



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Combined twentieth to twenty-seventh reports
submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran under
article 9 of the Convention, due in 2014*, ****

[Date received: 10 February 2022]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



1. In accordance with the provisions of article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Islamic Republic of Iran is honoured to submit its combined twentieth to twenty seventh periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This report has been submitted by the virtue of the article 26 of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and contains the combined twentieth to twenty-third periodic reports, which was due on 4 January 2014, as well as the update report on the implementation of the Convention until 4 January 2022. It should be noted that Iran acceded to this Convention on 29 August, 1968.
2. The Islamic Republic of Iran submitted its last comprehensive report, which includes the eighteenth and nineteenth periods, to the Monitoring Committee on September 26, 2008, under the title CERD/C/IRN/18-19. Subsequently, the esteemed Committee reviewed the aforementioned report in its meetings of 4 and 5 August 2010, and on September 23, 2010 the concluding observations of the Committee regarding the national report were published.
3. As one of the most ancient and richest human civilizations, Iran has historically played a prominent and unique role in promoting culture and civilization. With the victory of the glorious Islamic Revolution, the people of Iran elected the Islamic Republic as their endorsed form of government in a nationwide referendum. The political system, on the one hand, is based on the principles of independence, freedom, and progressive Islamic beliefs, and on the other hand, is predicated upon democracy, separation of powers, and direct and indirect control of the people over every facet of its vital institutions.
4. Iran has long been the land for residence and growth of different ethnic groups with the cultural diversity as their common heritage for humanity. While preserving the essential components of their identity, different ethnicities have formed a single national identity and united in their diversity to form a great civilization in which tolerance, forbearance, mutual recognition, and a shared understanding of interests and culture have survived for millennia. The historical composition of the Iranian ethnicities has led to the synergy and formation of a common culture, literature, and history.
5. The collective historical experience of the Islamic Republic of Iran has confirmed that the domestic strategy, as well as international mechanisms concerning the discussion of ethnicities or minorities, need to be conducted in the direction of solidarity between population groups. From this perspective, demarcations should not lead to intra-state conflicts but rather promote the rights of every group of people within the framework of cohesion and brotherhood. Different strands of studies conducted in academic as well as cultural centers have identified hundreds of different ethnical, lingual, and cultural factors of distinction among Iranian groups, from whom some may be confined to a single village. Concordantly, in Islamic Republic of Iran, ethnicities who have lived together for millennia, are not defined in a restricted sense. Rather, the criteria for identification is the provincial divisions which are done according to the political, social, cultural, economic, and geological considerations. In these divisions, attention is paid to a plethora of factors and, “public policies”, including national development programs, are reviewed and compiled in this regard to prioritize less privileged areas to chart national development programs.
6. In Iran, for historical reasons, none of the ethnic groups live in an isolated community, and it is observed that despite the visible diversity and multiplicity of ethnicities, national unity has remained consistent within the framework of ancient and contemporary Iran. Also, through searching etymological roots of the names of provinces and cities, it is evident that in many cases, these names have been selected based on historical population groups living in the region (such as the provinces of Lorestan and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province or cities and counties such as Bandar Turkmen, Talesh and et cetera). Iranian society, as mentioned, is an intertwined nation of different ethnicities, which has been strengthened by millennia-long social interactions, including the abundance of inter-ethnic marriages and interdependency.
7. According to the latest census conducted in 2016, the country’s total population is 79926270, of which 51% are men and 49% are women. The average household size of the whole country is 3.3. Iranians are divided into three groups: urban dwellers, rural dwellers, and nomads in terms of living conditions.

The number and ratio of Iran's population based on residence status is as follows:

<i>Residence status</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Population ratio</i>
Urban	59 146 847	% 74
Rural	20 730 625	% 25.9
Nomad	48 798	% 0.1

8. The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to receive large numbers of displaced persons and refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Islamic Republic of Iran is home to one of the largest and longest-running refugee populations in the world, including millions of Afghan refugees who have lived in Iran for more than 40 years. According to the latest official statistics, as of November 2020, the number of registered foreign refugees is 772,854, including 758,532 Afghan nationals and 13,533 Iraqi nationals, albeit unofficial estimates of illegal and unregistered refugees put the number as high as three and a half million people. Most foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran live in urban areas, and less than three percent of them live in guest cities. The Government of Iran has continued to provide services related to the right to education, right to health, and livelihood of refugees with a minimum of financial assistance from the international community. Due to its support, Iran has been repeatedly acknowledged and commended by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.¹

9. The return of foreign refugees is carried out in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to facilitate voluntary returns with the government's aid. These efforts include issuing exit documents, speeding up the legal proceedings involving claims to take conventional possessions, as well as the withdrawal of savings in any amount of Rials which the government almost always grants. Additional support includes allocating a portion of UNHCR funds to cover the cost of the transfer of individuals and their belongings to the border and further to their residential place. The voluntary return of Afghans takes place under a tripartite return agreement between Iran, Afghanistan, and the UNHCR. In the case of Iraqis, a bilateral return agreement between the Iranian government and the UNHCR is the modular document.

10. According to the last census of 2016, the population of the country divided by religion is as follows:

<i>Type of religion</i>	<i>Population ratio</i>
Muslim	% 99.59
Christian	% 0.16
Zoroastrian	% 0.03
Judaism	% 0.01
Other	% 0.05
Not Declared	% 0.15

11. The share of Iranians' employment in major sectors of economic activities by gender in urban and rural areas is as follows:

<i>Economic Sector</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Agriculture	19/4	18/5	23/4	5/9	52/8
Industry	31/5	33/1	24/1	34/4	24/4
Service	49/1	48/4	52/5	59/7	22/8

¹ <https://en.irna.ir/news/83677825/UN-chief-UNHCR-praise-Iran-for-hosting-Afghan-refugees>.

12. According to the ongoing research started in the 2000s with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage's sponsorship, more than 211 languages and dialects are spoken in Iran, the protection of which policy-makers will factor in promoting culture and preserving the intangible heritage of the Iranian nation.

13. The Iranian people have suffered a great deal over the past century due to economic terrorism.² The man-made famine of World War I devastated Iran courtesy of Britain's policy of prioritizing its troops' supply and transferring Iranians' starch food to their capital resulting in millions of deaths and immeasurable suffering irrespective of Iran's announced neutrality. In recent decades, the United States has imposed unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) and an unrelenting economic embargo that is considered one of the most inhumane examples of discrimination based on nationality or place of origin in the world. Unfortunately, over the last four decades, the rights of the Iranian people, including the rights to life, health, development, and other fundamental rights, have been widely and systematically violated by the imposition of UCMs.

14. This is contrary to the principle of prohibition of discrimination enshrined in international human rights law, including the United Nations Charter, Covenants on Civil and Political as well as Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which is the *raison d'être* for the present report. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures also emphasized the discriminatory nature of U.S. sanctions and their impact on the human rights violations of the Iranian people in his report to the 39th session of the Human Rights Council³ and dubbed it as "blockade in peacetime".

15. The Advisory Committee of the United Nations Human Rights Council, in its thematic report on the effects of unilateral coercive measures which was presented to the 28th session of the Human Rights Council (2015), referred to the case of Iran and described the widespread harm of unilateral coercive measures as cross-sectoral and harmful to all segments, especially children and vulnerable people⁴ and draw the attention of the charter-based organs such as Security Council and the General Assembly, as well as treaty-based human rights mechanisms to assess the harmful effects of unilateral coercive measures on human rights in order to promote the accountability of states that accommodate UCMs regardless of human rights repercussions.⁵

16. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his 2021 annual report on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, although insufficiently, expressed concern about the economic crisis resulting from the imposition of UCMs, indicates the harmful effects of sectoral sanctions on the health of Iranians, especially in the tackling COVID-19 pandemic.⁶

17. The destructive impacts of UCMs on the rights of the Iranian people are noted by various reports from governmental agencies as well as non-governmental organizations such as the Hemophilia Association of Iran and the Red Crescent Commission. The aforementioned bodies have focused on increasing difficulty accessing pharmaceutical items and medical equipment, especially those related to certain diseases and disorders such as hemophilia, epilepsy, cell therapy, bone marrow transplantation, cancer patients, MS, and the Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), otherwise known as the Butterfly Children. These shortages that are caused by UCMs put hundreds of thousands of Iranians' lives at risk on a daily basis. Needless to say, access to medicine, medical items, and equipment should not be subject to UCMs under any circumstances.

18. The right to health, and access to proper health care services, is explicitly emphasized in various international instruments. More importantly, it is enumerated in Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Interim Award

² Terrorism is defined as: "The use or threat of violence for political ends, including putting the public in fear" – Oxford's Dictionary of Law Enforcement, London:2007.

³ A/HRC/39/54, Para. 38–40, Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/39/54>.

⁴ A/HRC/28/74, Para. 32–35. Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/28/74>.

⁵ Ibid., Para. 45–34 and Para. 63.

⁶ A/HRC/47/22, Para. 56–58.

of the International Court of Justice issued on 3 October 2018.⁷ These violations, which lead to the endangering the health of Iranians, should be stopped by the United States and its allies as soon as possible to ensure the rights of the Iranian people.

19. In response to Recommendation No. 22, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the responsible body to submit the report, publishes the document along with the Committee's considerations through the link to the relevant OHCHR portal. Other non-governmental and civil society organizations are free to follow suit.

20. Noting Recommendation No. 21 of the esteemed Committee, preliminary studies have shown that, given the existing mechanisms and oversight procedures, the mentioned recommendation is not currently among the state's priorities.

21. While taking note of Recommendation No. 23 of the honorable Committee, it should be noted that the decision to update the Common Core Document has been taken and is currently on the agenda.

22. In response to Recommendation No. 20, human rights NGOs, especially non-governmental organizations, have focused on combating discrimination and social inequality during the reporting period. Comparatively, they have been more active in pursuing projects in this regard. On the other hand, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has also increased its interaction with civil society activists. By holding meetings and symposiums, more interaction and engagement have been pursued to address concerns of civil society. In the one year alone (March 2020 to March 2021), 46 national and 320 organizations at the provincial level have received licenses from the Ministry of Interior. Until now, 23,766 NGOs are officially licensed, and out of those, 73 have been accredited to the consultative status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

23. In response to Recommendation No. 6, given that the socio-economic and public policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is predicated upon provincial categories and not racial/ethnic or religious divisions, therefore in conducting a ten-year census, which is the most comprehensive statistics required by planners and decision-makers, the required and relevant indicators such as urbanization or suburbanization as well as ruralization and other province-specific criteria are included. The recommendation of the esteemed Committee in this framework does not apply. Furthermore, given the concerns raised by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racial discrimination⁸ as well as academics, in order to avoid racial profiling, it is necessary to take precautions when filling databases of citizens with racially-inclined statistics. Furthermore, researches also show that with the development of Big Data technologies and artificial intelligence, the exploitation of these divisions has been manifested through automated algorithms and led to the formation of new types of discrimination based on color and race without human intervention. In addition, and even regardless of these crucial considerations, it should be noted that the unique socio-historical characteristics of the Islamic Republic of Iran have caused many people to consider their identity as a combination of several ethnicities or even trans-ethnic where such options may seem irrelevant. This requires filling unique descriptive explanations, whereas generalization by the requirement to select limited options will result in complexity as well as inaccuracy in statistical summaries.

24. In writing the present national report, Recommendation No. 26 of the Committee has also been considered and put on the agenda. There is an ongoing attempt to compile national reports according to the instructions of the OHCHR and the word limitations set forth by the corresponding UNGA resolution.

Article 1

25. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, no distinction, prohibition, restriction, or preference based on race, color, lineage, the national or ethnic

⁷ ICJ GL No. 175, Para. 91. Available at: <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/175/175-20181003-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>.

⁸ A/HRC/44/57, Para. 08. Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/44/57>.

origin is accepted. Everyone is equal before the law in the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms in political, social, cultural, or any other facet of public life. This definition is consistent with the obligations under Article 1 of the Convention.

26. Different aspects of the public life of Iranians have been identified in the Constitution, as well as relevant laws. Accordingly, different mechanisms have been implemented to guarantee and observe their proper implementation. Based on the foregoing, equality before the law and the elimination of any unfair discrimination in the field of public life are observed as recognized principles.

27. According to Article 41 of the Iranian Constitution, the right to citizenship for every Iranian is their inalienable right, and the government can revoke one's citizenship only in the case of an individual's request. Foreign nationals without Iranian citizenship also enjoy many of the rights permitted by law. At the same time, according to Article 42 of the Constitution, they can obtain Iranian citizenship through legal channels, in which case, like other Iranian citizens, their citizenship cannot be revoked by the government and is possible only at their request.

28. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, through any classification of foreign nationals such as immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and the like, the issue of the race of the person in question, is irrelevant in law as well as in practice. It is observable that categorizations based on race, color, descent, nationality or ethnicity do not have any impact. In the fight against terrorism, these factors have no effect on the judiciary and the administration of justice, and no different punishments are issued and applied accordingly. Complementary measures as well as some of the court rulings regarding foreign nationals are given as an example in the present report under Article 5.

29. The Judiciary is currently drafting a bill called "the book of disciplinary measures". In the section on the fundamental rights of the nation, discriminatory acts and determining punishments for them are broadly defined. According to Article 12 of the aforementioned law: "Deprivation of rights or discrimination in endowing other rights is a violation under the constitution. If the perpetrator is not subject to a more severe punishment per the constitution, they will face imprisonment or a fine of the sixth category."

30. In response to Recommendation No. 7 of the Committee, it is also important to emphasize that under Article 9 of the Civil Code, "the treaty provisions concluded in accordance with the Constitution between the Government of Iran and other States are the law". Therefore, judges can refer directly to the provisions of the Conventions, including the ICERD. It should be noted that the issue of racial discrimination, which is widely and deeply rooted in some western countries, seldom has a historical background in Iran. Therefore, due to the rarity of cases of racial discrimination and the existence of national laws in this field, few verdicts with direct reference are observable. However, as mentioned above, according to the law, judges have the authority to invoke the Convention. The followings are a few examples:

- Branch 21 of the Court of Appeals of Khorasan Razavi Province, Lawsuit dated February 20th, 2018: Annulment of the decision made by the Khorasan Provincial Security Council and the Civil Registry Office in revoking the citizenship of an Iranian family suspected of citizenship according to Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- Branch 8 of the General Legal Court of Sari city, Lawsuit dated November 20th, 2017: Confirmation of the verdict related to the marriage of Ms. P. with Mr. R. and rejection of the father's complaint despite his opposition, invoking paragraph 4 of article 5 of the ICERD;
- Branch 12 of the Court of Appeals of Mazandaran Province, Lawsuit dated August 14th, 2017: Issued an order for the Civil Registration Office to provide a birth certificate per paragraph 3 of Part D of Article 5 of the ICERD;
- Branch 12 of the Court of Appeals of Mazandaran Province, Lawsuit dated March 15th, 2016: Vote to require the issuance of identity cards despite the lack of registration documents of the father and uncertainty regarding the citizenship of children under paragraph 3 of Article 5 of the ICERD;

- Branch 12 of the Court of Appeal of Mazandaran Province, Lawsuit dated November 17th, 2017: Confirmation of the right of the wife to work and rejecting the husband's complaint according to the first paragraph of Article 5 of the ICERD.

31. To address the other remark made by the Committee, relevant statistics regarding the human rights training courses in combating discrimination are mentioned in the present report under Article 7.

32. With regard to the definition of racial discrimination and in response to Recommendation No. 8 of the esteemed Committee on the combined 18th-19th national reports, it should be noted that Article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran explicitly states: "Every ethnic group and tribe has equal rights, and color, race, language, and the like will not be a basis for privilege." This fundamental principle of the Constitution, which rejects any grounds for racial discrimination, obviously confirms the principle of non-discrimination in the legal apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Given the explanations provided, which are fulfilling the obligations of the ICERD Convention, it seems in the light of the foregoing; domestic legal precedence exists to ensure the implementation of the esteemed Committee's recommendation.

33. In addition, since Article 9 of the Civil Code considers the provisions of international treaties concluded by the Government of Iran as domestic law, it can be stated that the definition of racial discrimination in Article 1 of the Convention has also been integrated into the Iranian legal system and is considered as part of Iran's domestic law. In recent years, the Iranian jurisprudence and judicial procedure have witnessed cases of direct reference to human rights treaties, which clearly show that, according to the Iranian legal system, the provisions of treaties approved by the Iranian Parliament are regarded as law. Accordingly, courts invoke conventions in their rulings and issue verdicts based on international documents such as ICERD.

Article 2

Legal Frameworks and Judicial-Administrative Standards in Combating Discrimination

34. To monitor the smooth running of affairs and the proper implementation of laws in the country's administrative apparatus to satisfy requirements for combating corruption and discrimination, the Inspection Organization of Iran was established per Article 174 of the Constitution and is operating under the head of the judiciary. The organization regularly oversees the activities of all ministries and departments as well as organizations in which the entire or part of the shares and assets belong to the government, judiciary, the armed forces, or law enforcement.

35. In addition to regular and periodic monitoring, extracurricular inspections may also be carried out at the request of other different parts of the government, judiciary or the Article 90 Commission of the Parliament, in order to identify possible cases of violations and failures, and promptly report to the relevant department of the Judiciary. It should be noted that the Inspection Organization is legally obliged to cooperate with the court until the final result is obtained and the judicial proceeding is fulfilled according to the due process. It is possible that in the cases of a legal remedy, the organization notifies the court of the request for compensation without the cost of litigation.⁹ Three examples of the interventions carried out by the Inspection Organization for the realization of people's rights are mentioned in the following:

- Case No. 2335301 (2017): Correspondence and follow-up of the Baha'i citizen's complaint about the performance of the municipality of their residence;
- Case No. 373370503 (2018): Contact the Department of Citizens and Immigrants of Bushehr Province regarding the complaint of Mr. A. Z. due to the lack of a proper communication line in the said department;

⁹ <https://www.rrk.ir/Laws/ShowLaw.aspx?Code=18014>.

- Case No. 367760803 (2016): Follow up on the complaint of Ms. Z. N. Regarding the non-issuance of taxi drivers' licenses for her.

36. Pursuant to Article 90 of the Constitution, a commission of the same name composed of Parliament's representatives is responsible for reviewing public complaints and correspondence from all over Iran, as well as Iranians abroad. According to the procedure, the Parliament members of the commission, with appropriate representation from urban and rural areas, volunteer to follow up on the complaints and correspondence of the people with a comprehensive and people-centered approach. Article 90 Commissioners refer the people's complaints or reports to the responsible department in the government or the Judiciary and inquire for follow-up. Also, according to the law, they can publish the correspondence and issues raised in citizens' letters if necessary.

37. In 2005, the Human Rights High Council started working as a cross-sectoral institution consisting of representatives of the judiciary, executive, and legislature branches of the government. This body aims to improve the coordination and focus of the government's activities in the field of human rights issues and the optimal use of facilities and more accurate implementation of relevant decisions, promotion of citizens' rights in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and international conventions, including the ICERD. The council is considered the national authority in human rights, responsible for facilitating communications and coordinating between all relevant bodies working to promote civil rights.

38. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has adopted the Citizenship Rights Charter to guarantee and develop social and economic justice. This Charter, which covers various issues, was presented by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2017 at the UN General Assembly. Articles 10, 33, 77, 97, and 110 of the above-mentioned Charter emphasize the rights of religious minorities and ethnicities regardless of social or political affiliations. Any form of hate speech, discrimination in employment, access to information, and restriction in access to information against religious minorities, ethnicities, and social or political groups are explicitly prohibited, while on the other hand, the right to intercultural communication is emphasized. In this regard, Article 10 of the Charter states: "Any insult or attempts at humiliating or spreading hatred towards ethnic groups and followers of different religions, sects, social and political groups is prohibited."

39. Furthermore, based on Citizenship Rights Charter provisions, the Supreme Administrative Council in 2016, approved a directive entitled "Citizenship rights in the administrative system" to eliminate discrimination by ensuring an accountable and efficient administrative system. To further protect, improve and promote Citizenship rights, citizens' use of the endowments and capacities, as well as facilitating the realization of the goals of the general policies of the administrative system, which communicated by the President to all administrative bodies, organizations, and government bodies. In this decree, the right to enjoy the impartial application of laws and regulations and the right to be free from discrimination in administrative systems, processes, and decisions are considered hallmarks of citizenship rights.

40. The second chapter of the "Charter for the Protection of Human Dignity and Values" in the judiciary (approved in July 2017) enumerates criteria for fair trial as well as additional safeguards and guarantors. Accordingly, equality before the law and the absence of any unfair discrimination are further emphasized and meticulously defined.

41. The "Legal Certainty Document", (سند امنیت قضائی), which was announced on October 13th, 2020, emphasizes the equality of all and their right to a fair trial and litigation regardless of their gender, race, color, language, religion, political beliefs, and other characteristics (Article 8) and has specifically criminalized discriminatory treatment in the courts and by the judges (Article 6) and other sectors within the judiciary (Article 27). Accessibility of competent judicial, quasi-judicial, disciplinary, and administrative services has also been

identified as a fundamental right of all Iranians, including the elderly and disabled (Article 9).¹⁰

42. The “Judicial Transformation Document” issued in December 2020 aims to examine further the strengths and weaknesses of procedures, processes, and also the structural efficiency in the judiciary to achieve the two main objectives of “satisfying justice” and “people’s satisfaction”. Accordingly, the promotion of public participation in reporting crimes against public rights and unfair discrimination has been pursued by establishing a specialized office in the public relations department and employing other solutions such as installing cameras on officers’ uniforms while maintaining privacy as part of a codified set for the transparent legal process of combating crime and preventing discriminatory practices.

43. In line with the commitments made by the accession of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the ILO Convention No. 111 on the Prohibition of Discrimination in Employment and Occupation, Article (38) of the Iranian Labor Law stipulates: “In case of equal work performed in identical conditions in a workshop, men and women will be granted equal wages. Therefore, discrimination in determining the salaries or wages based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, political and religious beliefs is prohibited”. Accordingly, in case of any discrimination in the workplace, according to Article 157 of the Labor Law, labor dispute resolution authorities, according to the provisions of Article 38, are obliged to investigate the workplace.

44. Pursuant to Articles 38 and 96 of the Labor Law, all labor inspectors are obliged to supervise the correct implementation of the provisions of the Labor Law and the regulations and instructions related to technical protection. According to the above-mentioned Article, if they observe any discrimination in the workplace, they will report the violating employer by issuing a notification. In case he does not comply, they will send the matter to the judicial authorities per Article 174 of the said law to render judgement.

45. In addition to the laws mentioned above, which comprehensively cover various aspects of the legislative approach to combating discrimination, specific laws and guidelines have also been adopted in this regard:

- Amendment to the Islamic Penal Code (IPC) in November 2020 regarding the criminalization of hate speech towards Iranian ethnic groups or constitutional religions. Additionally, financial assistance to these activities and the spread of hate and the promotion of violence via mass media or through assemblies, public sphere, and cyberspace is recognized as offenses;
- Establishment of the Council for the Reconciliation of Ethnicities and Minorities by the Assistant to the President for Ethnic and Minority Affairs, December 2015;
- Approval and implementation of the law on granting citizenship to children born to Iranian mothers;¹¹
- Allocating special budgets and various financial aids to special centers and notable organizations of religious minorities;
- According to Article 13 of the Constitution, religious minorities are free to compile and teach religious textbooks based on their religious books, rituals, and traditions in their schools in accordance with the law. Furthermore, in the footnote of paragraph 2–7 of the national curriculum document approved on October 19th, 2012, by the Higher Education Council, the issue of religious education to the followers of these religions has been enumerated;
- Application of local regulations, according to branches of religions, within the limits of the authority of city councils, in areas where the followers of each of these religions have the majority;
- Granting activity licenses to 58 religious minority organizations for social, civic, and cultural activities;

¹⁰ <https://rrk.ir/Laws/ShowLaw.aspx?Code=22444>.

¹¹ <https://rrk.ir/Laws/ShowLaw.aspx?Code=22043>.

- Granting government subsidies and aid to the press and special publications of the religious minority community, which include 20 newspapers, weekly and, monthly publications, magazines¹² as well as several publishing centers;¹³

46. The Islamic Republic of Iran does not consider Sunni Iranians as a religious minority, and the multiplicity of common principles and faith-based ethics has promoted the interaction of Muslim Iranians in various branches of Islam, including the ease of marriage and family formation and the establishment of joint religious ceremonies are a sign of proximity between them whereas, in the previous regime, the Sunni Iranians were in a terrible situation. Continuation of more than four decades of services of the Islamic Republic to the Sunni community of Iran in various fields (participatory, status, legal, political, economic, cultural, educational, social, et cetera.) is a hallmark that the quantity and quality indicators of individual and social life and participation and companionship and satisfaction in various fields have increased steadily and significantly. Based on official statistics and information and acknowledgment of elites, Sunni scholars and people from different section of the society have made significant progress compared to the pre-revolution era. As an example, statistics related to Sunni judges are listed in Appendix No. 1. For information on other progress made in promoting the rights of this group of citizens, paragraphs 97 to 109 of the Fourth Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Human Rights Committee are mentioned as a further source of reference.

47. The Law on the Establishment of “Dispute Resolution Councils” in 2015 was approved as one of the effective ways for citizens to have better access to justice based on the cultural and historical capacities of dispute resolution in the Iranian-Islamic society. Based on the ethnocultural as well as the religious composition of the judicial district, members of the council are chosen from volunteers with priority allocated to locals. Throughout the country, the possibility of forming councils which exclusively serve religious minorities as well as different branches of religions is mentioned in the law. During the six years-long since its inception, the councils have served the people admirably at a much lower cost alongside the judiciary. This body has now been renamed the “National Center for Dispute Settlement” by merging with the Arbitration Center.

48. The Transparency of the Bureaucratic System and Anti-Corruption Act, approved by the Expediency Council in 2011, has also provided legal protections for reporting individuals, considering the importance of receiving reports of violations to counter all kinds of violations and discrimination in the administrative environment. From this perspective, any discriminatory behavior such as dismissal, severance, early retirement, change of status, relocation, unfair evaluation, contract termination, suspension, or reduction of the reporter’s salary and benefits is prohibited and punishable as provided by law.

49. In order to ensure the observance of the rights of all citizens in the judiciary, the Board for Investigating Cases of Violation of Administrative Staff, per the provisions of the Law on Administrative Violations, identifies cases that have specifically discriminated and violated the rights of citizens and by referring to the law mentioned above, has issued verdicts of condemnation and reprimand. Sample verdicts are listed below:

- Judicial Violations Investigation Board of Ardabil Province: Verdict dated October 16th, 2019, sentence to two years in prison and demotion of Mr. S. J. R. B. the director of the judicial office of the city branch due to discrimination in the implementation of laws and abuse of administrative position per paragraph 7 of Article 8 of the Law on Administrative Violations approved in 1993;
- Administrative Violations Investigation Board of Mazandaran Province: Vote dated June 10th, 2018, reprimanding and dismissal from the service of Mr. M. Y. Z. The Judicial expert due to exerting his influence with the judicial authority to order an

¹² These periodic papers include Alik newspaper, Peyman quarterly and Araks monthly magazines, Ararat, Apaga Ayandeh, Louis Noor monthly and Hoys biweekly in Armenian and Persian, Payam-e-Assyrian monthly. Some of the Zoroastrian publications are Amrdad weekly, Pars Today Monthly, Parsnameh and Chista.

¹³ Examples include Kanoon Yohanna, which belongs to the Chaldean Catholic Church, and institutions such as Rasti, Nairi, Forouhar, Hirmaba, Barsam Printing House, and Tehran Kelimian Association.

illegal arrest warrant per paragraph 1 and paragraph 7 of Article 9 of the Administrative Violations Law approved in 1993;

- Administrative Violations Investigation Board of Ilam Province: Vote dated December 16th, 2018, conviction of Mr. M. B, director of the Department of Justice of Ilam Province for discriminating between colleagues and violating paragraph 7 of Article 8 of the Administrative Violations Investigation Law approved in 1993;
- Administrative Violations Investigation Board of Mazandaran Province: Verdict dated July 31st, 2017, deduction of 20% of salary for three months for Mr. A. A. the judicial director of the city due to non-professional relationships and intentionally using bias to the implement regulations against citizens according to paragraph 7 of Article 8 and paragraph c of Article 9 of the Law on Administrative Violations approved in 1993;
- Administrative Violations Investigation Board of Isfahan Province: Mr. M. S. K., the operator of the Judicial Notification Unit due to discrimination, intended purposes, and non-administrative relations in the implementation of laws per paragraph 1 paragraph 7 of Article 9 of the Law on Administrative Violations approved in 1993;
- Measures to counter discrimination is also pursued in military courts; Branch 8 of the Military Court of Tehran Province, dated September 1st, 2014, five months' imprisonment for Major F. Y. On charges of illegally confiscating a mobile phone, abusing a police car, and harassing an intersex citizen named N. Y. The verdict was issued per Article 585 of the IPC.

50. Considering the importance of the impartiality principle and commitment to the administration of justice and the avoidance of any discrimination in the courts as well as other sectors within the judicial system, a new law on monitoring the judges' conduct was adopted in 2011. The aforementioned law was an update over the 1925 Statue of Judges, which enumerated the course to recognize faults and issue sentences for wayward judges. Furthermore, in 1997 (reviewing the jurisdiction of judges), cases such as "unjustified delay in the hearing", "announcing the substantive opinion before issuing a verdict", "scheduling an unconventional hearing", "failure to report violations of employees, including experts and officers, "refusal to accept the documents and bills of the parties and lawyers" or any action that indicates "withdrawal from impartiality", was included as judicial acts that are punishable by law. The following are some of the court's rulings on the misconduct of judges in line with the objectives of the Convention:

- Supreme Disciplinary Court of Judges, Judgment dated November 21st, 2015. Deduction of one-fifth of monthly salary for six months for Mr. S. A. S, Branch Judge of within the jurisdictional area of Urmia city, due to the early announcement of the end of the case with missing parties according to paragraph 3 of Article 13 and Article 18 of the Supervision Law On the behavior of judges;
- Disciplinary Court of Judges, Judgments dated October 28th, 2018. The sentence included a written reprimand in the profile of Mr. A. S. Prosecutor's investigator and M. N. Deputy Prosecutor and A. M. Head of the branch of ... due to the lack of proper handling of a case and the issuance of a writ of non-prosecution regardless of the documents of the case according to Article 14 of the Law on Supervision of Judges' Conduct;
- Supreme Disciplinary Court of Judges, Judgment dated October 18th, 2015: Judgment of dismissal from the service of Mr. A. SH. Head of the General Criminal Court of ... in Fars province for six months due to bias and behavior contrary to judicial dignity, referring to paragraph 6 of Article 17 of the Law on Supervision of Judges' Behavior.

51. Concerning the right to access information on a non-discriminatory basis, the portal of "Dissemination and Free Access to Information" was established in July 2017, and 4 directives related to the Law on Dissemination and Free Access to Information were

announced by the President in May and June 2019 respectively.¹⁴ In order to monitor the proper implementation and facilitation of the process of free access to information, the Commission on Dissemination and Free Access has been established and is trying to institutionalize information disseminating processes through socialization as well as official outlets. In addition, it has provided penalties for government agencies that refuse to implement standards relating to the law.

52. In line with the public policy of inclusive development and eliminating deprivation in the less endowed regions, during the last four decades, being a local has always been widely considered a priority in employment since it has provided the possibility of employment for local forces. However, recent studies have shown that this criterion limits the citizens' access to the highest facilities in the country in specialized areas. Therefore, following the complaints raised in the judicial system, rulings were issued in the courts and subsequently the General Assembly of the Court of Administrative Justice; after reviewing the existing rulings, in some cases, the court ruled to annul the above-mentioned criterion until the relevant laws (Article 3 of the Constitution and Article 41 The Civil Service Management Law) should be adequately implemented to remove the possibility of discrimination. In followings, some of the rulings of the Court of Administrative Justice are mentioned, which include annulling some of the laws and decisions doubted to be discriminatory:

- The General Assembly of the Court of Administrative Justice, Ruling No. 1404, dated September 23rd, 2018: Cancellation of paragraph "c" of Booklet No. (1) of the Registration and Participation Guide in the National Examination of 2017 of Universities and Higher Education Institutions of the National Education Evaluation Organization regarding the banning of re-participation of candidates who have twice passed the exam, on the basis of restrictions on the right to education and creating inequality of opportunity and per paragraph 1 of Article 12 and Articles 88 and 13 of the law on the Organization and Procedure of the Court of Administrative Justice approved in 2013;
- General Assembly of the Court of Administrative Justice, Ruling No. 1786, dated September 16th, 2018: Annulment of the resolution of the Board of Trustees of the University of Tehran regarding an 80% reduction in tuition fees for spouses and children of faculty members due to unfair discrimination and violation of Article 9 of Article 3 of the Constitution Islamic Republic of Iran;
- General Assembly of the Court of Administrative Justice, Ruling No. 1265 dated March 5th, 2017: Revocation of part of the employment licenses of the Vice President for Science and Technology due to allocation of 100% quota to local candidates based on paragraph 9 of Article 3 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Article 41 of the Civil Service Law and paragraph 1 of Article 12 and Article 88 of the Law on the Organization and Procedure of the Court of Administrative Justice approved in 2013;
- Third Branch of the Court of Administrative Justice, lawsuit dated May 28, 2014: Annulment of the decision of the Security Council of Karaj city regarding the unjustified sealing of the place of business of Mr. P. V. V. obliging the health network of Nazarabad city to issue the necessary permits for a Baha'i citizen concerning the peremptory principle of law that no citizen in an unofficial capacity has the prerogative to prevent the conduct of business belonging to another citizen.

53. Another positive legal development in 2019 is the legal emphasis on the permissibility of the representation of religious minorities in city and village councils, which was based on an inquiry from the Expediency Council about Mr. Spanta Niknam, a member of Yazd City Council, which resulted in his continued presence within the mentioned body, and set a precedent of clarification for an issue which could entail a possibility for discrimination in the future.

¹⁴ These directives include: A. Publishing and free access to public information for private service providers, B. Publishing and free access to information for NGOs, C. Publishing and free access to public information for public enterprises and D. The procedure for resolving disputes over how to provide information, and follow-up on complaints.

Supportive Measures for Less Endowed Regions to Eliminate Discrimination

54. Since the submission of the 18 and 19 country reports, various new laws, executive programs, and policies aimed at supporting underprivileged and less endowed areas in Iran have been adopted and implemented. Some of these regulations are: the fifth five-year development laws (2011–2015) and the sixth (2017–2021), the law of balanced use of the country's facilities and equitable distribution and elimination of discrimination and promotion of less endowed areas approved in 2014, the set of directives regarding Permanent Development Plans approved in 2016, and many other regulations have been adopted to provide economic, social, educational and health incentives to support villages as well as less endowed areas. These protections and positive discriminations cover a broad range of areas such as allocating a larger share of the country's budget, tax exemptions, university entrance quotas, extension of rural insurance programme, employment support packages, investment, entrepreneurship, providing affordable housing, and et cetera. The description of the laws mentioned above, along with the relevant indicators and some executive reports, are mentioned in Appendix No. 2.

55. It should be noted that the criterion for determining the protected areas is based on objective studies and considering the rate of economic growth. Therefore, each province, city, village, or county have been studied to identify certain characteristics that indicate a lack of adequate development. Finally, these areas were included in the Cabinet approval letter entitled "List of less endowed areas for protection" approved in 2009. Once approved, the areas on the list will benefit from various government incentives to stimulate economic growth and development. Therefore, there is no focus on any particular ethnicity in allocating development incentives, and the government's neutrality in allocating supportive incentives is maintained.

56. In general, two approaches are followed in the formulation of regional protection regulations for less endowed areas: First, increasing the role of local groups living in rural and less endowed areas of the country in planning and policy-making of local communities through increasing interaction between local executives and councilors, and second, efforts to empower women and increase their role, including rural women, in the implementation of economic projects and involving civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations active in the field of women's rights.

57. Unfortunately, during the previous administrations (2013–2021), which were in charge of implementing the bulk of the Sixth Development Plan, the imposition of UCMs by the U.S. regime, otherwise known as unilateral coercive measures (UCMs), has hampered governmental efforts to allocate the necessary budget for the implementation of the program to reduce inequality and combat discrimination especially from May 2018 onwards. The imposition of more than 1,500 unilateral sectoral sanctions in the areas related to housing and the over-compliance of European governments and companies during these reporting periods has caused severe and irreparable damage to the country's development capacities. Consequently, the objectives set out in the housing supply and reconstruction of worn-out structures in less endowed areas have sustained caustic damages, as is the case with other sectors of the economy.

58. In response to Recommendation No. 9 of the esteemed Committee, it should be noted that one of the earnest efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran to eliminate discrimination and promote equal access to facilities as well as capacity building projects, is the vital issue of women's empowerment and the elimination of any possible double discrimination against vulnerable women (head of the household, rural and living in underprivileged areas). The following are some of these measures.

Programs for Women Empowerment in Rural or Underprivileged Areas

59. According to paragraph D of Article 80 of the Sixth Development Plan Law, the government must prepare and fully implement a comprehensive plan for the empowerment of women heads of households per relevant laws and with the approvals of the Social Council for the duration of the plan. According to the law, the plan is carried out by the office of Vice President for Women's Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Cooperative Labor and

Social Welfare (CLSW) and other relevant institutions. The Council has approved the plan of Ministers, and it is being monitored by the Parliament and relevant organizations.

60. In order to create the necessary infrastructure to identify women in need of social protection, the Ministry of CLSW has prepared a “Data Dashboard for women heads of households”. By visualizing important indicators and strategic data in tables, maps, and charts and the possibility of general or case comparison with male heads of households, this dashboard provides the possibility of observation, conclusion, and action to empower women. The divisions are made according to age group, gender and residence status along with four axes of social, economic, population, and health based on provincial categories, which can be displayed and detailed in comparative studies.

61. One of the Ministry of Cooperative Labor and Social Welfare’s (CLSW) priorities is identifying families with children and those in need of malnutrition, which is particularly important given the Coronavirus’s outbreak and the resulting food insecurity. Accordingly, livelihood assistance has been provided to mothers in eight provinces (Sistan and Baluchestan, Kerman, South Khorasan, Ilam, Bushehr, Hormozgan, Khuzestan, and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad) where family coupons have been distributed. The mentioned monthly amount varies from 12,000,000 Rials to 18,000,000 Rials based on the household dimension.

62. In addition to government assistance and granting loans in form of subsidies to all members of the society to help them cope with the consequences of the Coronavirus, over 250,000 female-headed households receive non-refundable grants. More than 51,500 rural and nomadic female-headed households and 50,500 female-headed households living in urban areas were covered by free social insurance.

63. In order to distribute health items and promote rehabilitation programs for rural areas, Ministry of CLSW’s facilitators, primarily selected from rural women (75% of 4,078 people), were chosen as program implementers. Among the essential activities of the facilitators are monitoring the optimal distribution of health items and accessibility for everyone in all areas. In addition, by creating sustainable employment for female-headed households in cooperative groups, more than 1,400 groups composed of female-headed households have been formed. The CLSW has provided these groups with capital and other facilities needed to produce health items and other necessities to fight against the pandemic in all 31 provinces of the country.

64. State Welfare Organization as one of the governmental bodies in charge of empowering women heads of households, initiated programs to improve the literacy rate of covered family members, provide social services to cases of multiple births, paying student tuition, housing deposit, and social insurance premiums for rural as well as nomad female heads of households. These measures also include implementation of self-governing women support groups, technical and vocational training based on community facilities, implementation of temporary housing and social support for homeless women, payment of self-employment loans from approved notes, implementation of the nutrition improvement plan, allocation of loans to help marriage of female-headed households and self-employed females, pursuing the empowerment of rehabilitated clients through care clinics and the expansion of social services covered by care clinics with priority given to underprivileged areas.

65. The Office for Development of Agricultural Activities of Rural and Nomadic Women in the Ministry of Agriculture organizes courses for phytosanitary, agricultural waste management, and sustainable agricultural development to provide rural women with world-class standards of healthy products. The aforementioned courses introduce production methods based on modern technologies. This joint project is implemented in cooperation with the National Standards Organization, the Vice President of Women and Family Affairs, and the Ministry of Health as one of the programs that pursue empowering rural women. In addition to training courses, the Deputy Minister of Agricultural Extension and the Ministry of Health holds annual conferences to publicize and promote a healthy diet pattern with rural women in charge.

66. In addition to training courses held by the Ministries of CLSW, Health and Agriculture, other international organizations such as APO, JICA, CIRDAP, UNDP, OIC, and FAO are also cooperating based on reached agreements in advancing projects that directly and

indirectly empower rural women. Additionally, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), while participating in the meetings of the office of the Vice President for Rural Areas, has cooperated in the preparation of the document “Model of Sustainable Rural-based Development in the Islamic Republic of Iran”.

67. Given that women are active for the production of more than 80% of the handicrafts, traditional or local industries as well as their integral role in tourism sector, protective measures related to the development of the relevant industries and promotion of positions as a platform for the creation of sustainable jobs have a direct impact in empowering women. Therefore, initiatives such as “Unemployment free Village”, “Every Village a Product”, and “Local Micro Fund” have been pursued to empower women, especially in underprivileged rural areas. Therefore, the Ministry of CLSW periodically holds festivals and exhibitions of local products, and during the pandemic, has made an effort to continue these programs in an online format.

Article 3

68. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that promoting and expanding areas of dialogue among different cultures and civilizations in the international sphere should be the primary basis for the fundamental struggle against various manifestations of racism and racial discrimination, which also entails respect for cultural diversity. In recent years, Iran has raised the idea of dialogue among civilizations as an antithesis to the notion of the clash of civilizations. The international community welcomed the initiative and it was reaffirmed in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Iran has also presented the draft resolution on cultural diversity to the 54th session of the UN General Assembly, which has been iterated in the said body for many years along with other UNGA documents which signified violence rejection such as WAVE or A/RES/72/241: a world against violence and extremism adopted on December 20th, 2017.

69. During the Ministerial Meeting of Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed to establish the Center for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity (NAM CHRCD) within the organization. The aforementioned body provides a unique opportunity to exchange views and propose initiatives among the NAM member states, UN member states and developing countries on human rights and cultural diversity and creates a framework for promoting respect for cultural diversity and institutionalizing intercultural dialogue within the Non-Aligned Movement. The final document of the summit with the participation of more than 100 non-aligned countries, which took place in Tehran from 26 to 31 of August in 2012, otherwise known as the “Tehran Declaration”, reiterated the right to cultural diversity and the need to promote dialogue among religions, cultures, and civilizations in order to enhance equality, fraternity and respect among nations. The document further condemns racism, racial discrimination, and Apartheid as blatant insults to human dignity and equality.

70. The Islamic Republic of Iran also pursued initiatives within the framework of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (IPHRC) to prioritize the issuance of documents expressing Islam’s fundamental opposition to racism, discrimination, and hatred. Furthermore, Iran played an active role in drafting a declaration of the said commission to reject unilateral coercive measures including economic sanctions as a coercive tool, which primarily attacks vulnerable groups in targeted countries.¹⁵

71. Considering the poignancy of the efforts made by the late Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures to explain the pressure on vulnerable populations within the countries affected by the UCMs and the conclusion of his report presented to the General Assembly as A/73/175, which enumerates that economic sanctions practically leads to discrimination against tens of millions of people based on nationality and birthplace,¹⁶ the Islamic Republic of Iran has contacted and volunteered in various media and academic outlets,

¹⁵ https://oic-iphrc.org/web/index.php/site/view_news/?id=345.

¹⁶ A/75/173, Para. 15 & 39. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/73/175>.

to cooperate with former as well as the current mandate-holder of the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures on human rights and encouraged other countries to assist them in this endeavor.

72. Given the spread of a new wave of racial discrimination in recent years and the deepening of institutionalized racism in some developed countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the two non-African sponsors of HRC/RES/43/1 of the Human Rights Council, jointly spearheaded the efforts with the Africa Group, to submit the draft document to the Human Rights Council. Accordingly, Iran confirmed in action its belief in eliminating systemic as well as systematic racism in law enforcement, security, and judicial agencies in countries and showed that the fight against racism, while including the integral component of defending the rights of people of African descent, requires an inclusive approach and readiness to nullify all contemporary and emerging forms of racial discrimination. It should be noted that Iran's proposal for a comprehensive approach in combating racism and countering all its malign manifestations has been recorded in the A/HRC/45/45 report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

73. To properly implement recommendation No. 19 of the Committee, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as mentioned in previous reports, was one of the active States which participated in the 2001 World Conference Against Racism and the formation of its outcome document, otherwise known as DDPA. Iran has made consistent efforts to put the issue of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance and its hallmark document, the DDPA, ongoing in the international outlets and participated in Durban Review Conference (2009) at the head of the state's level and continued to promote the message and goals of DDPA by active participation in Durban III and Durban IV which was held in 2011 and 2021 respectively. Iran has also been active in dialogue formation processes in the framework of the meetings of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and has expressed its support for the strengthening of the IGWG to form an improved understanding of how to better counter new manifestations of racism such as neo-Apartheid especially in the context of the commemoration events of the 20th anniversary of DDPA. At the national level, the corresponding measures are mentioned under the relevant articles of the present report. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the socio-cultural capacities of the Iranian society at the civil as well as governmental level are active in supporting the victims of this malignant problem and shaping the global norms against racial discrimination. For example, as mentioned earlier, Iran was one of the two non-African sponsors of HRC/RES/43/1 of the Human Rights Council, and in doing so, emphasized the importance of fighting systemic racism in the law enforcement as well as other organs that are in charge security and justice in the countries. Furthermore, Iran reaffirmed its belief that the fight against racism, while including the integral component of defending the rights of people of African descent, requires an inclusive approach and coalescing efforts of all countries to readily combat all contemporary forms of racism and its manifestations.

Article 4

74. In conjunction with the esteemed Committee, Iran is of the opinion that the provisions of Article 4 of this Convention, which prohibit the publication, promotion, and dissemination of racial discrimination, are binding and therefore under the pretext of protection of freedom of expression and information, the propagation of racist ideas and content based on racial and ethnic superiority cannot be allowed.

75. In the laws and regulations of the country, the publication and dissemination of thought and racially-inclined content with the message of hate, insult, and animosity is criminalized. For example, article 1 of the "Penal Code Regarding Propagating Racial Discrimination", passed in 1977 and still in effect, has criminalized and banned the dissemination of any ideologies based on racial discrimination, racial hatred, or incitement to discrimination based on race or gender by using public avenues (such as radio, television, leaflets; publishing books, newspapers, magazines, movies, and et cetera) against any group that is different in terms of race, color, and ethnicity, as well as any assistance, including

donations to racist activities. Under this law, the perpetrator is sentenced to imprisonment for up to six months or a fine. Also, if the committed act pertains to other laws with more severe punishments, then the latter will be applicable.

76. Under article 2 of the aforementioned law, the formation and the running of associations that are primarily active in the propagation of discrimination based on race or ethnicity, as well as spreading racially-motivated hatred or hostility to cause discord is forbidden and criminalized. According to this article, a perpetrator shall be sentenced to three months to one-year imprisonment or fined.

77. Per paragraph B of article 18 of the Law on the Activities of Political Parties and Groups, approved in 2016, using propaganda to create dissension among different sectors of the society under the pretext of race, culture or religion, will be referred to a competent authority and in case of identifying the malign intent, will result in appropriate punitive measures to the party or political group under the existing laws.

78. In addition to paragraphs A and C of Article 2 of the Press Law adopted in 1985, which is in line with the provisions of the Convention regarding the prohibition of discriminatory content based on racial and ethnic superiority, the paragraph 4 of article 6 of this law stipulates that “sowing discord between sections of society, especially through highlighting racial and ethnic strains” is among the examples that the press has been barred from publishing.

79. According to the Amended Press Law of 2009, freedom of expression and constructive criticism have been emphasized. Furthermore, legal guarantees have been provided for protection of public as well as private lives of citizens from insults, humiliation, libel and defamation.

80. In view of the provisions of this article, which emphasizes the observance of the rights of different ethnicities and groups as a fundamental and inviolable principle, the Press Supervisory Board, which consists of academic as well as ethical experts, will examine reports on violations of paragraph 4 of article 6 of the press law and takes necessary legal measures to guarantee this right. As the aforementioned paragraph enumerates the observance of ethnics’ rights or the prohibiting extremism and hate speech within the press, some of the warnings referred to various publications issued during the reporting period are mentioned in the following:

<i>Date of the meeting</i>	<i>Publication Name</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
2016.06.09	Qanoon Daily	A legal notice was sent to the newspaper’s office. Subsequently, the newspaper on June 12th, 2016, while inserting an explanation, emphasized respecting the dignity of ethnicities.
2016.07.03	Zendegiye Ideal Biweekly	Warning for publishing hateful content.
2017.11.26	Iran Daily	Warning for publishing extremist tendencies. Subsequently, an apology was published by the newspaper in the next day’s issue due.
2018.01.28	Aydingalajak Quarterly	Warning due to the inclusion of a collection of articles spreading hate and ethnic extremism.

81. Furthermore, in the section on the nation’s fundamental rights within the drafted punishment bill, which was mentioned in Article 1, the issue of provocative actions against a race or ethnic group, has been criminalized.

82. Also, in line with ensuring mutual respect for the sanctities that belong to different segments of the society and preventing insults and hatred against Sunni figures, the Supreme Leader, considering his religious and governmental position, has forbidden any insult or spreading hatred towards Sunni figures and reaffirmed his previous call in 2010 to declare these commotions as detrimental.

83. In order to respond to the emerging complications raised by permeating hate speech in cyberspace, members of the Parliament passed a bill entitled “Prohibition of insulting Iranian ethnicities and religions” in November 2020, in which any intentional insult to sow discord and tension as well as inciting violence in the public sphere is criminalized. It is punishable by imprisonment or a fine of the sixth category. The aforementioned bill, which will be annexed to the Book 5 of the IPC as iterated articles 499 and 500, states that committing the actions enumerated in the law within the context of organized crime, through the use of public services or pursued in cyber platforms with high impact radius on audiences, are subject to imprisonment or a fine of one higher category.

84. In response to Recommendation No. 10, as previously mentioned, in order to prevent the spread of hate speech in cyberspace, which includes some well-documented cases such as the libel promulgated by fans of football teams, the lawmakers responded by adopting the law on “Prohibition of Insulting Iranian Ethnicities and Religions”. Other instances of legal action against the malign phenomenon of racial prejudice and hatred are elaborated in the corresponding paragraphs of the present article, which encompasses all citizens, including media figures and celebrities, based on the principle of equality before the law. It should be noted that after reviewing Recommendation No. 10 and the allegation of insulting ethnic groups by official figures, no high-profile case was found. Needless to say, if an allegation is received, it will be investigated accordingly. The following verdict is an example of countering insults to ethnic groups, which reflects the Iranian judiciary’s commitment to protecting the rights of different ethnic groups and establishing appropriate media practices:

“Branch 6 of the Criminal Court of Tehran Province, Lawsuit dated December 11, 2017: Sentencing the director of the news site to a fine of forty million Rials with one grade abatement because of the measure taken to remove the controversial material from his website. After receiving the complaint of the representative of the Public Prosecutor (affiliated with the Culture and Media Court) and the Qashqai ethnicity due to the accusation of spreading lies, insults and slander about Qashqai people that are contrary to their customs and traditions, the verdict was issued per article 3 of the law on Constructive Criticism of the Press.”

85. One of the leading programs to counter extremist and violent ideas is the production of cultural products within the framework of laws and ethics. In the last decade, due to the increasing pressures of UCMs, meeting the essential cultural, social, economic, health and development needs of many sections of the society, especially the vulnerable sectors, has been impacted. Additionally, malign external support has also fostered some extremist tendencies. Therefore, the simultaneous observance of the rights of the people, including freedom of expression and the media while ensuring security and the fight against extremism, has led to redoubled efforts on the part of legislators as well as executive branches of the government.

Article 5

86. In the previous report under Article 5, detailed information on the absence of notable discriminatory context as well as consistent efforts to counter racial discrimination was presented. In particular, information on political organizations, encompassing participation of the people in elections, equality in the context of freedom of expression, enjoyment of the right to choose a job and receive relevant social support was mentioned. Furthermore, activities of corresponding organizations to achieve equal access in employment, education, inclusive expansion of the health care system and allocation of quotas for admission of students from rural areas were illustrated. Here are additional legal as well as executive developments during the reporting period.

87. In order to guarantee equal treatment before the judicial and administrative authorities, and observe the provisions within the article 173 of the Constitution, which emphasizes proper handling of complaints, grievances, and protests of the people against officials as well as government regulations to ensure safeguarding their rights, the “Court of Administrative Justice” was established under the supervision of the head of the Judiciary in 1981. According to the latest structural reforms in 2013 to improve accessibility, plaintiffs can send their

petitions to the Secretariat through the post box, court e-mail, or registration on the website. The branches of the court, in case they realize that the decisions and actions of the subject of the complaint have caused the violation of the rights of individuals, have the authority to issue an appropriate ruling to revoke the verdict or cancel the effect of the decision and act on behalf of the complained party to oblige the defendant to compensate. It should be noted that such cases are processed out of turn in cases of urgent proceedings.

88. One of the positive measures adopted in the reporting period is the May 2020 directive of the Judiciary, according to which, even abroad citizens with a restraining order from the justice department can also benefit from consular services outside the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran as court rulings cannot be a basis for preventing people from enjoying their fundamental civil rights.

89. The right to property in Iranian law is protected and observed for all ethnicities and races without any discrimination and is guaranteed by civil as well as judicial safeguards. Examples of guarantees of property rights are the recognition of the contract concluded by the parties, which enjoy judicial protection therewith and is enshrined in several laws, namely article 10 of the Civil Code and article 5 of the Electronic Commerce Law. No ethnic or racial entity in Iran is prohibited from engaging in economic activity or concluding contracts. All contracts, regardless of the ethnicity or race of the parties, enjoy equal judicial protection, and breach of contract by any person has legal consequences.

1. Freedom of Opinion and Expression

90. To promote local and ethnic-related publications, implement media equality, and provide more support to the media in less endowed cities and provinces, applicants for publications in these areas have been given priority. In addition, special attention is paid to the provision of facilities such as subsidies to the press and the distribution of government advertisements to these publications. Accordingly, the inclusive approach to support the languages and dialects in Iran has been consistently pursued to preserve and maintain this intangible legacy. These efforts have led to issuing more than 600 media licenses and permits in the reporting period for diverse publications with languages such as Armenian, Assyrian, Azeri, Kurdish languages and et cetera which are distributed in monolingual as well as multilingual formats.

91. In addition to publications in different provinces which cover a broad range of local languages, in order to respect the rights of Iranian religious minorities, a number of the periodical papers are also published by fellow citizens who belong to these communities. Furthermore, publication offices such as St. John Center belong to the Chaldean Catholic Church, Rasti Printing House, Naeri, Forouhar, Hirmaba, Barsam, and the Tehran Jewish Association are among the printerries belonging to religious minorities. As for periodic papers, some of them include: Alik daily newspaper (Armenian), Amrdad weekly (Zoroastrian), Hewis biweekly (Armenian), Apaga quarterly (Armenian), Forouhar monthly (Zoroastrian), Louis monthly (Armenian), Pars-e-Amrooz (Zoroastrian), Araks (Armenian), Payam-e-Assyrian (Assyrian), Ararat (Armenian), Parsnameh (Zoroastrian) and Chista (Zoroastrian).

2. Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly

92. According to Article 43 of the Citizenship Rights Charter adopted in 2016; citizens have the right to form, join and operate in parties as well as associations that are active in social, cultural, scientific, political, trade and non-governmental spheres in accordance with the corresponding laws. No one may be barred from participating or forced to participate in any of them. Membership or non-membership should not deprive or restrict citizenship rights or cause unfair discrimination. Article 45 stipulates that activities in the field of civil rights are the right of every citizen. NGOs should have access to information and competent courts to sue for civil rights violations.

93. The observance of the right to peaceful assembly, guaranteed by the Constitution and relevant laws, is exercised with care to ensure standards of non-discrimination in citizens' lives. According to the Ministry of Interior statistics, more than 900 large gatherings have been formed during the reporting period. In this regard, thousands of small and spontaneous gatherings in front of Governors' offices, governorates, city councils, Parliament, courts, and

the like may be added to the list. A large part of these gatherings has led to the reform and actions which resulted in the realization of the rights of the demonstrators. In these gatherings, the rights of citizens have been observed regardless of ethnic, racial, or regional affiliations. Additionally, more emphasis has been placed on protecting this particular aspect of citizens' rights in recent legal developments. For example, according to the law on the "Protective Measures for Active Citizens in Enjoining Good and Forbidding Wrong" (approved in 2015), whenever relevant authorities refuse to issue a permit for a peaceful assembly without providing a valid reason, the perpetrators will be subjected to punishments within the article 570 of the IPC. Furthermore, the Iranian society welcomed the popularization of webinars and virtual platforms for expressing opinions and realizing their civil rights under this article. In addition to these social gatherings, it is necessary to mention the growth of religious, cultural, artistic and sports events sponsored by thousands of institutions, theatres and festivals.

3. Non-discrimination in the Enjoyment of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

94. Given the need to combat the Covid-19 pandemic and simultaneous neutralization of the imposed economic sanctions (UCMs), policies to empower and support vulnerable groups have been pursued through providing different levels of assistance. Accordingly, as one of the essential pillars of equal distribution of government aid to the people and vulnerable groups, the Targeted Subsidy Organization distributes financial resources among different sections of society after reforming the prices of energy carriers.

95. COVID-19 unemployment insurance is one of the government's programmes to support people's livelihood during the outbreak. For this purpose, a portal was set up at <https://bimehbikari.mcls.gov.ir/> for people to register their applications. According to the latest statistics (January 2021), 864,200 people are registered in this database. Also, during three months, 1,052,852 cases of allowance have been paid to 717,352 people.

The Right to Work and Fair Working Conditions

96. Criteria for fair working conditions include equal pay for equal working conditions, the enjoyment of paid leave as well as sick leave for all employees, and suitable working environment for disabled employees. It should be noted that fair working conditions do not mean identical conditions for all. Instead, hard-working employees are entitled to higher salaries and benefits, while people with disabilities are entitled to positive discrimination and have different working options based on their physical condition and disability. In order to protect fair working conditions and pay more wages for hazardous work, the General Board of the Court of Administrative Justice has issued rulings to support employees working in harmful conditions by paying salaries and benefits and facilitation of early retirement as well as legal benefits compared to employees in normal circumstances. Examples of these rulings are listed below:

- General Board of the Court of Administrative Justice, Ruling No. 28 dated April 18th, 2012; Regarding the stipulation of 50% extra payment of salaries and benefits for people in the workplace who are exposed to dangerous rays, and the rejection of criteria for assessing the potential risk to reduce the ceiling of 50% of payment, citing the employer's potential misuse in interpreting conditions;
- General Board of the Court of Administrative Justice, Ruling No. 24 and 25 dated April 18th, 2012; Concerning the implementation of the law on allocating a quota of at least 3% of employment permits for people with disabilities in order to strengthen and pursue employment justice per paragraph A of Article 7 of the Comprehensive Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- General Board of the Court of Administrative Justice, Ruling No. 759/763 dated January 18th, 2010: Emphasizing the right of official employees to use paid leave without restriction and annulment of leave regulations related to the law on laying off staffing of government agencies (Approved 1987) due to restrictions on the use of this fundamental right;
- General Board of the Court of Administrative Justice, unified judicial precedent No. 64, dated April 21st, 2015: Emphasis on observing equality between men and women

in employment and requiring all executive bodies to grant nine months' maternity leave to women and cancel the 6-month leave practice;

- The General Board of the Administrative Justice Court, Ruling No. 9702198 dated March 6th, 2020: Annulment of the Ministry of Labor directive regarding the right to unilaterally terminate the contract and the obligation of the employer to pay "remunerations" in the period of suspension to the plaintiff Mr. D. R.

97. Efforts of the Judiciary to eliminate discrimination and reduce inequality in the workplace have been pursued in several rulings to set a precedent for protecting workers' rights against unemployment. The General Board of the Court of Administrative Justice's procedure also includes examples of judicial interpretations about determining the case of involuntary unemployment. Some of the rulings of the court, which extends the protection under article 2 of the Unemployment Insurance Law, are as follows:

- Unified judicial precedent No. 180 dated August 13th, 1998, insured workers who have been laid off and redeemed against their will and are ready to serve;
- Unified judicial precedent No. 52 dated April 27th, 2003, workers whose contract has been terminated due to the cession of their place of employment before the end of the term;
- Unified judicial precedent No. 74 dated May 15th, 2005, and No. 195 dated November 25th, 2005, workers who have been unemployed due to factory closure;
- Unified judicial precedent No. 459 dated December 3rd, 2005, and No. 924 dated December 4th, 2007, the workers who were fired due to the lack of need to continue their work and in order to implement the staffing adjustment of the institution where they used to work;
- Unified judicial precedent No. 404 dated September 1st, 2007, those who lost their job due to transference of workshop location of against their will.

98. In order to eliminate any discrimination against contract workers, the law on "Organizing and Protecting Home-Based Businesses" by issuing home-based business licenses provides for the recognition of the jobs mentioned above. The government also provides facilities through grants and the Karafarini Omid Fund. According to the executive instructions of the law, residents of underprivileged areas are given priority for paying for the facilities. It should be noted that more than 70% of the registered applicants for home-based jobs in the country are women.

The Right to Organize and Join Unions

99. Pursuant to paragraph G of article 105 of the Sixth Development Plan Law, the government is obliged to design the necessary planning for political development in such a way that by the end of the Sixth Plan, political parties and organizations are supported according to the regulations approved by the Parliament. For example, in 2017 and 2018, a subsidy of 26 billion Rials was paid to support all parties. Based on the received assistance per legal process, 120 political parties and groups have been granted a license for activity, and 1100 city offices and 145 provincial subsidiaries of the parties have been established.

100. The progress achieved in promoting and observance of labor rights has been continuously reflected through national annual reports to the International Labor Organization. Reports indicate the realization of their rights through the formation of numerous associations, holding peaceful gatherings, generating better incomes and payments, as well as access to adequate health insurance. Unfortunately, during the last four years, especially since May 2018, coinciding with the commemoration of Labor Day in Iran, severe UCMs imposed by the United States have relentlessly been pursued to pressure third-party countries to cut off economic ties with Iran. These malign pressures have resulted in the deprivation of many workers' right to employment and, by extension, the right to have unemployment insurance, health insurance and an annual increase in their income. Official statistics of the country in this regard confirm the downward trajectory in the relevant indicators.

The Right to Health, Medical Care and Enjoying Social Insurance Services

101. As stated in response to Article 1 of the Convention, the detrimental effects of UCMs on the rights of the Iranian people, especially in the areas related to health and healthcare services, endanger the lives of thousands of Iranians on a daily basis and have been repeatedly reported to the relevant international institutions. While access to medicine, medical items, and equipment can in no way be subject to sanctions and is considered a basic human right, the imposition of unilateral and inhumane U.S. sanctions has led to severe disruptions in three areas: the process of early detection and identification of carriers, isolation and treatment of patients and finally controlling and curbing the disease. In many cases, complications arising from these disruptions have violated patients' right to life. However, after a few months with the extensive efforts of the government and non-governmental organizations notwithstanding the inhumane UCMs, during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has been able to fill the gaps to an acceptable extent, which does not absolve the perpetrators, nor the determination of the government to file complaints about crimes against humanity and economic terrorism suffered by the Iranian people in international venues.

102. Based on the provisions set forth in article 29 of the Constitution, the universal social security system has prioritized social coverage to more than 1,200,000 rural and nomadic households, seeks to compensate for economic shocks for households that face livelihood problems due to reasons such as old age, disability, and death of the household's head. In addition, according to the "Village without Corona" plan, a unique communication channel has been created between the insured and medical centers, according to which the client will be able to enjoy the support of the Villagers and Nomads Social Insurance Fund to become better equipped in confronting Covid-19 and is activated through sending an SMS (number 5 to +98300027).

103. Pursuant to Article 27 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the government is obliged to determine the subsistence allowance for persons with very severe or severe disabilities without employment and income at the minimum annual wage and to allocate the necessary credits in the annual budget law. The State Welfare Organization has prioritized the amount of allocated credit, with people with very severe disabilities in the three lower deciles of the comprehensive socio-economic database of the Ministry of Labor (Means test). Accordingly, 190733 families out of 812 thousand pension families of the rehabilitation recipients are covered by a quarterly subsistence allowance. In later stages, if resources are provided, other people in the target group will also benefit.

104. Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has followed up and finalized the creation of complementary insurance coverage (electronic file) in the comprehensive support system for all rural clients with essential medical aid cards, those who receive livelihood assistance and people with a history of receiving livelihood assistance. Also, implementation requirements have been documented along with supplementary insurance package for those entitled to a franchise, inpatient and emergency services, outpatient services, doctor visits, medicine, paraclinical services, accessories and rehabilitation and treatment, nursing services, care and maintenance of the needy, transportation, and other standard services. The aforementioned services for this group are provided in addition to the basic insurance package. The credit allocation table is as follows:

	Year	Number of Covered Individuals	Allocated Money (Rials)
<i>Complementary insurance for rural and urban clients</i>	2015	3.800.000	623.027.906.000
	2016	3.800.000	713.919.019.877
	2017	3.420.000	667.335.199.359
	2018 (Sep)	3.000.000	496.347.605.400

105. With the implementation of the Health Transformation Plan during the six years from 2013 to 2019, a 65% increase in inpatient services and a threefold increase in the number of physicians in underprivileged areas, which include the dispatch of 6150 general practitioners,

specialists, subspecialists and permanent fellowships, in full time and covering broad geographical range in underprivileged areas of the country.

106. The implementation of electronic health records is another highlighted indicator among legal duties set forth by national development programs. By the end of 2019, an electronic health record was created for more than 74 million people. The medical insurance program of rural families covered cities with a population of less than 20,000 as well as nomads. The program covered a population of about 28 million, including seven million people with an urban population of less than 20,000 and 21 million with rural and nomadic populations.

107. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its health and economic consequences to the people regardless of age, gender, social group, and other characteristics made the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran take positive action and support the vulnerable at the risk of discrimination, in addition to overall efforts to spread the scope of support for all people. Therefore, in addition to general health protocols, specific protocols for the prevention of certain groups, such as people with disabilities, have been developed and published in the media and tens of thousands of brochures have been sent to villages in rural and underprivileged areas.

108. In order to strengthen the public to fight the Covid-19, the department of Public Participation within the Ministry of Labor created a “National Welfare Employment Initiative” in coordination with municipalities and public transportation complexes to create opportunities for employing thousands of people in all provinces of the country. Additionally, the initiative included other measures such as launching the production cycle of health items and deploying clients in public transportation bases to help distribute health and public health necessities to the public.

109. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees in Tehran, Iran is one of the few countries that have covered refugees with a health insurance scheme similar to that enjoyed by Iranians. Since September 2015, the department of Foreign Citizens’ Affairs of the Social Security Organization has been established to facilitate insurance coverage for foreign nationals and immigrants residing and working in the country as well as Iranians abroad. The aforementioned body has issued various circulars and instructions for Insurance for people subject to its mandate. Accordingly, Salamat insurance defines vulnerable foreign nationals as individuals with chronic conditions such as hemophilia, thalassemia, renal failure, kidney transplantation, and MS, and with the financial support received from the UNHRC, the plan has covered 100% of health costs. This coverage at the beginning of 2015 included 6800 people and reached 92000 people by the end of 2019.¹⁷

110. To better confront the spread of Covid-19 among foreign nationals, who are present in large numbers within guest cities, appropriate preventive measures are constantly being taken for regular and periodic disinfection of settlements, distribution of sanitary items and brochures. According to the decree dated March 26, 2020 of the National Corona Disease Management Task Force, foreign nationals infected with the mentioned virus undergo treatment for free. To provide items necessary for implementing of additional measures for prevention and social distancing, a joint coalition between the offices of international organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as the UNHCR, Relief International, WFP, Caritas, and IOM are working with the government.

The Right to Education and Vocational Training

111. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, 15 million students were taught in-person by 800,000 teachers in 110,000 schools. However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IT department of the Ministry of Education launched Student Education Network or Shad Plan to ensure education equality and access for all students, including those with disabilities and in vulnerable situations.

112. Due to the inaccessibility of the Shad network for many students who reside within impassable areas with low internet coverage, the Ministry of Education has prepared and

¹⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/ir/fa/health-insurance-for-refugees-uphi/>.

reproduced the textbook collections of different courses with a simple and step-by-step teaching approach in the form of various examples, designing sample skills-based assignments and functional tests for many rural and nomadic students, until the necessary infrastructure for internet coverage is created.

113. Noting the importance of rehabilitation for students with unique needs, special funds have been allocated for rehabilitation programs designed exclusively for these students. In areas facing a severe shortage of rehabilitation experts (speech therapy, occupational therapy, et cetera), a special per capita credit is defined so that students in need can adequately receive these services from either governmental or non-governmental institutions. Due to these groups of students' special needs, a quota of the education staff is reserved for the facilities dedicated to these children on an annual basis.

114. Since 2015, According to the decree of the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, all foreign students must receive proper education free of charge and regardless of the legality of the residence status. Based on these programs, hundreds of thousands of illegal Afghan refugees, have enrolled in schools. It is important to note that registering in these classes is by no means a basis for discrimination or pressure on individuals to determine their immigration status and has been pursued to empower all students regardless of nationality or residency status. The statistics regarding foreign national students are as follows:

Row	Academic year	Number of Foreign Students	Enrolled in Accordance with the Free-of-Charge Education Decree	Number of Refugee Students
1	2015–2016	361 720	4 800	312 693
2	2017–2016	405 858	52 000	327 194
3	2018–2017	453 335	105 000	314 068
4	2019–2018	480 000	130 000	313 778
5	2020–2019	558 080	137 853	343 847
6	Total	2 258 993	472 853	1 611 580

115. The share of female students from the total number of students in 2015–2016 academic year was 47.9%, the number reached 48.38% in 2018–2019, which indicates an improvement of 0.45% during the years

116. In order to promote a culture of dialogue, strengthen the spirit of self-confidence and cooperation among students and practice the principles and standards of democracy, a student council is formed via election among high school students throughout the country. There are 150 student representatives in the Council (50% male students and 50% female students) and four representatives from religious minority students (Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian), and one representative from special-needs students.

117. In the border provinces with ethnic populations, the government has invested the most in higher education, while the private sector has been less inclined to invest. This precedent has led to the public sector providing 67.8% and the private sector 32.2% of all higher education centers in these areas. In other words, the public sector has been doubly involved in implementing development policies and establishing equitable access to higher education by creating equal opportunities.

118. According to Article 15 of the Constitution, Farsi, the common historical language of the Iranian people, is recognized as the official language of Iran. In addition, the usage of local languages and dialects in mass media, press, and educational centers is free. Given that the determination of one official language enables inclusive education, student transfer, and freedom of movement, by default, it will be used to achieve educational equality better and safeguard the common spiritual heritage. Naturally, to preserve local heritage, local language literature faculties have been created in universities and schools where there is a cultural context as well as the public demand. Here are some of them:

- Establishment of Kurdish languages and literature at Kurdistan University since 2015;

- Formation of the Department of Azeri Language and Literature at the University of Tabriz in 2015;
- Establishment of the foundations for Azerbaijani Culture, Art, and Literature in 2016 in East and West Azerbaijan;
- Presenting Turkish language and literature in Urmia and Ardabil universities as a general/optional course since 2015;
- Introduction of Turkmen language and literature unit as a general/optional course in Payame-Noor Universities in Golestan and Shams Non-Profit University of Higher Education;
- Presenting Balochi language course in undergraduate courses of Sistan and Baluchestan University;
- Teaching Assyrian and Zoroastrian script and language in unique schools related to these religions.

119. The Literacy Movement Organization has given priority to the vulnerable segments of society regardless of gender, ethnicity, color, race, and religion by carrying out activities in the field of literacy for adults and people left behind since the beginning of the revolution. The results of the census are recorded in the table below:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Literacy Rate</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
2015–2016	95.7	92.8	94.3
2016–2017	96.1	93.4	94.7
2017–2018	96.5	93.9	95.2
2018–2019	96.8	94.4	95.7
2019–2020	97.1	95.4	96.6

120. To ensure gender parity in literacy, as well as guarantee full and fair access for girls to primary education with appropriate quality, 80% of the budget for literacy activities has been allocated to girls and women, especially those residing in rural areas. As a result, the literacy index among women has increased more rapidly. The census results conducted between 1975 to 2020 shows that the literacy rate gap between men and women has decreased from 23.4% in 1975 to less than 2.8% in 2020.

121. In order to achieve social equality, the Ministry of Labor implements programs to improve the technical and vocational skills of vulnerable or socially disadvantaged people, such as the disabled and addicts. In addition to training courses for vocational proficiency and job support, social skills are also taught for empowerment. Currently, 1383 daily rehabilitation centers with the participation of the non-governmental sector in all provinces of the country are engaged in this crucial task. In Appendix No. 3, tables related to the details of the activities of these centers in 2019 are mentioned.

The Right to Participate in Cultural Activities

122. The general policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in promoting national and ethnic cultures has significantly enhanced the right to participate in cultural activities for all citizens of the country who are benefiting from various economic and development programs. As mentioned in the present document under previous articles, as well as relevant paragraphs under article 7, reports such as the growth of educational indicators (paragraphs 109 to 118 of the present report) and the publication of magazines and books on ethnic culture and language (paragraphs 88 and 89 of the present report) show a notable contribution to increasing the ability of different groups of people to manifest their cultural roles. In addition, with the opening of 6 new provincial television networks during the reporting period (2008 to 2022) and a total of 33 local media, all provinces of the country have local media to reflect the culture of the people. It should be noted that according to the population of speakers of different dialects in the province, programs are published in local languages.

123. The efforts of the State related to the education of mother tongue and the Observation No.12 of the Committee are highlighted under articles 2 and 5 of the present report and, in particular, paragraph 116. In addition, the Committee's attention should be drawn to the fact that the fight against illiteracy requires the mobilization of all facilities within the framework of joint and comprehensive effort in the country to reach equality. These aforementioned efforts have been made in the form of teaching Persian as a common language of all ethnic groups in Iran, which has led to an average rate of 97% literacy in the country. In the border areas in the previous regime, the literacy rate was meager. With the victory of the revolution and the efforts of the Literacy Movement Organization during these years, the illiteracy gap between the regions has consistently decreased. For example, in 2016, the national statistics of literacy rate in the population group of 10 to 49 years was 94.7% and in Kurdistan province as one of the border provinces was 84%, which compared to the statistics of 2015 in the same province, a 2.5 percent growth has been achieved.

124. In response to Recommendation No. 16, the Committee should pay attention to the realities of Iranian society and the ubiquitous presence of all ethnic groups in various social, economic and political arenas, as well as the historical participation of religious minorities in these areas. As mentioned earlier, the detailed indicators are presented in the periodic national reports under ICCRP as well as CESCRCovenants. Here is a summary of some of the statistics in this area:

- The share of government employment in Iran is 17% of the total employment in the country, and all Iranian ethnic groups have equal opportunities in employment. To implement positive discrimination in economic projects, local populations are given priority. In some cases, this positive discrimination is criticized by other fellow citizens. As noted earlier in the court rulings set out in paragraph 50, their complaints have been heard in the Court of Administrative Justice;
- In the Qualifying Process, the criterion for recruiting forces in government organizations and departments is the commitment to observe the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Needless to say, a government official must be committed to the law that they are responsible for enforcing, as is the case everywhere with an adopted constitution. According to the regulations, other qualifying criteria in Iran, such as having no record of financial corruption, indecency or criminal indictments while boasting a good reputation, scientific and professional backgrounds, specific abilities, et cetera, are applied equally to everyone. Also, in case of any violation of the recruitment law, individuals have the opportunity to refer to competent authorities to exercise their rights.

125. Regarding Recommendation No. 17 of the Committee, it should be noted that the Committee's view of the Iranian ethnic groups as indigenous and original inhabitants corresponding to the examples of the newly established countries is inconsistent with realities. Iranian ethnicities have been there for thousands of years. Therefore, the Islamic Republic of Iran, instead of demarcating ethnic groups, specifically pays attention to the area of people's residence in the provinces and whether it is an urban or rural area while also studying the welfare indicators of citizens. Concordantly, Public Policies are reviewed and compiled based on these observations. As such, the government is obliged to distribute the country's developmental budget fairly and inclusively provide facilities, including access to justice, health, education, welfare, employment and et cetera. Otherwise, the government will be held accountable by regulatory bodies, including MPs. In addition, as mentioned in paragraph 50 under article 2, prioritizing local citizens is one of the priorities of the State for recruitment in the public sector.

126. In Iran, for these historical reasons, none of the ethnic groups live as an isolated community, and extensive historical interactions naturally prevent strict demarcations and the formation of a community, and consequently, *ghettoization*. In addition, it should be noted that Iranian citizens, in many cases, due to having multiple ethnic identities, avoid placing themselves in one single ethnic group. The request in the recommendation to include statistics on public life is mentioned in Article 2, especially in the context of information regarding less endowed areas.

Article 6

127. In implementing the provisions of the Convention within the reporting period, one of the more significant legal developments is the adoption of the new Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP), which was put into effect in 2015. The aforementioned law was another effort to ensure respect for defendants' rights and parties to criminal proceedings. By enforcing the due process for every victim's complaint (regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, et cetera), this law creates a platform for the provision of rights and deliverance of compensations for the damaged party as well as victims.

128. Various articles of the law mentioned above explicitly emphasize the non-discrimination and equality of all persons before the court. For example, article 2 of this law stipulates that criminal proceedings must be solely based on the relevant laws, guarantee the rights of the litigants and its rules shall apply equally to persons who are prosecuted on equal terms for committing similar crimes. Article 3 also emphasizes the "impartiality and complete independence of the judiciary" and emphasizes that judicial proceedings must take place as soon as possible. Article 4, while emphasizing the "presumption of innocence" and the observance of privacy and the prevention of any restrictive action, states that any preventive justice involving temporary suspension of liberty under the law and by the supervision of the judicial officer, shall not distort the "personal dignity and social standing" of the people. Article 6 enumerates the observance of "equal rights" of the accused, the victim, the witness, and other persons involved in the proceedings.

129. Also, in accordance with Article 66 of the aforementioned law, in order to protect civil rights, non-governmental organizations with statutes dedicated to the protection of children and adolescents, women, the sick and physically or mentally disabled as well as the environment, natural resources, cultural heritage, public health and protection of civil rights, can lodge a complaint about crimes committed in the above areas and take part in all stages of the proceedings to provide evidence and object the opinions of judicial authorities.

130. Pursuant to article 14 of the aforementioned law, the plaintiff can claim compensation for all material and moral losses and possible benefits being deprived because of the crime. According to note 1 of this article, moral damage includes psychological damage or defamation of personal, family, or social reputation. In addition to issuing a sentence for financial compensation, the court may order compensation for damages through other means such as issuing an apology and publishing the ruling in the press and the like. According to article 38 of this law: "Judicial officers are obliged to inform the plaintiff at the very beginning of filing a case and filing a complaint about the right to seek compensation and benefit from the services of existing counselling and other legal assistance".

131. In addition, according to article 255 of the above-mentioned law, persons who are detained during the preliminary investigation and trial for any reason and are acquitted or issued a stay of proceedings by the judicial authorities may within six months, per article 257, demand compensation from the government for the days of detention. In addition, to expedite the reparation process for the period of detention, the legislator has assigned the handling of the detainee's request to the National/Provincial Compensation Commission, consisting of three judges of the court of appeals. If the request is rejected, the person may submit his/her objection to the National Commission subject to article 258 of the law within twenty days from the date of notification. It should be noted that the regulations for the implementation of these legal provisions have recently been drafted, and as a result, the National Compensation Fund has been established notwithstanding the complications caused by the imposition of UCMs on the Iranian people, which undermines the government's effort. Nevertheless, according to article 260 of the CCP, a dedicated budget has been allocated for the aforementioned Fund within the Ministry of Justice.

132. With regard to the new tasks assigned to the Ministry of Justice and the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran per paragraph L of note 11 of the Budget Bill of 2020, the latter is in charge of referring cases/persons who suffered accidents crossing the border illegally and also soldiers who suffered incidents in the garrison, for reparations. Accordingly, 230 billion Rials of compensation was paid for 159 cases/persons in 2020 by the Ministry of Justice.

133. According to article 42 of the Citizenship Rights Charter, the primacy of protecting the dignity and privacy of citizens in the media and forums is emphasized. In case of violation of personal dignity and causing material or moral damage, perpetrators are required to compensate the injured party according to legal provisions.

134. The Secretariat for Supervision of Civil Rights Protection in all provinces, which operates under the Chief Justice of each province, is obliged to inspect all detention centers and prisons (in addition to the relevant inspection bodies that regularly perform this function) and reports directly to the head of the judiciary.

135. As mentioned in the report under article 2, the directive for implementing Citizenship Rights in the Administrative System has been announced to all ministries, governmental institutions and public sector companies, non-governmental organizations, governorates, and other agencies that use the public budget. The aforementioned document has explicitly banned discrimination levied by government employees. Under article 19 of the aforementioned directive, in case of violation or negation of the rights and responsibilities outlined in this documents and its instructions, including cases of discrimination by employees; as the case may be, the clauses of article 8 of the law on Investigation of Allegations of Employee Misconduct is invoked especially after the citizens, or the supervisory bodies lodge a complaint in this regard. Afterwards, the employees will be investigated by the relevant administrative violation review boards.

136. As mentioned in paragraph 30 under article 1 in response to Recommendation No. 7, the rulings related to the preventing deprivation of citizenship and in paragraphs 47 and 48 under article 2, verdict concerning the investigation of violations of judges and the judicial staff were mentioned as examples of the procedure. Furthermore, the judicial orders related to the suspension of some decrees with discriminatory potential were mentioned in paragraph 50. After responding to recommendation No. 10 of the Committee, in paragraph 82, an example of a verdict related to the investigation of media violations countering hate speech was mentioned. Additionally, several court rulings related to workplace compensation were given as examples in paragraphs 94 and 95 under article 5. In the following, a number of two verdicts are mentioned as examples of remedy for foreign nationals:

- Twenty-sixth branch of the Court of Administrative Justice, lawsuit No. 9309970902600623 dated 22/05/1393: Accepting and follow-up on the complaint of Mr. M. D. Citizen of Pakistan against the Article 12 Commission of the Ministry of Interior and the revocation of the sentence regarding his expulsion from the country and the obligation of the Article 12 Commission to a retrial with due consideration for the situation of the plaintiff and his family;
- Twenty-ninth branch of the Court of Administrative Justice, lawsuit No. 92099702901272 dated 22/04/1392: Interim award regarding the suspension of the administrative operations of the Article 100 Commission of the Municipality regarding the destruction of the property belonging to a Turkish citizen, Ms. N. J.'s, with utmost urgency.

137. In response to Recommendation No. 14 of the Committee, it should be noted that, firstly, given the multiplicity of press and free dissemination of information and the sensitivity of Iranian society in opposition to discrimination, the slightest violations in this area will reflect in the press and other media outlets which the Committee has also mentioned one of them in its Recommendation No. 10. Technically, the public media and the local radio and television channels reflect the occurrence of any violations and shortcomings. Secondly, as mentioned, various investigation mechanisms for identifying the violations are in practice to verify the allegations. Third, educational programs promote public awareness of the rights of the people, which are described under article 7 of the present report. Furthermore, many domestic court rulings related to this issue, especially the cases in paragraphs 47 and 48, indicate the investigation of violations by judges or government employees, implying the plaintiffs' awareness of their legal rights and the judicial authorities' seriousness to deal with violations.

138. In response to Recommendation No. 11, the following should be noted: First, the issue of avoiding duplications and the need for coherence and relevance between the different observations and the provisions of each human rights instrument are crucial concerns that

have recently received serious consideration by many parties during the review of the human rights treaty bodies. Secondly, the Human Rights High Council activities were included in the previous report to show the efforts of that institution in eliminating racial discrimination. Regardless of this pivotal role pursued in the current broad structure, the Honorable Committee has recommended reform. Concordantly, the official response of Iran to the Human Rights Committee in this regard is referred for consideration. Furthermore, it should be noted that the 12th Government has submitted a bill regarding NHRI to the Parliament.

139. In response to Recommendation No. 15, it is worth mentioning that the Islamic Republic of Iran's periodic report regarding the efforts to improve welfare indicators, and socio-economic development are being compiled and updated for the future considerations of the CESR Committee. It seems that the Committee's bias and generalization regarding Iranian ethnic groups have been raised without regard to this information. For example, in the aforementioned recommendation, it is said that the provinces with an ethnic majority are the poorest, which does not correspond to the facts on the ground and the provided statistics. To delve into details, Tabriz, the capital of East Azerbaijan province, is the country's third most advanced industrial city, and the entire province has an indispensable role in industrial production and export. On the other hand, South Khorasan province, although mostly Farsi-speaking, is relatively less developed. For the sake of avoiding re-mentioning, the Committee's attention is drawn to paragraph 53 of Article 2 concerning the criteria for identifying less endowed areas and the subsequent allocation of extra developmental budgets and paragraphs 54 to 65 under article 2 concerning the support of less endowed areas. Additionally, paragraphs 102 to 112, as well as 117 and 118 under article 5, refer to promoting general health indicators and literacy, which are generally pursued in border areas and less endowed regions. Regarding the measures taken in the field of housing, the Committee's attention is drawn to paragraphs 10 to 12 of Annex 2 and other supplementary paragraphs of the aforementioned Annex. Furthermore, other measures in this regard are mentioned in the following:

“Through using its potential facilities and benefiting from the cooperation of other institutions in charge of housing, including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, governorates, Housing and Urban Development Organization, housing charities, and the participation of clients in housing construction, State Welfare Organization' Housing Supply Task Force has taken the following measures:

- Allocation of 66048 residential buildings to the target population from 2010 to the end of June 2017;
- Construction of more than 10,000 housing units for the disabled in 2018 and granting 100 million Rials aid to 1000 women heads of households for housing deposit;
- Pursuing the construction of 49,445 residential buildings in a joint effort with the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the Housing Foundation, and the New Cities Development Company and charities;
- Providing free housing facilities to victims of natural disasters whose homes have been wholly or partially damaged from 2018 onwards.”

140. Regarding Recommendation No. 13, as mentioned earlier, the achievements and ongoing efforts in literacy developments that have led to an above 95% rate for all citizens make it possible for everyone to speak and write in Persian. Additionally, in order to properly consider and observe the accuracy of legal opinions, courts and lawyers in all provinces are familiar with the languages of the ethnicities. Thus far, no case of abuse of rights in the courts due to lack of familiarity with the language of the tribunal has been reported. In the case of foreign nationals, the right to have an interpreter is explicitly provided in article 200 of the CCP, which stipulates: “The investigation judge shall appoint a certified eligible interpreter from amongst officially certified interpreters, and in the absence of access to a registered interpreter, another trusted one should be appointed for the plaintiff, the private claimant, the accused, the witness and any other person who is unable to speak in the Persian language. The translator must take an oath to observe honesty and trustworthiness. The lack of an oath does not prevent accepting the interpretation of a trusted interpreter”.

141. In addition, Article 201 of the Code of Criminal Procedure expressly states: “For the plaintiff, the private claimant, the accused, the witness, and the informed person who is deaf, or have no power of speech, the investigation judge shall appoint a trusted person, as interpreter, who is capable of expressing their intentions through sign language or other technical means. The translator must take an oath to observe honesty and trustworthiness. In case the individuals are able to write, the clerk of the branch shall write the question for them so that they give replies in writing.”

142. In view of the foregoing, the right to have a lawyer and an interpreter is provided in the CCP, and failure to comply with the rules may result in disciplinary liability.

143. In response to Recommendation No. 18, it should be remembered that non-adherence to some conventions does not mean non-compliance with the rights outlined therein. Rather, some concepts may not align with national values, or some provisions may not be among national priorities. However, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken note of Recommendation No. 18 of the Committee and informs that in order to protect migrant workers and their family members, the Islamic Republic of Iran, considering its accession to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its duties according to the constitution in support of all the oppressed and defenseless people, both Iranians and non-Iranians, in its practical procedures, provides various protections to refugee workers.

144. In addition, in the reporting period, the capacities of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the possibility of acceding to it are being re-examined by the Expediency Council. According to studies, its indicators have been used to improve laws and executive planning, and efforts have been made to raise standards regarding women’s rights. The following are some of the executive and legislative efforts:

- Approval of the law granting citizenship to children born to Iranian women married to foreign men on April 21st, 2020. According to Article 1-T-1 of this law, Iranian mothers can apply for Iranian citizenship for these children from birth. If their child has reached the age of 18 or older, they will be able to apply for citizenship;
- Establishment of a committee for the prevention of violence at the national level (2015) by the department of crime prevention in the judiciary. The Committee has developed and disseminated guidelines for specialized interventions in State Welfare Organization’ safe homes to support female victims of domestic violence, as well as guidelines for specialized interventions in cases of child abuse;
- Amendment of Article 946 of the Civil Code in 2011 regarding accounting all property for an inheritance to the wife;
- Equal payment of Diyya for men and women according to note 2 of Article 4 of the Third Party Insurance Law approved in 2008 and amendment of the Insurance Law based on the unanimous vote of the unified procedure verdict issued by the General Board of the Supreme Court No. 777-32 dated April 21st, 2020, based on the note 1 of Article 551 IPC for all types of crimes, whether intentional or unintentional, in suicide or bodily harm;
- Compilation of the document on the safety of women and children in the Ministry of Interior;
- Law on Intensification of Punishment for Acid Spraying and Protection of Victims of this crime, approved in 2019;
- Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents including vulnerable girls, approved on April 13th, 2020;
- Preparation and communication of national gender parity indicators to executive bodies in 8 axes, 25 leading indicators, and 177 sub-indicators;
- Implementation of national economic empowerment plan for women heads of households based on the new model of home business development by creating sustainable employment in 31 provinces of the country with priority given to women heads of households, vulnerable or potentially vulnerable in rural and suburban areas;

- Supporting 415 joint projects of non-governmental organizations active in the field of women and family with the focus on job creation, prevention of social harms, strengthening the family foundation, deepening religious values and beliefs.

145. Additional Indicators regarding women's empowerment include:

- In 2019, 54.45% of the country's students were women. In 2017, the share of women in the faculty in the whole country was equal to 24%, which compared to 2009 levels that were 16%, shows an increase of 8% of women's presence in shaping the higher education;
- Increase the appointment of women to managerial positions in government agencies. For example, in the Ministry of Interior, this figure increased from 13.6% in 2017 to about 25% in 2020, which includes 15 deputy general governors, 63 general managers, 106 deputy general managers, four governors, 60 deputy governors, 53 district heads, and 2955 county heads;
- The rate of women's economic participation has increased from 12.4% in 2013 to 16.4% in 2018. The share of women working in government had increased from 34.64% in 2009 to 41.67% in 2018, which indicates an upward trend in the presence of women in government recruitments. More than 4,000 women entrepreneurs are active and by 2018, 223 conglomerates have been established and are operating throughout the country, of which female CEOs manage about 20%. Between 2011 and 2019, 523,371 companies and institutions were registered by women. In addition, 850,565 companies and institutions have a board of directors consisting of female members. Between the above-mentioned years, 24,804 patents have been registered by women as joint or solo intellectual property.

Article 7

146. Given the importance of public education regarding the rights and responsibilities of different segments of society, which results in awareness of legal facilities and rights in the face of possible discrimination, various institutions have taken several measures in the reporting period. Notably, the public media has played a crucial role among them. Some of these activities are enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.

147. In addition to extensive programmes in training administrative and judicial staff, the judiciary has taken various measures to fulfil its duty in the public education on human rights and subsequently, creating sensitivity as well as the impetus for combating discrimination. In the following, some of the efforts in this regard within the reporting period are mentioned:

- Sponsoring educational animations with citizenship rights' themes;
- Broadcasting television programs to teach people about various legal issues;
- Broadcasting various radio programs to teach people different legal topics;
- Production of 75 law training brochures in an easy-to-understand format;
- Production of 23 volumes of books and booklets with the topics of teaching how to realize rights and broader topics about human rights, and citizenship rights;
- Establishment of legal and consulting stations in judicial assistance offices, selected cultural centers, forensic medicine areas, property and deeds registration offices, several metro centers, tax offices, and many large factories and industries to promote citizens' legal knowledge. (It should be noted that all judicial complexes across the country have consulting services and judicial assistance offices that provide free advisory services to the people).

148. Additionally, the judiciary pursues corporate human rights education to its staff which includes courses related to appropriate non-discriminatory behavior. As an example, the tables related to holding training courses for the staff of the Prisons Organization in Tehran and other cities are presented in the following which covers the period between 2011 to 2018:

<i>Row</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Sessions</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
1	Human rights in prison	2011	18 times (in person)	16	552
2	Getting to know citizenship rights guidelines	2014	7 times (in person)	6	93
3	Getting to know citizenship rights guidelines	2015	11 times (in person)	6	241
4	Getting to know citizenship rights guidelines	2016	once (in person)	6	125
5	Citizenship rights in the administrative system	2017	5 times (virtual)	8	7946
6	Citizenship rights of prisoners	2017	6 times (virtual)	8	11 120
7	Citizenship Rights Charter	2017	6 times (virtual)	6	11 120
8	Citizenship rights of prisoners	2019	32 times (virtual)	8	12 460

149. In addition to the judiciary, the Center for Public Management Training has also provided educational content and training courses for managers and employees of the administrative apparatus, including knowing the Citizenship Rights Charter and Citizenship Rights in the administrative system. It is worth mentioning that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the aforementioned training courses are currently available through the electronic platforms provided by the center. The following table lists the hours of training for human rights courses in 2019:

<i>Row</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
1	Citizenship Rights Charter	6	More than 22 500
2	Citizenship Rights in the Administrative System	8	Up to 17 000
3	Total		More than 39 500

150. During the years 2016 to 2019, the Ministry of Interior held more than 260 cultural festivals to raise public awareness for the rights of ethnic groups and create cultural contexts to prevent discrimination in social interactions. The festivals are held specifically with the theme of honoring the culture of Iranian ethnicities and with the attendance of officials, elites and prominent individuals in 21 provinces. Notwithstanding the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many of these festivals are held through online platforms to showcase cultural and artistic performances, host educational webinars such as introductory contents regarding village culture in different regions, specialized interviews with locals, and various competitions, including the Iran Zamin Fair. Simultaneously, virtual exhibition of handicrafts has opened the possibility of online sales for the audience.

151. The official commemoration of martyrs and veterans of religious minorities, usually held annually, is another cultural festival held by the government to counter discrimination and expresses the commitment to respect all religious minorities and pay tribute to their heroism and sacrifices.

152. To facilitate education for the first-grade students of the ethnicities, more introductory content is provided in the curriculum, for which purpose a particular budget is allocated. As mentioned in paragraph 116 under Article 5, teaching local cultures and literature of the provinces and familiarity with the cultural features of other provinces are among the courses provided for students and are taught in schools. In addition to the courses related to the local culture and literature of each region, students are getting familiar with the diversity of languages and dialects throughout Iran through studying courses such as “Our Iran’s Shared Cultures”, “Cultural Analysis”, and “Cultural Features”.

153. The official broadcast of the “Adhan” call to prayer from some local media channels are based on Sunni tradition and formulation of time that is another measure taken by the government in respecting cultural diversity as is currently pursued in Zahedan, the capital of

Sistan and Baluchestan province, along with some other cities within the aforementioned province.

154. The permissibility of the fact that all students can wear their traditional local dress in schools is another example of the government's practical measures to support noble Iranian groups and a testament of practical commitment to honor the symbols of different groups and, by extension, eliminate the grounds of racial and ethnic discrimination in the country. It should be noted that employees of offices and banks may also use traditional Iranian clothes in the workplace.

155. The active publications of various periodical papers in the field of theology and research about different religions are emblematic of the governmental efforts to counter religious discrimination in every possible way. Journal of Dialogue of Religions, Journal of Dialogue between Islam and Christianity, Journal of Religions and Mysticism, Quarterly Journal of Religious Knowledge, Journal of Religions, Journal of Religions News, Journal of Religious Approximation, Tolu Islamic Quarterly, Forough Vahdat Magazine on the Unity of Beliefs and Divine Religions, Haft Aseman Quarterly, are some of these publications which along with their online platforms, are active in the study of different religions and beliefs and are operated by researchers on divine religions with the support of the government.

156. The official closure of schools on Saturday was one of the requests of the Jews of Iran, which was officially announced during the reporting period. Other religious minorities also have the right to be on holidays during their religious occasions and ceremonies.

157. In addition to Iranian ethnic groups, efforts are being made to promote the culture of refugees and asylum seekers. National Afghan Studies Festival is held by the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with the UNHCR Office for Afghan youth and adolescents born and raised in the Islamic Republic of Iran to raise awareness of Afghanistan's culture, history and customs for Afghanistani youth and adolescents.
