

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

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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 Islamic Republic of Iran continues to be among the foremost countries in the world that systematically abuse human rights. The mechanisms of suppression in Iran have become so sophisticated that many of them are invisible. For instance, Iran is the largest prison for journalists in the world, yet a much larger number of journalists and political and human rights activists are not allowed to leave the country or lead an ordinary life even after being released on bail. They are also periodically subject to harassment by security and intelligence authorities. By enforcing its techniques of intimidation, the Islamic Republic has made society livable only for those who are loyal to the government.

The Western campaign against human rights abuses in Iran has proved to be extremely helpful. When Western governments or human rights organizations have responded in a timely and proper manner toward cases of abuse in Iran, the regime has felt the heat and become visibly more cautious. For example, Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, initially sentenced to death by stoning, was saved only by pressures applied on the Islamic Republic by Western states and human rights organizations. In most of the cases in which prisoners' situations were publicized or Revolutionary Court sentences against political and religious victims were highlighted in the West, the Islamic Republic either backed down or became more aware of the consequences of its decisions and actions regarding these specific cases...

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<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/KhalajiTestimony20110922.pdf> ❖

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