



**IOPHR**

**International Organisation to  
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[To UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#)

Dear **Dr Javaid Rehman**,

IOPHR is writing to you in regards to the urgent and disturbing situations facing the prisoners of conscience held in Iranian prisons, given the dangers posed by the coronavirus epidemic in Iran.

As you are no doubt aware, it has been more than two months, since the irregularities and secrecy of the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in regards to the dangerous spread of COVID-19 virus, which has engulfed Iran, and has killed many Iranian citizens.

Unfortunately, according to the unanimous opinion of experts and some of the current Iranian parliamentarians, the official statistics provided by the Iranian Ministry of Health are unrealistic as the number of infections, and fatalities from coronavirus, is much higher than stated by the government statistics.

As you might also be aware according to official statistics, the coronavirus has infected more than one hundred and fifty cities, in thirty-one Iranian provinces. Yet, video footage of various cemeteries and mass graves indicate that the number of actual fatalities, due to coronavirus, is much higher. In this respect, a number of Iranian MPs have also stated that cemeteries seem to have "very disturbing" statistics on the number of victims of the coronavirus in Iran.

According to official reports, the negligence and disregard of Iranian authorities in reference to World Health Organization guidelines, have also led to the spread of the virus from Iran to at least eleven other countries with travellers being allowed to freely leave Iran.

Meanwhile, the situation of prisoners, especially political prisoners, and the Iranian government's reaction to their plight has been very distressing, as the Iranian regime has shown no commitment to protect their lives. Especially, given the fact that on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, according to news reports the Iranian regime temporarily freed 54,000 prisoners to combat the spread of coronavirus, while excluding the vast majority of political prisoners from this list.

Therefore, IOPHR requests that the UN and other international authorities, in accordance with international health protocols, require that the Iranian regime, immediately release all political prisoners.

Also in the light of the numerous human rights abuses, and the failure of the Iranian authorities to comply with internationally accepted standards, IOPHR expresses its deep concern over the health of political prisoners in Iran. Thus, IOPHR urges the UN and other international bodies to send a special delegation to Iran, so that they can visit the prisons, and meet with the political prisoners, in order to prevent a possible humanitarian catastrophe. As IOPHR believes that the coronavirus epidemic could provide the regime with the opportunity to eliminate all political prisoners under the pretext of becoming victims of coronavirus.

Given the historical record of the Islamic Republic, with regards to committing mass murder of prisoners, especially given the mass execution of over 30,000 prisoners in the summer of 1988, which was a clear case of "genocide" and officially registered in Iran's human rights file, one should not underestimate the Iranian regime's ability to use any excuse to eliminate all its opposing voices. Therefore, IOPHR urges the UN human rights bodies, especially the United Nations Human Rights Council, to respond to this extremely dangerous situation, by putting added pressure on the Iranian regime to free all political prisoners for at least the duration of the coronavirus epidemic like it did last week for 54,000 other prisoners.

Yours sincerely,

IOPHR