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Building the Evidence Base for Effective Antislavery
Governance

Iran Country Profile

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About this report

This report was prepared by Dr Ana Valverde-Cano (Rights Lab Research Fellow in Antislavery Law and Policy), Dr Katarina Schwarz (Rights Lab Associate Director), and Dr Daniel Ogunniyi (Rights Lab Research Fellow).

The report is based primarily on research conducted from 2020-2021 and may not therefore consider more recent emerging evidence. Updates to the report to reflect new and emerging evidence are ongoing.

The authors welcome enquiries on the report and the project more broadly, which may be directed to Katarina Schwarz at Katarina.Schwarz@nottingham.ac.uk

About the project

The report was produced to support the research project 'Building the Evidence Base for Effective Antislavery Governance in the UK and the Top 20 UK Source Countries', funded by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre. The research team consisted of Dr Katarina Schwarz (Rights Lab, University of Nottingham), Dr Ana Valverde-Cano (Rights Lab), Dr Daniel Ogunniyi (Rights Lab), Alexandra Williams-Woods (CSIS, University of Liverpool), and Prof Jean Allain (Wilberforce Institute, University of Hull).

The **Rights Lab** is a University of Nottingham "Beacon of Excellence" and home to the world's largest and leading group of modern slavery researchers. Through its five research programmes, impact team, and INSPIRE project, the Rights Lab is underpinning antislavery with an advanced research agenda, collaborating with civil society, business, and government, and elevating survivor-informed research as a key part of knowledge production to help end slavery.

The **Wilberforce Institute** at the University of Hull aims to advance fundamental knowledge of slavery and emancipation, informing policy, business practice and public debate at local, national and international levels. The Wilberforce Institute brings together experts in humanities, law and social sciences to help tackle this global problem head on.

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1. Overview of antislavery and anti-trafficking governance in Iran

1.1. GSI rankings and government response ratings¹

	Vulnerability		Prevalence			Government response	
	Ranking ²	Score ³	Ranking ⁴	Absolute ⁵	/ 1000 ⁶	Ranking ⁷	Rating ⁸
2013	11	71.26	103	62,000	0.8	-	-
2014	17	71.4	60	336,700	4.3	166	D
2016	22	50.94	57	495,300	6.2	-	D
2018	30	63.30	10	1,289,000	16.2	-	D

Although the nature of modern slavery makes measuring the phenomenon an inherently difficult task, the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index (GSI) aims to provide the 'best available data and information about the scale and regional distribution of modern slavery'.⁹ This includes **national prevalence estimates** of the number of people experiencing modern slavery in each country, calculated on the basis of a predictive model that accounts for individual and country-level risk factors.

National prevalence estimates are analysed in the context of results of Walk Free's **Vulnerability Model**. This model uses 'statistical testing and processes to identify the factors that explain or predict the prevalence of modern slavery'.¹⁰ The 2018 Vulnerability Model features five factors, made up of 23 distinct variables: governance issues, lack of basic needs, inequality, disenfranchised groups, and effects of conflict.

Walk Free also tracks **government responses** to modern slavery, tracking government efforts across five milestones: (1) survivors of slavery are identified and supported to exit and remain out of slavery; (2) criminal justice mechanisms function effectively to prevent modern slavery; (3) coordination occurs at the national and regional level, and governments are held to account for their response; (4) risk factors such as attitudes, social systems, and institutions that enable modern slavery are addressed; and (5) government and business stop sourcing goods and services produced by forced labour.¹¹

It should be noted that the scope, methodology, and sources underpinning GSI findings has changed over the years. This means that data between different reporting years is not directly comparable.

¹ Walk Free Foundation, 'The Global Slavery Index 2013' (2013), available [here](#); 'The Global Slavery Index 2014' (2014), available [here](#); 'The Global Slavery Index 2016' (2016), available [here](#); 'The Global Slavery Index 2018' (2018), available [here](#) accessed 04 November 2020

² Note: a higher ranking (closer to 1) indicates high vulnerability relative to other countries.

³ Note: a higher score indicates increased vulnerability to modern slavery, with a median country score of 47.28 in 2018.

⁴ Note: a higher ranking (closer to 1) indicates a high number of people experiencing modern slavery per 1000 in the overall population relative to other countries.

⁵ Note: absolute prevalence measures the estimated number of people experiencing modern slavery in the country.

⁶ Note: prevalence /1000 measures the number of people estimated to experience modern slavery per 1000 people in the overall population.

⁷ Note: a higher ranking (closer to 1) indicates better government responses to modern slavery relative to other countries.

⁸ Note: government response ratings are broken into scoring bands, with an A rating representing the strongest government response to modern slavery (with a score of 70-79.9), followed by BBB (60-69.9), BB (50-59.9), B (40-49.9), CCC (30-39.9), CC (20-29.9), C (10-19.9), and D (<0-9.9).

⁹ Walk Free Foundation, 'Global Findings' (2018), available [here](#).

¹⁰ Walk Free Foundation, 'Methodology: Vulnerability' (2018), available [here](#).

¹¹ Walk Free Foundation, 'Methodology: Government Response' (2018), available [here](#).

1.2. TIP Rankings 2001-2019¹²



The Trafficking in Persons report ranks countries into one of four tiers, as mandated by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 (TVPA). A country's ranking is based on an assessment of the government's efforts to address trafficking in persons, rather than on the extent of trafficking within the country, and considers government action against the TVPA's minimum standards.¹³

Tier 1: Countries whose governments fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. To maintain a Tier 1 ranking, the country must continue to make progress in its anti-trafficking efforts each year.

Tier 2: countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

Tier 2 Watch List: Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and for which:

- (a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;
- (b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecution, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials; or
- (c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional steps over the next year.

Tier 3: Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. Countries ranked as Tier 3 may be subjected to restrictions on non-humanitarian, non-trade foreign assistance from the US. Impositions of such restrictions are determined by the President.¹⁴

1.3. Quantitative measures on anti-trafficking governance (TIP Reports)¹⁵

Measure	Year	Qty
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¹² US Department of State, '2020 Trafficking in Persons Report' (2020), available [here](#); (2019) available [here](#); (2018), available [here](#); (2017), available [here](#); (2016), available [here](#); (2015), available [here](#); (2014), available [here](#); (2013), available [here](#); (2012), available [here](#); (2011), available [here](#); (2010), available [here](#); (2009), available [here](#); (2008), available [here](#); (2007), available [here](#); (2006), available [here](#); (2005), available [here](#); (2004), available [here](#); (2003), available [here](#); (2002), available [here](#); (2001), available [here](#)

¹³ Minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking are found in section 108, Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 (United States), available [here](#).

¹⁴ See further Department of State (2020), above n **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, 40-41.

¹⁵ Sources:

[1] UNGA, 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Note by the Secretary-General' (21 July 2020) A/75/213.

[2] Global Slavery Index, 'Country Data-Iran' (2018) <<https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/data/country-data/iran/>> accessed 12 October 2020.

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Funds allocated in the National Development Fund to aid COVID-19 relief efforts.	2020	\$1 billion	[1]
Estimated number of people living in modern slavery	2018	1,289,000	[2]

2. Treaty commitments¹⁶

Instrument	Ratification date
1926 Slavery Convention	N/A
1953 Protocol to the Slavery Convention	N/A
1930 Forced Labour Convention	10 June 1957
2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention	N/A
1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery	30 December 1959
1957 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention	13 April 1959
1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	24 June 1975
1966 Optional Protocol to the ICCPR	N/A
2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings	N/A
1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families	N/A
1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court	N/A
1999 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention	8 May 2002
2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children	N/A
2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography	26 September 2007
2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict	N/A
2011 Domestic Workers Convention	N/A
Regional and bilateral instruments	
1969 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation	1969
Key International Commitments	
1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights	
1985 Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power	
2005 UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law	
2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (5.3, 8.7)	

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¹⁶ UN Treaty ratification info sourced from UN Treaty Collection available [here](#); ILO Convention ratifications available [here](#); Rome Statute ratification status available [here](#). Membership data on the 2017 Call to Action is found at Delta8.7, 'Call to Action' available [here](#), accessed 04 November 2020

3. General country context

3.1. Constitutional structure

Iran is a unitary Islamic republic with one legislative house. The 1979 Constitution¹⁷ establishes a Shia Islamic political system based on *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist).¹⁸ Shia clergy, most notably the *rahbar* (supreme jurist or supreme leader) and political leaders vetted by the clergy dominate the key power structures, such as the judiciary, armed forces and government-run media.¹⁹ While there are elected –Presidency, the Islamic Consultative Assembly and Assembly of Experts– as well as non-elected institutions –Guardian Council, Expediency Council and National Security Council–, the *rahbar* and the Guardian Council represent the supremacy of clerical power over the political system.²⁰

The legislative power operates through the Islamic Consultative Assembly (*Majles*) that consists of 290 elected representatives of the people (Article 58 of the Constitution). The Guardian Council must validate the laws passed by the Parliament, dismissing those which are not in accordance with Islamic principles (Article 4 of the Constitution). Deputies are elected directly for four-year terms by universal adult suffrage, and recognized religious and ethnic minorities have token representation in the legislature (Article 64 of the Constitution).²¹ The President of the Republic, who is a native-born Iranian Shi'i²² elected by universal adult suffrage, and the Council of Ministers are vested with executive power, except for matters directly related to the Supreme Leader (Article 60 of the Constitution). The judiciary power is exercised by the courts of justice that must be formed according to Islamic criteria (Article 61 of the Constitution). The 12-member Council of Guardians is a body of jurists which acts in many ways as an upper legislative house (Article 4 of the Constitution), and the Expediency Council arbitrates disagreements between the *Majles* and the Guardians Council. The Assembly of Experts (*Majles-e Khobregān*) chooses the leader from among qualified Shi'i clergy on the basis of the candidate's personal piety, expertise in Islamic law, and political acumen. However, although the members of the Assembly of Experts –which selects or dismisses the supreme leader– are directly elected in popular elections, they can be vetted by the Guardian Council, which in practice mean the Assembly of Experts is indirectly selected by the supreme leader himself.²³ The *rahbar* is at the head of both the state and oversight institutions, and his duties and authority are those usually equated with a head of state.²⁴ He is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, controls the military intelligence and security operations, has sole power to declare

¹⁷ See an unofficial English translation: <<https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf>> accessed 06 October 2020.

¹⁸ On the description of the functions of the *velayat-e faqih*, see Articles, 5, 91, 96, 98, 107 and 110 of the Constitution

¹⁹ US Department of State, '2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran' (2019) <<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iran/>> accessed 06 October 2020. See, in-depth: Saïd Amir Arjomand, 'The Kingdom of Jurists: Constitutionalism and the Legal Order in Iran' in Rainer Grote and Tilmann Röder, *Constitutionalism in Islamic Countries: Between Upheaval and Continuity* (Oxford, 2012); Saïd Arjomand and Nathan Brown, *The Rule of Law, Islam, and Constitutional Politics in Egypt and Iran* (New York, 2013).

²⁰ Luciano Zaccara, '¿Quién gobierna Irán? La estructura política de la república islamista' (2009) 3 *Culturas* 17 <<http://revistaculturas.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Qui%C3%A9n-gobierna-Ir%C3%A1n-La-estructura-pol%C3%ADtica-de-la-rep%C3%BAblica-islamista.pdf>> accessed 06 October 2020.

²¹ 'The Zoroastrians and the Jews each elect one representative; the Assyrian and Chaldean Christians elect one representative together; the Armenian Christians of the North and the South each elect one representative' (Article 64).

²² 'Nevertheless, the presidential elections, like all other elections, are not democratic because the Guardian Council only allows candidates whose absolute loyalty to the regime has been proven. Women are per se excluded from running as candidate'. See BTI, 'BTI 2020 Country Report- Iran' (2020) 9 <https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_IRN.pdf> accessed 06 October 2020

²³ The supreme leader directly appoints half of the 12-member Guardian Council, and indirectly the other half, because they are appointed by the head of the judiciary, who is appointed by the supreme leader. US Department of State, above n 19.

²⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Iran' (30 September 2020) <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Iran/Government-and-society#ref32220>> accessed 06 October 2020.

war, and has direct or indirect control over the legislative and executive branches of government.²⁵ Power is concentrated in the supreme leader and the Guardian Council, none of them being democratically accountable institutions.²⁶

3.2. Political context

Iran has one of the largest economies in the Middle East, with an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$445,345,282.12.²⁷ Iran ranks second in the world in natural gas reserves and fourth in proven crude oil reserves.²⁸ Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have held the position of supreme leader since 1989, while in May 2017 voters re-elected Hassan Rouhani as President of the Republic. However, restrictions on media and obstacles to opposition figures for speaking publicly, reportedly limited the freedom and fairness of the elections.²⁹ Although fundamentalist and conservative groups dominate the landscape sphere in Iran, after the latest 2016 parliamentary elections, the Majles is under the control of the so-called reformists.³⁰ The Majles has traditionally been a platform for political debate and criticism of the government, since they frequently challenged the president and his cabinet.³¹ However, 'within both the conservative and the reformist camps, a complex and powerful relationship system of mafia-like family relations exists, which makes it hard to reform the republic'.³² With a 99% of Muslim population, Iran is a multi-ethnic State, wherein non-majority ethnic and religious groups experience governmental discrimination and hold a precarious status.³³ Many militant-separatist Sunni Baloch and Kurdish parties and organizations have been established in Iran in response to this central government's mass repression and discrimination of minorities, with violent clashes between Kurdish groups and governmental authorities.³⁴

In November 2019, gasoline price hike prompted mass protests nationwide, which were the largest since the 2009 Green Movement protests, and to which security forces responded with lethal violence, reportedly killing more than 300 people, and injuring and arresting more. 'Iranian citizens protested for economic, political and social demands. For the first time in Iran's history, demonstrations and protests did not start in the capital Tehran, but in provincial towns. More importantly, it was the first time that people attacked both the reformist and conservative camps of the regime'.³⁵ At this juncture, authorities

²⁵ US Department of State, above n 19.

²⁶ BTI, above n 22, 13.

²⁷ World Bank, 'GDP (current US\$) - Iran, Islamic Republic' (2017) <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IR>> accessed 12 October 2020.

²⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, 'United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017-2021)' (2016) p. 2 <https://www.unodc.org/documents/islamicrepublicofiran//UNDAF-Iran_2017-2021.pdf> accessed 12 October 2020.

²⁹ US Department of State, '2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran' (2018) <<https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iran/>> accessed 06 October 2020.

³⁰ Main political groups are: 'Pervasive Coalition of Reformists' (includes Council for Coordinating the Reforms Front, National Trust Party, Union of Islamic Iran People Party, Moderation and Development Party); 'Principlists Grand Coalition' (includes Combatant Clergy Association and Islamic Coalition Party, Society of Devotees and Pathseekers of the Islamic Revolution, Front of Islamic Revolution Stability); and 'Front of Prudence and Development of Islamic Iran' (includes Islamic Revolution Devotees Party, Solidarity of Graduates Party, Association for Graduates of Azarbaijan, Development of Islamic Iran Party, Islamic Iran National Unit Party). See Nordea, 'Country Profile Iran' (2020) <<https://www.nordeatrade.com/en/explore-new-market/iran/political-context>> accessed 06 October 2020.

³¹ BTI, above n 22, 11.

³² Ibid, 12

³³ Ibid, 6.

³⁴ See Chirine Mohseni, 'The instrumentalization of ethnic conflict by the State: the Azeri-Kurdish Conflict in Iran', in Gilles Dorronsoro and Olivier Grojean, *Identity, Conflict and Politics in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 2018) 217 ff; Gareth Stansfield, 'Kurds, Persian Nationalism, and Shi'i Rule: Surviving Dominant Nationhood in Iran' in David Romano and Mehmet Gurses, *Conflict, Democratization and the Kurds in the Middle East. Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 59 ff.

³⁵ BTI, above n 22, 4; Human Rights Watch, 'Iran. Events of 2019' (2019) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/iran>> accessed 06 October 2020.

implemented a near-total internet shutdown for a week with the alleged aim to suppress information about the protests and related state violence.³⁶

The risk of escalating tensions between Iran and the United States has steadily increased, especially after commander Qassem Suleimani, responsible for Iran's military support to the Syrian government, was killed in a United States air strike at Baghdad in January 2020. In retaliation to the US sanctions, Iran announced that it would no longer abide by restrictions on uranium enrichment imposed by the 2015 nuclear deal. In response to this announcement and Iran's actions, in January 2020 UK, France and Germany triggered the dispute resolution mechanism under the 2015 nuclear deal, a process which could result in the reimposition of UN sanctions if Iran does not return to compliance.³⁷ The strengthened alliance between the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia has also led to a shift in the balance of power in the Middle East in Iran's detriment. However, the Iranian ayatollahs managed to keep their adherence to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, which is considered as a successful movement of Iran's foreign policy.³⁸

3.3. Migration profile

The strategic geographic location and ongoing conflicts within the subregion facilitates the position of Iran as a country of origin, destination and transit of mixed migration flows. At mid-year 2019, Iran harboured a total of 2,7 million of international migrants, which represented a 3,2% of the total population, and hosted 979,4 thousand of refugees.³⁹ This is one of the 'largest and most protracted urban refugee populations in the world –951,142 Afghan refugees and 28,268 Iraqi refugees with 97% of them living in urban and rural areas while the remaining 3% residing in 21 settlements managed by the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA)–'.⁴⁰ Aside from seeking refugee status, many Afghans migrate to the Islamic Republic of Iran for job-seeking, motivated by Iran's relative economic and social stability and comprehensive social system.⁴¹

Furthermore, its strategic location makes Iran a transit country by migrants seeking to reach third countries, mainly in Europe and in the Gulf.⁴² Top destination countries for Iranian migrants include the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. As major drivers of migration from Iran we found factors such as poor economic situation; social and political repression; violation of human rights, and religious persecution; rise of labour mobility, urbanization, individualism, and secularism.⁴³ Recent research also suggests that Iran's increasing vulnerability to climate change has prompted a significant internal migration.⁴⁴

³⁶ Freedom House, 'Iran' (2020) <<https://freedomhouse.org/country/iran/freedom-world/2020>> accessed 07 October 2020.

³⁷ Reuters, 'Britain, France and Germany urge Iran to stick to 2015 nuclear deal' (12 January 2020) <<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-nuclear-europe/britain-france-and-germany-urge-iran-to-stick-to-2015-nuclear-deal-idUKKBN1ZB0KD?il=0>> accessed 06 October 2020; UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'E3 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the JCPoA' Statement (20 August 2020) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/e3-foreign-ministers-statement-on-the-jcpoa>> accessed 06 October 2020.

³⁸ BTI, above n 22, 3.

³⁹ Migration Data Portal (2020) <https://migrationdataportal.org/?i=stock_abs&t=2019&cm49=364> accessed 06 October 2020.

⁴⁰ UNHCR, 'Islamic Republic of Iran' (2020) <<https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2527?y=2020#year>> accessed 06 October 2020.

⁴¹ UN, 'Situation Report- Islamic Republic of Iran' (2011) <<https://sitreport.unescapsdd.org/iran>> accessed 07 October 2020. See also Nassim Majidi et al (Migration Policy Institute), 'Seeking Safety, Jobs, and More: Afghanistan's Mixed Flows Test Migration Policies' (25 February 2016) <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/seeking-safety-jobs-and-more-afghanistan%E2%80%99s-mixed-flows-test-migration-policies>> accessed 07 October 2020.

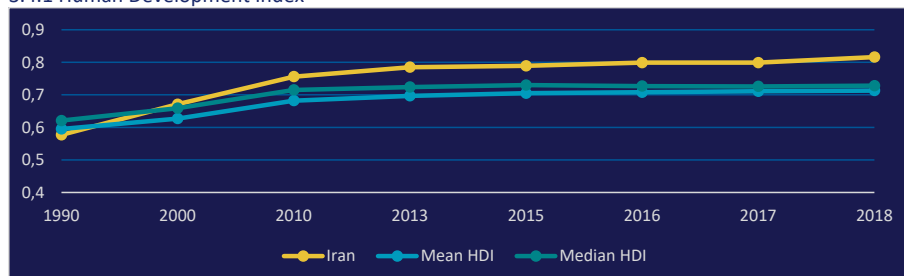
⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Pooya Azadi et al, 'Migration and Brain Drain from Iran' (Stanford Iran 2040 Project, April 2020) 3-4 <https://iranian-studies.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj6191/f/publications/migration_and_brain_drain_from_iran_final.pdf> accessed 06 October 2020.

⁴⁴ Mehdi Shiva and Hassan Molana, 'Climate Change Induced Inter-Province Migration in Iran' (Discussion Papers in Economics and Finance. Discussion Paper No 18-2, April 2018) 17

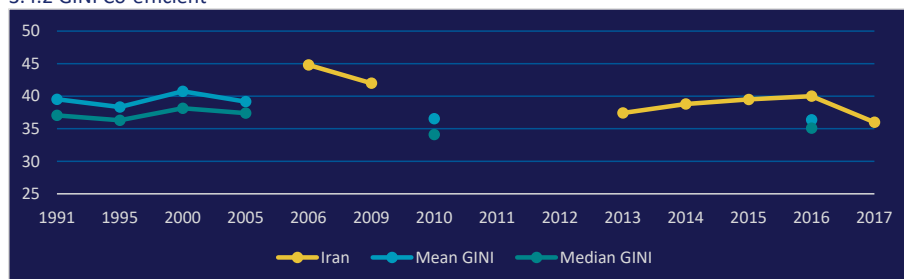
3.4. Development profile

3.4.1 Human Development Index



The Human Development Index (HDI) measures average life expectancy, level of education and income for each country in the world. Each country is given a score between 0 and 1 - the closer a country gets to 1, the more developed it is.⁴⁵ Romania's scores place it in the 'High Human Development' grouping.

3.4.2 GINI Co-efficient⁴⁶



Gini index measures the extent to which income distribution or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.⁴⁷

3.4.3 Iran Sustainable Development Goals⁴⁸

Year	Rank	Score
2020	59	71,81
2019	58	70,5
2018	82	65,5
2017	89	64,7
2016	79	58,5

The Sustainable Development Reports assess implementation of, and progress towards, the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Index and Dashboards summarise countries' current performance and trends across the 17 SDGs. All SDGs are weighted equally in the index. Changing indicators, data, and methodology used to determine rankings and scores mean that SDG index results are not comparable over time.⁴⁹

<https://aura.abdn.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2164/10678/DP_2018_2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> accessed 07 October 2020.

⁴⁵ UNDP, 'Human Development Reports' <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>> accessed 03 November 2020

⁴⁶ World Bank, 'Gini index (World Bank estimate)-Iran, Islamic Republic' (2020) <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=IR>> accessed 07 October 2020.

⁴⁷ World Bank, 'Metadata Glossary' <<https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/gender-statistics/series/SI.POV.GINI>> accessed 03 November 2020.

⁴⁸ Sustainable Development Report (2020) <<https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>> accessed 07 November 2020.

⁴⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 'Sustainable Development Report 2019' (June 2019) 19.

3.4.4 GDP Rates

3.4.4.1 Iran GDP Growth Rate

Iran GDP Growth Rate - Historical Data		
Year	GDP Growth (%)	Annual Change
2017	3.76%	-9.64%
2016	13.40%	14.72%
2015	-1.32%	-5.92%
2014	4.60%	4.80%
2013	-0.19%	7.25%
2012	-7.44%	-10.09%
2011	2.65%	-3.15%
2010	5.80%	4.79%
2009	1.01%	0.76%
2008	0.25%	-7.90%
2007	8.16%	3.16%
2006	5.00%	1.81%
2005	3.19%	-1.18%
2004	4.37%	-4.36%
2003	8.73%	1.47%
2002	7.27%	6.49%
2001	0.78%	-5.08%
2000	5.86%	5.00%
1999	0.86%	-1.32%
1998	2.18%	1.70%
1997	0.48%	-4.69%
1996	5.17%	2.89%
1995	2.28%	3.79%
1994	-1.51%	-2.55%
1993	1.04%	-1.79%
1992	2.83%	-9.55%
1991	12.38%	-1.45%
1990	13.83%	7.81%

3.4.4.1 GDP per capita (current US\$)⁵⁰

Year	GDP per capita
1995	1,569
2000	1,670
2010	6,599
2011	7,781
2012	7,927
2013	6,018
2014	5,585
2015	4,904
2016	5,253
2017	5,520

3.4.5 Other relevant indicators

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unemployment rate ⁵¹ (%)	10,57	11,06	12,43	12,1	12,4	11,38
Youth unemployment rate ⁵² (%)	24,9	25,9	28,8	28	28,3	27,4

Other relevant indicators include the World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap Index, which ranked Iran 142 out of 149 countries; the UNDP's 2017 Gender Inequality, which assigned Iran 0.461 points;⁵³ the Freedom House's Global Freedom Score, which ranked Iran 17/100;⁵⁴ and the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, where Iran is ranked 146 out of 180 countries.⁵⁵

3.5. Iran's Human Rights Record

Notwithstanding recent legal reforms, such as the amendment of a law allowing Iranian women married to men with foreign nationality to pass on Iranian citizenship to their children, significant human rights issues remain, including:⁵⁶

- Unlawful or arbitrary killings. It has been reported the killings of over 300 people in nationwide protests in November 2019 and early 2020.⁵⁷ Additionally, executions for crimes not meeting the international legal standard of 'most serious crimes' remained

⁵⁰ World Bank, 'GDP per capita (current US\$)-Iran, Islamic Republic' (2020) <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=IR>> accessed 07 October 2020.

⁵¹ Statista, 'Iran: Unemployment rate from 1999 to 2019' (2020) <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/294305/iran-unemployment-rate/>> accessed 07 October 2020.

⁵² ILO, 'Unemployment, youth total (% of total labour force ages 15-24)' (2020) <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=IR>> accessed 07 October 2020.

⁵³ BTI, above n 22, 17.

⁵⁴ Freedom House, above n 36.

⁵⁵ Transparency International, 'Country Data-Iran' (2020) <<https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/iran#>> accessed 07 October 2020.

⁵⁶ US Department of State, above n 19.

⁵⁷ Amnesty International has uncovered evidence that the victims included at least 23 children – 22 boys, aged between 12 and 17, and a girl reportedly aged between eight and 12". See *ibid*; Amnesty International, "They shot our children": killings of minors in Iran's 2019 November protests' (2020), 11, 13 and 16 <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en/>> accessed 12 October 2020.

relatively common in Iran, and without fair trials of individuals, including juvenile offenders.⁵⁸

- Forced disappearance and torture practices by government agents, as well as arbitrary imprisonment and harsh and life-threatening prison conditions.⁵⁹ 'Forced 'confessions' obtained under torture and other ill-treatment were broadcast on state television and used by courts to issue convictions'.⁶⁰
- Discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities and women. Women continued to face entrenched discrimination in all branches of law, including in relation to marriage, divorce, employment, inheritance and political office. Impunity in gender-based violence remained the rule, including concerning domestic violence and forced marriage. Ethnic minorities, including the Kurds, also face entrenched discrimination, curtailing their access to education, employment and adequate housing. By and large, economic neglect of women and girls, and minority-populated regions exacerbated their poverty and marginalization.⁶¹
- Significant problems with independence of the judiciary, particularly the revolutionary courts. 'Accountable to none except Ayatollah Khamenei, the judiciary has become infamous for unjust deeds, such as the execution of convicted minors, the oppression of religious minorities (e.g., the Baha'is and Dervishes)'.⁶²
- Severe restrictions on the freedom of expression, the press, and the internet, including violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests and prosecutions against journalists, censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel.⁶³ Furthermore, restrictions on religious freedom⁶⁴ and on political participation through arbitrary candidate vetting were also reportedly common.⁶⁵ Significantly, political participation was restricted in the 21 February 2020 parliamentary elections, with the Guardian Council rejecting 45.5 per cent of candidates' applications.⁶⁶
- Substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive NGO laws. While association and assembly rights are granted in the Constitution, they have to be exercised under the condition that these rights do not 'violate the foundations of Islam.' In practice, the Islamic Republic rarely tolerates protests and demonstrations, and the Interior Ministry does not issue permissions.⁶⁷
- Unlawful recruitment of child soldiers by government actors to support the Assad regime in Syria. 'Several credible sources continue to widely report the IRGC and Basij coerce male adult and child Afghans resident in Iran, including boys as young as 13 years old, to fight in the Iranian-led and funded Fatemiyoun Brigade deployed to Syria. Officials threaten these individuals with arrest and deportation to Afghanistan'.⁶⁸

⁵⁸ Amnesty International, 'Iran 2019' (2019) <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>> accessed 08 October 2020.

⁵⁹ Centre for Human Rights in Iran, 'Detained protestors in Iran: beaten, tortured, forced to 'confess' (10 February 2020); UNGA, 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Note by the Secretary-General' (A/75/213, 21 July 2020) 10; Human Rights Activists News Agency, 'Qarchak prison; a list of political prisoners and prison conditions' HRNA (2 March 2020) <<https://www.en-hrana.org/qarchak-prison-a-list-of-political-prisoners-and-prison-conditions>> accessed 12 October 2020.

⁶⁰ US Department of State, above n 19.

⁶¹ Amnesty International, above note 44.

⁶² BTI, above n 22, 13.

⁶³ 'The independence of the Iranian media, both print and electronic, is severely limited. The National Iranian Radio and Television (IRIB) is controlled by the supreme leader. Newspapers and magazines are liable to censorship, which encompasses even the selection of lead features and cover pages': *ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁴ See, in-depth: US Department of State, '2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran' (2019) <<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/iran/>> accessed 12 October 2020.

⁶⁵ Corruption and the violation of laws are widespread among the political elite. However, people are rarely prosecuted and (when they are prosecuted) the prosecution is mainly a result of political rivalry. BTI, above n 22, 12.

⁶⁶ UNGA, above n 59, 18.

⁶⁷ BTI, above n 22, 9-10.

⁶⁸ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 264.

- Crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons; together with criminalization of LGBTI status or conduct.⁶⁹

3.6. Social support systems

Social security is considered a human right under Article 29 of Iran's Constitution, and its regulatory framework is shaped by the following laws: 1975 (social security); 1986 (self-employed insurance), implemented in 1987; 2000 (coverage of commercial drivers); 2009 (coverage of carpet weavers and handicraft workers), and 2013 (partial pension).⁷⁰ The contributory social insurance institutions are dominated by the Iranian Social Security Organization (SSO), a public and independent organization which provides both pensions and cash benefits including: a) Old age pension; b) survivor pension; c) disability pension; d) sickness pension; e) maternity benefit; f) accident and work injuries benefit; g) unemployment insurance; h) marriage grant; i) death grant; and j) physical, mental and psychic disability insurance.⁷¹ SSO insurance covers the employee and his/her dependents including parents, spouse and children,⁷² and it is financed through insurance contributions; investment of funds, reserves and properties of the organization; income obtained from penalties and cash fines; and grants, gifts and other incomes.⁷³ According to the World Health Organization (WHO), total expenditure on health care in 2013/2014 amounted to 6.9% of GDP. In 2018, Iranian health care spending amounted to 8% of the country's GDP.⁷⁴

Besides the State Social Security provisions, the non-contributory system is dominated by NGOs and other grassroots organisations, predominantly the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation (IKRF), Martyrs' Foundation (Bonyad Shahid), and the Bonyade Mostazafan Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled Veterans (MJF), which play an essential role in the country's social security and welfare systems. Their services cover a range of packages for all life phases such as pregnancy, breastfeeding, childhood, adolescence, education, marriage, employment, shelter and health. IKRF is responsible for delivering 92% of overall support services in the country with 16,000 employees and over 62,000 volunteer workers.⁷⁵

However, the Iran's social security system has frequently been pointed out as inefficient due to an inadequate outreach and growing population, lack of finances and lack of administrative capacity.⁷⁶ A report by the Majles Research Centre demonstrated in 2017 that the SSO were at threat of bankruptcy, and the retirement system were at the verge of collapse. In the budget plan for March 2018 to March 2019, President Rouhani reduced government subsidies on food and fuel and intends to continue financing the increasing cash payments made to citizens. 'These actions are likely going to cause problems for Rouhani's government in 2019 following the reinstatement of U.S. sanctions. The recent rial devaluation had a massive impact on the majority of pensioners, with many pensioners increasingly unable to cover their daily living costs'.⁷⁷ The Iran's subsidy system also places significant pressure on the state finances and has allegedly continued to strongly oppress and discriminate against the Baha'is and some Muslim groups that do not align with the regime.⁷⁸ These civil society organizations are supervised by Ayatollah Ali

⁶⁹ US Department of State, above n 19.

⁷⁰ US Social Security, 'Social Security Programs Throughout the World: Asia and the Pacific, 2018' (2018) <<https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/2018-2019/asia/iran.html>> accessed 08 October 2020.

⁷¹ ILO, 'Country Paper on Iran's Social Security System' (Enhancing Employers' Involvement in Social Protection Policy Debate- International Training Centre of the ILO, October 2017).

⁷² See in-depth: US Social Security, above n 70.

⁷³ ILO, above n 71.

⁷⁴ BTI, above n 22, 25.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ahmad Barati Marnani et al, 'Challenges of a Large Health Insurance Organisation in Iran: A Qualitative Study' (2012) 4(6) *International Journal of Collaborative Research on Internal Medicine & Public Health* 1050.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

⁷⁸ BTI, above n 22, 26.

Khamenei and are not accountable to the government or the judiciary.⁷⁹ By and large, minorities have uneven access to public sector, and are excluded from many other social and economic sectors.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid, 25

⁸⁰ Ibid, 26.

4. National modern slavery context

4.1. Modern slavery profile

Iran is a mostly a country of origin and transit for trafficking victims, and to a lesser extent a destination for victims trafficked from neighbouring countries.⁸¹ Prostitution and sex trafficking are deemed endemic throughout the country, and tend to proliferate in large urban centres, including major pilgrimage sites of Qom and Mashhad. Victims are often driven by poverty and declining economic opportunities to willingly get involved in commercial sex,⁸² and they are subsequently forced or coerced to remain by traffickers. In fact, the ongoing worsening economic conditions and the serious environmental degradation in Iran, have significantly exacerbated Iran's human trafficking problem, particularly for ethnic minority groups, refugee and migrant populations, and other vulnerable groups.⁸³

Temporary marriages —known as 'sigheh'—, which last from one hour to one week, often mask sexual exploitation and are reportedly widespread in Iran.⁸⁴ Iranian men are permitted to have up to four permanent wives, but temporary marriages don't count – men can theoretically enter as many as they'd like–. Consequently, it is not difficult for a man to marry four girls and traffic them within Iran, or take them outside the country for either prostitution or forced labour. The temporary marriages are accepted only in the Shi'a sect of Islam. The government does not acknowledge the effect of temporary marriages on sex trafficking'.⁸⁵

Child marriage of Iranian or foreign girls –particularly Afghan girls– is reportedly increasing in Iran and is most widespread among communities in lower-income areas of large cities, often with the consent of parents. This frequently leads to their involvement in harmful practices such as sex trafficking, forced labour, sexual slavery, and domestic servitude.⁸⁶ These practices and arrangements reportedly proliferate with authorities' acquiescence, who in some cases directly control and facilitate the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking throughout the country.⁸⁷ Regarded highly by religious leaders have also been reported 'to allow men to sexually exploit female and male Iranians, as well as Chinese, Thai, and other victims, including children'.⁸⁸

Children between the ages of 10 to 15 years old are increasingly exposed to various forms of forced labour, especially Afghan refugee children, street or undocumented children, and orphans.⁸⁹ They are often recruited to work in transport, garbage and waste disposal, 'dumpster diving', car washing, brick factories, construction, the carpet industry, and for carrying out illegal activities, such as drug trafficking and smuggling of fuel and tobacco. They experience physical or sexual abuse, restriction of movement and are exposed to infectious diseases, increasing their risk to forced labour.⁹⁰ Children begging has become

⁸¹ Roksana Alavi, 'Identifying Human Trafficking Victims Under the Sharia Law in Iran' in Jennifer Bryson Clark and Sasha Poucki, *The SAGE Handbook of Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery* (Sage Publications, 2019) 391.

⁸² See further Mohammad Karamouzian et al, 'How sex work becomes an option: Experiences of female sex workers in Kerman, Iran' (2016) 18(1) *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 58. 'Some Iranian women who seek employment to support their families in Iran, as well as young Iranian women and girls who run away from their homes, are vulnerable to sex trafficking': US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁸⁴ See Saeid Mirzaei, Sajad Khosravi and Nadia Oroomiei, 'Female sex worker's children: their vulnerability in Iran' (2020) 45 *Children Australia* 21.

⁸⁵ Roksana Alavi, above n 81, 391.

⁸⁶ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ "Iranian media suggests there are approximately seven million Iranian children sold, rented, or sent to work in Iran". *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* On the risks posed by addiction on street working children, see: Maryam Zaheri and Erfan Kameli, 'Problems of Street Working Children in Iran and Preventive Crime Policy' (February 2018) 15(2) *Journal of US-China Public Administration* 93; Habib A. Salihu, 'The Growing Phenomenon of Street Children in Tehran: An Empirical Analysis' (2019) 3(1) *UKH Journal of Social Sciences* 1.

a common practice: 'Organized criminal groups target children for child begging rings in Iran. Criminal groups kidnap or purchase and force Iranian and migrant children, especially undocumented Afghan children, to work as beggars and street vendors in cities, including Tehran. These children, who may be as young as three years old, are routinely subjected to physical and sexual abuse and drug addiction. Orphaned children are vulnerable to criminal begging rings that maim or seriously injure the children to gain sympathy from those passing on the street. Poor families "rent" their children by the day to criminal groups that force the children, some as young as five years old, to beg in the street; if the children do not collect a specified amount of money by the end of the day, the groups force children to work in illegal workshops or exploit them in commercial sex'.⁹¹

Afghan refugees and foreign undocumented workers from Afghanistan and Pakistan are highly vulnerable to debt bondage and forced labour in Iran, and they are exploited in low-skilled employment, such as domestic work, agriculture, and construction.⁹² Furthermore, Afghan and Pakistani migrants are coerced by Iranian authorities into armed groups in the region.⁹³ It has also been reported government fund to militias which recruit, train, and use child soldiers in combat in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.⁹⁴

Iranian women, boys, and girls are vulnerable to sex trafficking abroad, including in Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).⁹⁵ For instance, some girls are trafficked from Iran to UAE to be sold to marry prominent Arab men.⁹⁶ Iranian nationals are also increasingly recruited for commercial sex Georgia, Turkey or Dubai, where their passports are confiscated and they are physically abused and threatened with violence or execution if they return to Iran.⁹⁷

4.2. Causes and drivers of modern slavery and transnational trafficking

Causes or drivers of human trafficking and modern slavery are multiple and overlapping. As highlighted by the report of the University of Bedfordshire/IOM, there are different risk factors that increase vulnerability. These factors are structured into five levels (individual, household and family, community, structural and situational) interacting with each other, creating the conditions for exploitation and modern slavery to emerge.⁹⁸

As above explained, the practice of temporary marriages has been identified as a driver for transnational trafficking.⁹⁹ For instance, it is relatively simple for a man to traffic a temporary wife within Iran or outside the country, since young girls are often presented to immigration authorities either as children of the adults accompanying them or temporary wives. In fact, 'some actually marry the girls of victims so they can travel with them without fearing any kind of law enforcement problem'.¹⁰⁰ This pervasive practices persist against a backdrop of uncontested local traditions and sexually violent views of women which have created a breeding ground for human trafficking and underground sex trade endeavours.¹⁰¹

⁹¹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 264

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 245.

⁹⁶ Roksana Alavi, above n 81, 391

⁹⁷ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 264.

⁹⁸ Patricia Hynes et al, "Vulnerability" to human trafficking: a study of Viet Nam, Albania and the UK' (IOM, University of Bedfordshire and IASR, 2018), 15 ff, <<https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1263/vulnerability-to-human-trafficking-albania.pdf>> accessed 05 November 2020.

⁹⁹ See Saeid Mirzaei, Sajad Khosravi and Nadia Oroomiei, above n 84, 21-29.

¹⁰⁰ Roksana Alavi, above n 81, 391; Zach Schubert, 'Iran's Dark Secret: Child Prostitution and Sex Slaves' *Huffington Post* (6 December 2017).

¹⁰¹ Sholeh Shahrokhi, 'When Tragedy Hits: A Concise Socio-Cultural Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Young Iranian Women' (2008) 5 *Wagadu: a Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* 29.

Poverty and an ongoing environmental degradation have also been identified as major determinants of modern slavery and human trafficking in Iran,¹⁰² along with governmental acquiescence and low levels of political will.¹⁰³ Significantly, the Global Slavery Index lists Iran among the top ten countries taking the least action to combat modern slavery.¹⁰⁴

Certain dynamics and high-risk behaviours, including drug addiction and exposure to infectious diseases, affect street children and increase their risk be subjected to various forms of physical and sexual abuse, and forced labour.¹⁰⁵

4.3. Particularly vulnerable groups

Iranian women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking in the Gulf countries, India and Pakistan. Many of these victims are auctioned and sold at events in the destination countries.¹⁰⁶ Practices such as temporary marriages and a context of generalised sexually violent views and attitudes towards women create a 'breeding ground for human trafficking and underground sex trade endeavours'.¹⁰⁷

Afghan nationals, either with refugee or migratory status are disproportionately affected by various types of modern slavery-related abuses, which frequently occurred in the construction, domestic labour, and agricultural sectors, primarily among adult Afghan men. Afghan refugee children constitute a particularly vulnerable group among Afghan nationals, many of whom were born in Iran but could not obtain identity documents. These children were often unable to attend schools or access basic government services and were vulnerable to labour exploitation and trafficking.¹⁰⁸ The policies that make it difficult to obtain legal documentation increased these populations' vulnerability to trafficking.¹⁰⁹ In this vein, they are often used for forced labour in agriculture and construction, while girls are used for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic work.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, it has also been reported that Afghan children are coerced by Iranian authorities into Shia militias deployed to Syria by threatening them with arrest and deportation to Afghanistan.¹¹¹

As above explained, working and street children constitute a vulnerable group.¹¹² They are often subjected to various forms of economic exploitation (for instance, in the carpet or bricks industry), including sexual abuse and exploitation by the public and police officers, or by criminal organisations.¹¹³ Drugs or narcotic addictions favour the perpetuation of these situations.¹¹⁴

¹⁰² Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, 'Modern Slavery. A brief study of human trafficking in Iran and the role of regime officials in facilitating it' (2018), 8 <https://women.ncr-iran.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Modern_Slavery_August2018.pdf> accessed 08 October 2020; US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

¹⁰³ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263-264.

¹⁰⁴ Global Slavery Index, 'Global Findings' (2018) <<https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/global-findings/>> accessed 08 October 2020.

¹⁰⁵ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 264; Maryam Zaheri and Erfan Kameli, above n 90, 93-103; Habib A. Salihi, above note 79, pp. 1 and ff.; Maryam Foroughi et al, 'Prevalence of HIV, HBV and HCV among street and labour children in Tehran, Iran' (2016) 93(6) *BMJ* 1.

¹⁰⁶ Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, above n 102.

¹⁰⁷ Sholeh Shahrokhi, above n 101, 29.

¹⁰⁸ US Department of State, '2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-Iran' (2018), available [here](#).

¹⁰⁹ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 245

¹¹⁰ US Department of State, '2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour' (2019), 103, available [here](#).

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 643

¹¹² According to official estimates, there were 60,000 homeless children, although many children's rights organizations estimated up to 200,000 homeless children. US Department of State, above n 19.

¹¹³ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁴ See also Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention' (10 April 2013) CRC/C/IRN/3-4, 27, 84.

5. Antislavery governance frameworks

5.1. Legislative measures

5.1.1. Iran's Constitution 1979.¹¹⁵

Articles 43(4), 2(6) and 19, 20, 22 and 28 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran prohibit to force a person to perform work against his will or to exploit others. Namely, Article 22 of the Constitution emphasises the inviolability of human dignity, life, property and rights, except in cases sanctioned by law, and Article 28 endows the freedom to work in the following terms:

Article 28: Every person is entitled to choose the employment he wishes, so long as it is not contrary to Islam or the public interest or the rights of others. The Government is bound, with due regard for the needs of society for a variety of employment for all men, to create the possibility of employment, and equal opportunities for obtaining it.

Other provisions related to work include Article 43, which lays down the objectives the economy of the Islamic Republic of Iran must fulfil, including respecting the right 'to choose freely one's occupation; refraining from compelling anyone to engage in a particular job; and preventing the exploitation of another's labour'. It is also envisaged a principle of non-discrimination, and are entitled to the same protection of the law.

5.1.2. Law on Combating Human Trafficking 2004¹¹⁶

The 2004 Law on Combating Human Trafficking criminalises two modalities of human trafficking with a prescribed penalty of imprisonment from two to ten years and payment of a fine, even if the trafficker is under eighteen years old.¹¹⁷ Article 1 defines human trafficking as either: A) "The departure or entry or transit of an individual or people in groups through countries' borders by coercion, force, deception, intimidation, or by misuse of power or position with the aim of sexual exploitation, organ harvesting, involuntary servitude, or marriage"; or B) "Taking over or transferring or hiding or providing the means of concealment of the person or persons subject to paragraph (a) of this article after crossing the border for the same purpose".

Article 2 establishes the acts considered human trafficking:

- A- The formation or administration of a group or group whose purpose is to carry out the actions referred to in Article (1)
- B- Passing (exporting or importing or transit), authorized or unauthorized transportation or transfer organized person or persons for prostitution or other purposes subject to Article (1) of this law, even with consent
- C- Passing (importing or importing or transit), unauthorized transportation or transfer of persons with the intention of prostitution, even if it is with their consent

Articles 4 and 5 establish the criminal liability of private-run and state-run legal persons which are involved in human trafficking, and additional penalties for the managers of the legal persons, such as expulsion from jobs or revocation of commercial license. Article 8 deals with the confiscation of properties related to human trafficking, which can be used for victims' reparations.¹¹⁸ As reported in the 2020 TIP Report, Iran's definition of trafficking is inconsistent with the definition of human trafficking under international law

¹¹⁵ See an unofficial English version: <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ir/ir001en.pdf>

¹¹⁶ See Law 2004-07-18 in Persian: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=91993&p_country=IRN&p_count=168

¹¹⁷ The fine is twice the amount earned by the culprit or the amount promised by the third party for the services will be exacted from him (Article 3). Mitigating circumstances are included in the following cases: "A person who starts committing crimes subject to this law, but the result is the purpose. If he does not fulfil his will, he will be sentenced to six months to two years in prison"; and "Punishment of the deputy for the crime of "human trafficking" in the amount of two to five years of imprisonment" (Article 3)

¹¹⁸ See, in detail: Zahra Fehrest, 'Legislative Approaches towards Human Trafficking in Pre- versus Post-Islamic Revolution Iran' (2010) 14 *Iran and the Caucasus* 431, 431-448

because the law required a demonstration of forced, fraud or coercion in child sex trafficking cases, and it does not encompass all forms of labour trafficking.¹¹⁹

5.1.3. Law for prohibition of slave trade and liberation of slaves at the point of entry 1929¹²⁰

This 1929 Law criminalises slave and slave trade and prescribed a penalty of up to three years of imprisonment: 'In Iran no person shall be deemed to be a slave, and any slave, immediately upon entering Iranian territory or Iranian territorial waters, shall become free. Any person who engages in traffic in human being as a slave, commits an act ascribable to ownership of him or her, or acts as an agent in the trading and transport of a slave, shall be sentenced to correctional imprisonment for a term from one to three years'.

5.1.4. Law on protection of children and adolescents 2002¹²¹

This Law addresses various forms of child abuse and criminalises buying, selling, and exploiting children:

Article 2: Any kind of abuse, harassment or physical or mental torture of children and intentional neglect of their physical or mental wellbeing and preventing their education is prohibited and is subject to imprisonment from three months and one day to six months or up to 10 million rials in fine.¹²²

Article 3: Any purchase, sale, exploitation and employment of children in order to commit subsequent acts, such as smuggling, prohibited and, as the case may be, in addition to compensation for damages for six months up to one year in prison or a fine of ten million (10 000 000) rials to twenty million (20,000,000) rials will be sentenced.

Although the punishment is not considered sufficiently stringent or commensurate,¹²³ it is important to note Article 8: 'If the offences mentioned in this law are subjected to other legal punishments, or if other laws prescribe heavier punishments or penalties for these offences, the maximum penalty shall be applied accordingly'. All individuals and institutions responsible for the guardianship of children are obliged to immediately report any case of child abuse to the competent judicial authorities to legally pursue the offender and to take appropriate action (Article 6).

5.1.5. Law aggravating punishment for employing children under 12 years of age in the carpet industry 1969.

It provides for an imprisonment term of six months up to one year and a fine of five thousand to fifty thousand rials for violators.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 262.

¹²⁰ See, in Persian: <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/91872>

¹²¹ See, in Persian: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=91493&p_country=IRN&p_count=168

¹²² See English translation in: Persian Educational Foundation, 'A legal study on children's rights and Iran's laws' (2017) 20 <https://www.persia.education/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PEF_Irans-Childrens-Report.pdf> accessed 08 October 2020.

¹²³ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 262.

¹²⁴ Collection of Labour Laws (Yar Bakhat 1993).

5.1.6. Islamic Penal Code 2013¹²⁵

Several provisions include criminalisation of prostitution (Article 286);¹²⁶ child marriage (Article 646);¹²⁷ and other types of abuses.¹²⁸ The Penal Code retains the death penalty for boys of at least fifteen lunar years of age and girls of at least 9 lunar years for *qesas* (retribution in kind) or hudud crimes, like adultery or sodomy (Articles 146-147 of the Islamic Penal Code).¹²⁹ Child begging is prohibited under Article 713:

Article 713: Anyone who uses a child or an incompetent person for a begging purpose or appoints some people for this purpose, shall be sentenced to two years and restitution of all properties gained through this way.¹³⁰

Although the Constitution and the Civil Code enshrines the principle of non-discrimination between men and women, the Islamic Penal Code values a woman's testimony at half that of a man's in some proceedings, and also sets the age of criminal responsibility significantly lower for girls than for boys (see Articles 199 and 147 of the Islamic Penal Code, respectively).

5.1.7. Labour Code 1990¹³¹

Article 172 prohibits forced labour:

In accordance with section 6 of this Code, all forms of forced labour are prohibited. Any person who commits an offence on that account shall, with due regard to his situation and means and to the degree of the offence, be subject to a term of imprisonment ranging from 91 days to one year and to a fine of between 50 and 200 times the minimum daily wage, in addition to the payment of fair remuneration for work completed and compensation for damages.

Where several persons, jointly or on behalf of an organisation, cause a person to perform forced labour, each offender shall be subject to the penalties prescribed above and shall be jointly subject to payment of fair remuneration, unless the person who caused the offence to be committed is superior to the overseer, in which case such person shall be held personally responsible.

Note: Where several persons are collectively made to perform forced labour, the offender shall, with due regard to his situation and means and to the degree of the offence, be subject to the maximum penalty provided for in this section in addition to payment of fair remuneration.

¹²⁵ See in Persian: <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/103202/125190/F-2020626636/penal%20code.pdf>

¹²⁶ 'Everyone who commits crimes against the physical integrity of individuals, crimes against the internal or external security of a country, publishing libellations, disrupting the country's economic system, bursting and destroying, distributing poisonous and microbial and hazardous toxic substances, or setting up corrupt and prostitution centers or assists in them, that leads to severe disruption of the general order of the country, insecurity or major damage of the physical integrity of individuals or public and private property, spreads corruption or prostitution to a large extent is viewed as a corruptor and is sentenced to execution'. Translation in: Ardavan Arzhang et al, 'The jurisprudential foundations of Iran's criminal policy concerning the spread of prostitution covered in the 2013 Penal Code' (2018) 7 *Revista de Derecho* 53, 57-58

¹²⁷ 'Marriage before puberty without the permission of the guardian is forbidden. If a man violates Article 1041 of the Civil Code, and its note, and marries a girl before she reaches the age of puberty, he shall be sentenced to six months to two years' ta'zir imprisonment'. See an unofficial English translation at: Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 'Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book Five' (2013) <<https://iranhrdc.org/islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five/#17>> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹²⁸ See, in-depth: Mojgan Amrollahi Byouki, 'An International and National Evaluation of Child Abuse in Iran and Germany' (July 2015) <<https://freidok.uni-freiburg.de/fedora/objects/freidok:10358/datastreams/FILE1/content>> accessed 09 October 2020.

¹²⁹ See Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran' (A/HRC/31/69, 10 March 2016) 5-6.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ See an unofficial English translation: <<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/21843/134132/F1308606019/IRN21843%20Eng2.pdf>> accessed 09 October 2020.

Article 79 of the Labour Law also prohibits employment of persons below 15 years old and the following Articles establish limitations to imposition of work to 'young workers' (between 15-18 years old).

5.1.8. Civil Code 1935.

Pursuant Articles 1173, 1178 and 1179 of the Iranian Civil Code, the parents are bound to take all appropriate measures to provide their children with education and guarantee a health and safe environment. Particularly, parents must not abuse their children or force them to engage in immoral issues, such as corrupted activities, prostitution, beggary, or trafficking.

The enforcement sanctions for the violation of these legal responsibilities are prescribed in Article 1173 of Civil Code and may even include depriving the delinquent parents from the custody of the child on the request of child's relatives, legal guardian or the local Public Prosecutor or head of judicial district.¹³² It also establishes an age restriction for a valid marriage (13 years old for females and 15 for males).¹³³ Nevertheless, in cases where proper reasons justify it, on the proposal of the public prosecutor and by ruling of the court, exemption from the age restriction can be accorded (Article 1041).¹³⁴ Therefore, in practice marriage is possible at any age.

5.1.9. Criminal Procedure Code 2015¹³⁵

The UN Special Rapporteur noted important achievements of the Criminal Procedure Code, such as provisions improving the rights of the accused (see Articles 48 and 190).¹³⁶

5.2. Prosecution

The TIP Reports note the absence of statistics on investigations, prosecutions, convictions, or sentences of traffickers in Iran.¹³⁷ There was neither evidence of government officials being accountable for trafficking offenses, notwithstanding continued reports of officials' involvement in trafficking crimes, particularly child recruitment for the armed conflict in Syria.¹³⁸ In this vein, the 2020 US TIP Report stated that 'the government condoned or directly facilitated the commercial sex of men, women, and children, including clear cases of sex trafficking, throughout Iran and in neighbouring countries'.¹³⁹ The government did not encourage trafficking victims to assist in the investigation or prosecution of traffickers and did not provide witness support services.¹⁴⁰

¹³² Committee on the Rights of the Child, above n 114, 15.

¹³³ In Iran, the age of majority (legal adulthood) is 9 years for girls and 15 years for boys (Article 1210 of the Civil Code, 1991).

¹³⁴ See Committee on the Rights of the Child, above n 114, 10.

¹³⁵ Available [here](#) (in Persian).

¹³⁶ See Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran' (A/HRC/34/65, 17 March 2017); Amnesty International, 'Iran: flawed reforms: Iran's new Code of Criminal Procedure' (11 February 2016) <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2708/2016/en/>> accessed 09 October 2020: 'Under the old Code, it was at the judges' discretion to decide whether to allow the involvement of a lawyer during the investigation phase in national security cases or in cases where it was determined that such involvement would result in "corruption". In practice, that meant that individuals accused of national security crimes were almost never granted the right to a lawyer during the investigation and pretrial phase, which rendered them vulnerable to abuse such as ill-treatment, torture, coerced confessions or enforced disappearance by law enforcement forces, Intelligence Ministry officials or others (see art. 33 of the Criminal Procedure Code (1999)).

¹³⁷ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 244; US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 262.

¹³⁸ 'Observers continued to report that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Iranian Basij Resistance Force (Basij), a paramilitary force subordinate to the IRGC, continued to actively recruit and use—through force or coercive means—migrant and refugee children and adults, as well as Iranian children, for combat in IRGC-led and commanded militias in Syria. According to a statement made by an IRGC official in October 2019, the IRGC may have recruited child soldiers from 3,700 student Basij bases in Khuzestan province'. Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid. See also US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 244.

¹⁴⁰ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

5.3. National policies and plans

There is no evidence that a National Action Plan exists in Iran.¹⁴¹ The Sixth National Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2016-2021) envisages comprehensive economic and social provisions, including the promotion of the status of women in all areas, and ensuring the right to adequate housing.¹⁴²

5.4. Victim support and assistance frameworks

The government failed to identify and protect any trafficking victims, and reportedly continued to punish sex and labour trafficking victims for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit, such as prostitution and migration felonies.¹⁴³ Notwithstanding credible reports that some of these individuals were victims of trafficking, the government did not screen for trafficking among detained migrants pending deportation.¹⁴⁴

Trafficking victims or persons vulnerable to trafficking did not benefit from specific protection services. While the government provides for accommodation for victims of domestic violence, the number of shelters remain insufficient: there are only 28 available, including 20 NGO-run shelters.¹⁴⁵ The Government also reported there were 357 social emergency centres for victims of violence and 31 girl-only medical centres, although structural problems have been identified.¹⁴⁶ In general, Iran's social assistance frameworks have proven to not provide adequate coverage nor protection to the most vulnerable populations in the country, including children and persons involved in commercial sex.¹⁴⁷ The government did not provide foreign trafficking victims legal alternatives to their removal to countries in which they may face retribution or re-trafficking.¹⁴⁸

5.5. National institutions and inter-departmental coordination

The government does not have a national anti-trafficking coordinating body or institutions specifically addressing trafficking or modern-slavery related offences.¹⁴⁹

5.6. Training and capacity-building for responders

Despite reportedly conflation between human trafficking and smuggling of migrants offences, the government has not provided antitrafficking training to the police and law enforcement agencies. Iran has neither reported to have provided training or capacity-building activities to relevant actors.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴¹ Global Slavery Index, 'Country Data-Iran' (2018) <<https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/data/country-data/iran/>> accessed 09 October 2020

¹⁴² See Human Rights Council, 'National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21' (A/HRC/WG.6/34/IRN/1, 28 August 2019) para. 46, 50.

¹⁴³ See also US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 262.

¹⁴⁴ US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 245; US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

¹⁴⁵ See Human Rights Council, above n 142, para. 53

¹⁴⁶ 'The need for urgent reform is highlighted by the killing of 14-year-old Romina Ashrafi by her father on 21 May 2020. Before her death, Ms. Ashrafi had reportedly informed the authorities that she feared her father would harm her, but the police nevertheless returned her to him'. US Department of State, (2020) above n 12, 263.

¹⁴⁷ 'The Iranian state welfare organization reportedly offered rehabilitation services to women in prostitution, a population highly vulnerable to trafficking; however, it was unclear what types of appropriate protection services were available at these facilities. The government also operated health clinics that reportedly could offer "safe space" for potential trafficking victims, but it did not report on services it provided to any victims in these clinics in 2018'. US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 245.

¹⁴⁸ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 264

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 262-263; US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 244-245.

5.7. Public awareness raising

No public awareness raising activities against trafficking or modern-slavery related practices have been reported by the government of Iran.¹⁵¹

5.8. Efforts to address vulnerabilities and drivers

Within the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR),¹⁵² the Government of Iran has maintained a fully inclusive approach to refugee education, and more than 480,000 Afghan and Iraqi children were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Refugees enjoy access to free primary health care, and can access healthcare through the Islamic Republic of Iran's Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) scheme.¹⁵³ Notwithstanding the existence of this framework, 'children of unregistered Afghans continued to have difficulty obtaining legal documentation, which increased this populations' vulnerability to trafficking; registered refugees (Amayesh cardholders) could register their children if both parents held Amayesh cards and their marriage was registered'.¹⁵⁴

In October 2019, the government passed an amendment to a law allowing children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian father to acquire Iranian nationality. Before, they did not acquire Iranian citizenship and remained undocumented, increasing their vulnerability. 'Despite this effort, human rights activists reported concerns that the amended law required the Intelligence Ministry and the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC to certify that no "security problem" existed before approving citizenship for these specific applications; this vaguely defined security provision could have been used to arbitrarily disqualify applicants if they or their parents were seen as critical of the government'.¹⁵⁵

5.9. Frameworks for international coordination

Notwithstanding the lack of comprehensive and consistent either internal or international coordination efforts by the government, recent advances have been identified:

- On 29-31 January 2019, UNODC hosted a high-level delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran for a three-day specialized technical meeting on 'Exchange of Views on Cooperation Mechanisms for Effective Prevention and Combat of Transnational Organized Crime' at its Headquarters in Vienna. Technical cooperation issues and mechanisms were discussed, such as criminalization of organized crime offences, international judicial and law enforcement cooperation, or money-laundering and seizure. The Iranian delegation expressed interest to increase level of cooperation and partnership, including to promote the implementation of UN Convention of Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols in the framework of UNODC Country Partnership Programme for Iran.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 262-263; US Department of State (2019), above n 12, 244-245; Global Slavery Index, above n 141.

¹⁵² See UNHRC, 'The support platform for the solutions strategy for Afghan refugees' (2020) <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/77284.pdf>> accessed 12 October 2020: 'The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is the result of an unprecedented quadripartite consultative process among the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and UNHCR. Since its launch in 2012, the SSAR has served to jointly identify and implement approaches toward lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region. Building on a convergence of interests and reconciling the priorities of the country of origin and the principal host countries, the SSAR has provided a comprehensive strategic vision and operational framework for three overarching objectives: facilitating voluntary repatriation; enabling sustainable reintegration; and assisting the host countries and communities' (p. 6)

¹⁵³ Ibid, 20.

¹⁵⁴ US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 263.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ UNODC, 'Islamic Republic Of Iran And UNODC To Cooperate On UNTOC, Trafficking In Persons And Smuggling Of Migrants' (2019) <<https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/en/islamic-republic-of-iran-and-unodc-to-cooperate-on-untoc-trafficking-in-persons-and-smuggling-of-migrants.html>> accessed 12 October 2020. See the UNODC Country Partnership Programme for Iran (2017-2019) <https://www.unodc.org/documents/islamicrepublicofiran/UNODC_Iran_Country_Partnership_Programme_2016-2019_-_en.pdf> accessed 12 October 2020.

- The Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants - Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT Asia and the Middle East) is a four-year (2018-2022), €12 million joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and UNODC being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).¹⁵⁷
- The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017-2021) –(UNDAF)– provides a strategic framework for cooperation between Iran and the UN system.¹⁵⁸
- Iran participates in the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), a quadripartite multi-year regional strategy between Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and UNHCR, launched in 2012, and aimed at ensuring the protection of Afghan refugees, and finding solutions for them.¹⁵⁹
- Iran is a member of Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which has partnered with the IOM to assist trafficking victims with safe return.¹⁶⁰
- Iran is a member of the Bali Process (BP). Set up 2002, BP hosts workshops and conferences on human trafficking issues.¹⁶¹

5.10. Key challenges to effective antislavery governance

- An almost total lack of political will coupled with corruption

As elaborated in the 2020 US TIP Report, the government persistently failed to prevent, prosecute, and punish trafficking and other modern-slavery crimes.¹⁶² It particularly failed to prevent official complicity in trafficking crimes against a backdrop of widespread corruption and impunity.¹⁶³

- Structural imbalances

Gender and ethnic-based discrimination and social exclusion, especially among Afghan refugees and Baha'is communities, are also major contributors to vulnerability. Street children can easily get involved in criminal rings partially due to extreme poverty and drug addiction, which led them to forced labour or sexual exploitation situations.¹⁶⁴

- New challenges: environmental degradation

Many of Iran's environmental challenges, such as water resource scarcity and desertification are expected to be compounded by ongoing climate change.¹⁶⁵ The environmental degradation may increase internal displacement and consequently vulnerabilities to exploitation and trafficking in the upcoming years.

¹⁵⁷ UNODC, 'GLO.ACT Regional Consultation: Towards A Women's Network Against Human Trafficking And Migrant Smuggling' (2020) <https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/en/glo-act-regional-consultation_-_towards-a-womens-network-against-human-trafficking-and-migrant-smuggling.html> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁵⁸ Islamic Republic of Iran, 'United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017-2021)' (2016) <https://www.unodc.org/documents/islamicrepublicofiran//UNDAF-Iran_2017-2021.pdf> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁵⁹ UNHRC, 'Islamic Republic of Iran' (2020) <<https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2527?y=2020#year>> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁶⁰ Global Slavery Index, above n 141.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² US Department of State (2020), above n 12, 262-264.

¹⁶³ BTI, above n 22, 34.

¹⁶⁴ UNGA, above n 59, 21 ff.

¹⁶⁵ Islamic Republic of Iran, above n 158, 2-3.

6. Experiences of modern slavery of Iranian nationals in the UK

6.1. Demographics of Iranian nationals in the NRM (including intersectionality)

Statistics from the UK's National Referral Mechanism point to Iranian nationals as constituting a relatively significant proportion of those referred to the National Crime Agency (NCA) as being potential victims of trafficking (39 out of 3,128 of the referrals). In 2019, the main proportion of identified victims (62%) were subjected to unknown forms of exploitation, while labour exploitation constituted a 35%. All identified victims were men.¹⁶⁶

Country of Nationality	Domestic Servitude		Labour Exploitation		Organ Harvesting	Sexual Exploitation		Unknown Exploitation		Total
	F	M	F	M		F	M	F	M	
2019		2		9	1		3		24	39
2018¹⁶⁷		2		15	5		5	4	15	41
2017¹⁶⁸		1	1	7			1	3	29	42

6.2. Typical journeys from Iran to the UK for trafficking victims

Due to its strategic location, Iran is a common route for human traffickers. As the IOM's World Migration Report shows, 'migrants from Southern Asia heading to Western Europe are primarily smuggled through Central Asia and the Russian Federation, as well as through the Middle East into the Western Balkans'.¹⁶⁹ The main entrance point to Europe has traditionally been Turkey, either legal or illegally.¹⁷⁰

Despite the lack of data specifically regarding typical journeys from Iran to the UK, in 2020 it was reported that Iranians 'accounted for almost all the migrants intercepted while trying to cross the English Channel to enter the UK in the first three months of this year, according to statistics from the UK government'.¹⁷¹ Iran nationals also accounted for the

¹⁶⁶ UK Home Office, '2019 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery' (October 2019), 47 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840059/Modern_Slavery_Report_2019.pdf> accessed 07 November 2020

¹⁶⁷ UK Home Office, '2018 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery' (October 2019), 47 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907527/2018_UK_Annual_Report_on_Modern_Slavery.pdf> accessed 07 November 2020

¹⁶⁸ UK Home Office, '2019 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery' (October 2019), 47 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652366/2017_uk_annual_report_on_modern_slavery.pdf> accessed 07 November 2020

¹⁶⁹ IOM, 'World Migration Report' (2020) <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁷⁰ See Global Commission on International Migration, 'Migration in the Middle East and Mediterranean' (September 2005) <https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/gcim/rs/RS_5.pdf> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁷¹ Dominic Dudley, 'Iranians And Iraqis Dominate Attempts To Enter UK Via Perilous Cross-Channel Route' Forbes (29 May 2020) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2020/05/29/perilous-cross-channel-migration/#3cc6a6a5c206>> accessed 12 October 2020.

top five most common nationality of asylum seekers to the UK in 2018;¹⁷² and within the top ten nationalities of unaccompanied children.¹⁷³

6.3. Experiences of exploitation and working conditions

There is a lack of reliable data about the specific experiences of exploitation of Lithuanian nationals into the UK. We know that in 2019 all identified victims were men subjected predominantly to unknown forms of exploitation,¹⁷⁴ and that in the last three years men were disproportionately affected by various forms of exploitation in comparison to women.

6.4. Consequent effects of trafficking on survivors

In general terms, human trafficking exerts psychological effects on survivors that persist after intervention, and even after community reintegration. Effects include anxiety, depression, alienation, disorientation, aggression, suicidal ideation, attention deficit, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Within this context, community support and coping mechanisms may mitigate these effects.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Migration Observatory, 'Migration to the UK: Asylum and Resettled Refugees' (08 November 2019) <<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migration-to-the-uk-asylum/>> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁷³ ECPAT UK and Missing People, 'Still in Harm's Way' (December 2018), p. 48 <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/files/PandR/Still_in_Harms_Way_Final.pdf> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁷⁴ UK Home Office, above note n 166, 47.

¹⁷⁵ See, generally David Okech et al, 'Social Support, Dysfunctional Coping, and Community Reintegration as Predictors of PTSD Among Human Trafficking Survivors', (2018) 44 *Behavioral Medicine* 209-218, and Asefch Haileselassie Reda, 'An investigation into the experiences of female victims of trafficking in Ethiopia' (2018) 11 *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 87.

7. The impact of COVID-19

7.1. The Government's response to COVID-19

Iran was one of the first countries outside China to have a rapid increase in the number of cases of COVID-2019, which contrasted with a mild governmental response. On March 25, it was announced a partial lockdown, closing businesses and government offices for two weeks and banning travel between different cities, and religious sites were only closed in early March.¹⁷⁶ The University of Oxford's Government Stringency Index – a composite measure of the strictness of policy responses¹⁷⁷ – indicates that Iran reached 61,57 out of 100 in the score during two periods of time (March to mid-April and mid-July to mid-September).¹⁷⁸ Measures in different areas have been adopted to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including economic stimulus, employment-related and tax-related measures.¹⁷⁹ The Government took also the initiative to temporarily furlough up to 120,000 prisoners to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in prisons.¹⁸⁰

The Government has planned an allocation of \$1 billion from the National Development Fund to aid COVID-19 relief efforts, which will allow financial assistance packages to be distributed to vulnerable households for an initial period of four months. The plan also seeks to provide 24 million households with a one-time no-interest loan.¹⁸¹ In general, the Government has been criticized for its delayed and inadequate response and its lack of transparency, embedded by "power struggles within its hierarchy that have erupted publicly".¹⁸²

7.2. The impact of COVID-19 on workers and modern slavery victims

In Iran, the country's capacity to respond to the virus had already been substantially hampered by unilateral economic sanctions imposed by US Administration after US withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018, and in March 2020. It has been reported 'this financial situation makes the funding of adequate prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19 impossible, and the country cannot take the same measures adopted in other countries to strengthen responses, such as paying the full cost of obtaining treatment. Essential medicines and medical equipment are technically exempt from sanctions, but their availability is restricted by the effect of sanctions on the commercial sector, reducing manufacturing and trade capacity, and on foreign exchange. Consequently, although approximately 184 000 hospital and primary health-care staff are working to fight COVID-19, their efforts are thwarted by shortages of test kits, protective equipment, and ventilators. WHO has provided crucial supplies, sufficient equipment for 31 000 workers, but supplies are still substantially short of what is needed.¹⁸³ At this juncture, vulnerable groups are more prone to human trafficking and exploitation.

¹⁷⁶ KPMG, 'Iran- Government and institution measures in response to COVID-19' (29 April 2020) <<https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/04/iran-government-and-institution-measures-in-response-to-covid.html>> accessed 12 October 2020

¹⁷⁷ See in depth: <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/coronavirus-government-response-tracker>

¹⁷⁸ Our World in data (2020) <<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/liothuania?country=~LTU#government-responses>> accessed 25 August 2020.

¹⁷⁹ For a description, see KPMG, above n 176.

¹⁸⁰ UNGA, above n 59, 19.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 24.

¹⁸² Farnaz Fasshi, 'Power Struggle Hampers Iran's Coronavirus Response' (17 March 2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/world/middleeast/coronavirus-iran-rouhani.html>> accessed 12 October 2020.

¹⁸³ Adriana Murphy et al, 'Economic sanctions and Iran's capacity to respond to COVID-19' (1 May 2020) 5(5) *The Lancet*.

COVID-19 has particularly affected to the increase of child marriages across the globe. According to UNFPA, disruptions in planned efforts to end child marriage due to COVID-19 could result in an additional 13 million child marriages between 2020 and 2030.¹⁸⁴ Although child marriage in Iran is less frequent than in neighbour regions, is still considerable and it can increase due to COVID-related measures.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ UNFPA, 'Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family planning and ending gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and child marriage' (UNFPA, 2020).

¹⁸⁵ Khadijeh Azimi, 'The trend of girl child marriage in Iran based on national census data' (2020) 28(1) *Journal Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 1.