

2020 IMPACT REPORT

42.1
Years

253
Institutions

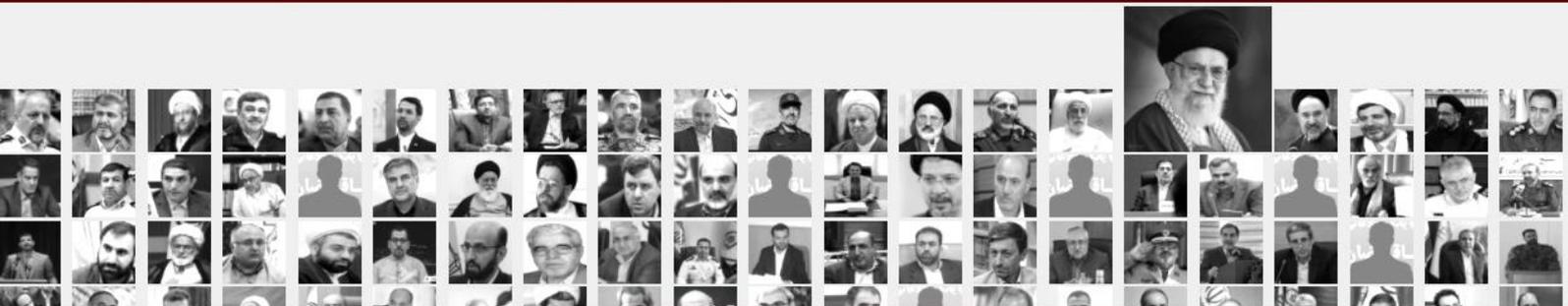
266
Recorded Perpetrators

The organizational chart shows the hierarchy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the top is the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Below him are the General Staff of Armed Forces, the Supreme Leader's Office, and the Assembly of Experts for Leadership. The General Staff of Armed Forces oversees the Army, IRGC, and Police (NAJA). The Assembly of Experts for Leadership oversees the Supreme National Security Council, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, and the Supreme Council for Cyberspace. The Supreme National Security Council oversees the Guardian Council and the Expediency Discernment Council. The Supreme Council for Cyberspace oversees the Executive Power and the Parliament. A red 3D model of a building is shown in the bottom right corner of the chart area.

NAME/AKA

POSITION

INSTITUTION



About Us

Established in July 2010, Justice for Iran (JFI) is a London-based human rights NGO that seeks freedom from impunity.

JFI aims to hold the perpetrators of serious human rights violations, including but not limited to crimes against humanity, torture, enforced disappearances, war crime and genocide which have been committed in Iran or by the Iranian officials, accountable.

JFI focuses on the right to truth for individual victims and society as a whole, and pursues right to justice for those who belong to the most marginalised groups such as women, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTIs and political dissidents.

JFI conducts fact-finding, initiates judicial and semi-judicial actions, and carries out campaign and advocacy at national, regional and international levels.

JFI is a member of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) and the Regional Network for Historical Dialogue and Dealing with the Past (RNHDP).

Board of Directors

- Hamid Sabi, lawyer and head of the prosecution team at the Iran Tribunal
- Dr Nena Tromp, lecturer in East European Studies at the University of Amsterdam (UvA).
- Drewery Dike, former Amnesty International Researcher on Iran
- Shadi Amin, Researcher, LGBTQI Activist, Justice for Iran Co-Founder

Co-Directors

- Shadi Sadr, Human Rights Lawyer and Justice for Iran Co-Founder
- Dr Mohammad Nayyeri, Human Rights Lawyer, PhD from King's College

Advisory Board

- Professor Yakın Ertürk, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women
- Professor Payam Akhavan, McGill University

Highlights of the Year

- **Justice for Iran marked its 10th anniversary.**
- **More than 500 truth and justice seekers in the country joined Justice for Iran’s campaigns.**
- **Perpetrators acknowledged being hit by human rights sanctions.**

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Introduction

Justice for Iran (JFI) reached its 10th anniversary in July 2020, and in ordinary circumstances this would have called for a celebration. However, 2020 was to say the least, far from ordinary and it did not feel right to celebrate our anniversary while the world remained deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A decade ago, when JFI was co-founded by Shadi Sadr and Shadi Amin, Iran was still in the midst of the crackdown on the post-2009 election protests, experiencing yet another episode of widespread impunity for perpetrators of serious human rights violations. Iranian society has been suffering from prevailed impunity since the inception of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Such chronic impunity could not, and still cannot, be addressed without dealing with both the current and the past atrocities. 10 years after 2009, another bloody crackdown on peaceful protesters took place in November 2019, with impunity reaching an unprecedented level, partly (if not entirely) due to the failure to hold perpetrators of past atrocities accountable.

We started our journey documenting sexual torture against women political prisoners in the 1980s, reconstructing the profiles of those responsible for some of the most heinous crimes, such as raping virgin girls prior to their execution.

Working with hundreds of survivors and victims' families, JFI has continued conducting investigations into violations of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, marginalised groups such as LGBTIs, and political dissidents. We have also investigated the role of individuals and institutions involved in committing widespread and systematic human rights violations. Examples include enforced disappearances, forced confessions, and killing protesters. These efforts have contributed to the work and publications of various international human rights mechanisms, including several procedures at the United Nations and other regional mechanisms such as the EU's legal regime for sanctioning perpetrators. We have also initiated and assisted in litigation proceedings, and fought perpetrators in the European Court of Justice.

Over the years, it has been our vision, and we have been increasingly convinced, that we needed to go beyond the mere documentation of human rights abuses. Many experts in this field have confirmed and supported the importance of identifying perpetrators and

collecting evidence about them, as a pre-requisite to justice and accountability processes. As Beth Van Schaack, a Professor in Human Rights at Stanford Law School, observes:

“Although collection efforts focused on abuses are valuable, when it comes to legal accountability, it is equally—if not more—important to collect potential evidence that speaks to individual responsibility. It is thus crucial to search for, preserve, and authenticate linkage evidence—evidence that connects the commission of a crime to a particular culprit or set of actors. Linkage evidence can help identify not only the direct perpetrator(s), but also his or her confederates, co-conspirators, superiors, subordinates, and enablers, all of who may be equally liable through doctrines of complicity, aiding and abetting, conspiracy, joint criminal enterprise, common plan, instigation, and superior responsibility, depending on the operative legal framework. All told, the point is to signal an awareness of who is responsible for abuses so as to remove the cloak of anonymity and signal the feasibility of future accountability processes.”

The significance of documenting the perpetrators in the fight against impunity has also been highlighted by Dr. Nevenka Tromp, author of *Prosecuting Slobodan Milošević: The Unfinished Trial*, and JFI’s Board member:

“Law changes the way we think and the way we behave - but the law without certainty of law enforcement will undermine our trust in justice and accountability. The lack of law enforcement has been the Achilles heel of the international criminal regime and the world citizens have been turning to the alternatives to address the accountability. It is thus of a paramount importance for human rights organisations to keep investigating and recording the politically motivated crimes of the political and military elites. Public display of the faces and the names of those who have been engaged in commission of crimes in order to conquer the power or retain the political control is a welcome step in the direction of breaking the culture of impunity.”

In light of this, and by adopting the same vision, we launched, on our 10th anniversary, *Faces of Crime (FoC)*, a database of human rights violators in Iran. Dr. Nader Hashemi, Director of the Center for Middle East Studies, University of Denver, considers it to be a move towards achieving accountability:

“Accountability for gross human rights abuses can mitigate their perpetuation. Accountability, however, requires due process and irrefutable evidence presented in a court of law. This new database, Faces of Crime, focusing on human rights violators in Iran, helps to advance these goals. It is an essential reference point for researchers, lawyers, journalists, scholars

and activists, interested in the question of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

While our struggle to combat impunity in Iran goes on, and despite the pandemic, some positive developments took place in 2020 that widened the horizons for accountability efforts. More countries passed Magnitsky Style acts to sanction perpetrators of gross human rights violations that occurred in other countries, and the EU adopted the Global Magnitsky Act, consolidating its efforts to tackle impunity when judicial avenues are closed. The increasing number of cases in domestic courts using Universal Jurisdiction (in particular, a case in Sweden investigating the 1988 massacres of political prisoners in Iran, as well as several ongoing cases in Germany against Syrian perpetrators based on the prosecutor’s structural investigation) has reignited hope amongst victims’ communities in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) that justice would prevail, even thousands kilometre away when it is impossible to achieve at home . The International Criminal Court’s opening of investigations into Afghanistan and Palestine, as well as the Rohingya genocide case in the International Court of Justice, were also other signs that the world is slowly becoming a dangerous place for those involved in heinous crimes.

Most Important Activities at a Glance

In 2020, JFI used fact-finding initiatives, engaging with accountability mechanisms, campaigning and deploying advocacy efforts at the national, regional and international levels to fulfil its mission. Despite unprecedented challenges, including those resulting from the global pandemic, JFI has had a substantial impact in 2020 in areas such as building, launching, and optimising advocacy and accountability tools and documentation mechanisms; having a significant accountability footprint both through multiple investigations (Aban Tribunal, November 2019 Visual Investigations) and research reports (*Shoot to Kill* and *Mockery of Justice*); leading successful joint initiatives with partners, including the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) with the publication of the *Orwellian State* report on forced confessions, and the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) with capacity building actions; further expanding its network inside Iran and connecting with hundreds of activists on the ground; contributing to sanctioning perpetrators of human rights violations; and achieving significant media outreach. The organisation also broadened its mandate by collaborating with practitioners from other MENA countries and contributed to the establishment of Justice Beyond Borders as a regional initiative. All these would not have been achieved without working closely with our regional and international partners, including but not limited to FIDH, SOMO, the Leiden University Kalshoven-Gieskes Forum (KGF), Alliance Against Genocide, as well as several Iranian NGOs.

In 2020, JFI continued (after a decade of honing their expertise) their specialised work : documenting and uncovering profiles of perpetrators of grave human rights violations, as the first and most vital step towards holding them accountable. The 2020 JFI's running programs were Accountability for All, Business and Human Rights, and Justice Beyond Borders.

1. Accountability for All

1.1. Forced Televised Confessions

JFI's joint report with FIDH, 'Orwellian State: The Islamic Republic of Iran's State Media as a Weapon of Mass Suppression', was launched in June 2020, marking the International Day for Supporting Victims of Torture. The report identified 4 entities, namely the IRIB, Press TV,

Ofogh TV and Mardom Khabar Internet TV, as human rights violators. These organisations had produced and broadcasted the forced confessions of political prisoners, stolen data and created defamatory content against activists and journalists. The report confirmed that between 2009 and 2019, Iranian state-owned media (including the mentioned organisations) had broadcast the forced confessions of at least 355 individuals, as well as defamatory content against at least 505.

Despite the postponement of the launch of the report, originally scheduled to be held at the European Parliament on March 26th, due to COVID19-related delays, the report was launched virtually.

Echoing victims and activists, JFI initiated a [joint letter](#) of 13 international and Iranian human rights organisations to the European Union Council. It requested the sanctioning of the IRIB and 7 officials responsible for the broadcast of forced confessions extracted from political prisoners.

1.2. [Mapping the November Bloodshed](#)

2019 marked one of the most turbulent and bloody periods in Iranian contemporary history. On November 15th, following a sudden spike in fuel prices, nationwide protests broke out across Iran. On the 16th, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) commenced a 5-day shutdown of the internet, while brutally cracking down on the peaceful protestors (shootings, use of disproportionate violence and mass arrests).

In response, JFI initiated a visual investigation to geolocate, verify and analyse over 2000 public videos from the protests, with eyewitnesses, local activists, and families of victims.

[‘Mapping the November Bloodshed,’](#) remains an ongoing project, combined with a video series targeting the general public through social media. It documents unlawful lethal force in 43 cities across 17 provinces, over just 5 days, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands injured.

Under this project, JFI published 2 reports in 2020; [‘Shoot to Kill!; Mapping the November Bloodshed’](#) identifies perpetrators and forces involved in firing live ammunition against protestors, while [‘Mockery of Justice for Victims of Iran’s November Protests’](#) documents the plight of the families in seeking justice. Both reports, on request, were submitted to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, to be used in the next report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran.

Moreover, JFI shared the findings of [Shoot to Kill!; Mapping the November Bloodshed](#) with several EU officials during face-to-face meetings in visits to Brussels, the Hague and Berlin. Our advocacy urged the EU to consider the new listing of 35 individuals responsible for the unlawful killing of protestors and other civilians (listed in the Annex) and utilise its human rights sanctions regime.

Moreover, JFI concluded a partnership with the Humanitarian Law Clinic of Leiden University (the Kalshoven-Gieskes Forum (KGF)) in order to compile a communication to the International Criminal Court (ICC) demonstrating evidence to urge the ICC Prosecution to open an investigation into the November 2019 atrocities.

1.3. Faces of Crime Database of Human Rights Violators

One of the substantial achievements of JFI this year was launching the FoC Database, a unique tool documenting and detailing the profiles of, to date, more than 250 perpetrators and a multitude of institutions that have been involved in more than 430 incidents of gross human rights violations. These include their institutional ties, positions of power, and evidence-based accounts of their crimes. This Database also includes a hierarchical chart of the state, showing the distribution of political power, key positions and the role of these institutions in human rights violations. The FoC Database can be utilised by a wide range of stakeholders, from policy makers to scholars, to advocates for accountability for crimes committed by Iranian perpetrators and litigate through various accountability mechanisms. Its launch on International Human Rights Day attracted unprecedented media coverage by all mainstream Iranian satellite TV channels, as well as popular websites, while multiple interviews were given by JFI staff.¹ The Database and public calls for submissions similarly sparked great interest within the human rights community and resulted in significant engagement with tens of activists and victims of violations inside Iran subsequently making contact with JFI and contributing to the Database.

FoC is an interactive tool that provides information about perpetrators, including their personal details and positions, as well as the locations where they committed human rights abuses. This is done through pages allocated to the profiles of each perpetrator. The user can filter information by type of rights violated, or by the government institution involved in the abuses. The power structure of the Islamic Republic, as it links to human rights abuses, is also available on a separate page in the database.

The database demonstrates that human rights violators are holding high-ranking official positions in the Islamic Republic. Not only have they not been held accountable for the violations, but on the contrary they are often promoted to higher positions. The database shows how key state institutions, including the executive, military and even so-called cultural entities, are deeply involved in gross human rights violations. Most importantly, entities that are by law tasked to protect the human rights and security of individuals, are the main perpetrators responsible for the majority of human rights violations.

The evidence incriminating these perpetrators, profiled by FoC, has mainly been collected through independent investigations into these events carried out by JFI over the past 10 years. The evidence is supplemented by the research reports of other human rights

¹ See, for example, interviews with [BBC Persian](#), [Radio Farda](#), [Kayhan London](#), [Gooya News](#), [Akhbar Rooz Manoto](#), [Iran International](#), [Iran Wire](#).

organisation and official statements.

The list of violators in this database does not yet include all state violators, or all the cases of human rights violations perpetrated by these violators. FoC is an ongoing project that is continuously being updated – upon rigorous verification - with information received from survivors, witnesses, and those who hold other forms of validated evidence. These contributions assist in fulfilling the requirements to hold these perpetrators to account for their violations.

1.4. Aban Tribunal

Invented by Bertrand Russel and Jean Paul Sartre for investigating war crimes committed in the Vietnam war (known as Russell Tribunal), people’s tribunals have become a popular tool or, as some authors suggest, movements, for raising awareness and advocacy for victims of mass atrocities who have been denied justice by the international accountability mechanisms.

One year on, JFI’s research in unravelling the adopted policies, laws and measures, and examining how they were implemented in practice, confirmed that Iranian authorities had been denying truth and justice to the families of victims, and refusing to identify or prosecute perpetrators. Not a single criminal investigation into the November 2019 killings of protesters had been initiated to date. Human rights groups have proposed 2 initiatives towards bringing justice and accountability for the victims’ families:

1. The establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry by a group of international and Iranian NGOs;
2. The adoption of human rights sanctions (including asset freezing and travel bans) against perpetrators by the EU.

Despite lots of talks and promises, the international community has failed to take any meaningful and effective action.

In response to the situation, on the anniversary of the November 2019 deadly repression of protests, JFI (together with a group of human rights advocates, and 2 other human rights organisations - Iran Human Rights and ECPM – Together against the Death Penalty-) established an international people’s tribunal – the Aban Tribunal (Aban is the name of the month in the Iranian calendar when the atrocities took place). All these organisations have been working with the victims’ families, protesters, detainees on death row and other people whose lives have been deeply impacted by the atrocities perpetrated during the peaceful protests. They mandated a co-counsel, and a group of renowned international lawyers (the Panel) on behalf of the victims’ community to investigate the grave human rights violations that took place between November 15th and 18th, 2019 across Iran.

The launch of this Tribunal was announced alongside a public call asking eyewitnesses and victims’ families who volunteered to testify before the Tribunal and to provide the Tribunal with videos, photos and other evidence. In total, 263 people (237 men and 26 women) from 60 cities, including 233 eyewitness and 30 family members of victims have volunteered to testify about the events. Their testimonies will be heard or read in a three-

day hearing to be held in July 2021 (preferably in the Hague) with the Tribunal's Judgment being announced later in 2021.

2. Business and Human Rights

In 2020, JFI continued documenting human rights abuses committed by the public economic institutions run under the supervision of the Supreme Leader. The organisation further progressed in building a 'Stolen Lands Database' that documents the systematic unlawful confiscation of more than 40,000 properties over the last 4 decades across Iran. JFI researchers examined the confiscation and subsequent auctioning of properties which essentially belonged to religious minorities, political dissidents, and those who were perceived to have ties with the previous regime in Iran. To be launched in 2021, Stolen Lands is an interactive database allowing users to search for and locate each of the confiscated properties in a visual way, as well as filter cases based on city, province, type of property, auctioning body, and date of auction. This platform will be an invaluable tool for all stakeholders, including policy makers, scholars, litigants, or any other accountability advocates.

Under its program on business and human rights, JFI also kept raising awareness among different stakeholders about the key concepts of corporate social responsibility and how to use them in the Iranian context. Together with its partner, the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO), JFI held 2 online capacity-building workshops on business and human rights. Despite challenges, including restrictions imposed by the Iranian government on the access to internet and on platforms such as Zoom, the online workshops went smoothly and provided a useful and practical introduction to corporate accountability, international business and human rights documents and tools to hold corporations accountable to 36 lawyers, journalists, and civil society activists in Iran. The capacity-building activities also included 2 education modules used in the workshops (Module One and Module Two) on business and human rights with Farsi translation, aimed at making this field more accessible to JFI's Farsi speaking audience.

The positive reaction generated by these guides and educational modules suggests that they will prove to be crucial instruments for activism and the promotion of accountability in the business and human rights field.

3. Justice Beyond Borders

In 2020, JFI has taken enormous steps towards forming a regional initiative focusing on justice and accountability in the Middle East. Aiming to develop a consolidated regional strategy to tackle impunity in MENA countries, JFI first conducted a mapping exercise to

identify NGOs and INGOs working on justice and accountability in the region. It then conducted online consultations with 19 practitioners from organisations working in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The findings of the research, published in the White Paper can be used as a tool for further discussion amongst the key players when the restrictions due to the global pandemic are lifted.

While a long discussion still lies ahead among key players on how to combat impunity in the MENA region, this white paper has shed light on how a group of stakeholders from the human rights community envisions the roadmap. As the findings of the research demonstrate, there is an urgent need for a regional collective and sustainable initiative that institutes unity in the message of civil society actors.

Based on the findings, and in order to materialise the recommendations made by the participants in the research, JFI registered the regional initiative under the name 'Justice Beyond Borders' in Berlin, Germany, which has become a hub to many activists coming from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries, obtained not-for-profit status for it, and set out a mandate for it.

At the same time, Justice Beyond Borders began 2 research projects. The first one aims to identify available accountability mechanisms for the MENA countries that include both country-specific mechanisms and mechanisms with broader geographical mandate. The research also gathers basic information that might be needed to engage with each mechanism. The result of the mapping research project will serve as a tool for NGOs and practitioners.

The second project is 'Shia Armed Forces in Conflicts in the Middle East'. It is an ongoing study that provides a unique online map, presenting the activities of the IRI's armed forces, as well as their sponsored Shia armed groups in the recent or current conflicts in Syria (2011-2020), Iraq (2014-2017) and Yemen (2014-2020), collects evidence of the international crimes allegedly committed by those forces and identifies the perpetrators when possible.

The project aims to increase public knowledge in this field, by demonstrating a fact-based picture of the Islamic Republic and its sponsored armed groups in the regional conflicts, and to contribute to the existing and future accountability measures, by providing evidence of international crime.

In addition to the activities of Justice Beyond Borders, jointly with Syrian architects and urban practitioners, JFI conducted a study into the activities of Iranian businesses in Syria and their impact on human rights, documenting the continuation of international crimes, especially forced displacements. Following this research, JFI submitted a written contribution to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights. The submission, 'Destruction and Reconstruction of Syria: Complicity of Iranian Businesses in Forced Displacement and Other Violations' focuses on the continuation of forced displacement of millions of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)

through policies and laws governing reconstruction in Syria. Considering the conflict and post-conflict environment in Syria, from a corporate social responsibility perspective (CSR), JFI raised concerns that the Iranian government enterprises and private sectors doing business in Syria may be accomplices to international crimes such as forced displacements.

JFI's report also became the foundation of our subsequent submission to the Caesar Sanctions Coordination Group, which identified 11 Iranian companies with ties to the Syrian regime. We believe that our report could contribute to the implementation of the Caesar Act and ensure that the companies on the list would be held accountable for their role in enabling the Assad regime to carry out atrocities and prolong the Syrian conflict.

Impact

In 2020, JFI's activities and campaigns resulted in increasing international pressure on Iranian authorities and contributed to holding perpetrators accountable on an international level.

The effectiveness of human rights sanctions acknowledged by the Iranian authorities

Following the documentation of violations, the identification of many perpetrators, and subsequent submissions to international human rights mechanisms by JFI, the United States sanctioned several individuals and a couple of entities for their roles in grave violations of human rights. These included the Minister of Interior, Head of Iran's Police and an IRGC commander whose role in the killing of protesters in November 2019 had been previously identified and revealed by JFI's *Shoot to Kill* report.

These new sanctions, and resulting pressure on the Iranian government, led to the latter acknowledging the significant cost that individual sanctions have had on Iranian interests, as well as JFI's continuous efforts towards their reinforcement.

On May 21st, 2020, a statement from the Deputy Minister of the Interior Ministry was published by the official website of Iran's government, reacting to the designation of the Interior Minister and other officials responsible for the November atrocities. Jamal Orf stated that human rights sanctions are designed to neutralize the Iranian authorities and prevent them from doing what they should. Although he said that such designations cannot reach their aims, the tone and content of the statement and the mere fact that the Iranian authorities have reacted to this as such shows that it costed them, both politically and personally much more than they could swallow and pretend nothing happened.

While JFI has been an advocate for human rights sanctions since its inception in 2010, it has never been easy to justify the effectiveness of this accountability mechanism either to the policy maker or the members of the public. The statement was a success for JFI not only with regards to confirming the NGO's role in the recent designation of the Interior Minister and other officials responsible for the November atrocities, but also the effectiveness of human rights sanction regimes.

Over 500 truth and justice seekers in the country joined Justice for Iran's campaigns

In 2020, JFI's network inside Iran significantly expanded. Following the launch of the FoC Database and its submission of evidence against perpetrators of human rights violations, as well as public calls for witnesses to give their testimonies to the Aban Tribunal and visual evidence-based investigations into the November 2019 human rights violations, nearly 500 Iranians contributed to and joined JFI's initiatives. These individuals include survivors of state repression and other grave crimes, eyewitnesses, family members of victims and frontline activists. This unprecedented engagement shows the meaningful impact of JFI's work within its target community. Many of these people, who had lost hope for any accountability, became aware for the first time that efforts were being deployed to hold Iranian government officials accountable. They immediately praised these efforts and sought to get involved and contribute.

This significant increase in engagement and volunteering of our target audience has been a direct result of the great amount of effort dedicated to delivering justice to victims who have no hope in the government or judiciary of Iran – no hope for accountability. The promotion of these initiatives, paired with the positive feedback, and the resulting contributions strengthen these initiatives and add to our effectiveness in holding the perpetrators of these serious human rights violations accountable.

International Calls for Accountability for the November 2019 Atrocities

The findings of JFI's report on the November 2019 atrocities were used and cited in multiple 2020 UN reports by the UN Secretary General (±,±) and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran (±,±). They called on Iranian authorities to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations. Coming from one of the highest authorities in international mechanisms, these recommendations in general have a great impact on holding perpetrators of human rights violations to account.

Their widespread coverage contributed to prompting Iranian authorities to finally address the public outcry about the number of casualties and some other key details of these events. The IRI acknowledged that the crackdown on the protests had claimed the lives of more than 200 people. However, rights groups fear that the real toll of the crackdown was far higher, and that nobody will be brought to justice or held accountable. In addition, as persistently reported by JFI and other human rights organisations, by merely announcing the “official” figure for the number of deaths, the Iranian government has not admitted any wrongdoing or violation of human rights, including the right to life of the peaceful protesters and the right to hold public demonstrations.

The case of Iranian businesses in Syria deepened the perspective of the UN authoritative document

In its July 2020 report entitled “Business, human rights and conflict-affected regions: towards heightened action”, the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights drew on our submission on the role of Iranian businesses in reconstruction projects in post-conflict Syria, Destruction and Reconstruction of Syria: Complicity of Iranian Businesses in Forced Displacement and Other Violations². In paragraph 80, it specifically referenced our conclusion that businesses should not partner with companies and individuals that have been parties to the conflict, or people who have committed human rights abuses.³

The Working Group also took on board our recommendations regarding the role of businesses in reconstruction projects in post-conflict contexts.⁴

It was a significant achievement, as we were able to make our mark and contribute to a document that is going to be an authoritative and pioneering source in this specific and crucial corner of the field of business and human rights. It will also be a firm foundation for further examining the role and responsibility of Iranian businesses in other conflict and post-conflict contexts in the region. The report of the Working Group was also presented to the UN General Assembly in October.

² The submission was uploaded to the UN website.

³ Paragraph 80 reads “after the conflict, businesses will often have to partner with companies and individuals that have been parties to the conflict, or people who have committed human rights abuses. Screening of relationships is therefore particularly important. [...] Business activity should not further institutionalize the impacts of war crimes, for example, by solidifying the status of resettlements where forced displacements along sectarian lines have taken place. For business, it is not just a question of whom they are dealing with, but where they are going, which requires understanding of the specific local context. It is essential for businesses to consult with local communities and to develop appropriate tools for screening business partners as part of human rights due diligence, as well as to recognize that, in many cases, it will hardly be possible to invest in a way that is compliant with international standards.”

⁴ Those recommendations are as following:

- Investigate ties and track records of your business partners: In conflict-affected contexts, businesses and investments are very likely to get involved in business relationships with actors that may have committed, or been involved in, war crimes or gross human rights abuses. One clear recommendation, therefore, is to appropriately investigate their business relationships and establish any ties and track record of their business partners.
- Engage with civil society and human rights groups: Risk assessment of businesses with regards to being complicit in human rights violations in conflict and post-conflict contexts, would require an in depth knowledge of the context and access to information that is not manipulated or distorted for instance by the host state and victors of the conflict. This is why it is even more important in such a context that foreign businesses and investors consult with stakeholders and engage with civil society and human rights groups before and during their business relations. Consider drawing a line and avoiding engagement: Businesses must be prepared to avoid engagement, or disengage, if they would otherwise contribute to gross human rights abuses. They have to accept and incorporate into their business plan that engagement in some contexts is unacceptable, and that they will not pursue engagement in all circumstances.

International concerns over the broadcast of forced confessions in Iran

Confirming the findings of FIDH and JFI's research on the widespread and systematic use of torture and ill-treatment to extract and record forced video confessions from political prisoners, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran raised concerns over the use and broadcast of such confessions, alongside the statements of repentance by political prisoners, on State-run television channels and other media outlets.

Moreover, on December 18th 2020, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling on Iran to end human rights violations and obtaining and broadcast of “forced confession”.

Outreach

In 2020, JFI's works were covered by several reputable international media outlets, while reaching over 20 million people in Iran through Persian mainstream media.

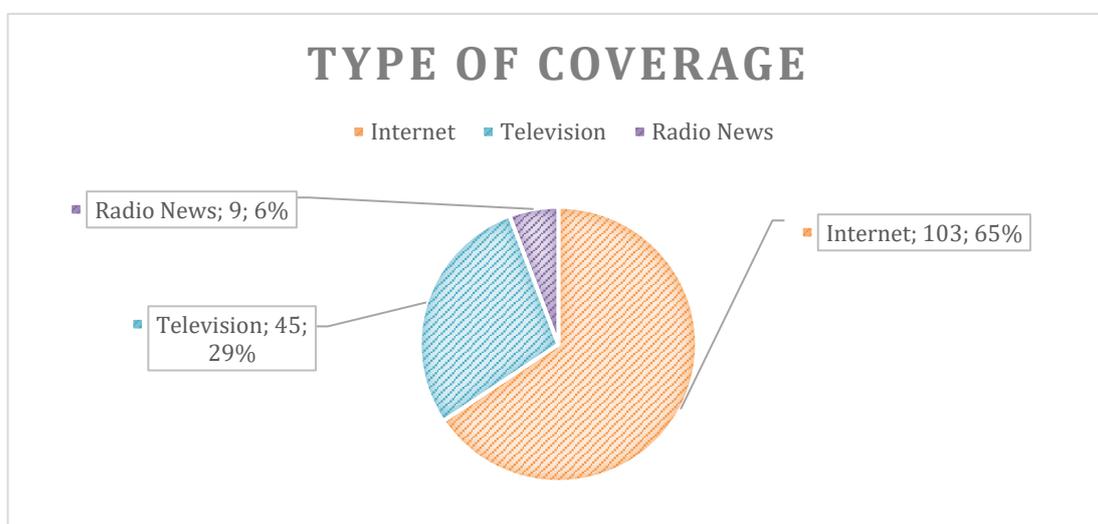
JFI's work received international coverage more than 52 times in international media, including most notably AFP, AP, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and Reuters, as well as several regional and international newspapers, including Egypt Independent, Asharq Al-Awsat, and RUDAW.

This media coverage was mainly related to the report on forced confessions, the Aban Tribunal and the Mockery of Justice report published 6 months after the November 2019 atrocities. In addition to raising public awareness of the Iranian regime's granting of impunity to perpetrators of human rights violations – particularly through the failure to investigate human rights violations committed during the November 2019 peaceful protests – this extensive coverage brought the voices of victims and their families to significant audiences around the world.

JFI's work was also covered massively by Persian mainstream media outlets below:

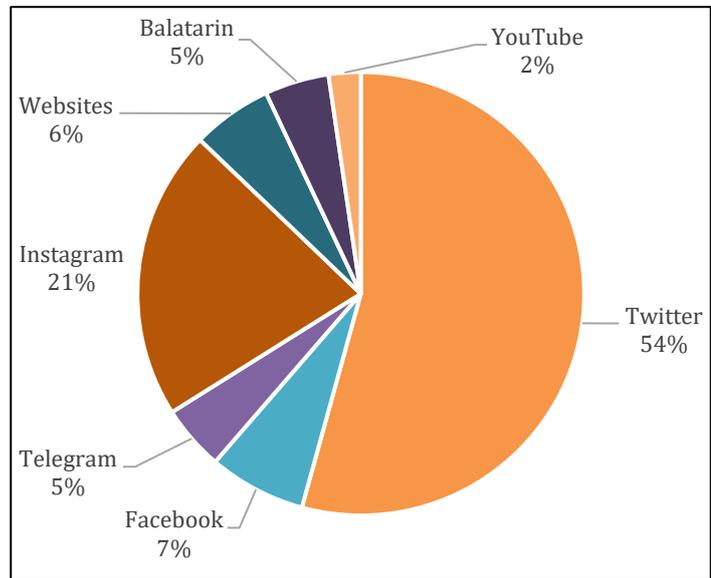
1. 20 references on BBC Persian with 13 million viewers;
2. 10 mentions on Manoto with 25 million viewers;
3. 3 mentions on Voice of America Persian with 13 million viewers; and
4. 22 references on Iran International with over 20 million viewers.

JFI's work was covered 48 times by other Persian media outlets and websites such as Deutsche Welle (DW), VOA, Radio Farda, and Iran Wire.



In 2020, JFI’s outreach through popular social media also expanded substantially. Written and audio-visual material produced and disseminated by the organisation as part of successful media campaigns reached over 3.5 million people.

Platform	Reach / Visits
Twitter	1,901,954
Facebook	247,273
Telegram	165,816
Instagram	742,551
Websites	203,868
Balatarin	163,347
YouTube	81,124
Total	3,505,933



Challenges

The global pandemic that broke out in 2020, and its subsequent effect on all areas of life, significantly affected human rights and the work of their advocates. Many activities planned in 2020 by JFI had to be altered or postponed due to restrictions on movement, travel, and events. Activists on the ground had to halt many of their activities, while the target population could not be reached through in-person contact. Switching political priorities, inability to engage in in-person interactions, and travel restrictions also created obstacles for carrying out international advocacy efforts.

In addition to the pandemic, changes in the political environment also affected some of JFI's activities. The deterioration of the relationship between Iran and the US had a negative impact on our EU advocacy because, despite initial promises of adopting sanctions against 35 individuals involved in the grave violations of human rights perpetrated during the November 2019 protests, EU countries backed out at the last minute in order to avoid any action that would appease the Trump administration or make the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)⁵ weaker than it is. Due to the EU's position on the JCPOA, and the resulting desire to prevent its relationship with Iran from deteriorating, JFI's advocacy efforts towards the EU largely remained delayed and dependent on the results of the November 2020 US Presidential Election.

⁵ JCPOA is an agreement with five annexes reached by Iran and the P5+1 countries (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on July 14th, 2015. The nuclear deal was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, adopted on July 20, 2015. Iran's compliance with the nuclear-related provisions of the JCPOA is verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) according to certain requirements set forth in the agreement.