



[United Nations Human Rights Council Votes to Establish a Fact-Finding Mission for Investigating Iran's Repressive Crackdown on Anti-Government Demonstrations](#)

Over two and a half months after 22-year-old Iranian woman Mahsa Amini died under questionable circumstances in police custody, anti-government protests have raged on in Iran, prompting the United Nations Human Rights Council to vote to establish a fact-finding mission for investigating the government's repressive crackdown. Recent figures estimate the death toll to be at least 300 based on UN reports, and 440 or more according to other sources. Particularly concerning is the fact that of these, between 40 and 60 have been children, with Amnesty International and local human rights groups stating that the majority have been killed since November 15th, suggesting an alarming increase in suppressive violence as of late. UN High Commissioner of Human Rights Volker Türk indicated that Irani forces have utilized "live ammunition, birdshot and other metal pellets, tear gas, and batons," despite claims from Iran to the contrary. Many of the tens of thousands of civilians that have been detained face an incredibly bleak scenario – as demonstrators have routinely been denied lawyers and given lengthy and severe sentences. Troubling accounts of violence and abuse against protest prisoners have also come to the forefront.

Responding to the actions taking place in Iran, the United Nations Human Rights Council was called to a special session to vote on launching a fact-finding mission. Iran attempted to pacify the UN before the meeting by saying that they would conduct their own investigation, but the offer fell on deaf ears. At the session, Iran representative Khadijeh Karimi, Deputy of the Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, argued that Western nations had no right to intervene in internal Irani affairs, especially given the unilateral sanctions placed on Iran that she stated were detrimental to the average citizen's life. Speaking on behalf of the UN, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran Javaid Rehman expressed that a fact-finding mission was required to address the uptick in violence, especially against children. He also broached the topic of lies and misinformation he believes the government is spreading regarding the hundreds of deaths, and said that the strategy is to indiscriminately arrest as many protestors as possible. Ultimately, the results of the vote were 25 for and 6 against, with 15 abstaining. The move is an unprecedented one in the history of the UN's dealings with Iran, and has been praised by prominent rights groups such as Amnesty International. For the first time, there will be a mechanism by which state abuses may be documented and cited in international court.

Earlier this week, Irani Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanani shocked no one with his announcement that Tehran will not cooperate with the UN investigation, saying that the probe is of a "political" nature. Iran has refused to back away from their conviction that the protests have nothing to do with the death of Amini or women's rights, and are purely about overthrowing the government, while also blaming terrorist activity – such as the mass shooting at Shah Cheragh Shrine in October – on the protests as well. Whether the investigation will continue to go forward remains to be seen.