

IMPACT IRAN



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States and UN must not let Iran lead upcoming UN Forum on technology and human rights

As organizations dedicated to promoting respect for human rights, Impact Iran and its members express their profound dismay and concern at the recent appointment of Mr. Ali Bahreini, the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations (UN), as Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Social Forum of the Human Rights Council (HRC). Given Iran's track record on human rights, this appointment undermines the integrity of the forum, and that of the UN human rights system as a whole.

The appointment of Mr. Ali Bahraini was made public yesterday by the President of the UN Human Rights Council. The President is required to appoint the Chair-Rapporteur among candidates put forward by the five regional groups. While the five regional groups were invited to appoint candidates, only the Asia-Pacific Group, to which Iran belongs, nominated a candidate. Impact Iran and its members fully condemn the choice of the Asia-Pacific Group, coordinated by the Philippines, to nominate the Iranian Ambassador for such a pivotal position. We are also profoundly disappointed by other regional groups' failure to offer alternatives to this nomination by proposing their own candidates.

This Forum will gather civil society organizations from all regions of the world, states and international organizations in Geneva on 2 and 3 November 2023 to discuss "the contribution of science, technology and innovation to the promotion of human rights".

Iranian authorities have long deployed technology to surveil and censor the people of Iran, including limiting access to information and monitoring information exchanges and expression online and offline. Most recently, UN Special Procedures condemned various proposals being discussed by the Iranian Government to use artificial intelligence to enforce compulsory hijab. Mr. Bahreini's appointment is a startling affront to all the victims who have had their fundamental

rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly violated by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This appointment is also an affront to Iranian human rights defenders who are being violently and systematically repressed and silenced at home. These individuals will not be given a chance to travel to Geneva to share their perspective on the topic of the forum. The Social Forum is supposed to be primarily a space for civil society organizations and human rights defenders to share their experiences and discuss challenges, on a par with state representatives and UN experts. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in contrast, has been for decades repressing civic space to the extreme, including through heavy censorship, arbitrary arrests and detentions of human rights defenders and judicial harassment.

More generally, the appointment of Mr. Bahreini, who was appointed Representative to the UN by the Islamic Republic of Iran in September 2022, amid the deadly mass repression of nationwide protests marked by severe violations of human rights that may amount to crimes against humanity according to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, is an affront to all victims of the repression in Iran, and consequently a serious blow to the credibility of the UN human rights system.

As Chair-Rapporteur of the Social Forum, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be involved in the preparation of this event, including the framing of its agenda, decisions on what should be discussed and who will be invited to participate in panel discussions. He will also benefit from the protocolar honors related to this function: sitting on the podium of the Human Rights Council assembly room, alongside the President of the HRC and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, chairing the session and delivering opening and closing statements.

The UN and Member States must not let the Islamic Republic of Iran make a mockery of the UN Social Forum and undermine the credibility of the institution. States must now make up for this failure. They must not let the Islamic Republic of Iran take control of the UN Social Forum and receive the undue honors associated with the function of Chair-Rapporteur.

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Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran

All human rights for all in Iran

ARTICLE 19

Association for the Human Rights of the Azerbaijani People in Iran (AHRAZ)

Baloch Activist Campaign

Iran Human Rights

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center

Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM)

Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva (KMMK-G)

Kurdpa Human Rights Organization

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