a nationwide uprising in which LGBT+ people protested alongside women and other marginalised groups for more than six months.<sup>6</sup>
  19. The authorities responded with extreme violence. Over 500 people—including at least 70 children—were killed, and thousands were injured, disabled, or arrested. Repressive measures included suspensions and expulsions from schools and workplaces, forced confessions (often filmed), torture, sexual violence, and enforced disappearances. Human rights organisations report more than 500 protest-related deaths, though the true figure is believed to be considerably higher due to intimidation of families. Injuries inflicted by security forces likely number in the thousands, caused by live ammunition, pellet rounds, shotguns, batons and blows to the head and other vital organs.<sup>7</sup>
  20. According to 6Rang's research, many LGBTIQ+ individuals – especially queer adolescents – played a prominent role in the protests and were among those

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<sup>3</sup> UN Human Rights Committee. *Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran*. CCPR/C/IRN/CO/4, 23 November 2023, para. 15.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/ccprcirnco4-concluding->

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. "Iran: UN Experts Demand Stay of Execution for Two Women, Including LGBT Activist." Press release, 28 September 2022. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/iran-un-experts-demand-stay-execution-two-women-including-lgbt-activist>.

<sup>5</sup> 6Rang. "Iranian LGBT+ Activist Sareh Arrives in a Safe Country Following Her Release on Bail." 6Rang, 1 December 2023. <https://6rang.org/english/3662/>

<sup>6</sup> Supranote 2.

<sup>7</sup> Euronews. "Iran Protests: What Caused Them, Who Is Generation Z, Will the Unrest Lead to Revolution?" *Euronews*, 20 December 2022. <https://www.euronews.com/2022/12/20/iran-protests-what-caused-them-who-is-generation-z-will-the-unrest-lead-to-revolution>.

targeted and harmed.<sup>8</sup> One emblematic case is that of 16-year-old Nika Shakarami, who was pursued by security forces during a demonstration in Tehran and later found dead. A CNN investigation confirmed that she had been running from security forces shortly before her death. Witnesses reported that she was forced into a van and subsequently disappeared for ten days, after which her family were summoned to identify her body, which bore clear signs of severe head trauma.<sup>9</sup>

21. The authorities covertly interred Nika in a location other than the one chosen by her family and barred them from holding a funeral. Despite her death certificate indicating blunt-force trauma as the cause of death, officials persist in asserting that she died by falling from a building. Following her death, it became known that Nika had been openly queer on social media and was in a relationship with a 16-year-old girl in Germany — a story later documented in detail by *Zeit Magazine* in November 2022.<sup>10</sup>

- **Abolish the death penalty for consensual same-sex sexual conducts, particularly when they are committed by individuals under 18.**
- **Investigate the killings and other human rights violations committed during the 2022–23 protests, and hold all perpetrators — including those responsible for the deaths of LGBT+ protestors — accountable.**

## V. Right to Preserve Identity (Article 8)

22. Iranian authorities do not recognise diverse sexual orientations or gender identities, leaving children who experience same-sex attraction or express transgender identities faced with three equally harmful paths: undergoing coercive “reparative therapies” aimed at ‘treating’ homosexuality; pursuing gender reassignment surgeries to enforce conformity with prescribed gender norms; or concealing their identities in the face of persistent discrimination and violence. Each of these outcomes fundamentally violates the child’s right to preserve their identity.

23. In Iran, individuals who do not conform to socially imposed norms of masculinity

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<sup>8</sup> 6Rang. *War on Bodies and Minds: Gender Persecution of LGBTI+ Protestors in the Context of the 2022–23 Iran Uprising*. September 2023. <https://6rang.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/War-on-Bodies-and-Minds-EN-FINAL-.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> CNN. “Video Shows Girl Fleeing Amid Protests Before Death in Iran — Investigation.” *CNN*, 27 October 2022. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/27/middleeast/iran-nika-shakarami-investigation-intl-cmd/index.html>.

<sup>10</sup> *Zeit Magazine*. “Crazy in Love? — Nika Schakarami and Nele.” *Zeit Magazin*, 20 November 2022. [https://www.zeit.de/zeit-magazin/leben/2022-11/nika-schakarami-nele-iran-protest-love-english?utm\\_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Ft.co%2F](https://www.zeit.de/zeit-magazin/leben/2022-11/nika-schakarami-nele-iran-protest-love-english?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Ft.co%2F).

- and femininity are placed into two interconnected categories: “transsexual patients” and “homosexual perverts”. The former refers to those who seek gender “normalisation” through gender reassignment procedures, while the latter is applied to individuals who defy gender expectations without pursuing medical intervention or identifying as “transsexual”.
24. This binary framework places LGBTI+ individuals in Iran in an untenable position, forcing them to “choose” between fundamental rights. Full enjoyment of their human rights is not available to them. They must either submit to efforts aimed at “curing” same-sex attraction and transgender expression in order to obtain equal legal recognition, or live on the margins of society, where they are exposed to homophobic violence, police abuse, torture, family and community hostility, and pervasive discrimination in education, employment, and access to services.
  25. Transgender individuals interviewed by 6Rang described experiencing severe stress and anxiety throughout adolescence. They reported that routine activities—such as purchasing clothing, enrolling in school, socialising with peers, or presenting identity documents—were frequently accompanied by family conflict and the risk of encountering legal or administrative barriers.

## **VI. Right to Information and Protection From Material Harmful to Well-Being (Articles 13 and 17)**

26. LGBTI+ adolescents, like other members of the community are exposed to a systematic and prevailed hate speech campaign by the state officials and media. As documented by 6Rang in 2017 and 2023 reports, homophobic comments and incitement to hatred and violence against LGBTI people is widespread in public domains.<sup>11</sup> High-ranking Islamic republic officials, religious leaders and state media continue to use hateful, derogatory and dehumanizing rhetoric against LGBTI individuals, describing LGB persons as “animalistic”, “subhuman”, “sick” and “diseased”. They strip away the humanity of an entire group of people based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, and fan the flames of homophobic violence against them. This risk is particularly heightened in a context like Iran where gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people face widespread discrimination and violence in law and practice; consensual same-sex sexual relations are criminalized with harsh

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<sup>11</sup> See: 6Rang. *“It’s a Great Honour to Violate Homosexuals’ Rights”: Official Hate Speech against LGBTI+ People in Iran*. December 2017. <https://6rang.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Official-Hate-Speech-against-LGBTI+-People-in-Iran.pdf>. & 6Rang. *Silencing Protests: Official Hate Speech against LGBTI+ People as a Tool of Suppression*. March 2023. <https://6rang.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/30.03.23-Hatespeech-EN-SBFV.pdf>.

- punishments ranging from flogging to the death penalty; and affirmative and accurate materials on sexual diversity and the human rights of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions are banned.
27. LGBT+ adolescents in Iran lack access to accurate, evidence-based information on sexual orientation and gender diversity. The government systematically censors positive or educational content relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, while actively promoting materials that reinforce derogatory stereotypes and prejudice. This state-sponsored misinformation contributes to the continued social exclusion, discrimination, and denial of dignity historically faced by LGBTI+ people.
  28. Under Iran’s Cyber Crime Act, individuals may face between 91 days and one year of imprisonment, along with a fine of 5 to 20 million rials (approximately USD 750), for using online or digital platforms—including social media, blogs and websites—to “encourage crimes against chastity” or to promote so-called “sexual perversion.” The Act mandates a “Committee Charged with Determining Offensive Content” to identify and block prohibited online material and to communicate relevant standards to the Telecommunications Company of Iran, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and major Internet Service Providers. The Committee has issued a list of 78 categories of forbidden content, which include “encouraging or inviting immoral acts, prostitution, crimes against chastity or sexual perversion,” as well as any redistribution of material deemed to “violate public decency.”
  29. Comparable restrictions apply to printed media to suppress and censor discussions of topics related to homosexuality. The Press Law prohibits the “promotion of prostitution and vice” and the publication of images or articles considered contrary to public morality. Circular No. 660 of the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution further bans publications from engaging in content that could lead to “anti-family propaganda,” “the weakening of family values,” or “the promotion of deviant or immoral individuals or movements.”
  30. Laws and policies that restrict open discussion of homosexuality have greatly limited public access to reliable medical information. This has intensified stigma against LGBT+ people, including children, and has reinforced harmful misconceptions about sexual orientation and gender identity. These conditions have also created space for medical mistreatment, including attempts to ‘cure’ individuals engaged in same-sex relationships or expressing transgender identities. The mental and physical harms arising from such practices are detailed in the sections below.
  31. Most lesbian, gay and transgender individuals whose accounts have been collected and verified by 6Rang reported that healthcare providers failed to offer them—or their parents—accurate, evidence-based information on key

- issues related to sexual orientation and gender diversity. Among the information withheld from them were the following facts:
- Homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-II) in 1973, following recognition that “homosexuality per se implies no impairment in judgement, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities.”<sup>12</sup>
  - The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) affirms that gender diversity is not inherently pathological, and that cross-gender or transgender identities do not constitute a psychiatric disorder.<sup>13</sup>
  - International standards of care for transgender, transsexual and gender-diverse people acknowledge that not all transgender individuals require or desire the “complete therapeutic triad” of real-life experience, gender-affirming hormone therapy, and surgical alteration of genitalia or other sex characteristics.<sup>14</sup>
32. The accounts received and verified by 6Rang also described receiving materials and advice that pathologised homosexual orientation and gender diversity; diagnosed “gender identity disorder” solely on the basis of non-conformity to gender stereotypes, including same-sex attraction; misrepresented the scientific validity of psychiatric attempts to change sexual orientation or gender identity; and provided misleading information about the effectiveness and potential harms of sex-reassignment surgeries when counselling individuals experiencing distress related to their sexual orientation or gender expression.
33. Advocacy for the human rights of LGBTI+ people may even be framed as “*corruption on earth*” and punished by death, as demonstrated in the case outlined in paragraph 16. The UN Human Rights Committee has confirmed that Iranian authorities prosecute human rights defenders who work on behalf of sexual and gender minorities, and that such individuals are also subjected to smear campaigns.<sup>15</sup>
34. The criminalisation of advocacy for LGBT+ rights has been accompanied by extensive online attacks aimed at discrediting activists, a pattern that intensified during and after the 2022–23 nationwide protests.<sup>18</sup> The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran has further

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<sup>12</sup> eCuypere, G., G. Knudson, and W. Bockting. Response of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health to the Proposed DSM-5 Criteria for Gender Incongruence. WPATH, May 2010. [http://www.wpath.org/uploaded\\_files/140/files/WPATH%20Reaction%20to%20the%20proposed%20DSM%20-%20Final.pdf](http://www.wpath.org/uploaded_files/140/files/WPATH%20Reaction%20to%20the%20proposed%20DSM%20-%20Final.pdf). Accessed 1 December 2025.

<sup>13</sup> World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders, 6th version. 2001. <http://www.wpath.org/Documents2/socv6.pdf>. Accessed 1 December 2025.

<sup>14</sup> World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People, 7th version. 2012. [http://www.wpath.org/uploaded\\_files/140/files/Standards%20of%20Care,%20V7%20Full%20Book.pdf](http://www.wpath.org/uploaded_files/140/files/Standards%20of%20Care,%20V7%20Full%20Book.pdf). Accessed 1 December 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Supra note 1.

established that:

*“The authorities appear to have condoned, if not actively participated in, doxing, smear campaigns and other demeaning forms of online harassment, especially of women and others, including the LGBT+ community, for their support or involvement in the protests. In that regard, the authorities failed to uphold their duty both to protect and fulfil the rights to freedom of expression and to privacy.”<sup>16</sup>*

- **Refrain from censoring, withholding or intentionally misrepresenting health information, including with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity.**
- **Repeal laws that ban positive or neutral discussions about homosexuality, ensuring freedom of expression and access to information about sexual orientation and gender identity related issues.**
- **Ensure that no one is imprisoned, tortured or otherwise ill-treated for exercising the right to freedoms of expression, assembly and association.**
- **Ensure technically competent health care professionals can provide adolescents with quality sexual health education and information, including with respect to sexual and gender diversity.**
- **Refrain from assigning a diagnosis of mental disorder to children with homosexual feelings and transgender expressions and reclassify aspects relevant to the provision of health care in a non-stigmatizing health category.**
- **Ensure that all incidents of hate speech and hate crimes are promptly, thoroughly, and independently investigated, and that perpetrators are prosecuted and, where convicted, sentenced in accordance with international human rights standards.**
- **Safeguard the right to freedom of expression for those advocating for LGBT+ rights, and ensure that individuals responsible for smear campaigns, harassment, or reprisals against them are investigated and held accountable.**

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council. *Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran*. A/HRC/55/67, 14 February 2024, para. 72.

## VII. Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association (Article 15)

35. During the 2022–23 Woman, Life, Freedom protests, LGBT+ people—especially queer youth—were highly visible and among the most engaged participants, recognising that meaningful rights and dignity could not be achieved under the current government. Many took part in street demonstrations and publicly shared their experiences of discrimination, with some carrying rainbow flags or posting images of same-sex affection. This increased visibility, however, also drew the attention of the authorities, who used it to reinforce their repressive narrative.
36. 6Rang’s research shows that hate speech by Iranian officials against the LGBTIQ+ community intensified during the 2022–23 uprising, largely in reaction to the increased visibility of queer people in the protests. Senior figures—including the President, the Supreme Leader, clerics and Friday Prayer leaders—amplified long-standing state narratives portraying LGBTIQ+ people as immoral, a threat to Islamic values, and linked them to “immorality” and the protests. Statements by officials in late 2022 and early 2023 claimed that accepting homosexuality would “destroy families” or even lead to “marriage with animals.” This rhetoric exploited entrenched gender prejudices to create fear, reinforce rigid gender norms, and justify hostility towards LGBTIQ+ people. It also contributed to a climate of intimidation that discouraged their participation in the protests. For instance, in January 2023, Hojjatollah Masoud Ali, teacher at a seminary (hawza), said: “Reducing and making hijab optional, allowing relationships between boys and girls, accepting homosexuality and ultimately destroying families are the goals of our enemies.”<sup>32</sup> In the same speech, he conflated this ‘immorality’ with the protests, saying, “in the past 100 days, the rioters have shown what they want!”
37. Already tormented by discrimination and inequality in all aspects of life, the evidence collected by 6Rang from 70 LGBT+ individuals who participated in the protests confirms that LGBTIQ+ protestors experienced aggravated violations of their fundamental human rights only and merely for deviating from gender criteria imposed by the Islamic Republic during or as a result of participation in the 2022-23 protests. Moreover, some of the participants of this research ascertained that security forces targeted people who identify as LGBT+, including adolescents.
38. As confirmed by the UN Independent Fact Finding Mission on Iran, protestors belonging to the LGBT+ community, whether due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, face increased levels of violence when compared to individuals who conform to societal norms. Moreover, it contends that inflammatory rhetoric endorsed by high-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic fostered an environment conducive to cold-blooded and flagrantly unaccountable crimes.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council. *Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on*

39. From the 16th of September 2022 until February 2023, among thousands of people arrested were those belonging to the LGBT+ community, many of them being adolescent and high school students. The officials confirmed the arrest of 20,000 people, but human rights organisations believe that the actual number is much higher. Their perceived or real sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression of LGBT+ individuals became an excuse for security forces to not only deprive them of their fundamental human rights, an experience all protestors shared, but also open-handedly commit a wide-range of gender-based crimes against them, in particular.
40. The UN Independent Fact Finding Mission on Iran has reached to the conclusion that “Pre-existing discriminatory laws and policies created a permissive environment for gross human rights violations to be committed against LGBTQ+ persons. The evidence suggests that the State’s actions constituted an intentional campaign to target and suppress persons through systematic violence and discrimination in the context of the protests. On this basis, the mission finds that there are reasonable grounds to believe that LGBTQ+ persons were specifically targeted in acts amounting to gender persecution. This targeting was based on their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, intersecting with their activism and political beliefs”.<sup>18</sup> These included LGBT+ adolescents, participating in 2022-23 protests.
41. Leni’s case is an example of such crimes, documented by 6Rang. He was a 16-year-old gay man and a high school student in Isfahan when the protest begun. He described having been harassed and humiliated by his classmates and his teachers. He said the school principal referred to him using derogatory terms, and he was not able to report incidents of harassment to the school because of it. He talked about an incident where he was humiliated by students belonging to the Basij, as well as sexually harassed.
42. Leni<sup>19</sup> took part in a protest in Isfahan where he was identified and taken by plainclothes officers who beat him with batons until he fell. He was asked whether he was a boy or a girl. One of the officers attempted to ascertain his sex by touching his genitals. Because he resisted, an officer kicked him from behind, causing him to hit his head on the ground. He experienced temporary changes to his vision.
43. Leni was also sexually assaulted by the security forces during the protests. He was at a protest in Isfahan in December 2022. He was noticed by the police and plainclothes officers because of his voice. They started a physical altercation with him. He was beaten with batons and fell to the ground due to pain. They dragged him to a car to harass him. An officer asked him if he is a girl or a boy. Leni

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*the Islamic Republic of Iran. A/HRC/58/CRP.1. Advance unedited version. Geneva: United Nations, 2024. para. 391. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session58/advance-version/a-hrc-58-crp-1.pdf>.*

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Paras 82 & 405.

<sup>19</sup> His real name is withheld for security reasons.

answered that he is a boy. One of the officers said, "It's one of those tranny prostitutes. It's probably a girl." The officers attempted to ascertain his sex by touching his genitals. He tried to resist being touched. Another officer kicked him from the back. Leni hit his head on the ground, which caused his vision to blur.

- **Guarantee the right of all children, including LGBT+ adolescents, to participate safely in peaceful assemblies without fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.**
- **End the targeting, arrest, and detention of LGBT+ adolescents and ensure that no child is subjected to gender-based violence, including sexual assault, during or following participation in protests.**
- **Conduct prompt, impartial, and independent investigations into all allegations of violence against LGBT+ protestors—particularly adolescents—by security forces, and ensure accountability in line with international human rights standards.**
- **Prohibit the use of hate speech by public officials, clerics, and state institutions that incites hostility or discourages the participation of LGBT+ children in public life or peaceful assemblies.**
- **Ensure that discriminatory laws and policies—especially those related to gender expression, dress codes, or criminalisation of same-sex relations—are not used to restrict children's participation in peaceful assemblies or to justify abuses against them.**

## **VIII. Protection from Violence (Article 19)**

44. In 2020, 6Rang carried out a survey with 230 LGBT+ participants, most of whom were residing inside Iran; 34 of the respondents were under the age of 18.<sup>20</sup>

45. LGBTI individuals in Iran experience violence across every sphere of life, with overlapping forms of abuse creating a cycle from which many struggle to escape. Violence often begins in the home, where children's identities, gender expression and sexuality are suppressed or rejected by family members. In schools, LGBT children and adolescents face homophobic and transphobic bullying perpetrated by peers, teachers and administrators, undermining their right to education and contributing to poor academic performance. Many are unable to complete secondary school, and those who reach higher education continue to encounter harassment, discrimination and fear of being outed, with

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<sup>20</sup> 6Rang. *Hidden Wounds: A Research Report on Violence against LGBTI+ People in Iran*. 2020. <https://6rang.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/15-09-2020-Hidden-Wounds-English.pdf>

potential legal repercussions.

### *Family violence*

46. More than half (62.2%) reported experiencing violence from a member of their nuclear family. The table below summarises the frequency of different forms of intra-family violence. Only one quarter of respondents considered their nuclear family to be supportive when they faced violence, while 53 per cent described their family as unsupportive. A further 26 per cent reported experiencing constant violence throughout their childhood.

### *School violence*

47. According to the survey findings, 107 of the 230 respondents reported experiencing violence within their educational environments, meaning that nearly half faced abuse at school or university.

48. Violence in educational settings is one of the most visible forms of abuse against LGBT+ individuals, encompassing physical, verbal, psychological, and, in some cases, sexual violence. Such abuses commonly manifest as bullying, intimidation, and repression by classmates, teachers, or other school personnel. Eighteen per cent of participants stated that they were routinely insulted or humiliated by school administrators. Sexual violence in educational institutions is particularly prevalent in contexts where LGBT+ identities are criminalised or socially stigmatised.

49. For some LGBT people, harassment and abuse happen so often and so severely that they are left with no choice but abandon their education and drop out of school. The harassment and abuse in education is not limited to trans persons where their identity is apparent. Students who are perceived to be LGBT or have non-conforming gender expression also suffer extensive violence and harassment including bullying and rape by classmates. School authorities rarely take any action to address these issues.

### *Violence in healthcare system*

50. LGBT+ children in Iran face discrimination within the healthcare system due to staff inexperience and insensitivity, pervasive homophobia and transphobia, heteronormative attitudes, stigmatisation, derogatory remarks, harassment, denial of treatment, and instances of verbal or sexual assault. “Reparative” or conversion therapy remains widely practised by mental health professionals and is further reinforced through the Islamic Republic’s education system. Such conditions expose LGBT+ individuals to systemic mistreatment that endangers their health and overall wellbeing. Transgender people are particularly vulnerable, as they require regular medical support, including hormone therapy.

51. According to the survey referenced above, 18.7 per cent of participants reported experiencing violence perpetrated by healthcare professionals. Moreover, 66 per cent stated that they never or rarely sought assistance from mental health providers after incidents of violence, reflecting a profound lack of trust and fear of further harm.

### *Impunity and state violence*

52. The criminalisation of same-sex relations and the stigmatisation of LGBT+ identities create an environment of impunity. When members of a community—such as LGBT+ people—are forced into invisibility due to criminalisation, violence against them remains concealed, enabling perpetrators to act without fear of accountability.

53. The figure of 19.6 per cent reflects only direct violence committed by police, security forces, and the judiciary. However, the legal framework itself functions as an indirect driver of violence in all areas of life. Sexual minorities in Iran face ongoing threats, harassment, blackmail, and abuse from non-state actors who feel empowered to act with impunity because discriminatory laws criminalise same-sex conduct and gender-nonconforming expression.

- **Take effective legislative and other measures to prohibit and prevent all forms of physical and mental violence against LGBTI+ children, including corporal punishment and sexual abuse, in the family, in schools, and in other institutions, and ensure that all those who abuse children are punished without discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.**
- **Ensure that all allegations of discrimination, bullying, and exclusion of LGBT+ adolescents in schools are promptly investigated, with effective accountability measures applied to staff and students responsible.**
- **Ensure that school officials who harass or abuse children because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity are punished with proportionate penalties.**
- **Provide comprehensive, gender-sensitive training for judicial and law enforcement officials, parents and other care-givers, including teachers and healthcare workers, about homophobia, transphobia, and sexual and gender diversity.**
- **Initiate public education campaigns to raise awareness about homophobic and transphobic violence.**
- **Establish a system whereby disaggregated data are collected on all forms of violence against LGBTI+ children, and use such data to assess progress**

**and design policies and programmes to eliminate violence against LGBTI+ children.**

## **IX. Protection from Torture and other Ill-Treatment (Articles 37 and 39)**

### *“Reparative Therapies”*

54. In 2001, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment expressed concern over reports indicating that members of LGBTI+ minorities were being “subjected to forced treatment on grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity, including electroshock therapy and other ‘aversion therapies’, reportedly causing psychological and physical harm.”<sup>21</sup>

55. In 2013, the Special Rapporteur on torture reiterated these concerns, highlighting instances of “homophobic ill-treatment on the part of health-care professionals” and calling on States to repeal laws permitting intrusive and irreversible procedures—such as forced genital-normalising surgery, involuntary sterilisation, and “reparative” or “conversion” therapies—when carried out without the free and informed consent of the affected individual.<sup>22</sup>

56. 6Rang carried out new research to update its previous reports on “reparative” or “conversion” therapies. The study was based primarily on a voluntary online survey consisting of 22 questions designed to capture the experiences of LGBT+ individuals subjected to such practices.<sup>23</sup> The survey was circulated via 6Rang’s social media platforms in May 2022, and a total of 240 responses were received, 16% of which were from children under the age of 18. Of those who reported their sex, 103 identified as female, 97 as male, and 10 as intersex. Responses were gathered from 25 of Iran’s 31 provinces, with only 21 participants residing outside the country.<sup>24</sup>

57. 105 participants, or 50%, were found to have undergone reparative therapy or were offered reparative therapy. 39% of them were under the age of 18 at the time. These people lived in 20 different provinces at the time. The goals of these

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<sup>21</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, A/56/156 (3 July 2001), para. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, A/HRC/22/53 (11 February 2013), para. 76.

<sup>23</sup> 6Rang. *Straitjacketed Identities: Reparative Therapy in the Systematic Medical Abuse of Iran’s LGBTI+ People*. May 2023. <https://6rang.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/6Rang-Conversion-Therapy-Eng-edit.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup>

institutions in suggesting or offering reparative therapy have been to ‘convert’ LGBTI+ people into fitting the hetero and cis-normative Iranian society.

58. It can be deduced that reparative therapies, which are inhumane and amount to medical torture, are being used in a systematic way against LGBTI+ people in Iran. It also seems that adolescents are in the greatest danger of being subjected to it. The survey results suggest that reparative therapy is suggested to LGBTI+ people most often in their youth. It must be noted that due to the lack of financial, social and emotional independence from parents, young people are more susceptible to suggestions of reparative therapy. Furthermore, the effects of such treatments are often more pronounced and harmful on younger people and adolescents. This shows that families have a big influence on whether or not their children receive reparative therapy.
59. Many respondents reported being pressured to uptake reparative therapy by multiple sources and/or institutions. The most prominent influence was that of family (57 instances), followed by health institutions and services (51 instances), friends and acquaintances (37 instances), educational institutions (18 instances), religious institutions (15 instances), romantic or sexual partners (11 instances), judicial or military institutions (10 instances), and employers or colleagues (7 instances).
60. Participants in 6Rang’s survey reported undergoing a range of “reparative” or conversion-therapy practices, including pharmaceutical treatment, talk therapy, behavioural therapy, religious interventions, hypnosis, and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). Most individuals experienced more than one method, with talk therapy, behavioural therapy, and medication being the most common. Notably, 20% had been subjected to ECT, despite Iran’s international denial of using such practices against homosexual people.
61. Common recommendations given during these treatments included entering relationships with the opposite sex, altering clothing and behaviour, ending same-sex relationships, marrying someone of the opposite sex, and distancing themselves from friends. Some were even advised to change personal preferences (such as music) or consume pornography—methods unsupported by scientific evidence and inconsistent with ethical medical practice. These interventions constitute serious violations of human rights and pose significant harm, particularly to adolescents and young people.
62. Due to the goal of reparative therapy being changing sexual orientation and gender identity, it is often a tool of abuse and repression used against LGBTI+ people. Nearly 90% of the respondents who underwent reparative therapy reported experiencing verbal and psychological abuse during treatment, and more than 60% of them (22 people) were subjected to coercion and control. Over a third of participants also experienced violence and physical abuse. Other violations included disclosing clients’ sexual identity, sexual abuse, and deprivation of education.

63. Depression was the most commonly experienced side-effect of these treatments (82%). The other reported adverse reactions included lethargy (62%), sleep disorders (60%), memory loss, disordered eating, muscle weakness, and verbal stutters. One participant reported having attempted suicide as a result of reparative therapies.
64. The following excerpts are taken directly from respondents' descriptions of their experiences:
- "I was 17 when at the insistence of my family I went to a practitioner who claimed he could change my sexuality through hypnotherapy. He told me that after the treatment I would still be attracted to men, but I would also be sexually attracted to women. During the therapy sessions, he humiliated me and verbally abused me."
  - "It was very bad. I received electroconvulsive therapy. I've lost almost 70% of my memory, especially my short-term memory. I lost 10kg after being put on medication and I still don't have the appetite I once did. I have no drive to eat or to have sex. I feel like I've lost all my energy. It drives me crazy every day and I can't even talk about it."
  - "The treatment was not successful and drove me to suicide. My mother stopped it from going further."

#### *Torture and ill-treatment in the context of protests*

65. As confirmed by the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, LGBT+ individuals were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in a systematic manner during the 2022–23 Woman, Life, Freedom protests. This included a consistent pattern of sexual and gender-based violence targeting protestors on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The Mission documented 21 testimonies involving rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence—including gang rape, rape with objects, threats of rape, electrocution of the genital area, invasive body searches, and gender-based verbal abuse—committed largely in unofficial detention facilities. As previously outlined, LGBT+ adolescents were among those subjected to these violations.<sup>25</sup>

- **Take all the necessary measures to ensure that persons under 18 are not subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in health-care settings.**

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<sup>25</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council. *Detailed Findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran*. A/HRC/55/CRP.1, 19 March 2024, para. 714. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session55/a-hrc-55-crp-1.pdf>.

- **Outlaw all forms of “reparative therapies”, including medications and electroshocks, designed to change children’s sexual orientation and gender identity.**
- **Conduct prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in health-care settings, and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice in fair trials.**
- **Ensure prompt, independent, and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence committed against LGBT+ adolescents during the 2022–23 Woman, Life, Freedom protests.**
- **Guarantee that perpetrators—including those with command responsibility—are held fully accountable in accordance with international human rights standards.**
- **Provide effective remedies and comprehensive support services, including psychosocial and medical care, to all affected adolescents and ensure that investigations are child-sensitive and protect victims from retaliation.**

## **X. Right to Health (Article 24)**

66. In Iran, youth services, sexual health care, general medical care, and psychological support systems do not address the specific needs of LGBTI+ adolescents. As a result of persistent stigma and criminalisation of same-sex attraction and gender variance, many LGBTI+ adolescents experience social isolation, poor self-esteem, and significant emotional distress. Some seek help from healthcare providers due to confusion or anxiety surrounding their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, many professionals lack the training or knowledge to respond appropriately, which reinforces homophobic and transphobic attitudes and contributes to worsening mental health outcomes for LGBTI+ youth.
67. A significant number of Iranian mental-health practitioners continue to view homosexuality as a mental disorder and gender variance as inherently pathological. Instead of providing supportive, exploratory counselling free of predetermined outcomes, they frequently prescribe interventions aimed at altering sexual orientation or enforcing alignment between sex, gender, and sexuality. Broadly, these interventions fall into two main models:
- The first model promotes psychoanalytic and behavioural techniques designed to produce a psychological aversion to homosexuality or gender-nonconforming behaviour. In practice, these interventions are often paired with punitive

- reinforcement strategies, including shaming, nausea-inducing or psychoactive medications, and electroshock procedures. Practitioners adhering to this model continue to assert the effectiveness of such conversion efforts despite their widespread international condemnation as unscientific, harmful, and violative of human rights.
- The second model acknowledges the general ineffectiveness of attempts to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity, and instead encourages altering the bodies of transgender individuals through hormone therapy and sex-reassignment surgery. Practitioners who follow this approach frequently diagnose lesbian, gay, and transgender persons with “Gender Identity Disorder,” often conflating social non-conformity, same-sex attraction, and the psychological effects of societal prejudice—such as depression, isolation, confusion, and low self-worth—with symptoms of the disorder. This practice has resulted in lesbian, gay, and transgender individuals being misdiagnosed and pushed prematurely into irreversible medical procedures, without meaningful opportunities to explore their identities or access accurate, evidence-based information about sexual orientation and gender diversity.
  - **Ensure that adolescents can receive quality mental health care for issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity.**
  - **Ensure that medical professionals do not diagnose gender non-conforming adolescents with a gender identity disorder based on stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity.**
  - **Adopt medical policies, practices and protocols that are respectful of the right to free and informed consent, autonomy, self-determination and human dignity, without any distinction on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.**

## **XI. Right to Education (Article 28)**

68. Homophobic discrimination is pervasive within Iranian schools. Boys who are perceived as overly “effeminate” and girls labelled as “tomboys” are frequently subjected to ridicule and harassment because their appearance or behaviour is seen as deviating from rigid heteronormative gender expectations. School staff also engage in discriminatory practices toward students based on their sexual orientation or gender expression, which in some cases results in students being denied admission or expelled.
69. Gender segregation within Iran’s education system creates heightened risks for transgender adolescents whose physical appearance does not align with the sex marker on their identity documents. These students may be excluded from schools designated for their assigned sex at birth due to their transgender status, yet they are also barred from enrolling in schools consistent with their affirmed

gender unless they first undergo gender reassignment surgery and obtain new identification documents. This leaves many transgender adolescents without meaningful access to their right to education.

- **Take all necessary legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure equal access to primary and secondary education and recreational activities without discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.**
- **Ensure that students are not marginalized or segregated because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and their best interests are identified and respected in a participatory manner.**
- **Introduce into education curricula modules about diversity and about the human rights of all, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.**
- **Guarantee that trans adolescents can access education without being required to undergo medical procedures or present amended identity documents, and prohibit any school from denying admission on the basis of gender identity or expression.**







