

## STATEMENT FROM THE EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN IRAN FOLLOWING RECENT PROTESTS

*[Brussels, 14 January 2026]*

The European Women's Lobby stands in solidarity with the **women and girls of Iran**, who continue to face a **brutal system of gender-based repression and lethal protest crackdowns** into January 2026. As protests flare again across the country, Iranian women remain **at the core of the struggle for "Woman, Life, Freedom"**<sup>1</sup>, paying an unbearable price for demanding dignity, equality and democracy.

Iranian authorities have unleashed a **renewed cycle of bloodshed against protesters**<sup>2</sup> since late December 2025, with security forces firing live ammunition, beating demonstrators in the streets, and inflicting particular brutality in provinces with large Kurdish and Luri populations<sup>3</sup>. **Women and girls have been among those killed, arbitrarily detained, tortured and forced into televised "confessions"**<sup>4</sup> in scenes that mirror and intensify the repression that followed the killing of Jina Mahsa Amini in 2022.

Based on the latest aggregated and verified data from the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), protests have taken place at **585 locations nationwide**<sup>5</sup>, including 186 cities across all 31 provinces. As of this date, at least 47 members of the security forces and one government-affiliated non-civilian (a prosecutor) have been killed, alongside 483 protesters. HRANA has recorded eight children under 18 and five non-protesting civilian bystanders among the dead, bringing the total number of **confirmed fatalities to 544 so far**, with a further 579 reported deaths still under investigation.

This repression is rooted in a system of **gender apartheid**<sup>6</sup>, where discriminatory laws on compulsory hijab, marriage, divorce, mobility, employment and bodily autonomy deny women equal citizenship and basic freedoms. Recent legal measures, including harsher penalties for "improper" hijab and further erosions of women's rights in family and criminal law, show a state determined to tighten control rather than reform.

Despite lethal force and pervasive surveillance, Iranian women continue to lead and inspire the protest movement with extraordinary acts of courage. From **appearing unveiled in public and dancing in the streets to symbolically lighting cigarettes**<sup>7</sup> from burning portraits of the Supreme Leader, they defy laws designed to erase their presence from public life.

The European Women's Lobby calls on **EU institutions and all Member States** to move beyond statements of concern and take coordinated, principled action in support of Iranian women and all those protesting for their rights. In particular, we urge:

- The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, European Council President António Costa, and EU High Representative Kaja

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<sup>1</sup> ["Woman, Life, Freedom" survivors want to end State impunity in Iran | OHCHR](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Iran: Deaths and injuries rise amid authorities' renewed cycle of protest bloodshed - Amnesty International](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Iran: Authorities' Renewed Cycle of Protest Bloodshed | Human Rights Watch](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Amnesty International, "Iran: Deaths and injuries rise amid authorities' renewed protest bloodshed"](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Day Fifteen of Iran's Nationwide Protests: Sharp Rise in Human Casualties - Hrana](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Center for Human Rights in Iran, 'Gender Apartheid in Iran is Crushing Women's Lives and Futures', 27 March 2025](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Iran International, "Lighting cigarette with burning Khamenei portrait becomes symbol of defiance"](#)

Kallas, to publicly and consistently name the situation in Iran as a systemic, state-imposed regime of gender-based oppression and to recognise the central role of women in the current protest movement.

- All EU institutions and Member States to maintain and expand targeted sanctions and asset freezes against officials and entities responsible for serious human rights violations, including killings, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and persecution of women human rights defenders and protesters.
- EU governments and agencies to urgently increase political, financial and protection support to Iranian women's rights organisations, human rights defenders, journalists and artists, including those in exile, with safe pathways, emergency visas and long-term funding.
- The EU to systematically integrate women's rights, the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and accountability for protest-related crimes into all diplomatic, trade and security contacts with Iranian authorities, refusing any normalisation that ignores ongoing atrocities.

The European Women's Lobby calls on the **United Nations**, its Member States and all relevant international actors to act decisively to end impunity and protect those at risk in Iran. We specifically call for:

- The UN Human Rights Council to extend and strengthen the mandate and resources of the Fact-Finding Mission<sup>8</sup> on Iran so it can continue to document killings, torture, sexual violence, and other grave violations linked to the protests, with a specific focus on gender-based crimes.
- The full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>9</sup> and its Women, Peace and Security Agenda, particularly UNSCR 1820<sup>10</sup> (protecting women from sexual violence in conflict) and UNSCR 2467<sup>11</sup> (addressing conflict-related sexual violence), in all UN dealings with Iran.
- All UN Member States to support pathways toward international accountability, including preserving evidence for future prosecutions, exploring universal jurisdiction cases, and working toward recognition of gender apartheid as a crime under international law.
- The UN Secretary-General António Guterres, relevant Special Procedures and UN Women to systematically highlight the situation of Iranian women and girls, including discriminatory laws on hijab, family status, reproductive rights and child marriage, in all reports and dialogues with Iran.

The European Women's Lobby stands in solidarity with the Iranian women and girls who continue to march, sing, and speak out, despite knowing that they may face bullets, prisons, torture or death. **Iranian women are leaders of a historic push for freedom whose voices must shape the future of their country.** The European Women's Lobby calls on the EU, the UN, all Member States and international actors to listen to them, to center their demands in all policies on Iran, and to use every peaceful means available to support their fight for a free, democratic and just Iran where "Woman, Life, Freedom" is finally realised.

<sup>8</sup> [Fact-finding mission urges Iran to end protest violence and restore internet | UN News](#)

<sup>9</sup> [UN Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\) on Women and Peace and Security](#)

<sup>10</sup> [UNSCR 1820 \(2008\) on protection of women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [UNSCR 2467 \(2019\) on conflict-related sexual violence](#)