

The governments of democratic countries governed by the rule of law should immediately and completely sever political and economic relations with the current ruling authorities in Iran, for the following fundamental reasons:

1. No free and civilized society in today's world maintains official or unofficial relations with organizations such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS. The ruling authorities in Iran meet the same defining criteria: ideological absolutism, institutionalized violence, and systematic use of terror as a tool of governance and foreign policy.

2. The ultimate and declared objective of this regime is not peaceful coexistence within the international system, but the expansion and imposition of its rigid religious-ideological doctrine beyond Iran's borders.

This position is not based solely on the regime's documented conduct over the past 47 years in Iran and across the region, including widespread human-rights violations and acts of terrorism<sup>1</sup>. Rather, it is grounded in the regime's own formal legal and ideological foundations, as set out in what it calls its "Constitution" and in the statutes governing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the regime's primary instrument for repression and external operations. An examination of key provisions of these documents makes this clear.

#### 1. Being an Iranian citizen is not a condition for the "Leader of the Islamic Revolution"

The highest political authority in Iran is the office currently held by Ali Khamenei, officially designated as the "Leader of the Islamic Revolution." All major political, judicial, and military appointments are subject, directly or indirectly, to his approval.

This position is endowed with near-absolute authority, without any effective institutional mechanism for democratic accountability or meaningful limitation of power. However, under Article 109 of the regime's "Constitution" that describes the requirements and roles of the "supreme leader", Iranian citizenship is not a requirement for holding this office. Instead, the criteria focus on religious qualifications, including "justice and piety necessary to lead the Islamic Ummah."

This structure reflects a fundamental reality: the holder of this office does not define himself as the national leader of Iran, but as a religious-political authority over Muslims all over the world. When the highest authority in a state is not defined by national citizenship or national accountability, the regime cannot be considered a normal national government within the international legal order.

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<sup>1</sup> Documented examples of the regime's terrorist activities include, among others: the Mykonos restaurant assassinations in Germany (1992); the AMIA bombing in Argentina (1994); the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia (1996); and the attempted bombing in France linked to regime operatives (2018).

## 2. The IRGC as a Transnational Military-Terrorist Organization

The primary armed force under the direct authority of the “Leader of the Islamic Revolution” is the IRGC. Under Article 34 of the IRGC’s statutes, Iranian nationality is not a requirement for membership.

The IRGC functions as a military-terrorist organization whose mission extends beyond Iran’s borders. Its role and operational model closely resemble those of transnational jihadist groups, including ISIS, in that it recruits and deploys individuals based on ideological loyalty rather than nationality.

In practice, the IRGC has established and supported armed networks in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, serving as an instrument for regional destabilization and ideological expansion.

## 3. Rejection of National Sovereignty and Advocacy of Ideological Expansion

Within the regime’s ideological framework, nationality is treated as subordinate to religious-political objectives. The regime’s own doctrine envisions the expansion of its system beyond Iran. This is even reflected in the writings of Ali Khamenei, the current leader of the regime, long before he came to power. In his preface to his own translation of Sayyid Qutb’s<sup>2</sup> “Islam: The Religion of the Future”, published in 1966, Khamenei writes that Islam will ultimately “assume the throne of world governance” and force existing powers to retreat.

Such statements confirm that the founders and the current “supreme leader” of the regime governing Iran did not and do not regard it as a conventional state pursuing national interests, but as an ideological project with global ambitions. This worldview provides the ideological justification for the regime’s sustained support for terrorist and militant groups abroad. It is hardcoded in the nature of the regime, and no change in the leadership will change that destructive course.

## 4. Legal Impunity of the IRGC and Denial of Judicial Remedies to Citizens

Under the regime’s constitutional and statutory framework, ordinary citizens are effectively denied access to judicial remedies for crimes committed by the IRGC. The founders of the regime established this immunity through the regime’s own governing framework, without stating it explicitly. Article 150 of the regime’s “Constitution” provides that the scope and limits of the IRGC’s responsibilities, in relation to any disagreements with other armed forces, shall be determined by law. By expressly addressing the application of law only in the context of relations between the IRGC and other armed forces, the legal structure implicitly excludes civilian judicial oversight. Under a widely recognized legal principle known as the “principle of the limited jurisdiction” or “the principle of enumerated powers”, when legal

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<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Qutb, a central ideologue of modern jihadist Islam, promoted a doctrine that rejects secular governance and envisions political Islam as a global alternative to existing national and international systems. His ideas have had a documented influence on Ali Khamenei’s political and ideological worldview.

applicability is expressly defined for a specific category of cases, it is presumed not to apply outside those categories. The practical consequence is that ordinary Iranian citizens are denied standing to bring legal action against the IRGC, even in cases involving serious criminal conduct. As a result, IRGC personnel enjoy de facto immunity for grave offenses, including unlawful killings, torture, sexual violence, and confiscation of private property.

By comparison, even in situations of foreign military occupation, civilians may invoke international humanitarian law, including protections under the Geneva Conventions, to seek accountability for crimes committed by occupying forces. Iranian citizens living under the occupation of the IRGC and its leader are denied even these minimal protections.

This structural legal impunity has enabled the repeated and violent suppression of mass protests, including the large-scale uprising of January 2026, during which IRGC forces used lethal force against civilians while remaining shielded from accountability. Further details are provided in the Appendix.

### Conclusion and Policy Implications

The 47-year record of this regime, combined with its own constitutional and ideological foundations, demonstrates that it does not operate as a normal national government, but as an ideologically driven system that institutionalizes repression at home and exports instability abroad. Despite this, many democratic governments have continued to treat the regime as a conventional state actor, maintaining diplomatic relations on the grounds that it is the “legal government” of Iran. The evidence presented above shows that this assumption is inconsistent with the regime’s own legal structure and declared objectives. Accordingly, the treatment of this regime by democratic states should be aligned with the policies applied to comparable terrorist and extremist organizations.

At a minimum, the governments of democratic countries should:

- Recall their ambassadors from Iran;
- Close regime diplomatic missions that function as centers for espionage, intimidation, and sabotage;
- Expel all personnel operating under the cover of these missions; and
- Maintain and strengthen policies of maximum political and economic pressure.

Such measures are not only justified but necessary to uphold international norms, protect the security of democratic societies, and stand in solidarity with the Iranian people, who are living under the control of a regime that denies them both national sovereignty and basic legal protection.

## Appendix

Recently, the Editorial Board of the Iranian news outlet Iran International announced in a statement<sup>3</sup> that more than 36,500 Iranians have been massacred in what it described as an “organized crime.” The outlet also reported that it possesses reports and evidence indicating the extrajudicial execution of recently detained individuals. Accounts describing the killing of many protesters indicate that injured demonstrators were shot at point-blank range in hospitals while they were receiving initial medical care; many of the victims were killed by live ammunition fired directly into the forehead. This demonstrates that when a bullet is fired into the forehead, death would be immediate, making transfer to a hospital unnecessary. Moreover, in many photos and images published online and on social media, medical equipment and cardiac monitoring electrodes can be seen, indicating that these individuals were under medical treatment prior to their deaths.

As a result of these actions, many injured protesters avoided going to hospitals and medical centers and, due to the lack of adequate facilities in their homes, lost their lives. There are also numerous credible accounts that the regime arrested individuals in their homes and, after several days of families being kept in the dark, informed them to go to collect the bodies of their loved ones. In addition, there are many reports of protesters being shot in the eyes with pellet guns, with estimates indicating that more than 10,000 people have suffered eye injuries alone. During the peak days of the January protests, the regime also did not refrain from using chemical weapons, and countless field reports were received from citizens stating that they had been exposed to chemical gases. Considering all the facts mentioned above, it can be concluded that at present, thousands of protesters are being killed in complete silence!

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.iranintl.com/202601254093>