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POLICY BRIEF

Islamic Republic Attacks on Medical Facilities, Healthcare Workers, and Injured Protesters

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This report documents grave, systematic, and coordinated violations committed by Islamic Republic security forces against medical facilities, healthcare professionals, and injured civilians during nationwide protests in Iran. Based on multiple independent eyewitness testimonies, cross-verified regional reports, and institutional confirmations, the findings establish a deliberate strategy of repression in which healthcare spaces were intentionally transformed into sites of surveillance, violence, and punishment.

The evidence demonstrates: Direct attacks on hospitals, including the deployment of tear gas and armed incursions; targeted killing, abduction, and enforced disappearance of injured protesters seeking medical treatment; intimidation, detention, and extrajudicial killing of healthcare workers who adhered to medical ethics; and criminalization and judicial persecution of medical personnel for providing lifesaving care. Collectively, these acts constitute serious violations of international human rights law, including the right to life, the right to health, and the principle of medical neutrality, and may amount to crimes under international law.

Attacks on Medical Facilities

- Islamic Republic security forces carried out direct and deliberate attacks on functioning hospitals during periods of heightened protest activity. These operations included the deployment of tear gas inside or inside hospital premises or their immediate surroundings, as well as armed incursions that damaged property and disrupted emergency medical services.
- At least three hospitals have been conclusively identified as targets:
    - Imam Khomeini Hospital, Ilam Province — *January 4, 2026*

- Sina Hospital, Tehran — *January 6, 2026*
- Milad Hospital, Esfahan — *January 14, 2026*

- Patients, medical staff, and civilians seeking urgent medical care were exposed to tear gas and violence, creating life-threatening conditions within facilities that are protected under international law as neutral medical environments.
- The World Health Organization has publicly confirmed attacks on Sina Hospital (Tehran) and Imam Khomeini Hospital (Ilam), providing independent international verification of these violations.

Targeting, Abduction, and Murder of Injured Protesters

- Credible evidence indicates that security forces systematically pursued injured protesters into ambulances and hospitals, treating physical injury as a proxy for criminal culpability.
- Reports confirm that injured protesters were:
  - Shot and killed inside ambulances,
  - Killed while receiving medical treatment, or
  - Forcibly abducted from hospitals and subsequently disappeared or executed.
- A documented case involves Nastaran Abdollahi, who was shot from behind in Andisheh, Karaj (Fars Province), on January 8, 2026. She was transferred to Noor Hospital, where she was briefly treated before being forcibly removed by security forces. Her family was deliberately misled, subjected to extortion, and later informed that her body had been found in Kahrizak, where she died from uncontrolled internal bleeding.
- Independent reporting by The Wall Street Journal documents the killing of Sam Afshari, a 17-year-old protester from Karaj (Fars Province). He was admitted to the hospital in critical condition with a gunshot wound to the back of his head, but a medical worker later told his family that security forces removed him and other injured patients. Four days later, his body was found in a Kahrizak morgue, showing a second gunshot wound and severe facial trauma.
- Multiple eyewitness testimonies from Lahijan (Gilan Province) and Mashhad (Razavi Khorasan Province) confirm that on January 8–9, 2026, injured protesters were identified in ambulances or medical facilities, abducted, and summarily executed.

Intimidation and Murder of Healthcare Workers

- Healthcare professionals across Iran attempted to uphold medical ethics by protecting injured protesters. As reports indicate, through such measures as:
  - Concealing patients from security forces;
  - Delaying or withholding patient identification;
  - Registering patients under false names to prevent arrest.

- In response, security forces engaged in direct violence, threats, and institutional retaliation. Medical personnel were explicitly ordered not to document injuries, deaths, or patient identities.
- At least one confirmed extrajudicial killing of a healthcare worker has been documented:
  - Samin Rostami, a nurse in Karaj (Alborz Province), was killed by security forces while treating a wounded protester.
  - Maryam Zardasht, a physician based in Shiraz (Fars Province), died after being attacked by security forces inside a hospital, where she was critically injured and remained in intensive care for about one week. According to Iran International, she had travelled to Marvdasht (Fars Province) to help treat injured civilians and overburdened staff during the early days of the protests.
- Additionally:
  - Elham Zeinali, a healthcare professional who participated in protests, was shot and deliberately denied medical assistance. Emergency services refused to dispatch an ambulance, resulting in her death.
- Professional retaliation was also used as a tool of intimidation. For example:
  - Farshid Pourreza, head of Golsar Hospital in Rasht (Gilan Province), was dismissed from his position and expelled from the hospital for treating injured protesters.

Detention, Criminalization, and Persecution of Healthcare Workers

- Islamic Republic authorities have arbitrarily detained healthcare professionals across multiple provinces solely for providing medical care to injured protesters.
- The Medical Council of Iran has confirmed approximately 15 detentions. Independent reporting indicates that at least 32 healthcare workers have been forcibly disappeared, with no information regarding their whereabouts or legal status.
- Detainees are reportedly:
  - Held without formal charges;
  - Denied access to legal counsel;
  - Subjected to a credible risk or torture, coerced confessions, and capital punishment.
- Confirmed cases include:
  - Alireza Golchini — General surgeon, Qazvin (Qazvin Province), faces a credible risk of execution
  - Babak (Hossein) Zarabian — Physician, Milad Hospital, Esfahan (Esfahan Province), arrested during a violent home raid.
  - Shamsi Abbasalizadeh — Gynecologist, Tabriz (East Azerbaijan Province)
  - Moein Moradian — Nurse, Mashhad (Razavi Khorasan Province)
  - Ameneh Soleimani — Physician (Ardabil Province)

- Farhad Nadeali — Orthopedic surgeon, Gorgan (Golestan Province)
- Saber Dehghan — Neurosurgeon (Kerman Province)
- Babak Pouramin — Emergency medicine specialist (Razavi Khorasan Province)

Legal Assessment

- The documented conduct constitutes serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including:
  - The right to life,
  - The right to health,
  - Protections against arbitrary detention and extrajudicial killing,
  - The principle of medical neutrality and professional independence.
- The scale, repetition, geographic breadth, and institutional coordination of these acts strongly indicate a state policy, rather than isolated misconduct.

Conclusion

The evidence establishes a systematic campaign by the Islamic Republic to weaponize healthcare as a instrument of repression.

Hospitals were rendered unsafe, injured civilians were treated as execution targets, and healthcare professionals were subjected to violence, dismissal, and death for adhering to medical ethics.

These actions constitute grave violations of international law and warrant urgent international investigation, accountability mechanisms, and protective measures for Iranian healthcare workers and civilians.