



High Council for Human Rights of
the Islamic Republic of Iran

A Report:

**Measures Implemented by the Islamic
Republic of Iran in Response to Poisoning
of Students**

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(03 March 2023)

In the Name of GOD

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Incident History:

Several students at a school in Qom were hospitalized after being poisoned for an unknown reason on 30 November 2022. 13 days later, another poisoning incident happened again. Immediately after the second incident, prominent and advanced laboratories and institutions started technical research, conducted several types of special tests (from blood to saliva and lungs), and took samples from the equipment in the classroom, workshop, and environment.

On 6 February 2023, six schools in Qom announced that their students smelled a particular thing or gas. As per a decision made by the Provincial Governorate, schools in Qom were closed on the 7th and 8th of February for further technical investigations. As confirmed by the preliminary results of several ultra-advanced and well-equipped laboratories on 17 February 2023: “Based on clinical symptoms, there are suspicious cases that require further investigations, but we have not reached any abnormal behavior in the environmental inquiries.” A few days later, poisoning incidents spread to other provinces, including Tehran, Borujerd, Mazandaran, Ardebil, Khuzestan, and Khorasan Razavi.

Investigating State Accountability

a) Reactions Made by High-Ranking Officials

In continuation of the Establishment’s policy of accountability, transparency, as well as protecting and promoting the human rights of citizens, the high-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran have adopted decisive positions since the very beginning of such inhumane serial incidents, and have been following up on them in all seriousness. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution has described the poisoning of students as a great crime and demanded the identification of and severe punishment for the perpetrators. The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran has also assigned the Interior and Intelligence ministers to investigate the incidents and provide a clear report to the people. Separately, the Chief of the Judiciary has referred to the incident as an example of *ifsad-e fil-arz* (creating corruption on Earth), which will result in severe, unforgivable, and unrelenting punishment. The Chief of the Judiciary, has further ordered that a special branch be set up in the Justice Administration of each province to deal with the issue. The Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly has also asked the heads of four specialized commissions to investigate this issue by forming a special working group.

1. On 6 March 2023, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution stressed that the officials as well as intelligence and law enforcement agencies must follow up on the issue, and noted: “This is a big and unforgivable crime, and if anyone is involved in this incident, the agents and the masterminds must be severely punished. This incident is a crime against the most innocent members of society, meaning children, and a source of psychological insecurity and concern for the affected families. Everyone should know that if anyone is identified and convicted as the perpetrator of this crime, there will be no forgiveness for them because they must be severely punished to become a memento for others.”
2. Referring to the recent poisoning incidents in schools, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran said: “The enemy is seeking to create despair among the people with its hybrid warfare, and recently, in psychological warfare and [in line with its] security project against some schools, they are creating stress and fear among students and parents to spark off chaos. One day [the enemy creates] street chaos, and one day [they] create security issues in education and schools. For the incidents in question, I have instructed the Intelligence and Interior ministers to follow up on the issue *tout de suite*, and provide the reports in full to the public.”
3. In response to the poisoning incidents, the Chief of the Judiciary issued the following statement on 6 March 2023: “The first issue that we are all dealing with these days is the poisoning of pupils in schools, which started in Qom back in November, and has been unfortunately going on until today. Considering that this issue is [first and foremost] related to human life and, secondly, to the psyche of all people, it is of paramount importance. All the [responsible] agencies have done their best to resolve this problem. The poisoning incidents seem organized and are something the enemy has created and is now exploiting or taking full advantage of. The utmost effort is being made to identify the main perpetrators and the cause of the problem. Hopefully, it will be concluded soon. If the perpetrators are identified, it should be noted that such an [inhumane] act is one of the clear examples of *ifsad-e fil-arz* under the law. The perpetrators who are arrested are among those who are undoubtedly among those who have created corruption on Earth. Undoubtedly, the judiciary will deal with it in an extraordinary and out-of-turn manner. Those involved in any way whatsoever will be sentenced to the severest punishment provided by the law; they will be dealt with decisively, and there will be no tolerance. In this regard, a [special] branch in the center of each province must be established.”

4. In a letter addressed to the heads of the four specialized commissions of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Foreign Policy and National Security, Internal Affairs and Councils, Education, Research and Technology, as well as Health and Treatment commissions), the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly touched upon poisoning of several students which has caused concern for the families, ordered that a working group be formed to investigate the issue in detail and find out the causes of the accidents with the presence of relevant executive officials and security, law enforcement and medical experts, and stressed that the results of the investigations be presented to the Parliament as soon as possible to make appropriate decisions.
5. As announced by the Secretary-General of the High Council for Human Rights: “The High Council for Human Rights has been seriously following up on the clarification of [all the aspects] of poisoning of students in some schools, and has been in constant contact with the security and judicial agencies, demanding the immediate identification of the perpetrators. We will not allow such issues to prevent students from enjoying their right to education, and deprive them and their families of peace.”

b) Expert Reviews & Initial Findings of Research Committees

The specialized teams of the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education started their scientific and field research immediately after the incident, and published the results of their study in different time frames. Moreover, the President instructed the Ministry of Interior to carefully examine the security and political aspects of the incident, and present its reports transparently.

1. **Investigations and findings of the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education:** Following the order of the Minister of Health, Treatment and Medical Education to form a scientific committee for investigating school poisonings, a committee with more than 30 of the most prominent specialists, including those specializing in the lung, toxicology, microbiology, infectious diseases, psychiatry, and environmental health was immediately established. The key findings of the said committee are as follows:
 - Some of the students were exposed to an irritant substance that is mainly inhaled, and were sent to the emergency;
 - Some others were with the students who had been exposed to the stimulant, which caused them to become anxious and distressed;
 - The third group are those who were not in that school where their classmates had inhaled the stimulating substance, but they were

informed about the incident through the news, which brought them complications triggered by psychological effects;

- The students exposed to the irritant substance mainly expressed that 10 to 15 minutes after inhaling a different “smell”, they felt respiratory problems such as throat irritation, cough, shortness of breath, and epiphora, followed by other irritation symptoms such as heartache, weakness, and fatigue, with some other students and people experiencing obdormition. The substances inhaled by the pupils were not dangerous, those used by certain countries in wars and deadly at all. We have not had any deaths so far. Furthermore, we did not have severe and persisting physical symptoms requiring an extended hospital stay. After going to the medical centers, the majority of the students were treated and discharged within six hours. Of course, several pupils who had underlying diseases such as asthma or those who had a history of convulsions needed to stay more at the hospital;
- It is necessary to mention that the inhaled stimulating substance has a gaseous state, but the primary substance may not necessarily be a gas, but it can be a solid substance. It can be in the form of a powder, paste, or even a liquid, which – when poured on a stove or heater or due to environmental heat – can evaporate and cause irritation symptoms;
- The studies show that less than 10% of students encountered a stimulant and experienced the aforementioned symptoms. Such stimulants are not necessarily the same substance and have different types. Most of them are easily accessible and, contrary to what some have stated, are simple materials that can cause irritation; and
- Samples of stimulants have been discovered. Some of the tests have been positive but must be re-checked and confirmed. Accordingly, the tests should be returned to the reference laboratory, where the necessary measures are carried out. Medically, these irritants are usually washed down with water. Therefore, if a student has symptoms, it is better to do the washing. In addition, the clothes of those close to the stimulant may be contaminated, and the same symptoms may be aggravated again due to contact with the clothes. Therefore, they must change and wash clothes, and drink fluids. Usually, after a few hours, the symptoms will disappear, and if more measures are needed, the necessary treatment will be carried out at the hospital.

2. Investigations and findings of the Ministry of Interior: After conducting field investigations and holding intensive and continuous meetings with the officials and prominent experts of the Ministries of Health, Treatment and Medical Education, as well as intelligence, law enforcement and judicial agencies, the Ministry of Interior published its key findings as follows:

- Since the first incident, which took place in one of Qom's schools in November, there have been reports indicating the occurrence of complications in 52 schools and 250 classes. The students who expressed their displeasure, monitored the internal and external environment of the school. Immediately, the emergency, medical, fire, and law enforcement forces went to the places of the incidents, conducted medical examinations for the students expressing discomfort, and monitored the internal and surrounding environment of the schools;
- According to the announcement made by the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education, the majority of people received outpatient treatment and were discharged, and 28 others were hospitalized, all of whom (except two persons suffering from underlying diseases) were discharged in less than two days;
- Since the beginning of the incident, the orchestrators of the hybrid warfare against the Islamic Republic of Iran have sought to spread chaos in the society by creating mental-psychological pollution, and cause the closure of science and knowledge education centers, thereby rekindling the failed project of riots. The dear people must rest assured that the health of the students has been and will be the main priority of all officials, all of whom will exhaust all efforts to create peace and ensure their comfort;
- More than 90% of the students' inconvenience and discomfort were caused by anxiety and worries created in the class and school environment; and
- According to the investigations and following the measures taken by intelligence agencies, several people have been arrested in five provinces concerning stimulants. The relevant intelligence agencies are also carrying out comprehensive investigations. Part of the cases that led to distress in some schools was due to the adventurous actions of some students, which was addressed. Since the issue was not identified as a hostile action, it was brought to the notice of the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education.

Points for Consideration:

1. The protection and promotion of human rights are one of the central and fundamental goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this context, the Country has taken significant measures to respect, guarantee, and implement the right to education. In the meantime, increasing the literacy rate of women and girls, and guaranteeing their right to education are among the components that, as confirmed by the statistics, place the Islamic Republic of Iran in the leading countries in terms of education:
 - 48% increase in the ratio of female to male students (nearly 16 million students in Iranian schools);
 - Increasing the literacy rate of women to 95% from 35% prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution;
 - Increasing women's access to higher education by 20 times to 41.2% from 2.1% before the 1979 Islamic Revolution;
 - Women make up more than 56% of students at public universities (over 3 million study at universities);
 - 44.3% of higher education graduates are women; and
 - Increasing the share of women faculty members to 33.3% (there are nearly 25,000 women faculty members).
2. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a government that adheres to the values of human rights, regardless of any pressure, psychological operations, instrumental abuse, and politicized treatment, will do its best to follow up on the events that happened, and will leave no stone unturned to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of and anyone involved in such criminal actions.

