**Statement by Javaid Rehman**

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**Mr. President,** **Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of civil society**

I am today presenting my fifth report to the General Assembly in an unprecedent context of violence in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The report I present today contains two parts. In addition to an overview of some of the key areas of concern regarding the human rights situation in the country, the other section of the report highlights the extent of arbitrary deprivation of life in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since my previous report to the General Assembly on the application of the death penalty, no measures have been taken to amend the Penal Code to reduce the imposition of the death penalty nor to amend the deeply flawed judicial processes. Regrettably, on a worsening trend, we observe a sharp increase in the number of executions since 2021, particularly executions on the basis of drug-related charges. Between 1 January and 30 June 2022, at least 251 people were executed, representing double the numbers executed in the first six months of 2021. Executions for drug-related offences account for more than 40 per cent of executions in 2021. Reports indicate, that by September 2022, the overall number of execution has passed 400, for the first time in five years. This number includes the execution of 12 women and two individuals who were below the age of 18 at the time of the alleged commission of a crime. Ethnic minorities continued to be disproportionately affected by executions.

Arbitrary deprivation of life as a result of excessive use of force continued representing the response by the authorities to the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly.

Examples of arbitrary deprivation of life extend to places of detention, including through denial of access to urgent medical treatment and the widespread use of torture against detainees..

I regret that no steps were taken to strengthen the accountability framework in law or policy. By contrast, available information paints a picture of intentional withholding of evidence and cover-ups. Victims of human rights violations and their relatives, including families of individuals killed in nation-wide protests in November 2019, faced increased threats, arrest and convictions. An emblematic case concerning obstruction of national investigations is the conviction of a group of lawyers and human rights defenders in June 2022 for merely planning a lawsuit against the authorities for mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The authorities continue to exert pressure on an already severely restricted civic space, particularly through abuse of overbroad national security legislation. In May 2022, the Imam Ali Popular Student Relief Society, the country’s largest non-governmental organization, was dissolved, following a case brought against the organization by the Ministry of Interior. The growing protests of teachers and trade union over the last year faced a crackdown amidst the summoning, detention and imprisonment of teachers, labour rights defenders, human rights defenders, and academics. Furthermore, the authorities employed various Internet disruption methods preventing access to information and information-sharing about the ongoing events. Since this report was issued in August, I also publicly expressed my concern over persecution and harassment of religious minorities and in particular the policy of systematic persecution of members of the Baha’i faith.

However, please allow me to dedicate part of my statement today to the events that followed the tragic death of Jina Mahsa Amini.

On 16 September, three days after she was arrested by the morality police for inappropriately wearing her Hijab, Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman from the Kurdish minority died in hospital after collapsing in a detention centre. This gave way to huge waves of protests spanning the geography of the country, its provinces, cities and social strata calling for political change. Women and youth lead the charge as they chanted “women, life and freedom”. Conditions that led to the death of Amini could no longer be tolerated and the violation of the fundamental right, for women, to speak and dress freely seemed more urgent that ever. The barrier of fear had been overcome and a movement was born.

In predictable fashion, the authorities responded to these claims by brutal repression of peaceful demonstrators and a shutdown of internet connections with the view to stifling the free expression and association of the Iranian population, and curtailing protests.

On 22 September, together with seven Special Procedures mandate holders, I denounced this crackdown and urged the Iranian authorities to immediately stop the use of lethal force in policing peaceful assemblies, to avoid further violence, to hold an independent, impartial, and prompt investigation into Ms. Amini’s death, to make the findings of the investigation public and to hold all perpetrators accountable. Similar calls were made across the United Nations system and around the world.

These calls were not only ignored but the highest State authorities clearly ordered security forces to repress protestors.

Excellencies,

While it remains difficult to verify numbers of casualties, more than five weeks since the start of the protest, the unabated violent response by security forces, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and paramilitary Basij forces has already led to the reported death of at least 215 persons.

In the province of Sistan and Baluchistan alone, reports indicate at least 66 persons, including children, were killed after Friday prayers on 30 September. If confirmed this would be the highest death toll from a single incident in the current protests. In Kurdistan, the region where Ms. Amini is originally from, 39 protestors were reportedly killed, among them six children. 638 Kurdish protestors have also reportedly been detained.

Since the onset of the protests, at least 27 children, some of them as young as 11 were killed by live ammunition, metal pellets at close range, while some were beaten to death. As reported recently by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, despite grieving for the loss of a child, many families were pressured to absolve security forces by declaring that their children had committed suicide and making false confessions.

Excellencies,

 In the midst of the current protests, please allow me to convey a voice and a story. Maybe its echo could be heard in these chambers: on 21 September, Hadis Najfis, in a video she posted, knowing little it would be her last one said : “Now I am joining the protest and years later, I want to look back to these days and see how everything has changed and that makes me happy”. She was shot and killed shortly after.

Over the past five weeks, thousands of men, women and children have been arrested and jailed, among them dozens of human rights defenders, 170 student, 16 lawyers, 590 civil society activists and at least 38 journalists including the journalist who published one of the initial reports about the death of Ms. Amini. A number of schools have also been raided, and children arrested by security forces. Some principals have also reportedly been arrested for not cooperating with security forces. On 11 October, the Minister of Education confirmed that an unspecified number of children had been sent to “psychological centres” after they were arrested allegedly for engaging participating in anti-State protests.”

Excellencies,

Let me now turn to investigations conducted in the death of Jina Mahsa Amini.

Three days only after Ms. Amini died, the commander of the police forces in Tehran stated that investigations conducted by himself and ‘special teams’ had shown no misconduct or wrongdoings. According to other declarations by the police she suffered a heart attack. On 7 October, the State Forensic Organisation (under the authority of the Judiciary) released a statement indicating that: “Mahsa Amini’s death was not caused by blows to the head and vital organs and limbs of the body…”. Subsequent official reports repeated this conclusion. Lately, on 16 October, a parliamentary fact-finding committee also concluded that she was not subjected to assault and indicated that those who spread fake information would be prosecuted if they “do not correct their positions.” These statements were all rejected by Jina Mahsa’s family whose request for the establishment of a committee of independent doctors to investigate her death was denied. Her family members have also reportedly faced threats and pressure by the authorities.

It is clear that the so-called investigations into the death of Jana Mahsa Amini have failed the minimum requirements of impartiality and independence.

Excellencies,

In the current environment, and in the absence of any domestic channels of accountability, I would like to stress once again the role and responsibility of the international community in addressing impunity for human rights violations in Iran and to solemnly call for the prompt establishment of an independent investigative mechanism in all human rights violations leading up to and since the death of Mahsa Amini.

I thank you.