

**A Brief Review of the
Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission's Activities
Regarding International Criminal Justice**

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I. Brief Review

The Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission (hereinafter "the Commission") is an independent national institution for the promotion of human rights in the Islamic republic of Iran which was established 15 years ago and has taken a host of measures and initiatives in all related fields from human rights education, research and promotion to human rights-based international interactions and watchdogging and addressing public legal complaints regarding cases of human rights violation.¹

The Commission is the only independent Iranian body that has the privilege to actively cooperate with most of the distinguished scholars and lawyers of this country. The promotion of criminal justice at the national and international levels has been one of the priorities of the Commission from the very beginning of its establishment. This prioritization receives the public support as well, considering the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran had the bitter experience of 8 years of aggression by Saddam and Ba'ath Regime of Iraq and suffered a considerable degree of financial, and environmental damage and destructions as well as loss of human lives amounting up to hundreds of thousands of casualties, the aftermaths of which can be seen today in the living conditions of the victims; and therefore the related activities receive a significant level of support and attention from the public.

In the long process of administrating criminal justice at international level, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been clearly a remarkable milestone and one of the main concerns. That's the reason why the Commission has followed the world developments and events related to this Court and has greatly focused on the international activities related to the criminal justice. A summary of the Commission's activities in the said area are presented here as follows:

- ✚ Establishment of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Workshops in the Field of Criminal Justice:** In the Research Department of the Commission, two of the nine specialized workshops are directly related to human rights and humanitarian law purposes in the field of criminal justice and follow the academic

1. For further information about the Commission's activities, please refer to Monthly Round-up Reports which are available in Farsi, English and Arabic at www.ihrc.ir.

researches and critiques on the humanitarian issues and the criminal justice mechanisms, to arrange for programs and plans for related activities.

- ✚ **Publication of the specialized bulletin titled “The Latest on the International Humanitarian Law”:** The bulletin’s publication started on 2009 as a quarterly output of the Commission. The bulletin reports the latest on the international humanitarian law issues and the events related to the International Criminal Court (ICC), and is distributed all over the country.

- ✚ **Holding educational workshops under the theme of international humanitarian law:** Considering the fact that one of the general responsibilities of the Commission is the promotion of human rights through education, the international humanitarian law's discourses are also presented as one of the priorities in different educational workshops held by the Commission. Some of the issues brought up in the international humanitarian law’s discourses including war crimes, weapons used in armed conflicts and the like have been the subjects of separate specialized workshops and are still present in the agenda for future educational and promotional workshops.

- ✚ **Panel discussions and academic seminars:** In the context of the periodical academic panel discussions held regularly at the Commission's Central Office in Tehran and at its Provincial Offices across Iran, the Commission has done its double best to review the important issues regarding the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the scholars and the theoreticians. The detailed reports of the seminars and panel discussions are available in the Commission’s monthly news bulletins.

- ✚ **Providing advisory opinions to the parliament and other governmental bodies:** Considering this fact that the Research Committee of the Commission, consisting of the best lawyers and scholars in the field of law, has been mandated to review the deliberations of the Parliament, Administration and the Judiciary from the view point of the promotion of human rights and to prepare and provide advisory opinions, where deemed necessary, to the related authorities, the Committee has so far rendered its consultative and advisory recommendations to competent authorities in several cases related to international humanitarian law such as the Bill of Accession of the Islamic republic of Iran to the Additional

Protocols of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the Bill on Criminalization of the International Crimes, the Bill Requiring Iran to Legally Follow-up on the Rights of the Chemical Victims, Advisory Recommendations about Iran's Accession to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in several phases and in different times before the signing of the Rome Statute by Iran and after that, Iran's Accession to the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines and ...

- ✚ **The international interactions and participation in international events:** During recent years, the Commission had a close cooperation with different specialized organizations in the field of international humanitarian law and therefore the representatives of the Commission have participated in different international events including international humanitarian law educational workshops, international conferences with activities related to the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) etc. the Commission is one of the independent organizations that are members of the CICC.
- ✚ **Regular acquirement of the international publications and text resources:** The Library and Documentation Center of the Commission has one of the richest inventories in Iran on texts related to human rights and international humanitarian law. The latest international publications in these fields are promptly identified and are purchased for the use of Iranian researchers or obtained via mutual exchange of material with the worldwide research centers.
- ✚ **Regular cooperation with the International Red Cross Committee:** The International Red Cross Committee holds an office in Iran and the organization is regularly following the international humanitarian law issues and discussions, especially those related to the legal responsibilities of the Committee, naturally cooperation and mutual technical interactions happen between the two organizations and within the framework of mutual agreements different programs were implemented by the two organizations.
- ✚ **The facilitation and publication of academic research papers and translations on the international humanitarian law topics:** In all of the Commission's publications from books to the specialized bulletins such as "International

Organizations and Human Rights” or the bulletin for “Women and Children’s Rights” or the analytical weekly reports of the “Events and Analysis”, the Commission takes different aspects of the international humanitarian law discourses into consideration. Some of the most important academic works published in global scale on this field were translated into Farsi as well, and will be published shortly for the readers.

- ✚ **Practical measures against the grave and serious violations or breaches of international humanitarian law:** Since the Commission includes a special unit to lookout for the positive and negative developments and events regarding the international humanitarian law at the international level, the cases of violation of these laws are immediately recognized and the Commission responds to these cases through different measures including communications addressing the related international authorities and other human rights activists on the matter. As was the case with the violations of international humanitarian laws in Sri Lanka, Gaza, Xinjiang China and Yemen, the Commission took certain measures and issued statements with the aim of reacting to these events. The mentioned activities are considered as part of the global campaign against impunity.
- ✚ **The emphasis on Islamic studies along with the international researches:** Since the majority of the Iranian population are Muslim and the Islamic beliefs play a significant role in their approaches and actions and considering the fact that all the Islamic countries share similar concerns regarding the issue of Islamic identity and thought or the protection of Muslim victims in different parts of the world; the Commission tries to reinforce the theoretical Islamic foundations of humanitarian law. The Commission’s office in Qom (the Islamic capital for the Shi’ate all over the world) is regularly following the issues.
- ✚ **Networking with the volunteers and civil rights activists:** The Commission organizes a network of volunteers and human rights activists and, other than the office in Tehran, it holds offices in many different cities all over Iran, whose primary responsibility is to create networks for increasing the capacity for civil activities in the area; and as a result at this time in many places of the country, networks of civil activists are systematically operating in the field of international humanitarian law and criminal justice. The mentioned networks are excelled in quality and quantity with the help of the Commission.

2. Future Outlook

Considering the highly academic and promotional potentials of the Commission it is foreseeable that in near future this organization will be recognized as a representative of the global Coalition for the independent organizations supporting the international criminal justice, or become a centre for educational, promotional and research activities among the neighboring countries and aside from domestic influences, it could act for the promotion of independent activities, supporting the International Criminal Court (ICC) and implementation of criminal justice across the globe. Therefore, the Commission welcomes cooperation and assistance from all of the active organizations in the fields related to international humanitarian law and international criminal justice. Let us hope for administration of justice and attempt for ending impunity for all of those responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocides, aggressions and terrorist actions.

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