

Mass Prison Transfers and Crackdown on Dissidents

Following Airstrike on Evin Prison

In the aftermath of the Israeli airstrike on Evin Prison on 23 June 2025, the Islamic Republic of Iran has launched a wide-ranging crackdown. This includes the mass transfer of political prisoners—many of them women human rights defenders—to other prisons or unknown locations, and the arrest of more than 700 people on vague charges such as espionage and collaboration with foreign entities. Families and lawyers have been left without information, and concerns are growing over incommunicado detention, enforced disappearances, and the risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Targeted Airstrike

At 11 a.m. Monday, 23 June 2025, Evin prison was targeted by Israeli airstrikes, one day before the ceasefire. The airstrikes targeted the main entrance, administration buildings, and the medical center.¹ According to the Iranian judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir, at least 71 people were killed,² including staff, soldiers, visiting family members and people living nearby.³ Israel's military spokesperson, Effie Defrin stated that Evin prison had been used by the Islamic Republic as an "intelligence operation center against Israel" and was therefore attacked. However, the timing coincided with family visitation hours.⁴

¹ The Washington Post, "Israel strike hit four areas in notorious Tehran prison. Civilians among the dead", 6 July 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2025/07/06/israel-iran-evin-prison-attack/>.

² AP News, "Iran says 5 inmates in Evin prison were killed in Israel's Airstrike on Tehran, 12 July 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/iran-israel-inmates-killed-airstrike-096dc13c2c210fbda92162216efb743a>.

³ Aljazeera, "Aftermath of deadly Israeli attack on Tehran's Evin prison", 29 June 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2025/6/29/aftermath-of-deadly-israeli-attack-on-tehrans-evin-prison>.

⁴ Tehran Times, "Iran's Judiciary says no Israeli spies harmed in Evin Prison strike" <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/515514/Iran-s-Judiciary-says-no-Israeli-spies-harmed-in-Evin-Prison>.

Mass Transfers

In the aftermath of the airstrikes, prison authorities ordered all detainees to assemble in the main yard of Evin prison. The Islamic Republic of Iran deployed anti-riot forces and SWAT teams inside the facility. A woman human rights defender reported that they were told “to not get close to the windows or snipers will shoot them.”⁵ According to reports, approximately 60 women political prisoners and 70 male political and foreign prisoners were instructed to collect their belongings. Some have reported that they did not have enough time to retrieve essential medications.⁶ Prisoners were subsequently handcuffed and chained in pairs. Detainees were held in the yard for at least 10 hours before being forcibly loaded onto approximately 20 buses at gunpoint. Some prisoners have reported that they were violently dragged to the buses.⁷ These transfers were reportedly carried out without notifying the prisoners’ families or lawyers, including the families of Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, a French couple accused of espionage by the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁸

According to the Special Rapporteur in the situation of human rights in the Islamic republic of Iran,⁹ most male prisoners were sent to the Greater Tehran Prison (Fasafouyeh prison). Other male prisoners were transferred to Ghezal Hesar prison in Tehran. Women prisoners were relocated to one the most notorious prisons in Iran, Qarchak prison.¹⁰ Having said this, the whereabouts of many detainees remains unknown, with indications that they were taken to safe houses operated by the ministry of intelligence service agents and are now held incommunicado.¹¹

More than two weeks after the airstrikes, many families reported that they have little or no information about their detained relatives’ whereabouts or conditions. Some families have received only a single brief phone call, and many have no contact at all with their detained loved ones.¹²

⁵ BBC Persian, “Israel Attack on Evin Prison”, 26 June 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/c0l4151elrno> (In Farsi).

⁶ Iran Human Rights Monitor, “Forced Transfer of Political Prisoners from Evin” 28 June 2025, <https://iran-hrm.com/2025/06/28/forced-transfer-of-political-prisoners-from-evin>.

⁷ Iran International, “Shahryar Barati story after the airstrikes on Evin prison”, 28 June 2025, <https://www.iranintl.com/202507098195> (In Farsi).

⁸ Euronews, “We don’t know where they are, say families of French prisoners in Iran”, 27 June 2025, <https://www.euronews.com/2025/06/27/we-dont-know-where-they-are-say-families-of-french-prisoners-in-iran>, and France24, “Iran charges French detainees, Cécile Kohler and Jaques Paris with spying for Israel”, 2 July 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250702-iran-charges-french-detainees-c%C3%A9cile-kohler-and-jacques-paris-with-spying-for-israel>.

⁹ Mai Sato, @drmaisato, 25 June 2025, https://x.com/drmaisato/status/1937870663320027260?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1937870663320027260%7Ctwgr%5E17aa00e5774d912c9cc4253c9a3f256f17261db8%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Firan-hrm.com%2F2025%2F06%2F28%2Fforced-transfer-of-political-prisoners-from-evin%2F.

¹⁰ Iran Human Rights, “Qarchak Prison Report: Hell for Women and Children in Iran” 10 December 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7185/>.

¹¹ Iran Wire, “Political prisoner transferred from Iranian prison to unknown location”, 17 July 2025, <https://iranwire.com/en/prisoners/143290-political-prisoner-transferred-from-iranian-prison-to-unknown-location/>.

¹² Iran Wire, “Political Prisoner’s lives are in danger: Families left in the dark after Israeli strike on Evin Prison”, 11 July 2025, https://iranwire.com/en/prisoners/143151-political-prisoners-lives-are-in-danger-families-left-in-the-dark-after-israeli-strike-on-evin-prison/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Conditions in New Detention Sites

Conditions in the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary (Fashafouyeh) are dire. Inmates are held in severely overcrowded and inadequate rooms, with an occupancy exceeding three times the prison’s intended capacity. Inmates are confined to rooms holding 40 to 50 individuals and are often forced to sleep on the floor without beds. Access to basic necessities—including food, clean water, and medical care—is gravely insufficient. Sanitary facilities are inadequate, with only one toilet and sink per 70–80 inmates and one shower per 90 detainees. The combination of poor infrastructure, extreme summer heat, and lack of ventilation has led to malnutrition, dehydration, outbreaks of infectious disease, and heatstroke. Juveniles, elderly individuals, and those with chronic illnesses are detained without proper safeguards or separation.¹³

Similarly, women held in Qarchak Prison in Varamin are allegedly confined to windowless warehouse-like structures devoid of privacy, ventilation, and access to essential medications, hygiene products, and personal belongings. Contact with the outside world remains heavily restricted, with limited phone access and no official registry confirming their presence. Reports also indicate that some inmates have been compelled to work under exploitative conditions to support their families. The absence of transparency regarding the transfer, treatment, and current condition of these detainees raises serious concerns under international human rights standards, particularly the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.¹⁴

The transfers appear permanent. The silence around detainee locations, the harsh conditions in new facilities, and the disappearance of entire groups¹⁵ suggest a continuing pattern of repression and not a purely emergency-related relocation.

Wave of New Arrests

Parallel to these transfers, the Iranian authorities have responded with further crackdown. 700 individuals have been arrested under vague accusations of collaboration with the Israel intelligence agency (Mossad) and espionage.¹⁶ 50 cases have been filed against individuals, charged with “publication of lies” and “disseminating false information” and “spreading public anxiety”, according to the Spokesperson of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s judiciary.¹⁷ Many political prisoners are reportedly subjected to solitary confinement, torture, intensified interrogations and other ill-treatment, according to Narges Mohammadi, Nobel peace prize laureate.¹⁸ Moreover, there are credible concerns that some detainees on death row have been moved to secret facilities, raising fears of imminent and unmonitored executions under a newly approved bill to fast-track the death penalty for individuals

¹³ Iran Human Rights Monitor, “Forced Transfer of Political Prisoners from Evin” 28 June 2025, <https://iran-hrm.com/2025/06/28/forced-transfer-of-political-prisoners-from-evin>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Iran Wire, “Political prisoner transferred from Iranian prison to unknown location”, 17 July 2025, <https://iranwire.com/en/prisoners/143290-political-prisoner-transferred-from-iranian-prison-to-unknown-location/>.

¹⁶ Hamshahri Online, “700 mercenaries of Israel arrested in 12 days”, 26 June 2025, <https://www.hamshahronline.ir/news/958092> (in Farsi).

¹⁷ Iran International, “Iran files 50 cases over alleged ties to Israel, Judiciary says”, 12 July 2025 <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202507120687>.

¹⁸ Narges Foundation, “Solitary cells, forced confessions, and the threat of mass executions: Narges Mohammadi warns of intensified crackdowns in Iran, 7 July 2025, <https://narges.foundation/solitary-cells-forced-confessions-and-the-threat-of-mass-executions-narges-mohammadi-warns-of-intensified-crackdown-in-iran/>.

accused of espionage or cooperation with hostile governments.¹⁹ Just days ago, members of religious minorities, including 21 Christian converts, were arrested, with some reportedly also facing charges under this new legislation.²⁰

These developments raise serious concerns about the well-being and rights of detainees held for political reasons or under ambiguous legal circumstances. While the Israeli strike has drawn international attention, its consequences on the ground continue to unfold largely away from public scrutiny.

We call on all relevant authorities to:

- Ensure that all detainees have access to legal representation, medical care, and contact with their families.
- Disclose the identities and conditions of those who were killed, wounded, or transferred following the strike on Evin Prison.
- Refrain from using the aftermath of the conflict as a pretext for further repression or politically motivated detentions.
- Facilitate independent monitoring of detention conditions and ensure accountability for any violations of international human rights law.

The Iranian authorities' response to the June 23 airstrikes on Evin Prison has not prioritized the protection of detainees or compliance with humanitarian obligations. Instead, it has accelerated an ongoing pattern of repression. The large-scale transfers and over 700 new arrests risk becoming yet another normalized chapter in the systemic erasure of dissent in the Islamic Republic.

¹⁹ Front Line Defenders, "Iran: concerns over Israeli strikes at Evin prison, new amendments to "espionage law", mass arrest, and safety of human rights defenders, 2 July 2025, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/iran-concerns-over-israeli-strikes-evin-prison-new-amendments-espionage-law-mass>.

²⁰ Iran International, "Iran detains 21 Christian converts amid postwar crackdowns, Rights group says", 12 July 2025, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202507125560>.