

2017 Impact Report



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About us

Established in July 2010, Justice for Iran (JFI) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit human rights organization.

The mission of JFI is to address and eradicate the practice of impunity that empowers officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran to perpetrate widespread human right violations against their citizens, and to hold them accountable for their actions.

JFI unravels the truth and seeks justice for ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTs, women, and those who are persecuted because of their political beliefs.

To achieve its mission, JFI researches, documents, validates, and litigates individual cases. It further raises public awareness and participates in human rights advocacy through the UN and the EU.

Advisory Board

- Professor Yakın Ertürk, Middle East Technical University, Ankara
- Professor Payam Akhavan, McGill University
- Marietje Schaake, EU Parliament Member

Board of Directors

- Hamid Sabi, Lawyer and Head of the prosecution team in Iran Tribunal
- Dr Nena Tromp, lecturer in East European Studies at the University of Amsterdam (UvA).
- Shadi Amin, Researcher, LGBTIQ Activist, Co-Founder of JFI

Co-Founder and Executive Director

- Shadi Sadr, Human Rights Lawyer

Impacts

EU companies become more responsible doing business in Iran

Together with Redress and FIDH, JFI [filed a complaint](#) with the Italian National Contact Point (NCP) against Italtel Group S.p.A. (Italtel) for breaching OECD guidelines by entering into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Telecommunications Company of Iran (TCI). This was the [first ever](#) OECD complaint involving Iran. The complainant argued that the MoU would empower and equip the Iranian authorities, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), with tools to crush online dissent and suppress human rights in Iran.

Although the Italian NCP has not yet made a decision on whether it will investigate the case, it is only by filing complaints such as these that European companies are encouraged to act more responsibly in their business dealings with the Iranian government; a point acknowledged by [Gerald Pachoud](#), former Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on business and human rights.

UN urges Iran to investigate its past crimes instead of destroying mass graves and harassing victims' families

JFI and Amnesty International issued [a joint press release](#) about the destruction of the mass graves of political prisoners. In a separate [joint statement](#), with 18 other NGOs, they also raised serious concerns over reprisals faced by human rights defenders, including the families of those executed in the 1988 massacres. The late UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, Asma Jahangir, subsequently wrote a report expressing concern over the destruction of mass graves, urging their preservation by the Iranian authorities and calling on the government to conduct a full investigation into the 1988 massacres. The UN Secretary-General also [raised concerns](#) regarding the harassment of victims' families for seeking to uncover the truth behind the massacres, issuing a [report in this regard](#).

The victims of the 1988 massacre internationally recognized as enforced disappeared persons

Following a [complaint submitted by political prisoner, Maryam Akbari Monfared](#), about the execution of her siblings during the 1988 massacre, the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntarily Disappearances (WGEID) [urged Iran to disclose the truth](#) about their fate and demanded that the Iranian government investigate into the 1988 massacre and report back to it.

JFI's work in this area helped generate an atmosphere of hope among victims' families. JFI's strategy of framing these executions as "enforced disappearances", has transformed these past crimes into current violations. In a letter obtained by JFI, the WGEID expressed hope that appropriate investigations would be carried out to clarify the fate and whereabouts of Monfared's siblings.

The government of Iran provided a reply to the family of forcibly disappeared baby

Since 1984, Raheleh Rahemipour has campaigned to learn the truth behind the disappearance of her brother and niece. Despite the peaceful nature of her quest for truth and justice, Rahemipour's efforts have been met with persecution and harassment by the Iranian government.

Following a complaint made by JFI, the WGEID asked the Iranian government about Raheleh Rahemipour's missing relatives in August 2016 and demanded that it desist its campaign of harassment against her. The Iranian government provided a reply to the WGEID about her missing relatives. Although it was riddled with discrepancies and was missing key information, this represented the first time in at least a decade that the Iranian government has provided information to the family of a victim of the 1980s mass atrocities.

Iranian human rights violators were held accountable internationally

The EU extended [restrictive measures](#) against human rights violators in Iran, targeting 82 individuals and one entity. The existing [ban on exports to Iran](#) of equipment which might be used for internal repression and monitoring telecommunications has also been renewed. In advance of the EU decision, FIDH shared with relevant EU actors the ["updated details on the individuals designated to the EU restrictive measures responding to serious human rights violations in Iran"](#) compiled by JFI.

Families of the victims of mass atrocities were framed as human rights defenders

Human rights defenders attract specific protection under international human rights law. There are many programs to support and protect human rights defenders in different countries.

Although families of the victims of the 1980s mass atrocities and in particular, women had always been in front of the movement for seeking justice and truth, they were not traditionally categorized as human rights defenders. Over the past year, JFI succeeded in its efforts to reframe the discourse in the UN and other international bodies surrounding human rights defenders and victims' families; to categorise victims' families as human rights defenders where they seek truth and justice in response to rights violations; and to demand associated rights for them accordingly.

In its 2017 report, [Caught in a web of repression: Iran's human rights defenders under attack](#), Amnesty International portrayed Maryam Akbari Monfared as a human rights defender. In an [OHCHR press release](#) condemning charges made against Raheleh Rahemipour, a group of UN human rights experts also characterised her as a human rights defender.

More than 25,000 individuals became empowered to claim their rights

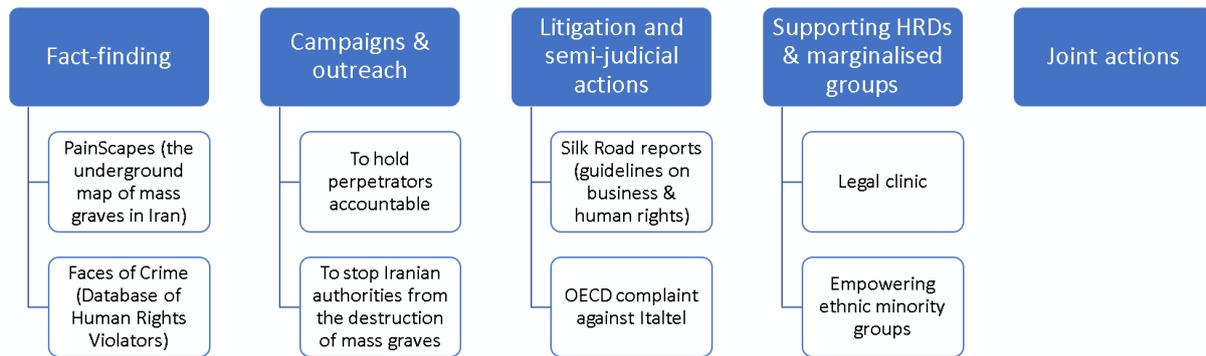
Through its program on human right defenders (Dastgiri) and on the rights of ethnic groups, JFI provided legal advice to 615 individuals, most of whom were based in Iran. Furthermore, at least 24,507 individuals from different ethnic groups benefited from JFI's project on minority rights who would not otherwise be able to claim their rights.

I am writing to you to express my great appreciation for your book, "Crime and Impunity." It is indeed an in-depth work and much-needed one.

Over years I have read about human rights violations inside the Iranian prisons and the gendered aspects of these violations. Your work, however, has contextualized these human rights violations and humanized the experiences of these women. It is indeed a timely and important work. I cannot thank you enough for providing invaluable information for my research project.

Ashraf Zahedi, sociologist, researcher at the University of California

Most Important Activities of the Year



A glance at JFI activities in 2017

Fact-finding

A joint research project with Amnesty International on the mass graves and 1988 prison massacre

September 2018 marks the 30th anniversary of the 1988 massacre. In conjunction with Amnesty International, JFI has conducted holistic research to shed light on these mass atrocities; some of the gravest crimes against humanity committed by the Iranian government and which have never previously been addressed. The research project took a participatory approach which attracted the full engagement of survivors and victims' families who gave in-depth interviews to JFI.

On 30 April 2018, JFI and Amnesty International published the first report of its joint project, entitled *Criminal cover-up: Iran destroying mass graves of victims of 1988 killings*. This report was based on evidence mostly gathered by JFI and verified by Amnesty International. It reveals new evidence including satellite imagery, photo and video analysis showing that the Iranian authorities are deliberately destroying suspected or confirmed mass grave sites associated with the 1988 massacres in which thousands of prisoners detained for political reasons were forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed. The methods of destruction documented in this report include bulldozing, constructing buildings and roads, dumping rubbish or building new burial plots over mass grave sites. These tactics are destroying key evidence that could be used to establish the truth about the scale of the crimes and obtain justice and reparations for the victims and their families.

The finding of the research was also presented at two events: one in Turkey in January 2017 which was organised by *Hafiza Merkezi* ([Mapping Enforced Disappearances and the Missing in the Caucasus, Middle East and North Africa](#)), and the other in the Hague, in November 2017 which was organised by International Institute of Social History ([Right to Justice: Mass Graves and Memorialization](#)) as a working study.

The findings of the research will be published in September 2018 alongside an online platform.

PainScapes (the Underground Map of Mass Graves in Iran)

In 2017, JFI continued its mapping of mass graves in Iran, identifying more than 120 locations which may contain the remains of the victims of the 1980s massacres. 30 of these locations were confirmed as mass gravesites by JFI with a certainty of 50-100%. Through press releases, statements and audio-visual material, JFI drew attention to the Iranian government's accelerated destruction of mass graves in a bid to eradicate evidence and evade accountability.

Faces of Crime (the Database of Human Rights Violators)

JFI continued to systematically collect evidence about human rights violators (HRVs) and their crimes. JFI's work in this field comprises identifying HRVs; gathering information regarding new and existing HRVs; as well as drafting and uploading the profiles of HRVs. During the period 1 January – 31 December 2017, JFI monitored 335 HRVs; updated the profiles of 67 existing HRVs; and added 34 new HRV profiles to its Farsi-language website and 15 new HRV profiles to its English language website.

Supporting civil society activists

In the period 1 January 2017 – 31 March 2018, Dastgiri and its mobile application provided 615 services to people in need, with 723 individuals benefitting from these services. At least 3,000 individuals, including civil society advocates and engaged citizens, used JFI's legal counselling mobile application. JFI published and distributed 24 short articles and 48 visual materials based on best practices and lessons learned from the legal hotline on how to protect and promote civil rights and accountability within the Iranian legal system.

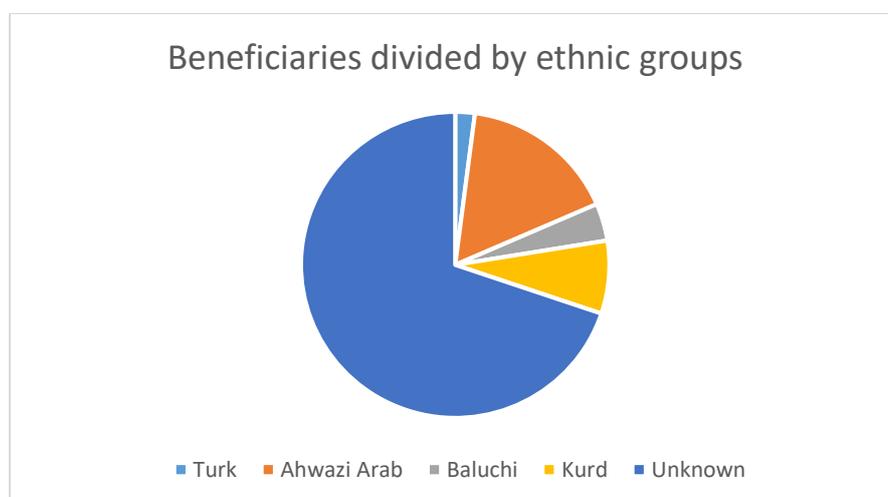
During the same period, JFI provided a comprehensive support package to clients and their families through a network of experienced in-house human rights lawyers including: providing legal advice on making a formal complaint; preparing complaints and required accompanying documentation; instructing defence lawyers of political prisoners; resolving financial issues; making recommendations regarding defence lawyers to political prisoners; submitting cases through UN mechanisms; providing information and documents for the UN High Commissioner; drafting legal statements and letters to official authorities; and referring activists to local lawyers.

Furthermore, through our program on ethnic group rights, we:

- Provided an online platform in four ethnic community languages as well as Farsi;
- Gave legal advice to ethnic community members in their mother tongue in a context where the sole language of the Iranian legal system is Farsi;
- Offered legal workshops to ethnic community members in their mother tongue;
- Gave 14 workshops to 485 Arab- and Kurdish-Iranians on how to make compensation claims arising from landmine-related incidents;
- Made nine legal submissions;
- Created a network of highly-experienced ethnic community lawyers;

- Developed connections between ethnic community lawyers and NGOs to facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing with respect to cases with similar elements; and
- Encouraged ethnic communities to claim their economic, social, cultural and environmental rights by developing and disseminating two series of guidelines on how to claims those rights using domestic and international legal avenues, best practices as well as legal question and answers.

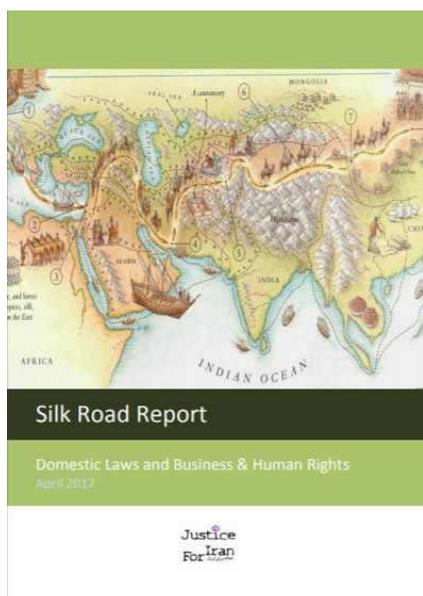
449 people in Iran benefitted from JFI activities while the total reach of the organisation through its website, Facebook pages and other social media platforms was 3,242,832. This does not include the indirect reach through all media coverage, which we are unable to estimate.



Litigation and semi-judicial action

Silk Road, JFI's program on business and human rights, produced and published a guideline which explores concepts and mechanisms on human rights and business which can be applied to cases involving multinational corporations and Iranian companies, including those which are closely linked to, or partially owned by, human rights violators. The guideline was [published in a four-volume series](#).

Using the guideline, JFI's lawyers created a strategy which they adopted in their approach towards a European IT corporate which had signed MoU or contracts with Iran. Together with its partners in Silk Road project, including FIDH, Redress and OECD Watch, JFI met with two European IT corporates and raised concerns about their probable complicity in censorship, breaching the right to freedom of speech, freedom of the internet, freedom of arbitrary detention and torture as Iran's IT sector is predominantly occupied by the IRGC which has an established role in serious human rights violations.



On 13 September 2017, this coalition also filed the first ever OECD complaint in relation to Iran. The complaint was made against Italtel, a major Italian telecom company, regarding its business activities in Iran. The complainants argue that the technologies and services offered by Italtel to its Iranian partner, the TCI, breach multiple provisions of the OECD Guidelines by contributing to internet censorship and other rights violations in Iran and helping the Iranian authorities, including the IRGC, to suppress political dissent and civil liberties in the country and in cyberspace.

The Complainants have asked the Italian NCP for its assistance in making an assessment of the facts and circumstances and resolving the issues, or examining the complaint further and reaching findings on whether the company's actions are consistent with the Guidelines. They have also called for an immediate moratorium on current negotiations and business engagements between Italtel and TCI until such time that the actual and potential breaches to the Guidelines are recognized and effectively mitigated.

Campaigns

In 2017, JFI initiated two major campaigns either individually or jointly with other organisations.

To hold perpetrators accountable;

JFI made submissions to the UN, EU, US and Canada on the adoption of restrictive measures against Iranian human rights violators.

In February 2017, JFI made submissions to the Council of Europe for the extension and continuation of Restrictive Measures adopted by the Council on 12 April 2011 (Council Regulations (EU) No. 359/2011). On 11 April 2017, the Council of Europe extended the sanctions and updated the information on sanctioned individuals on the basis of JFI's submissions.

In November 2017, JFI made submissions to the U.S. Treasury Department arguing for the imposition of sanctions against HRVs in Iran. In January 2018, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned Rajai-Shahr Prison and its director.

In March 2018, JFI made submissions to the Council of Europe, the US and Canada for the imposition of human rights sanctions against 15 officials who were responsible for the violent crackdown on protesters in the recent uprising (December 2017-January 2018) in Iran. In so doing, JFI drew the attention of the international community to these HRVs and their roles in the suppression of peaceful protests.

JFI also raised awareness about the fact [that Iran's new Minister of Justice, Alireza Avaei, is suspected of crimes against humanity](#). There is evidence which strongly suggests that he was a member of a death commission in the city of Dezful which determined the political prisoners

who were then massacred. This issue was subsequently given considerable coverage by the Iranian mainstream media including [BBC Persian](#) and [Iran International](#).

To stop Iranian authorities from destroying mass graves:

JFI published a report, press release and audio-visual materials on the destruction of mass graves and engaged with Iranian and international media on this issue. News reports on the destruction of mass graves in Ahvaz and Mashhad reached millions of Iranians as it was covered by the most popular Farsi-language media outlets including [Manoto TV](#), [VOA](#), [Euronews](#), Radio Farda, Radio Zamaneh and [IranWire](#).

Campaign activities around the joint report with Amnesty also attracted considerable coverage by Iranian TV channels, radio stations and news websites as well as international media outlets including the [Associated Press](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#) and [Daily Mail](#) and the [Spanish](#), [German](#), [Swiss](#), [Australian](#) and [Portuguese](#) press. In addition, all mainstream Persian-language media broadcast extensively the findings of the report, conducting interviews with the families and survivors. In total, at least 26 Persian popular and 35 global media outlets covered the story. The video clips and gifs created for social media coverage of the report also reached hundreds of viewers in the first couple of days following the release of the report.

JFI also used different social media platforms to reach its campaign out to millions of Iranians mainly inside the country. Creating and posting more audio-visual material boosted its reach during 2017. For instance, the video [Generations Without Justice: The Story of Maryam Akbari](#), produced jointly with the Center for Human Rights in Iran, was watched by thousands alone.

Joint Actions

In 2017, JFI strengthened its policy on coalition-making, forming a record number of partnerships with international human rights organisations. Here are some examples:

International Women's Day plea to Iran to release Kurdish women's rights activist on the ninth anniversary of her arrest

JFI and REDRESS [raised concerns about the health and well-being of Zeinab Jalalian, a female Kurdish activist](#) serving a life sentence in Iran after her arrest nine years ago on International Women's Day. The organisations [brought](#) Zeinab's case to the attention of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD). JFI also shone a spotlight on Jalalian's case through the publication of an [op-ed article in the New Internationalist](#).

On 18 April 2016, the WGAD issued a [strong opinion](#) on the case. It determined that her detention was arbitrary and urged Iran to release her immediately and offer her compensation. The WGAD also [expressed](#) "grave concern" that her mental and physical integrity may be at risk of "irreparable harm", requesting the Iranian government to "take the necessary steps to remedy the situation of Ms Jalalian without delay."

Joint statement on those seeking truth and justice for 1980s killings

On International Women's Day, and in conjunction with other 19 NGOs including Frontline Defenders and Human Rights Watch, JFI issued a [public statement](#) calling on the Iranian authorities to halt the harassment, intimidation and prosecution of human rights defenders seeking truth and justice on behalf of individuals who were summarily executed or forcibly disappeared during the 1980s.

JFI also participated in joint actions initiated by other NGOs such as [NGO statements](#) for the [renewal of the mandate of Special Rapporteur on Iran](#) and a [public statement](#) to urge the Iranian authorities to end their cruel campaign of harassment and intimidation against the families of detainees who have died in detention under suspicious circumstances.

Challenges

1. In 2017, JFI collaborated with the Taslimi Foundation on plans for the establishment of a people's tribunal on the persecution of Baha'is in Iran which was due to be held in Toronto in January 2018. Event planning and organisation was an incredibly time-intensive process. Despite its longstanding awareness of the initiative, the Baha'i World Centre put up unexpected and strong resistance to the event. In the absence of support from the Baha'i World Centre, it would prove impossible to secure the cooperation of individual Baha'is. As a consequence, JFI and the Taslimi Foundation were left with no other option but to cancel the event.
2. 2017 witnessed the reduction in funding for Iranian human rights organisations and projects. An increasing number of private donors, such as the Sigrid Rausing Trust, shifted their priority countries and began to withdraw support for new projects or organisations which work on Iranian human rights. Due to restrictive eligibility criteria or other undeclared policies, applying for or receiving funding from the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) and the UN became increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for Iranian human rights organisations. As a consequence, the US government presented the only remaining funding alternative for numerous organisations. The possibility of the US government becoming the main or sole donor for Iranian human rights projects and organisations carries with it worrying implications, including political, reputational and organisational risks.
3. With the election of Trump as US President, the issues of the nuclear deal and regional security have once more become the focal point for the international community, diverting its attention from human rights abuses in Iran. In this context, the work of organisations such as JFI has become increasingly difficult as instances of human rights violations have increased whilst the issue of human rights has become a secondary consideration for the international community and its attention and pressure on such cases have decreased.

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ARTICLE 19

SMALL MEDIA 

...and many individuals who supported us by their donations because they believed in our cause.