



High Council for Human Rights of
the Islamic Republic of Iran

No. 16

**An Elucidating Report on:
Actions of Security Forces;
Legality, Proportionality, and
Accountability**

**The High Council for Human Rights
of The Islamic Republic of Iran**

(February 2026)

In the Name of GOD

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Introduction

Any assessment of the performance of a country's security institutions requires moving beyond a one-dimensional perspective and understanding them as a "complex system". This system consists of interconnected components, including **fundamental laws, operational rules, professional training, organizational culture, internal oversight mechanisms, and judicial accountability**. The performance of Iran's security forces must be analyzed within the framework of this legal-institutional system. This report, rejecting approaches that generalize from specific cases to the entire system, demonstrates that the structure governing these forces is designed to minimize deviations from legal frameworks and, if such deviations occur, activate corrective and automatic disciplinary mechanisms.

Part 1: Domestic Laws on the Use of Force; Normative Hierarchy from the Constitution to Field Directives

The legal framework for the use of force in Iran has a **precise and transparent normative hierarchy**, enabling accountability at every level.

1. The Constitution, a supra-legal and ethical framework

The Constitution of Iran is not only a legal document but also a declaration of a **philosophy of governance based on human dignity**. Articles 22¹, 32², 38³, and 156⁴ form the basis for the **absolute prohibition of any arbitrary interference** with the life, property, or rights of individuals. These articles establish **non-negotiable red lines**. The role of the Constitution is to create an 'ethical-legal filter' through which all ordinary laws and executive actions must pass. Any order that contradicts these principles is inherently invalid, and officers are not only unauthorized to carry it out but are also obligated to refrain from executing it.

2. Ordinary laws and regulations, objective definition of crimes and authorities

At the next level, ordinary laws such as the Islamic Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Law on Police Regulations provide

¹ The dignity, life, property, rights, residence, and occupation of individuals are inviolable, except in cases where the law permits

² No one shall be arrested except by the order and in the manner prescribed by law. In the case of detention, the charges must be immediately communicated in writing to the accused with the reasons specified. Within a maximum of twenty-four hours, the preliminary case file must be sent to the competent judicial authorities, and arrangements for trial must be made as soon as possible. Any violation of this principle shall be subject to legal penalties.

³ Any form of torture for the purpose of obtaining confessions or information is prohibited. Forcing an individual to testify, confess, or take an oath is not permitted, and such testimony, confession, or oath has no value or credibility. Any violation of this principle shall be subject to legal penalties.

⁴ The absolute sovereignty over the world and humanity belongs to God, and He has granted humans dominion over their social destiny. No one can deprive humanity of this divine right or use it for the interests of any individual or specific group. The nation exercises this God-given right through the means outlined in the following principles.

objective and specific definitions of **crimes against public security, disruptions of order, and unlawful assemblies**. The importance of these laws lies in establishing **precise boundaries**. For example, they distinguish between a ‘peaceful assembly’ (which may only require a permit) and an ‘assembly with the intent to disrupt public order and damage property’ (which constitutes a crime). This distinction forms the legal basis for any intervention by security forces. The Police Employment Law also specifies crimes and disciplinary violations, serving as a clear warning to the personnel of the force regarding the consequences of misconduct.

3. **Laws, regulations, and technical-operational directives on the use of firearms**

The laws and regulations governing the use of firearms⁵ are key documents. These laws and regulations are not merely a list of prohibitions, but a positive guide for action that:

- **Clarifies the exceptional and highly limited conditions under which firearms may be used** (deadly armed attack, escape of a dangerous armed suspect, terrorist operations)
 1. **Requires a gradual process:** 1) Verbal warning, 2) Warning with a firearm, 3) Shooting at a non-vital body part, 4) Shooting at a vital body part (as a last resort).
- **Defines the individual responsibility of the officer in justifying any use of firearms.** Each shot fired must be explainable and in accordance with specific provisions in the regulations. **Crowd Control Protocols** also provide a clear operational algorithm that emphasizes phased action (from communication and warning to limited physical intervention). These documents aim to restrict and

⁵ The Law on the Use of Firearms by Armed Forces Personnel in Necessary Cases, enacted in 1994

regulate the discretion and arbitrary actions by officers as much as possible.

4. **The Civil Liability Law (enacted in 1960) and the Islamic Jurisprudential Principle of “No Harm”⁶**: The principle of proportionality in the use of force is fully consistent with the rule of “لا ضرر ولا ضرار في الاسلام” (no harm and no reciprocal harm in Islam), as well as Article 1 of the Civil Liability Law, which emphasize compensation for unlawful damage. Any disproportionate action that causes unnecessary harm may entail both civil and criminal liability.

⁶ لا ضرر

Part 2: The Principle of Proportionality and Gradation:

The principles of proportionality and gradation in the Iranian legal system are not merely slogans; they have been transformed into **measurable, operational, and trainable obligations**.

1. Proportionality as a “Criterion for Measuring Action”: Proportionality here is a two-step test:

- **First, proportionality of objectives:** Is the purpose of using force legitimate and lawful? (For example, preventing a crime in progress.)
- **Second, proportionality of means and outcome:** Is the level of force used necessary and the minimal amount required to achieve that legitimate objective? Does the collateral harm correspond to the importance of the objective?

In practical training, this principle is exercised through simulated scenarios. The trainee officer sees that when confronted with an angry individual wielding a knife, options such as “**controlled physical engagement,**” “**pepper spray,**” or “**baton**” take precedence over “**lethal shooting,**” unless the attack is immediately considered deadly.

2. Gradation as a “Crisis Control Process”: Gradation constitutes the temporal and operational structure of the principle of proportionality. In the management of assemblies, this process is defined as follows:

- **Prevention and warning phase:** Identification of potential risks, dialogue with organizers, and clear legal warnings.

- **Deployment and containment phase:** Positioning forces defensively, using barriers, and separating peaceful protesters from rioters.
- **Targeted intervention phase:** The targeted arrest of primary instigators of violence, using specialized trained units to minimize confrontation.
- **Restoration of order phase:** After controlling the violence, rapidly restoring public order without further conflict.

This process **prevents unnecessary escalation of tension**. Internal operational reports often emphasize success in the “**initial phases**” and the avoidance of progressing into subsequent phases.

Part 3: Absence of an Official Violence Policy; Analysis of Command, Training, and Organizational Culture

The claim that there exists a policy of violence is contradicted not only by law but also by official discourse, training content, and field evidence.

1. Senior command discourse and reinforcement of the legal framework:

Public and internal messages from senior commanders of the **Law Enforcement Force** and the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps** consistently emphasize several recurring principles:

- Preserving civilian life as a supreme value.
- A clear distinction between protesting citizens and rioters or armed elements.
- Respecting human dignity even toward offenders.
- Firm, yet fully lawful, enforcement measures

This discourse sends a **strong top-down signal** that any violence outside the legal framework constitutes a violation of direct command orders. In the hierarchical structure of the armed forces, ignoring such explicit orders is itself a serious disciplinary, and potentially criminal, offense.

2. Professional training system; internalizing ethics and law:

Training programs in security academies combine:

- **Technical skills:** Criminal law and procedure, non-lethal control techniques, crowd psychology.

- **Ethical and religious foundations:** Training based on Islamic jurisprudence emphasizing principles such as caution regarding human life (*ihtiyat fi al-dimaa*'), the sanctity of personal property and life, and justice.
- **Case studies:** Analysis of domestic and international incidents to teach practical lessons on the consequences of improper use of force. These programs aim to cultivate thoughtful and law-abiding officers. Emphasis on “the power of discretion” is always conditioned upon adherence to the legal framework.

3. Absence of structural evidence for a violence policy:

An “official violence policy” would require evidence such as secret written directives recommending extralegal violence, a reward system for committing violent acts, or the absence of mechanisms to punish such actions. None of these exist in the case of Iran. On the contrary, the presence of restrictive regulations, active oversight institutions, and judicial rulings against offending officers itself serves as evidence negating the existence of such a policy.

Part 4: Multi-Layered Oversight and Disciplinary Mechanisms

The oversight system over Iran's security forces is **an interwoven network of independent and semi-independent institutions** that operate both internally and externally.

1. Internal oversight; inspection and security

- **Protection, intelligence, and inspection offices within each force:** These bodies continuously monitor unit performance, review internal complaints, and handle public reports. They have immediate access to operational reports, available video footage, and radio communications.
- **Disciplinary boards:** They address minor infractions that may not rise to the level of criminality. Common disciplinary measures include **salary deductions, suspension from duty, forced transfer, and demotion.**

2. External judicial oversight; independent and effective

- **Public and military prosecutor's offices:** These bodies, completely independent of the Executive Branch, investigate any public complaint. Case files can be opened for incidents resulting in injury or death even without a private complainant (as part of the public aspect of the crime). Prosecutors can order inquiries from the relevant forces, inspect the scene, obtain expert opinions, and even issue temporary detention for the accused officer.
- **The High Council for Human Rights:** This body monitors, follows up on, and reports on cases related to citizens' rights. Publicly releasing summaries of the proceedings in some high-profile cases demonstrates the transparency of this mechanism.

- **Administrative Justice Court:** This court allows citizens to file complaints against all actions and decisions of government agencies, including orders or actions by security forces. The court can either annul such actions or require compensation for damages.

3. Parliamentary oversight and the General Inspection Organization of the Country

- **Commission of Article 90 of the Constitution of the Parliament:** Citizens can submit their complaints regarding the performance of government bodies to this commission. The Parliament can initiate a motion for the impeachment of the relevant minister (e.g., the Minister of Interior) if there are widespread shortcomings.
- **General Inspection Organization of the Country:** As an oversight body, it has broad powers to address violations in all government institutions. The reports of this body can be directly referred to judicial authorities.

4. Effectiveness of oversight mechanisms:

These oversight systems are not without challenges (such as delays in processing some cases). The existence of this framework does not deprive citizens of the ability to pursue legal recourse. The issuance of verdicts against offending officers in various courts (even if some may find them insufficient) demonstrates that the independent Judiciary has, in practice, intervened and imposed penalties. This, in itself, refutes the claim of “impunity” in an absolute sense.

Conclusion

The performance of Iran's security forces is framed within a dense, multi-layered, and operational legal framework. From the Constitution to field directives, professional training, and Islamic jurisprudential rules, all emphasize the principle of protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens while maintaining order. The various oversight mechanisms have enabled a system of self-correction. International bodies, rather than relying on isolated anecdotes and unfounded generalizations, can:

- 1. Identify and study these internal frameworks as part of their agenda.**
- 2. Encourage exchange of experience in technical areas such as community policing training, non-lethal crowd control techniques, and enhancing internal oversight systems.**
- 3. Respect the internal judicial and oversight mechanisms of Iran as the primary and legitimate means of addressing grievances.**

National sovereignty and the right of every country to design its own security-judicial system based on its specific values and conditions is a fundamental principle of international law. The Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated that it has established significant legal and institutional frameworks to regulate the use of force and hold its institutions accountable. Realistic dialogue must begin with recognizing these structures.

