



# Campaign No to Road Traffic Accidents: A Collective Effort to Save Lives in Iran

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Despite Iran's commendable standing in various health indicators, the nation faces a grave public health crisis: over 20,000 lives are lost annually due to road traffic accidents (1,2). This statistic is particularly alarming for two reasons: first, a significant proportion of these fatalities involve young individuals, and second, approximately 1,000 deaths occur during the Iranian New Year holiday (Norooz), a time traditionally associated with joy and celebration. Instead of ushering in happiness, this festive period brings profound sorrow to countless families.

Five critical factors contribute to the staggering number of annual road traffic deaths in Iran: Poor driving habits; Unsafe and poorly maintained roads; Aging and unsafe vehicles; Insufficient deterrent laws, including inadequate traffic fines; A limited number of ambulances and emergency services available at accident scenes. For instance, common risky behaviors such as using mobile phones while driving, failing to pay attention to the road, and driving while fatigued significantly increase the likelihood of accidents. Alarming, many of these incidents occur within 30 kilometers of urban areas, highlighting the urgent need for increased driver vigilance in these zones (3).

Moreover, the preference for private vehicles over safer rail transport exacerbates the situation. The impact of Western sanctions on Iran has further diminished the civilian aircraft fleet, compelling more individuals to rely on personal vehicles for travel, particularly during peak holiday periods. In light of these challenges, the current Iranian administration, led by a physician president and a health minister with extensive experience in trauma care, has prioritized the reduction of traffic-related fatalities (4). To this end, a nationwide road safety campaign was launched at the conclusion of the Iranian year 1403, garnering support from various sectors, including athletes and artists. The primary objective of this initiative is to raise awareness about this chronic issue, fostering a societal sensitivity that cannot be overlooked. The statistics surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, which claimed approximately 160,000 lives—predominantly among middle-aged and elderly individuals underscore the urgency of addressing road

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**Received:** 30 Apr 2025

**Accepted:** 30 Apr 2025

## Citation to this article

Akhondzadeh Sh. Campaign No to Road Traffic Accidents: A Collective Effort to Save Lives in Iran. *J Iran Med Counc.* 2025;8(3):409-410.

safety, particularly given that young people represent a significant portion of traffic fatalities. The effectiveness of the recent campaign will be assessed in the coming years, as we await its impact on road safety, vehicle quality, and the establishment of more stringent traffic laws.

Educational institutions and media organizations play a pivotal role in this awareness campaign. Notably, data indicating that 60% of all accidents occur within 30 kilometers of city entrances underscores the necessity for heightened driver focus in these areas (3). The monotony of long-distance driving can lead to fatigue and drowsiness, increasing the risk of accidents.

This year's campaign also saw innovative collaborations, such as tea and coffee companies setting up refreshment stations near city entrances, further emphasizing the campaign's national scope and involvement beyond the Ministry of Health.

In conclusion, while awareness is a crucial first step, it must be accompanied by comprehensive measures to improve road safety, enhance vehicle standards, and implement effective deterrent laws. The collective effort of society, government, and industry is essential to mitigate this tragic loss of life and ensure that future New Year celebrations are marked by joy rather than grief.

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