

# Axis of Abuse: U.S. Human Rights Policy toward Iran and Syria

by [Michael Singh \(/experts/michael-singh\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**T**estimony before the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

The alarming state of human rights and freedom in Iran and Syria is a matter not only of moral urgency, but of vital importance to U.S. national security. I drafted this testimony sitting in a crowded coffee shop, with free and unfettered access to the internet, on my laptop. I was not worried who might be looking over my shoulder at the screen, nor was I worried about the personal repercussions of what I might say. As I looked forward to briefing this committee, I understood that some of its members or my fellow witnesses might differ with me, perhaps even vehemently. But I had no worry that these issues would be settled through anything other than vigorous debate.

For Iranians and Syrians, none of these activities can be undertaken without significant peril. Freedom of assembly is proscribed. Access to the internet is restricted, and its use is monitored. Security personnel are a pervasive presence. And expressing one's point of view on political matters is often treated as a crime, bringing with it harsh punishment. It is important that we keep this context in mind in order to maintain a proper perspective on this subject; the abuses and repression we are discussing affect not only activists operating on the ragged edge of political dissent, but everyday citizens engaged in everyday activities...

[Download Mr. Singh's full prepared remarks \(PDF\).](#)

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/SinghTestimony20110922.pdf> ❖

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