

Legislative Criminal Policy in the Prevention of Road and Urban Development Crimes in Iran

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Abstract

This article examines Iran's legislative criminal policy in the fields of transport, urban development, and land management, with particular emphasis on its preventive and regulatory dimensions. It explores how fragmented and reactive legislation has limited the effectiveness of crime prevention in key sectors such as intercity road safety, illegal construction, and land grabbing. The study identifies major gaps in legal coherence, enforcement capacity, and institutional coordination, while highlighting areas of progress such as the 2013 Comprehensive Cadastre Law and the integration of digital monitoring systems. By analyzing the theoretical foundations, historical evolution, and practical implications of Iran's legislative criminal policy, the article argues that modernization requires a shift from punitive deterrence to proactive prevention. Technological instruments such as smart surveillance, GPS tracking, and big data analytics offer promising tools for reducing crime and improving transparency, but their success depends on clear legal frameworks governing privacy, accountability, and data governance. The findings emphasize the need for comprehensive codification of criminal provisions, the adoption of restorative and alternative sanctions, and the strengthening of inter-institutional collaboration among legislative, judicial, and executive bodies. The article concludes that Iran's criminal policy can achieve greater coherence and public trust by embracing integrated governance, preventive technology, and principled legislative reform aligned with international standards of legality, proportionality, and justice.

Keywords: Legislative criminal policy; Iran; road safety; urban crimes; land grabbing; cadastre; crime prevention; legal reform; deterrence; restorative justice; digital governance; transparency.

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1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of transportation infrastructure and urban development in Iran over the past several decades has been accompanied by an escalating pattern of legal and social challenges, including rising incidents of road-related offenses, unauthorized construction, land encroachment, and violations of urban planning laws. These issues not only threaten physical safety and public welfare but also undermine the integrity of the rule of law and the credibility of governmental oversight in maintaining spatial and infrastructural order. As Iran continues to pursue ambitious national development plans in both

transportation and housing sectors, the absence of a coherent legislative criminal policy has become increasingly visible in the inefficiency of enforcement mechanisms and the fragmentation of criminal laws governing road safety and urban management (Karimi, 2020). The need for a harmonized approach that integrates preventive, regulatory, and punitive measures under a comprehensive legislative framework is therefore central to advancing national objectives of safety, justice, and sustainable development.

Legislative criminal policy, as a fundamental component of a nation's broader criminal justice strategy, embodies the legislative branch's deliberate design of laws that define crimes, prescribe punishments, and articulate preventive strategies. It reflects how lawmakers conceptualize crime prevention as a legislative function rather than merely an executive or judicial concern (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2016). In the context of Iran, this policy acquires special importance because of the country's reliance on statutory instruments as the principal means of regulating social behavior within an Islamic legal framework. The theoretical foundation of legislative criminal policy is built upon principles such as legality, proportionality, and individualization of punishment (Ardebili, 2024). These principles ensure that legislative intervention in criminal matters does not merely serve punitive ends but contributes to broader societal protection, deterrence, and rehabilitation. When applied to the domains of road safety and urban development, legislative criminal policy determines the scope of offenses—from reckless driving and speeding to illegal construction and encroachment—and establishes sanctions and preventive tools that shape citizen behavior and institutional accountability.

The relationship between legislative criminal policy, road safety, and urban crime prevention is deeply intertwined. Roads and urban spaces are both public goods whose misuse or neglect can result in significant collective harm. Legislative policy determines the boundaries of lawful use, while the criminal justice system ensures compliance through enforcement and sanction. A strong legal framework acts as the backbone for deterrence, whereas the absence of clear, enforceable rules often leads to impunity and an erosion of public trust. In Iran, the challenges of maintaining road safety have long been exacerbated by the country's extensive road network, which spans thousands of kilometers of intercity highways and rural routes, often characterized by insufficient surveillance and infrastructural deficiencies (Hajizadeh, 2015). The Iranian legislative system has sought to address these issues through the Law on the Investigation of Traffic Offenses (2010) and provisions of the Islamic Penal Code, but inconsistencies in enforcement and lack of coordination between regulatory bodies have limited their effectiveness (Khaleghi, 2019). Moreover, the overlap between administrative and criminal responsibilities—especially between the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, municipalities, and the judiciary—has contributed to a lack of coherence in implementing road and urban safety measures (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020).

In the sphere of urban development, the problem extends beyond physical safety to include violations that compromise urban planning integrity and public property rights. Illegal construction, encroachment on road boundaries, and land grabbing represent serious challenges that reflect both institutional inefficiencies and the weakness of deterrent legislation. Such acts often exploit legal ambiguities in zoning and cadastral registration, allowing offenders to manipulate procedural gaps and delay enforcement. Although Iran has adopted multiple laws addressing these phenomena, including the Urban Land Act and the National Building Regulations, these instruments often lack the integrated criminal provisions necessary for effective prevention. As a result, many violations are treated as administrative infractions rather than as crimes with significant social consequences (Katouzian, 2024). Legislative criminal policy can therefore serve as the missing link that transforms fragmented administrative control into a cohesive system of deterrence and accountability.

Historically, Iran's criminal legislation related to transportation and urban development has evolved in a fragmented and reactive manner rather than through a systematic, preventive framework. The earliest efforts at regulating road conduct can be traced to the mid-20th century, when the first traffic laws were introduced primarily to govern vehicle registration and driver licensing rather than public safety. Later revisions, particularly those incorporated into the Islamic Penal Code, began to criminalize behaviors such as reckless driving, intoxicated driving, and fleeing the scene of an accident (Shiri, 2017). However, these reforms were driven more by judicial necessity than by a legislative policy vision, resulting in piecemeal regulations with limited deterrent value. The same reactive trend is observable in urban legislation. During Iran's rapid urbanization in the post-revolutionary period, legislative attention focused primarily on housing provision and land distribution, leaving the enforcement of urban planning and zoning largely to local authorities. It was only with the emergence of large-scale urban violations in the

1990s and 2000s that criminal provisions began to appear in the context of construction and land use (Safari, 2012). Yet, these measures still lacked integration with broader criminal policy objectives such as social protection, restorative justice, and environmental preservation (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018).

The development of legislative criminal policy in Iran has also been shaped by its unique blend of religious and statutory law. Within the Islamic framework, many offenses—particularly those affecting public order—are addressed through a combination of fixed (hudud) and discretionary (ta'zir) punishments (Khaleghi, 2019). In the field of transportation and construction, most offenses fall under the discretionary category, granting lawmakers and judges significant latitude in determining punishments. While this flexibility can accommodate evolving social realities, it also risks producing inconsistency and ambiguity, especially in modern contexts such as vehicular crimes, environmental hazards, and urban safety violations. This dual nature of the Iranian legal system, while offering normative depth, complicates the codification of a unified legislative criminal policy that can simultaneously reflect Islamic principles and contemporary regulatory needs (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi & Rezvani, 2015).

The conceptual gap that this study addresses lies precisely in the absence of a unified legislative framework that integrates preventive criminal policy across both transportation and urban development sectors. Although both domains involve distinct operational and technical challenges, they share common legal characteristics: they concern public safety, collective resources, and the state's responsibility to regulate shared spaces. Yet the current legal structure treats them separately, leading to duplication, inefficiency, and sometimes contradictory regulations (Karimi, 2020). For instance, the lack of clear legal definitions for road boundaries and construction zones has resulted in frequent jurisdictional conflicts between the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development and local municipalities (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). Similarly, while the penal code provides for punishment in cases of reckless driving, it lacks corresponding provisions for crimes arising from negligence in road construction or failure to maintain public safety standards by contractors. This disjunction demonstrates the need for an integrated legislative vision capable of harmonizing various laws under a unified preventive framework.

Another critical rationale for this research arises from the role of technological and cadastral systems in crime prevention. In recent years, Iran has implemented a national cadastre program (the Comprehensive Cadastre Law of 2013) designed to document land ownership, boundaries, and usage. This initiative provides a powerful tool for preventing land grabbing and unauthorized construction (Mirbagheri, 2011). By linking cadastral data to criminal enforcement, legislators can reduce opportunities for fraud, forgery, and encroachment on public lands (Hanifi, 2012; Pourkamal, 2003; Rezaei, 2013). However, the absence of explicit legal provisions connecting the cadastre system to criminal liability limits its preventive potential. Comparative studies emphasize that integrating spatial data and GIS technologies into legal frameworks significantly enhances transparency and accountability (Khosravi, 2001). Furthermore, the development of intelligent transportation systems and surveillance technologies can provide additional layers of deterrence through data-driven law enforcement (Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021). Yet, these advances also raise new legal and ethical questions related to data privacy and proportional use of surveillance technologies (Schneider, 2002). A forward-looking legislative criminal policy must therefore address not only traditional forms of crime but also emerging technological dimensions of prevention.

The significance of this research also extends to Iran's ongoing institutional reform debates. In 2020, the Islamic Parliament Research Center published an analytical report suggesting the separation of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development into two distinct entities—one responsible for transportation and the other for housing and urban affairs—to enhance governance efficiency (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). This proposal reflects the recognition that both domains, despite their interconnections, require specialized policymaking and legislative oversight. However, without an overarching legislative criminal framework, such administrative restructuring risks reproducing the same policy fragmentation under a different institutional guise. The study therefore argues that an effective legislative criminal policy could serve as the cohesive foundation upon which such institutional reforms can be grounded.

In the broader criminological context, legislative criminal policy represents the most proactive layer of crime prevention. Unlike situational or social prevention strategies, which address crime after or near its occurrence, legislative policy operates

ex ante—defining offenses and creating legal environments that make crime less feasible or attractive (Bright, 1992; Clarke, 1995). This conceptualization aligns with the rational choice theory of crime, which posits that potential offenders evaluate risks and rewards before acting (Harcourt, 1998). When laws are clear, sanctions proportionate, and enforcement visible, the perceived cost of criminal behavior increases, thereby reducing its likelihood. In the Iranian context, strengthening legislative criminal policy for roads and urban development would thus not only enhance deterrence but also embody the principle of rule of law that underlies social order (Katouzian, 2024).

This research aims to analyze and evaluate Iran's legislative criminal policy in the prevention of crimes related to roads and urban development, with an emphasis on identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and opportunities for reform. The objective is to articulate a comprehensive framework that integrates preventive, punitive, and technological dimensions under a unified legislative vision. The study hypothesizes that a coherent, data-informed, and principle-based legislative policy can significantly improve compliance, reduce offenses, and strengthen institutional coordination. Key research questions include: How effective are current Iranian laws in preventing road and urban development crimes? What institutional and legal barriers hinder the implementation of preventive legislative measures? And how can modern technologies and cadastral systems be legally embedded to enhance prevention and accountability? By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute both to academic understanding and to policy reform aimed at promoting safety, legality, and sustainable development within Iran's evolving urban and infrastructural landscape.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Legislative criminal policy represents the deliberate and normative design of criminal law by the legislative authority with the goal of preventing crime, safeguarding public order, and defining the parameters of lawful behavior within society. It forms the first and most fundamental layer of a nation's overall criminal policy framework, guiding both judicial interpretation and executive enforcement. As a theoretical construct, legislative criminal policy extends beyond the mere codification of criminal prohibitions and sanctions; it embodies the strategic vision of the legislature in addressing crime through a structured balance of prevention, deterrence, and rehabilitation (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2016). By setting the legal foundations for defining offenses, establishing punishments, and determining procedural safeguards, the legislature creates a framework that both expresses societal values and enforces compliance with public norms (Ardebili, 2024).

The conceptualization of legislative criminal policy rests upon the understanding that the prevention and control of crime cannot be left exclusively to the judiciary or executive authorities. Instead, it begins with the conscious choices made by the legislature regarding what behaviors constitute crimes, what types of punishments are appropriate, and how the criminal process should operate in accordance with principles of justice and fairness (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi & Rezvani, 2015). In this regard, legislative criminal policy differs fundamentally from judicial and executive criminal policies. Judicial policy is interpretive and corrective, concerned primarily with the consistent application of legal norms and the protection of individual rights in criminal proceedings. Executive criminal policy, by contrast, focuses on implementation through policing, investigation, and corrections. Legislative policy precedes both by determining the structural and substantive framework within which the other two must function (Khaleghi, 2019). It thus acts as both a compass and a constraint: guiding the operation of the criminal justice system while ensuring that coercive state power is exercised within legally defined limits (Katouzian, 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, criminal policy can be divided into three interrelated layers: legislative, judicial, and executive. These layers correspond to the three branches of government, reflecting the principle of separation of powers. The legislative layer establishes the substantive and procedural rules of criminal law; the judicial layer interprets and applies these rules in individual cases; and the executive layer enforces judgments and implements preventive measures (Ardebili, 2024). In a well-functioning legal system, these layers operate in harmony to ensure both the effectiveness and fairness of criminal justice. However, when the legislative layer lacks coherence or fails to reflect contemporary social realities, the entire criminal justice structure becomes vulnerable to inconsistency and inefficiency (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018). This interdependence highlights the critical role of legislative criminal policy as the foundation upon which all subsequent criminal justice activities are built.

The objectives of legislative criminal policy extend far beyond punishment. While traditional penal theory emphasizes retribution, modern approaches view legislative criminal policy as an instrument for social protection, deterrence, and rehabilitation. By defining offenses and their corresponding sanctions, the legislature seeks not only to punish offenders but also to prevent crime through the communication of social norms and the establishment of predictable legal consequences (Safari, 2012). The clarity and accessibility of criminal law thus play a vital preventive role, as they enable citizens to understand what behaviors are prohibited and what sanctions may follow violations. In this sense, legislative criminal policy serves as a means of moral education and social regulation, translating abstract values such as justice and security into concrete legal directives (Ardebili, 2024).

Three key principles underpin the formation of legislative criminal policy: legality, proportionality, and individualization of punishment. The principle of legality (*nullum crimen, nulla poena sine lege*) mandates that no act can be considered a crime nor any punishment imposed except as provided by law. This principle ensures legal certainty and restricts arbitrary use of power by the judiciary or executive (Khaleghi, 2019). It is also central to public trust in the criminal justice system, as it guarantees that citizens are punished only for acts explicitly defined as crimes by the legislature. The principle of proportionality, meanwhile, requires that the severity of punishment correspond to the gravity of the offense and the degree of culpability. Excessively harsh or lenient penalties undermine both justice and deterrence, making proportionality a cornerstone of legitimate criminal lawmaking (Ardebili, 2024). Finally, the principle of individualization of punishment recognizes that justice requires consideration of the offender's personal circumstances, motives, and potential for rehabilitation. This principle transforms punishment from a purely retributive act into an instrument for reform and reintegration (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2016). Together, these principles form the ethical and functional backbone of legislative criminal policy, ensuring that laws serve both societal protection and human dignity.

In practice, legislative criminal policy also encompasses the preventive and administrative dimensions of governance. For instance, in fields such as road safety and urban development, legislative measures determine the scope of criminal responsibility not only for individuals but also for institutions, contractors, and government officials. By defining offenses such as reckless driving, illegal construction, and encroachment on public land, the legislature delineates the contours of accountability across multiple domains (Hajizadeh, 2015). This integrative approach ensures that criminal law does not function in isolation but as part of a broader regulatory system that promotes order, safety, and sustainable development. The preventive aspect of legislative criminal policy thus lies in its ability to reduce the opportunities for crime by embedding deterrent norms into everyday social and economic interactions (Clarke, 1995).

Within the Iranian legal system, the development of legislative criminal policy reflects both historical evolution and constitutional orientation. Iran's criminal law draws from a dual heritage: the religious-legal tradition of Islamic jurisprudence and the modern codified system introduced during the early 20th century. The 1906 Constitution and subsequent reforms during the Pahlavi era initiated the codification of criminal statutes modeled on European systems, emphasizing legality and codified sanctions (Karimi, 2020). Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, legislative criminal policy underwent a profound transformation, as the new Constitution of the Islamic Republic established Islam as the primary source of legislation. This shift reoriented criminal law toward compliance with Sharia principles while maintaining the formal structure of codified statutes. The Constitution's Article 36 explicitly recognizes the principle of legality by affirming that "no punishment shall be imposed except in accordance with law," reflecting both Islamic and modern legal traditions (Katouzian, 2024).

Despite these foundational principles, Iran's legislative criminal policy has evolved in a fragmented and often reactive manner. Instead of a unified criminal code encompassing all major domains of public safety, various laws and regulations have emerged independently, resulting in overlapping jurisdictions and inconsistent definitions of offenses. For example, traffic-related crimes are addressed separately in the Law on the Investigation of Traffic Offenses (2010), while construction-related offenses appear in municipal bylaws, environmental statutes, and the Islamic Penal Code without a coherent framework connecting them (Hajizadeh, 2015; Shiri, 2017). This fragmentation is partly a legacy of Iran's complex legislative environment, where multiple institutions—including the Parliament, the Guardian Council, and the Expediency Council—exercise overlapping legislative powers. The absence of a unified codification strategy has allowed gaps and contradictions to

persist, particularly in emerging areas such as environmental crimes, technological offenses, and public safety regulations (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018).

Another feature of Iran's legislative criminal policy is its dependence on religious jurisprudence for determining categories of crimes and punishments. The Islamic Penal Code divides offenses into hudud, qisas, diyat, and ta'zir. Of these, ta'zir offenses—those left to the discretion of the legislature—constitute the majority of modern criminal provisions and provide the primary arena for legislative criminal policy (Khaleghi, 2019). In this realm, lawmakers have significant flexibility to define offenses and establish punishments that reflect changing social needs. However, the coexistence of fixed religious punishments and discretionary statutory provisions often creates interpretive tension. While hudud crimes are defined rigidly by divine law, ta'zir crimes require constant legislative revision to remain effective and relevant. The challenge for Iranian lawmakers, therefore, lies in maintaining coherence and consistency between these two systems while ensuring compliance with constitutional principles of legality and justice (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi & Rezvani, 2015).

The lack of coherence in Iran's legislative criminal policy manifests most clearly in the fields of transportation, construction, and urban governance. The proliferation of specialized statutes—each addressing narrow aspects of these sectors—has resulted in a legal mosaic where responsibilities are divided among multiple agencies with limited coordination (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). This institutional fragmentation not only weakens deterrence but also diminishes the preventive function of criminal law. For instance, while road safety offenses are well-defined in traffic legislation, accountability for infrastructural failures or violations by contractors remains ambiguous. Similarly, urban crimes such as illegal construction or encroachment on road boundaries often fall into a gray area between administrative and criminal law (Karimi, 2020). The absence of comprehensive legislative criminal policy across these sectors undermines legal certainty and contributes to inconsistent judicial outcomes.

The relationship between legislative criminal policy, social order, and public security in Iran is both direct and reciprocal. On one hand, effective legislative policy reinforces social order by establishing predictable norms and promoting compliance through deterrence and education. On the other hand, social stability provides the environment necessary for the rational formulation and enforcement of laws. A society characterized by rapid urbanization, technological transformation, and population growth—such as contemporary Iran—requires legislative criminal policy that is adaptable and forward-looking. This necessity is particularly evident in the integration of technology and cadastral systems into crime prevention frameworks. The national cadastre system, for example, serves not only administrative and fiscal purposes but also functions as a preventive tool against land grabbing and property-related crimes (Hanifi, 2012; Mirbagheri, 2011; Pourkamal, 2003; Rezaei, 2013). By linking these systems to criminal accountability, legislative policy can enhance transparency and safeguard public assets.

In this regard, the modernization of legislative criminal policy aligns with the global movement toward preventive and data-driven governance. Comparative studies underscore the importance of aligning legal systems with international standards for transport safety, urban development, and environmental protection (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021). At the same time, scholars warn against overcriminalization, emphasizing that the expansion of criminal law must remain consistent with the principles of necessity and proportionality (Schneider, 2002). In Iran, this balance is particularly delicate due to the moral and religious underpinnings of legislation. Ensuring that criminal law serves public security without infringing upon individual freedoms requires careful legislative design and continuous evaluation of legal outcomes (Katouzian, 2024).

Ultimately, the theoretical and conceptual understanding of legislative criminal policy in Iran reveals both its potential and its deficiencies. Conceptually, it possesses the capacity to unify preventive, punitive, and regulatory strategies under a single legal vision aimed at protecting public order and promoting social welfare. Practically, however, its fragmented implementation has limited its effectiveness. Addressing these deficiencies demands the development of a coherent, principle-based framework that integrates preventive technologies, aligns with international norms, and reflects Iran's constitutional and religious foundations. Such a framework would transform legislative criminal policy from a reactive instrument into a proactive mechanism of governance—one capable of reducing crime, strengthening the rule of law, and enhancing public trust in the justice system.

3. Legislative Criminal Policy in the Prevention of Intercity Road Crimes

The prevention of intercity road crimes in Iran represents one of the most complex challenges for legislative criminal policy, as it involves the intersection of legal, social, and infrastructural dimensions. Intercity roads are the backbone of national mobility and economic activity, but they are also spaces of high vulnerability where human error, negligence, and structural deficiencies converge to produce catastrophic outcomes. Road accidents are not merely accidental occurrences—they often involve criminal behavior such as speeding, intoxicated driving, or abandoning accident victims. These behaviors fall squarely within the scope of legislative criminal policy, as they are defined and regulated through statutory law and penal provisions that aim to ensure both deterrence and justice. Iran's legislative criminal policy in this field has evolved through several legal instruments, notably the Law on the Investigation of Traffic Offenses (2010), the Islamic Penal Code (2013), and a range of executive regulations that guide enforcement and administrative procedures ([Hajizadeh, 2015](#)). Together, these instruments define the criminal liability of drivers, vehicle owners, and even public officials responsible for road safety management, while also providing a legal framework for the regulation of driving behavior and the protection of human life on public roads.

The Law on the Investigation of Traffic Offenses (2010) serves as the principal statute governing criminal liability for driving-related offenses in Iran. This law categorizes traffic violations into minor administrative infractions and major criminal offenses, reflecting a dual structure that combines punitive and preventive measures. The criminal component targets behaviors that directly endanger life, property, or public order, such as driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics, exceeding speed limits by a substantial margin, driving without a license, and fleeing the scene of an accident. The legislative intent behind this differentiation is to impose proportional sanctions that correspond to the seriousness of the conduct and its potential harm to society ([Karimi, 2020](#)). The Islamic Penal Code (2013) complements this framework by codifying general principles of criminal responsibility and by defining categories of culpability such as intentional, quasi-intentional, and negligent offenses. Under this Code, negligent driving resulting in injury or death constitutes a *ta'zir* crime—an offense left to the discretion of the legislature and judiciary for determining appropriate punishment ([Khaleghi, 2019](#)). This category reflects the legislature's understanding that while not all traffic violations are committed with intent, their social consequences warrant criminal intervention.

In addition to these primary laws, a complex network of executive regulations guides the enforcement of road safety standards and the operation of related institutions. These include directives from the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, regulations issued by the Police Traffic Organization (RAHVAR), and safety protocols established under the National Road Safety Council. Together, they define the administrative mechanisms for monitoring driver conduct, licensing, and vehicle inspection, while also setting procedural requirements for investigating traffic-related crimes ([Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022](#)). Such executive regulations operationalize legislative intent by translating statutory provisions into concrete enforcement practices. For example, digital monitoring systems such as speed cameras and GPS-based data collection serve as preventive instruments, designed to increase the perceived likelihood of detection and thereby deter dangerous driving behaviors ([United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021](#)). Yet despite these advancements, the absence of a unified legislative framework integrating all these instruments often leads to inconsistency in implementation and enforcement.

The criminalization of risky driving behaviors represents the cornerstone of Iran's legislative criminal policy in the field of transportation. Among these, speeding remains the most frequent and deadly offense on intercity roads. The law explicitly defines thresholds of excessive speed beyond which a violation becomes a criminal act, subject to fines, license suspension, or imprisonment ([Hajizadeh, 2015](#)). The rationale for such criminalization lies in the direct causal relationship between excessive speed and fatal accidents, which has been consistently documented by national safety reports ([Karimi, 2020](#)). Similarly, driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics is criminalized under both the Traffic Offenses Law and the Islamic Penal Code, as such behavior indicates conscious disregard for human life and public safety ([Khaleghi, 2019](#)). The law also criminalizes the act of leaving the scene of an accident, framing it as a moral and legal failure to render assistance. This provision reflects not only punitive intent but also the social expectation that drivers owe a duty of care to other road users and victims ([Ardebili,](#)

2024). By criminalizing these behaviors, the legislature affirms that road crimes are not merely technical violations but moral breaches that undermine public order.

The legislative objectives underlying these provisions are threefold: reducing traffic accidents, enhancing road safety, and strengthening deterrence. The first objective—reducing traffic accidents—is grounded in the recognition that road fatalities constitute a major public health crisis. According to data from the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, thousands of lives are lost annually on Iran’s intercity roads, with the majority of incidents resulting from human error and rule violations (Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022). Legislative policy therefore aims to reduce such incidents by codifying behaviors that significantly contribute to accidents and prescribing sanctions that reflect their severity. The second objective—enhancing road safety—extends beyond punishment to encompass prevention. Laws and regulations emphasize the use of modern surveillance systems, driver education programs, and mandatory safety standards for vehicles and infrastructure (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021). The third objective—strengthening deterrence—is achieved through the strategic use of visible enforcement mechanisms, consistent punishment, and legal education. When citizens perceive that violations are promptly detected and justly punished, their compliance with traffic regulations increases, thereby reinforcing the preventive function of the law (Clarke, 1995).

The instruments used to achieve these objectives reflect both classical and modern conceptions of deterrence. Traditional punitive mechanisms include imprisonment, fines, and driving bans, all of which aim to convey the seriousness of traffic-related offenses. The severity of sanctions is typically scaled according to the degree of harm caused and the offender’s culpability. For instance, negligent homicide caused by reckless driving can result in both imprisonment and payment of blood money (*diya*), integrating penal and compensatory dimensions (Khaleghi, 2019). However, modern legislative criminal policy also incorporates preventive measures such as administrative sanctions, mandatory education programs, and technology-based monitoring. By combining punitive and preventive instruments, the legislature seeks to reduce not only the frequency of violations but also the underlying attitudes that foster unsafe driving behavior (Safari, 2012). This integrative approach reflects the influence of situational crime prevention theories, which emphasize the modification of environmental and behavioral conditions to reduce opportunities for crime (Bright, 1992; Clarke, 1995).

The role of law enforcement agencies, particularly the traffic police, is central to the success of these legislative measures. The police serve as both enforcers and educators, responsible for ensuring compliance and promoting awareness. Through road inspections, electronic monitoring, and public campaigns, they operationalize the preventive aspect of legislative criminal policy (Babaei, 2011). However, their effectiveness depends heavily on institutional coordination and public cooperation. In many cases, resource limitations and procedural inefficiencies undermine enforcement capacity. The shortage of patrol units, insufficient training, and outdated technology create enforcement gaps that reduce the perceived certainty of punishment—a critical factor in deterrence theory (Harcourt, 1998). Legislative reforms have therefore emphasized the importance of modernizing police practices and integrating digital technologies to support evidence-based enforcement (Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022). Furthermore, educational programs targeting drivers, especially new license holders and commercial operators, aim to instill a culture of legal compliance and safety consciousness. Such educational initiatives serve as the social counterpart to punitive sanctions, promoting long-term behavioral change through awareness and value internalization (Schneider, 2002).

Despite its structured design, Iran’s legislative criminal policy in the field of intercity road safety faces multiple limitations and challenges. The most prominent among these is weak enforcement. While the legal framework provides clear definitions and sanctions, actual enforcement often suffers from inconsistencies and lack of capacity. Many offenses go undetected or unpunished, diminishing the deterrent effect of the law (Karimi, 2020). The gap between legislative intent and practical implementation arises partly from institutional fragmentation. The Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the Traffic Police, and the Judiciary operate under separate mandates with limited coordination (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). This fragmentation leads to jurisdictional overlaps, delays in prosecution, and lack of accountability. For example, while the police may issue citations for traffic violations, the judiciary’s capacity to process cases promptly remains

limited, resulting in procedural backlogs that weaken deterrence. The absence of a unified information-sharing system among these institutions further exacerbates inefficiency.

Another major challenge is the ineffectiveness of sanctions. Although fines and imprisonment are prescribed for serious offenses, their deterrent impact is often limited by socio-economic factors. For wealthier offenders, monetary penalties are relatively insignificant, while imprisonment for minor traffic offenses may produce counterproductive social outcomes (Ardebili, 2024). Additionally, the current legal framework does not sufficiently employ alternative sanctions such as community service, license revocation, or compulsory safety training, which could provide more effective corrective mechanisms (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018). The limited use of restorative justice principles in road-related offenses further reduces the rehabilitative potential of the system. A more balanced approach would integrate punitive, restorative, and educational measures to ensure both accountability and reintegration of offenders into lawful driving practices.

Legal loopholes also undermine the consistency and comprehensiveness of Iran's road safety legislation. Ambiguities in the definition of certain offenses, such as "reckless driving" or "negligence," lead to inconsistent judicial interpretations and unequal sentencing (Khaleghi, 2019). Similarly, the lack of clear standards for assessing intoxication or determining causality in accident cases often results in evidentiary challenges and reduced conviction rates (Hajizadeh, 2015). The executive regulations intended to clarify these issues are not always aligned with the statutory provisions, leading to discrepancies in enforcement (Karimi, 2020). Moreover, the legislative framework has been slow to adapt to new technologies and modes of transportation, such as app-based ride services and automated vehicles, which pose novel regulatory and ethical questions. The absence of proactive legislative adaptation leaves gaps that offenders may exploit, reducing the preventive efficiency of the law (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021).

Institutional coordination remains a persistent structural weakness. Effective road safety policy requires seamless collaboration among legislative, judicial, and executive bodies, yet Iran's administrative culture often operates in silos. The Traffic Police, Ministry of Roads, and Judiciary maintain separate databases, procedures, and accountability mechanisms, preventing the formation of an integrated enforcement system (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). Furthermore, limited public awareness and weak civic participation hinder collective responsibility for road safety. Public education campaigns are sporadic and underfunded, failing to reach rural areas where the majority of fatal accidents occur (Babaei, 2011). Without sustained educational and cultural initiatives, legislative criminal policy remains reactive rather than preventive.

Finally, Iran's legislative approach to road crime prevention continues to rely heavily on punitive deterrence, often neglecting the broader socio-economic and infrastructural dimensions of the problem. While punishment remains an essential tool for maintaining discipline and accountability, overreliance on penal measures without addressing structural deficiencies—such as inadequate road design, insufficient lighting, or lack of emergency response systems—limits the law's overall effectiveness (Karimi, 2020). The integration of criminal policy with civil engineering, urban planning, and public health perspectives is therefore essential for achieving sustainable road safety. In this regard, legislative criminal policy should evolve from a reactive penal model toward a proactive governance model that combines legal, technological, and educational interventions.

In summary, Iran's legislative criminal policy for the prevention of intercity road crimes reflects both commendable progress and enduring challenges. The existing legal framework—anchored in the Traffic Offenses Law, the Islamic Penal Code, and related executive regulations—demonstrates the legislature's commitment to safeguarding public safety and reducing fatalities through criminalization and deterrence. However, enforcement weaknesses, institutional fragmentation, and outdated legal provisions continue to undermine these goals. Strengthening deterrence, enhancing coordination, and modernizing legal definitions in line with technological and social developments will be essential steps toward realizing the full preventive potential of legislative criminal policy. Only through a cohesive and principle-based legislative approach can Iran move closer to achieving the dual aims of justice and safety on its intercity roads.

4. Legislative Criminal Policy in Urban Development and Construction Crimes

Urban development and construction crimes represent one of the most pressing challenges confronting Iran's legislative criminal policy today. As cities continue to expand rapidly under the pressures of population growth, migration, and economic transformation, violations such as illegal construction, unauthorized land use, and encroachment on public property have become widespread and normalized in many urban and peri-urban contexts. These activities undermine public safety, distort urban planning objectives, and erode the legitimacy of governmental institutions charged with regulating the built environment. Legislative criminal policy in this domain must therefore serve a dual purpose: it must enforce compliance through deterrence while also shaping lawful behavior through preventive regulation and institutional coordination. Iran's legal system, drawing on both Islamic jurisprudence and modern statutory frameworks, recognizes the sanctity of public and collective property; however, the lack of an integrated legislative approach to urban crimes continues to limit the effectiveness of enforcement and prevention efforts (Katouzian, 2024).

Urban crimes encompass a diverse set of offenses, ranging from direct violations of construction codes to complex property-related crimes such as land grabbing and unlawful change of land use. Illegal construction refers to the erection of buildings or structures without obtaining proper permits from the relevant municipal authority or in violation of technical, safety, or zoning standards. Such acts often involve disregard for urban design regulations, height restrictions, and environmental considerations. They create risks not only for residents but also for the surrounding urban fabric, compromising public safety and infrastructure sustainability (Karimi, 2020). Encroachment on public roads or sidewalks constitutes another significant form of urban crime, where individuals or private entities unlawfully appropriate public spaces for personal or commercial purposes. This behavior directly violates the legal principle that public roads are collective assets held in trust by the state, and their obstruction or privatization disrupts both mobility and equity in urban access (Khosravi, 2001). Land grabbing—often involving the illegal occupation or transfer of public or state-owned lands—represents a more sophisticated manifestation of urban criminality, combining elements of fraud, corruption, and regulatory manipulation. It is typically facilitated by gaps in land registration systems, weak cadastral documentation, and collusion between private actors and administrative officials (Rezaei, 2013). Similarly, illegal land use changes—such as converting agricultural or green spaces into residential or industrial zones without authorization—violate both environmental and urban planning laws, undermining sustainable development goals (Hanifi, 2012).

These violations, while varied in form, share common structural causes rooted in rapid urbanization, economic inequality, and insufficient legal enforcement. The demand for affordable housing and urban land often drives individuals to circumvent complex and costly bureaucratic procedures for obtaining construction or zoning permits. Simultaneously, the fragmentation of regulatory responsibilities among different government agencies creates loopholes that enable offenders to act with impunity. The lack of effective deterrence has allowed these crimes to become systemic, turning what should be exceptional violations into everyday realities in many Iranian cities. The legislative criminal policy framework thus needs to shift from a reactive approach—focused primarily on punishment after the fact—to a proactive and preventive one that integrates regulatory clarity, institutional coordination, and technological oversight (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018).

Preventive legal measures play a crucial role in shaping the behavior of both individuals and institutions engaged in urban development. Iranian law provides several instruments designed to ensure that construction and land use activities align with national and local planning objectives. The Urban Planning and Architecture Law, the Municipalities Act, and the Building Engineering and Control Law together constitute the backbone of Iran's regulatory framework for urban development. These laws assign municipalities the authority to issue construction permits, approve designs, and enforce compliance with safety and zoning standards. They also require adherence to national building codes that regulate structural integrity, fire safety, and earthquake resistance (Hajizadeh, 2015). Through these statutory provisions, the legislature seeks to establish a preventive legal environment that minimizes the likelihood of violations before they occur.

The legal logic behind such preventive measures aligns with the broader principles of situational crime prevention, which emphasize the reduction of opportunities for wrongdoing through environmental design and regulatory control (Clarke, 1995; Schneider, 2002). By requiring official permits and technical inspections at multiple stages of construction, the law increases the visibility of activities that might otherwise escape regulatory oversight. Zoning laws and urban development plans further

serve to guide spatial allocation, ensuring that land use corresponds to infrastructural capacity, environmental constraints, and long-term planning objectives (Karimi, 2020). These preventive instruments are not merely bureaucratic mechanisms; they embody the legislative intent to harmonize urban growth with public safety, environmental protection, and social equity. For instance, zoning classifications help prevent incompatible land uses—such as the establishment of industrial facilities within residential areas—that could endanger health or quality of life (Hanifi, 2012).

In the context of land-related crimes, cadastral systems play an essential preventive function by documenting ownership, boundaries, and land use in a transparent and verifiable manner. Iran's National Cadastre Law (2013) represents a landmark legislative step in this regard, aiming to create a unified database of land records that can serve as both an administrative and legal reference (Mirbagheri, 2011). By integrating cadastral data with property registration systems, this law seeks to eliminate the ambiguities that have historically enabled land grabbing and encroachment (Pourkamal, 2003). The legislative criminal policy underlying this initiative recognizes that technological and institutional modernization can reduce opportunities for property-related crimes by closing the informational gaps between government agencies, local authorities, and citizens (Rezaei, 2013). The modernization of land governance through GIS and digital documentation aligns with global best practices in urban crime prevention, as emphasized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which advocates for transparent spatial data systems as a foundation for sustainable urban management (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021).

In addition to cadastral modernization, Iranian law prescribes criminal and administrative sanctions for a range of urban offenses. Under Article 100 of the Municipalities Act, individuals who undertake construction without proper permits are subject to fines, demolition orders, or referral to judicial authorities for prosecution. The decision to demolish an unauthorized structure or impose a fine is made by a municipal commission, whose rulings can be appealed through administrative and judicial channels. While this system provides a legal basis for deterrence, it also demonstrates the tension between punitive enforcement and economic pragmatism. In practice, the imposition of fines often replaces demolition, effectively transforming punishment into a revenue-generating mechanism for municipalities rather than a deterrent against illegal construction (Karimi, 2020). This outcome illustrates a broader problem in legislative criminal policy: when enforcement mechanisms are designed without sufficient deterrent value, they may inadvertently incentivize violations by framing penalties as manageable costs of doing business (Harcourt, 1998).

Another preventive instrument is the requirement for construction supervision by licensed engineers and technical experts, as stipulated in the Building Engineering and Control Law. This provision aims to professionalize the construction process and distribute legal responsibility among multiple actors, including builders, designers, and supervisors (Hajizadeh, 2015). The law criminalizes the falsification of engineering certifications or the use of non-licensed contractors, thereby reinforcing the integrity of professional oversight (Khaleghi, 2019). However, gaps in monitoring and the prevalence of informal construction practices often undermine these preventive mechanisms. Many residential and commercial projects, particularly in rapidly growing urban peripheries, bypass the formal permitting and supervision process altogether, reflecting both social demand and institutional weakness (Karimi, 2020). The persistence of these informal practices indicates that effective prevention requires not only legislative measures but also administrative efficiency, affordability, and public trust in legal institutions.

Institutional coordination remains one of the most significant policy challenges in preventing and responding to urban crimes. The Ministry of Roads and Urban Development holds the overarching responsibility for national urban policy, infrastructure development, and housing programs, while municipalities serve as the primary implementing agencies at the local level (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). The relationship between these entities is often characterized by regulatory overlap and jurisdictional tension. The Ministry sets national policy directives and urban development standards, but municipalities operate under independent local mandates that give them considerable discretion in issuing permits and enforcing construction regulations. This dual authority structure frequently leads to inconsistent enforcement, especially when political or economic pressures encourage local officials to relax standards in pursuit of short-term gains (Mehrasa, 2020). Urban councils, which function as elected supervisory bodies, add another layer of complexity by influencing municipal

decision-making and occasionally obstructing enforcement actions for political reasons. The resulting institutional fragmentation weakens the coherence of legislative criminal policy, allowing offenders to exploit jurisdictional ambiguities.

Municipal corruption further exacerbates these problems. The discretionary power vested in municipal commissions to determine penalties and issue demolition orders creates opportunities for bribery and favoritism. Legislative criminal policy in this area thus faces the challenge of balancing decentralization with accountability. Strengthening transparency through digital permit systems, public access to urban planning data, and standardized enforcement procedures could mitigate corruption risks and enhance public confidence ([United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021](#)). However, such reforms require strong political will and inter-institutional cooperation, which are often difficult to achieve in Iran's complex administrative landscape. The Islamic Parliament Research Center has repeatedly emphasized the need for integrated governance structures that align the objectives of different ministries, local authorities, and the judiciary under a unified legislative vision ([Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020](#)).

Another dimension of institutional coordination involves the role of the judiciary in enforcing urban development laws. Courts serve as the ultimate arbiters in disputes involving illegal construction, land ownership, and zoning violations. Yet the judiciary's capacity to process such cases efficiently is often limited by procedural bottlenecks and lack of specialized expertise. Judges must navigate technical issues of engineering, land measurement, and zoning, which require interdisciplinary knowledge not always present within the judicial system ([Ardebili, 2024](#)). As a result, decisions may vary widely across jurisdictions, further eroding legal consistency. Establishing specialized environmental and urban courts could enhance judicial expertise and ensure more consistent application of legislative criminal policy in this domain.

In addition to institutional fragmentation, the cultural and social context of urban development poses challenges for legal enforcement. Public perceptions of land and housing as instruments of social mobility often conflict with the regulatory goals of urban planning. In many communities, illegal construction is viewed not as a crime but as a practical necessity in response to housing shortages and bureaucratic inefficiency. Legislative criminal policy must therefore balance punitive deterrence with social sensitivity, addressing underlying structural drivers such as economic inequality and inadequate housing supply ([Karimi, 2020](#)). Policies that combine strict enforcement with inclusive urban planning—such as affordable housing programs and participatory zoning processes—can reduce the social incentives for illegal construction while maintaining the authority of the law.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of legislative criminal policy in preventing urban development and construction crimes depends on its ability to integrate legal, institutional, and cultural dimensions within a coherent framework. The definition and criminalization of urban offenses must be accompanied by preventive legal measures that make compliance accessible and rational for citizens. Institutional coordination must ensure that enforcement is consistent, transparent, and free from political interference. By modernizing cadastral systems, clarifying jurisdictional boundaries, and harmonizing legislative and administrative frameworks, Iran can strengthen the preventive function of its legal system and promote urban development that is both lawful and sustainable. The success of this endeavor hinges not only on the rigor of criminal sanctions but also on the capacity of the legislative system to create conditions under which adherence to the law becomes the most logical and beneficial course of action for all stakeholders involved in shaping the nation's urban future.

5. Role of Technology in Crime Prevention in Transport and Urban Sectors

Technological innovation has become a central component of contemporary crime prevention strategies in both transport and urban sectors, fundamentally reshaping how governments, law enforcement agencies, and citizens interact with the built environment. In Iran, where rapid urbanization and expanding transport networks have introduced complex risks and governance challenges, technology offers a means of bridging the persistent gap between legislative intent and enforcement capacity. Legislative criminal policy can no longer rely solely on traditional punitive and deterrent frameworks; it must now integrate digital and data-driven tools that enable real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and public participation in maintaining safety and legality. The emergence of smart monitoring systems, GPS technologies, and big data analytics reflects a global shift toward preventive governance, where law operates not only reactively but proactively, anticipating potential violations before they occur ([United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021](#)). In Iran's case, the integration of

such tools within the framework of road safety and urban management has already begun through initiatives led by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, although the pace of implementation and legislative adaptation remains uneven ([Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022](#)).

One of the most visible manifestations of this technological shift in the transport sector is the widespread use of smart monitoring systems and traffic surveillance cameras. These devices, strategically installed along intercity highways and urban intersections, serve not only as deterrents but also as evidentiary tools for the detection and prosecution of road offenses. They capture violations such as speeding, red-light running, and illegal lane changes, automatically transmitting data to centralized databases for processing. The deterrent effect of such systems arises from the increased perceived likelihood of detection—a principle deeply rooted in the rational choice theory of crime, which asserts that offenders are less likely to engage in unlawful behavior when the probability of being caught rises ([Harcourt, 1998](#)). By enabling continuous and objective observation, surveillance technologies supplement human enforcement and compensate for resource limitations within the police force ([Babaei, 2011](#)). Their integration into Iran's legislative criminal policy aligns with the shift from reactive punishment toward preventive control, emphasizing regulation through visibility and automation rather than reliance solely on post-incident adjudication.

GPS technology further extends this preventive potential by enhancing both the monitoring and management of transport systems. Within Iran's intercity and freight transport sectors, GPS devices installed in commercial vehicles allow real-time tracking of movement, speed, and route deviations. This data not only aids enforcement authorities in identifying high-risk driving patterns but also provides valuable input for designing safer road networks ([Karimi, 2020](#)). The Ministry of Roads and Urban Development has gradually incorporated GPS-based monitoring into its regulatory framework, particularly for public transportation and long-haul freight operators ([Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022](#)). By combining GPS tracking with digital logbooks, the authorities can detect violations such as overdriving, unauthorized stops, or deviation from prescribed routes, all of which contribute to accident risk. In addition, GPS data supports post-incident investigation by reconstructing the sequence of events leading to accidents or offenses, thus strengthening the evidentiary base for judicial proceedings ([Khaleghi, 2019](#)).

The use of traffic cameras and GPS devices also facilitates data integration across institutional boundaries. A centralized digital infrastructure allows the Ministry, traffic police, and judiciary to share verified data in real time, reducing administrative delays and inconsistencies that have historically hindered enforcement ([Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020](#)). When combined with automated penalty systems, such as electronic ticketing and digital payment of fines, this integration enhances both efficiency and transparency. However, effective implementation depends on legislative support that clearly defines the scope of data collection, permissible uses, and accountability for misuse. The absence of such regulation risks undermining public trust, as unregulated surveillance may be perceived as intrusive or discriminatory. Legislative criminal policy must therefore evolve to codify the technological responsibilities of state agencies while safeguarding individual rights, ensuring that technological efficiency does not come at the expense of legal integrity ([Katouzian, 2024](#)).

Beyond surveillance and monitoring, the rise of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionized the analytical dimension of crime prevention in the transport and urban sectors. Traditional law enforcement relied primarily on reactive statistics and manual reporting, which provided only partial insight into the dynamics of criminal behavior. In contrast, AI-driven analytics can process massive datasets derived from traffic sensors, satellite imagery, and urban surveillance systems to identify high-risk zones and temporal patterns of offenses ([United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021](#)). For example, algorithms can predict where accidents or violations are most likely to occur based on variables such as weather, traffic density, and time of day. This predictive capacity allows authorities to allocate enforcement resources more efficiently and to implement preventive interventions, such as targeted policing or temporary traffic restrictions, before incidents happen ([Clarke, 1995](#)).

In urban contexts, big data analytics also play a critical role in identifying illegal construction and land use violations. By integrating cadastral information, satellite imagery, and municipal permit data, AI systems can automatically flag discrepancies between registered and observed structures ([Hanifi, 2012](#)). This capability is especially relevant in Iran, where rapid and often unregulated urban expansion has overwhelmed manual inspection mechanisms. AI-driven urban surveillance enables early

detection of unauthorized construction, thereby enhancing compliance with zoning and safety regulations (Mirbagheri, 2011). Moreover, when linked with cadastral databases established under the National Cadastre Law, these technologies contribute to the transparency and accountability of land transactions, reducing opportunities for corruption and land grabbing (Pourkamal, 2003; Rezaei, 2013). In this sense, technological integration reinforces the preventive aspect of legislative criminal policy by transforming information asymmetry—one of the key enablers of urban and property-related crimes—into a framework of shared and verifiable knowledge.

Another emerging dimension of technology in crime prevention is digital education and awareness. While law enforcement and regulatory surveillance form the backbone of deterrence, public participation remains indispensable for sustainable compliance. Legislative criminal policy achieves its greatest preventive impact when citizens internalize legal norms and safety behaviors. Digital education platforms, social media campaigns, and mobile applications have become powerful tools for disseminating information about traffic laws, urban regulations, and the social consequences of violations (Schneider, 2002). For example, online programs developed by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development provide drivers with interactive training modules on safe driving practices, the use of seat belts, and adherence to speed limits (Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022). Similarly, mobile applications allow users to report road hazards, illegal construction, or zoning violations directly to municipal authorities, fostering civic engagement and shared responsibility. These participatory platforms embody a shift from state-centered enforcement to collaborative governance, where prevention is a collective endeavor supported by digital connectivity (Babaei, 2011).

However, the integration of technology into legislative criminal policy also raises significant legal and ethical implications concerning data privacy, liability, and transparency. The collection and processing of personal data through surveillance cameras, GPS devices, and AI systems inevitably generate privacy concerns. Without clear legal frameworks delineating the boundaries of data use, such technologies can easily infringe on the constitutional rights of individuals to privacy and freedom of movement (Katouzian, 2024). The challenge for legislators lies in balancing the public interest in safety and security with the protection of individual liberties. Legal scholars have emphasized the importance of adopting data protection statutes that establish oversight mechanisms, define data retention periods, and provide individuals with avenues for redress in cases of misuse (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018). Transparency in data governance is equally crucial; citizens must be informed about what data is collected, how it is used, and who has access to it.

Liability represents another critical legal issue arising from the deployment of automated and AI-based systems. When traffic cameras malfunction, GPS data is inaccurate, or AI algorithms make erroneous predictions, the question of responsibility becomes legally complex. Determining whether liability lies with the technology provider, the state agency operating the system, or the individual officer relying on its output requires careful legislative clarification (Khaleghi, 2019). Without such clarity, the use of advanced technologies may expose both authorities and citizens to legal uncertainty, undermining trust in the system. Therefore, legislative criminal policy must evolve to include explicit provisions on technological accountability, certification standards, and quality assurance mechanisms.

Transparency, finally, is the ethical linchpin that determines the public legitimacy of technology-based crime prevention. When surveillance and data analytics operate behind opaque administrative walls, citizens may perceive them as tools of control rather than protection. Public access to aggregated, anonymized data—such as accident statistics or urban compliance rates—can demonstrate the tangible benefits of technological enforcement and foster a sense of shared ownership over safety outcomes (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021). Moreover, transparency mechanisms, such as public reporting requirements and independent oversight bodies, can prevent the misuse of surveillance technologies for purposes unrelated to public safety. Ensuring accountability through transparency not only enhances the effectiveness of crime prevention but also aligns with the constitutional principle of the rule of law (Katouzian, 2024).

The integration of technology into crime prevention strategies across the transport and urban sectors reflects a profound transformation in the nature of legislative criminal policy itself. The law is no longer confined to static prohibitions and punitive sanctions; it increasingly functions as a dynamic system of governance that anticipates, monitors, and guides behavior in real time. Smart monitoring systems, GPS technologies, and AI-based analytics extend the reach of the legislature's preventive vision, translating abstract legal norms into tangible mechanisms of control and protection. Yet, this evolution demands

continuous legislative adaptation to ensure that technological innovation remains consistent with the principles of legality, proportionality, and individual rights. In the Iranian context, where infrastructural modernization and legal reform are advancing simultaneously, the challenge is to integrate these technological tools within a coherent legislative framework that enhances efficiency without compromising justice. By institutionalizing transparency, safeguarding privacy, and clarifying liability, Iran's legislative criminal policy can harness the full potential of technology as both an instrument of prevention and a manifestation of the rule of law in the digital age.

6. Critical and Comparative Analysis of Iran's Legislative Criminal Policy

The legislative criminal policy of Iran, while built upon strong constitutional and jurisprudential foundations, continues to struggle with issues of fragmentation, inconsistency, and limited adaptability to modern developments. Over the past decades, the country has enacted a wide array of criminal and administrative laws addressing road safety, construction offenses, land use violations, and urban management, yet these provisions often function in isolation rather than as components of a cohesive criminal code. This fragmentation weakens the coherence of legislative strategy, impedes enforcement, and undermines the deterrent and preventive goals that are central to criminal policy. A critical and comparative analysis of Iran's legislative criminal policy reveals that its challenges are not rooted merely in the volume of legislation but in the absence of a unified framework capable of harmonizing statutory, administrative, and technological approaches to public safety and urban governance. By examining the multiplicity of legal provisions, the weakness of sanctions and enforcement mechanisms, and the system's limited response to emerging threats, it becomes evident that Iran's legislative criminal policy requires a comprehensive reform grounded in principles of proportionality, coherence, and innovation.

The fragmentation of legal provisions in Iran's criminal system is one of its most persistent structural flaws. The existence of multiple overlapping statutes—each targeting narrow sectors such as transportation, construction, or land management—has produced a complex and often contradictory legal landscape. For instance, the Law on the Investigation of Traffic Offenses, the Islamic Penal Code, and various executive decrees all contain provisions addressing road safety violations, but their objectives and enforcement procedures are not always synchronized ([Hajizadeh, 2015](#); [Karimi, 2020](#)). Similarly, the legal treatment of urban crimes such as illegal construction or land encroachment is distributed among the Municipalities Act, the Building Engineering and Control Law, and the Urban Planning and Architecture Law, none of which form part of a cohesive criminal framework ([Hanifi, 2012](#)). The Islamic Penal Code, while comprehensive in traditional areas such as theft, homicide, and fraud, offers limited guidance for contemporary challenges like environmental damage, zoning violations, or technological crimes ([Khaleghi, 2019](#)). This fragmentation results in overlapping jurisdictions and inconsistent enforcement outcomes, as different authorities—municipalities, the police, ministries, and courts—interpret and apply laws based on their institutional mandates rather than on a unified legislative vision ([Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020](#)).

The multiplicity of legal provisions also reflects Iran's reactive legislative culture, where laws are often enacted in response to crises or specific incidents rather than as part of long-term criminal policy planning. This piecemeal approach produces short-term solutions that fail to address systemic issues such as institutional coordination, public education, or preventive infrastructure. In contrast, many European countries, including France and Germany, have developed codified criminal frameworks that consolidate sectoral legislation under overarching principles of legality and coherence. These systems demonstrate the value of a comprehensive criminal code that delineates clear boundaries between administrative and criminal offenses, ensuring that enforcement remains both efficient and consistent ([Ardebili, 2024](#)). By comparison, Iran's reliance on dispersed legislative instruments has led to confusion over the scope of criminal liability, especially in complex domains like transportation and urban governance, where administrative violations can easily evolve into criminal acts. The absence of a single codified framework thus undermines the predictability and accessibility of criminal law, both of which are essential to the principle of legality and the public's understanding of justice ([Katouzian, 2024](#)).

Another dimension of fragmentation lies in the inconsistency between national and local regulatory frameworks. Municipal bylaws and provincial ordinances frequently contradict national statutes, particularly in the enforcement of building codes and zoning regulations. While municipalities have broad authority under the Municipalities Act to impose penalties and order demolitions, their decisions often conflict with judicial interpretations of the same offenses under the Penal Code or the Civil

Code (Karimi, 2020). This inconsistency not only delays enforcement but also provides opportunities for corruption and selective application of justice. In several instances, offenders have been able to exploit these discrepancies by appealing administrative rulings in court, resulting in protracted legal disputes and weakened deterrence. The Islamic Parliament Research Center has acknowledged this lack of legal coherence as a major obstacle to effective urban governance, emphasizing the need for a unified legal structure that clearly defines the criminal and administrative dimensions of urban and road safety violations (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020).

Closely linked to legislative fragmentation is the weakness of sanctions and enforcement mechanisms. Although Iran's criminal laws formally prescribe penalties for a wide range of offenses, their practical impact remains limited due to lack of proportionality, inadequate deterrence, and inconsistency in application. The principle of proportionality, a cornerstone of modern criminal policy, requires that the severity of punishment correspond to both the gravity of the offense and the degree of culpability (Ardebili, 2024). However, many of Iran's criminal provisions—particularly those related to road and urban crimes—fail to observe this balance. For example, minor traffic offenses may incur disproportionately heavy fines, while more serious violations such as reckless driving causing death or illegal construction in high-risk zones often result in relatively lenient penalties (Hajizadeh, 2015). This imbalance diminishes the deterrent effect of punishment and contributes to public perceptions of legal inequity. Moreover, sanctions are often applied inconsistently across jurisdictions, as judges exercise broad discretion in interpreting ta'zir crimes, leading to variable outcomes even for similar offenses (Khaleghi, 2019).

The deterrent function of criminal sanctions also suffers from the low probability of detection and conviction. Enforcement agencies such as the traffic police, municipalities, and environmental departments frequently lack the resources, training, and technological capacity to identify and prosecute offenders effectively (Babaei, 2011). Weak institutional coordination further compounds this problem, as fragmented information systems prevent real-time data sharing between the police, judiciary, and administrative bodies (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). Comparative experience from countries like the United Kingdom and South Korea illustrates that effective deterrence depends not only on the severity of punishment but also on the certainty and swiftness of enforcement (Clarke, 1995). In Iran, however, lengthy judicial procedures, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited technological integration have weakened the perceived inevitability of punishment, allowing offenders to act with relative impunity.

A significant weakness in Iran's legislative criminal policy is its reliance on punitive rather than restorative or alternative sanctions. Traditional criminal law in Iran emphasizes imprisonment, fines, and corporal punishment, with limited use of community-based or rehabilitative measures (Safari, 2012). Yet contemporary criminological theory and comparative practice increasingly favor restorative justice approaches that prioritize reparation, education, and social reintegration over retribution. In the context of road and urban crimes, restorative sanctions such as community service in urban maintenance projects, mandatory safety training, or restitution for public property damage could achieve more sustainable behavioral change while reducing the social and economic costs of imprisonment (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018). Moreover, alternative sanctions align with Islamic principles of ta'zir, which allow discretionary punishment designed to achieve moral and social reform. The incorporation of such sanctions would modernize Iran's legislative criminal policy, bringing it into closer alignment with international trends and human rights standards (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021).

Another critical limitation lies in the enforcement culture itself. While legislative criminal policy provides the formal structure for prevention and punishment, its success depends on the efficiency and integrity of enforcement institutions. Corruption, lack of transparency, and insufficient accountability remain pervasive problems in local governance and law enforcement (Karimi, 2020). For instance, municipal commissions responsible for ruling on illegal construction cases have occasionally been implicated in bribery scandals, undermining public confidence in the rule of law. The discretionary nature of administrative fines and penalties exacerbates this problem by allowing officials to negotiate outcomes outside formal judicial oversight. Strengthening institutional integrity through transparent digital systems, automated enforcement mechanisms, and independent oversight bodies is therefore essential to restoring the deterrent power of criminal law (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021).

The third major area of weakness in Iran's legislative criminal policy concerns its limited responsiveness to emerging threats arising from technological, environmental, and infrastructural changes. The rapid development of smart transport systems, digital monitoring technologies, and automated vehicles has outpaced the legislative framework's ability to regulate them effectively. While surveillance technologies and GPS monitoring have been incorporated into enforcement practices, there remains little clarity in the law regarding data governance, liability, and the admissibility of digital evidence ([Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Iran, 2022](#)). Moreover, the Penal Code and traffic regulations lack explicit provisions addressing crimes involving digital sabotage of transport systems or interference with electronic monitoring devices. These omissions expose critical vulnerabilities in national security and public safety, especially as Iran moves toward greater reliance on intelligent infrastructure ([Karimi, 2020](#)). Comparative legal systems, such as those of the European Union, have already introduced comprehensive cybercrime and data protection laws that define offenses related to technological disruption and establish clear standards for privacy and accountability ([Schneider, 2002](#)). Iran's legislative framework, however, continues to treat such issues primarily as administrative or disciplinary matters, reflecting an outdated understanding of technological risk.

The deficiency in addressing new threats extends to the urban sector, where digital mapping and cadastral technologies have transformed the landscape of property management and land governance. Despite the introduction of the National Cadastre Law, Iran's criminal law does not yet fully integrate digital cadastral data into mechanisms of accountability and prevention ([Mirbagheri, 2011](#); [Rezaei, 2013](#)). As a result, land grabbing and illegal construction remain persistent problems, often facilitated by outdated paper-based systems and weak interagency communication. In countries such as Singapore and Estonia, the integration of cadastral data into national legal and judicial systems has dramatically reduced property-related crimes by ensuring that all transactions are traceable and verifiable in real time ([United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021](#)). Iran's legislative criminal policy could achieve similar outcomes by establishing legal obligations for the use of digital data in both preventive monitoring and judicial evidence.

A forward-looking legislative criminal policy must therefore incorporate mechanisms for the legal adaptation of technology. This includes not only defining new forms of digital crime but also leveraging technological tools for preventive governance. For example, AI-driven analytics could be legally recognized as part of enforcement infrastructure, enabling authorities to predict and mitigate risks associated with road safety and urban violations ([Clarke, 1995](#)). However, legislative adaptation must proceed in accordance with the principles of legality and proportionality, ensuring that technological efficiency does not lead to overcriminalization or violations of privacy ([Katouzian, 2024](#)). Establishing comprehensive data protection and technological liability laws would bridge the gap between modernization and rights protection, allowing Iran to harness the preventive potential of technology without undermining individual freedoms ([Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018](#)).

In sum, Iran's legislative criminal policy stands at a crossroads between tradition and modernization. Its current framework, characterized by fragmented legislation, weak sanctions, and limited responsiveness to emerging threats, requires systemic reform. The development of a comprehensive criminal code that consolidates sectoral laws, strengthens proportionality in punishment, introduces restorative and alternative sanctions, and integrates technological governance would represent a decisive step toward coherence and efficiency. Comparative experience demonstrates that successful legislative criminal policy is not measured by the quantity of laws but by their integration, adaptability, and ability to promote justice while ensuring public safety. By embracing these principles, Iran can transform its legislative criminal policy from a reactive set of dispersed statutes into a proactive, unified framework that reflects both the nation's constitutional values and the demands of the twenty-first century.

7. The Role of Cadastre in Preventing Land Grabbing and Urban Crimes

The establishment and implementation of a comprehensive national cadastre system have emerged as one of the most effective instruments for preventing land grabbing, illegal occupation, and related urban crimes in modern governance. In the Iranian legal and administrative framework, the cadastre is not merely a technical registry of land boundaries and ownership titles; it is a legal infrastructure designed to uphold the principles of transparency, justice, and the rule of law in land management. The National Cadastre System integrates spatial, legal, and administrative data to provide a unified record of all

land parcels across the country, including public, private, and governmental properties (Mirbagheri, 2011). This system was formally institutionalized under the 2013 Comprehensive Cadastre Law, which represents a landmark legislative initiative aimed at combating the long-standing challenges of land encroachment, overlapping property claims, and unregulated urban expansion (Rezaei, 2013). By aligning the technical aspects of geographic information systems (GIS) with the legal mandates of property registration, the cadastre functions as a preventive mechanism against both intentional and inadvertent violations of land rights.

The 2013 Comprehensive Cadastre Law in Iran established the legal foundation for a nationwide cadastral reform under the supervision of the Organization for Deeds and Properties Registration, affiliated with the Judiciary. The primary objective of this law was to replace fragmented and outdated paper-based records with a digital, spatially referenced database covering all categories of land ownership (Hanifi, 2012). The reform was intended not only to modernize administrative processes but also to reinforce legal certainty by providing accurate, transparent, and tamper-resistant records of land boundaries and ownership. Under this legal framework, every parcel of land must be uniquely identified, surveyed, and registered in accordance with standardized technical and legal procedures (Pourkamal, 2003). The cadastral map thus becomes the legal basis for defining ownership rights, verifying transactions, and resolving disputes, ensuring that property boundaries are not subject to manipulation or subjective interpretation. This systematic approach aligns with international best practices promoted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, which has consistently emphasized that comprehensive land registration systems are essential for preventing corruption, promoting good governance, and ensuring equitable access to land (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021).

The legal significance of the cadastre extends beyond its administrative function; it serves as a structural instrument of legislative criminal policy in the prevention of land-related crimes. Land grabbing, which has historically plagued both rural and urban areas in Iran, often thrives in environments characterized by ambiguity and opacity in property records. Before the 2013 law, inconsistencies between documents issued by local authorities, municipalities, and the Deeds Registration Organization allowed multiple parties to claim ownership of the same parcel of land, leading to widespread corruption and judicial inefficiency (Rezaei, 2013). The digital cadastre system eliminates such loopholes by consolidating all property-related data under a single national authority and integrating it with spatial mapping technologies (Mirbagheri, 2011). This integration ensures that any unauthorized alteration, sale, or transfer of land can be instantly detected and legally challenged. Furthermore, by linking cadastral data to the judiciary's electronic case management system, the law enables real-time verification of property documents, thereby reducing opportunities for fraud, document forgery, and speculative manipulation of land values (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2018).

From a technical-legal perspective, the cadastre functions as both a preventive and corrective mechanism. Preventively, it deters illegal activities by increasing transparency and reducing the discretion of administrative officials, who historically have been key enablers of land-related corruption (Karimi, 2020). The existence of precise, publicly accessible cadastral maps leaves little room for subjective decision-making, thus curbing administrative abuse and favoritism. Correctively, it strengthens judicial capacity to adjudicate land disputes efficiently and accurately, as judges can rely on certified cadastral data rather than conflicting testimonies or outdated documentation (Ardebili, 2024). The cadastre's dual function as a preventive and evidentiary tool exemplifies the fusion of technological innovation with legislative criminal policy, demonstrating how modernization of administrative systems can directly contribute to crime prevention and justice administration.

Urban implications of the national cadastre are equally profound. In rapidly expanding cities, where urban sprawl, informal settlements, and speculative development are common, the cadastre promotes land integration and zoning justice. By providing clear demarcation of land ownership and public boundaries, it enables municipalities to enforce zoning regulations more effectively and prevent illegal construction or encroachment on public roads and green spaces (Khosravi, 2001). This is particularly relevant in megacities such as Tehran, Mashhad, and Isfahan, where conflicting claims over property rights and irregular building permits have long impeded urban planning. The cadastre empowers municipal authorities with reliable spatial data, allowing them to monitor compliance with land use regulations, issue construction permits based on verified boundaries, and detect unauthorized activities at early stages (Hajizadeh, 2015). As a result, it enhances both the preventive and punitive

aspects of legislative criminal policy by transforming enforcement from a reactive process into a continuous, data-driven monitoring system.

The role of the cadastre in promoting zoning justice lies in its ability to ensure that land use allocation reflects legal and equitable principles rather than economic or political favoritism. In many urban contexts, the absence of accurate land data has led to the concentration of valuable urban land in the hands of a few powerful actors, often through illicit means such as falsified deeds or administrative manipulation (Rezaei, 2013). The cadastre corrects this imbalance by establishing a transparent legal record that identifies not only private ownership but also public lands, roads, and environmentally protected areas. This transparency prevents the privatization of public assets and ensures that urban development proceeds according to legally approved plans (Hanifi, 2012). Moreover, by linking cadastral data with urban information systems, policymakers can make informed decisions about infrastructure investment, housing policy, and environmental conservation, reducing the likelihood of crime-prone informal developments (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021).

In judicial terms, the cadastre significantly enhances the transparency and efficiency of property dispute resolution. Prior to its implementation, a large proportion of civil litigation in Iran involved land and property disputes, many of which were prolonged due to the lack of reliable documentation and spatial verification. The cadastre provides courts with precise, certified evidence of ownership and boundaries, thereby reducing ambiguity and facilitating faster resolution of cases (Mirbagheri, 2011). This improvement not only relieves pressure on the judiciary but also strengthens public trust in the legal system. The evidentiary value of cadastral records ensures that judicial rulings are based on objective data rather than conflicting personal claims, thereby minimizing opportunities for corruption or political interference (Najafi Ebrandi Abadi, 2016). Additionally, the integration of cadastral data into judicial databases enables automatic cross-checking of property transactions, helping prevent double registration or fraudulent transfers (Pourkamal, 2003). This integration marks a decisive step toward the digitization of judicial processes, aligning Iran's property law enforcement mechanisms with international standards of efficiency and transparency.

Another major impact of the cadastre system lies in its contribution to environmental protection and sustainable urban development. The availability of geospatial data allows policymakers to monitor and control land use changes that threaten ecological balance, such as illegal deforestation, conversion of agricultural land, or encroachment on protected zones (Hanifi, 2012). This monitoring capacity strengthens the preventive arm of criminal policy by enabling authorities to detect environmental violations early and impose sanctions in accordance with the law. The cadastre also supports fair taxation by providing accurate assessments of land value and use, ensuring that property taxes are levied equitably based on verified data. This financial transparency, in turn, reduces incentives for tax evasion and speculative land hoarding, both of which contribute indirectly to urban crime (Karimi, 2020).

Despite these achievements, the implementation of the national cadastre still faces several institutional and technical challenges. The integration of data from multiple agencies—including the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, and municipal authorities—remains incomplete, leading to occasional inconsistencies between cadastral and administrative records (Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran, 2020). These discrepancies can undermine the system's preventive potential by creating gaps that opportunistic actors may exploit. Furthermore, the success of the cadastre depends on the continuous updating and verification of spatial data, which requires both technical expertise and sustained financial investment. Without adequate resources, the system risks becoming outdated, losing its deterrent value against dynamic and sophisticated forms of land-related crime. Legislative criminal policy must therefore ensure that the cadastre remains a living, evolving tool integrated into the broader digital governance framework.

Comparatively, Iran's experience with the cadastre aligns with global trends emphasizing the centrality of digital land governance in crime prevention. In European jurisdictions, particularly in the Nordic countries, cadastral systems are fully integrated with judicial, tax, and municipal databases, providing real-time verification of ownership and facilitating transparent urban planning (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021). These models illustrate the potential for the Iranian system to evolve beyond a registry into a multifunctional platform for legal, fiscal, and environmental governance. The critical step lies in strengthening the legislative and institutional linkages between cadastral data and criminal enforcement

mechanisms. For example, incorporating mandatory cadastral verification for all land-related judicial proceedings and public projects could further enhance the system's preventive and evidentiary role.

Ultimately, the national cadastre represents a cornerstone of preventive criminal policy in Iran's urban and land management sectors. By providing a transparent, verifiable, and technologically advanced framework for defining and protecting land rights, it addresses the structural causes of land grabbing, illegal construction, and property fraud. The 2013 Comprehensive Cadastre Law not only modernized the technical infrastructure of property management but also redefined the relationship between citizens, institutions, and the law in the governance of urban space. When fully implemented and integrated with judicial and administrative systems, the cadastre can transform Iran's legislative criminal policy from a reactive, punishment-oriented model into a proactive framework of prevention, accountability, and sustainable urban justice.

8. Conclusion

The analysis of Iran's legislative criminal policy in the fields of transport safety, urban development, and land management reveals a system that has achieved significant progress in modernizing its legal and institutional foundations but still faces fundamental challenges in coherence, enforcement, and adaptability. The central insight emerging from this study is that while legislative criminal policy in Iran is grounded in solid constitutional and moral principles, it remains fragmented across sectors and reactive in its approach to crime prevention. The existing laws and regulations reflect good intentions and an awareness of contemporary challenges, yet their implementation is hindered by overlapping jurisdictions, inconsistent enforcement mechanisms, and limited use of preventive and restorative measures. The ultimate aim of criminal legislation—to maintain public order, protect human life and property, and uphold justice—cannot be fully realized unless the legislative system evolves into an integrated, principle-based, and technology-supported framework that aligns with both domestic needs and global best practices.

In the domain of road and transport safety, legislative criminal policy has made meaningful strides through the adoption of the Law on the Investigation of Traffic Offenses and the integration of new enforcement mechanisms such as GPS tracking and traffic surveillance systems. These instruments reflect a clear understanding of the need for deterrence and behavioral regulation in public mobility. However, the persistence of high accident rates and recurrent violations indicates that punishment alone is insufficient to change driving culture or ensure compliance. True deterrence arises from certainty and consistency in enforcement, not solely from the severity of punishment. Therefore, enhancing coordination among the judiciary, police, and transport authorities is essential. The integration of technology, public education, and transparent data management must become permanent features of legislative criminal policy. The road sector offers a valuable lesson: when law, enforcement, and public awareness operate in harmony, the potential for crime and negligence declines dramatically. Conversely, when enforcement is selective or inconsistent, even the best-drafted laws lose credibility.

Urban development and construction crimes reflect another critical dimension of Iran's criminal policy challenge. Illegal construction, land misuse, and encroachment on public property have become deeply entrenched problems, often linked to rapid urbanization, economic inequality, and weak administrative oversight. The analysis shows that while Iran's municipalities and the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development possess substantial legal authority, their operations are frequently undermined by corruption, political pressure, and lack of inter-agency coordination. Legislative criminal policy must therefore go beyond punishment to address the structural drivers of urban crime. Simplifying administrative procedures for obtaining permits, ensuring affordability of compliance, and introducing digital permit systems can transform the relationship between citizens and the state. In addition, greater transparency in municipal decision-making and public access to urban planning data would deter the misuse of authority and reduce opportunities for bribery. The urban governance sector demonstrates that prevention is inseparable from good administration; legal deterrence can succeed only when citizens perceive the system as fair, efficient, and accessible.

A major finding of this analysis is that Iran's criminal legislation remains heavily punitive and underutilizes restorative and alternative sanctions. Imprisonment and fines continue to dominate the penal landscape, even in cases where education, community service, or compensation could yield more constructive outcomes. This overreliance on punitive sanctions not only burdens the judicial and correctional systems but also fails to address the social roots of offenses. A more balanced approach would integrate rehabilitation, social responsibility, and restitution into the criminal justice process. In road crimes, for

example, offenders could be mandated to participate in safety training or community awareness programs instead of serving custodial sentences. In urban and environmental crimes, restorative measures could involve public service in urban renewal or environmental protection projects. Such measures would realign punishment with prevention, ensuring that offenders contribute positively to social restoration rather than becoming isolated from society.

Technology emerges throughout this analysis as both a challenge and an opportunity for Iran's legislative criminal policy. The growing use of smart monitoring systems, AI analytics, and digital education tools marks a decisive step toward preventive governance. When properly integrated into law and policy, these technologies can revolutionize how crime is detected, predicted, and deterred. Yet, the full potential of digitalization remains constrained by the absence of clear legal frameworks governing data protection, liability, and inter-agency cooperation. To prevent misuse and ensure accountability, Iran's legislators must establish comprehensive laws regulating data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and technological responsibility. In the age of artificial intelligence, the legitimacy of state power depends not only on its efficiency but also on its ethical use of technology. Transparent governance and public trust are indispensable components of technological crime prevention. The future of legislative criminal policy lies not in surveillance alone but in the creation of a digital legal ecosystem that balances public safety with personal freedom.

The study also highlights the pivotal role of the national cadastre system as a foundation for preventing land-related crimes. The 2013 Comprehensive Cadastre Law marked a milestone in Iran's legal modernization, establishing a unified, digital framework for documenting land ownership and use. This reform directly targets one of the root causes of land grabbing and urban corruption: the opacity and fragmentation of property records. By providing accurate, verifiable, and spatially integrated data, the cadastre enhances transparency, facilitates fair taxation, and supports the judiciary in resolving disputes. Its contribution extends beyond administrative efficiency to the very heart of legislative criminal policy—ensuring that public and private property are protected through law, not influence or power. However, the system's success depends on sustained investment, continuous data updating, and full institutional integration. The cadastre's preventive potential can only be realized if it becomes an active tool in law enforcement, judicial processes, and urban planning, rather than remaining a passive repository of information.

Another conclusion emerging from the analysis is that legislative fragmentation continues to be a major obstacle to effective governance. Iran's legal landscape is characterized by multiple overlapping statutes, executive decrees, and administrative directives that often conflict or duplicate each other. This complexity creates confusion among implementing agencies and opens avenues for corruption and selective enforcement. The lack of a single comprehensive criminal code addressing transport, urban, and land crimes undermines both deterrence and predictability. Legal reform must therefore focus on codification—bringing together disparate legislative instruments into an integrated and consistent framework guided by the principles of legality, proportionality, and coherence. Codification would not only simplify enforcement but also strengthen public confidence in the fairness and rationality of the legal system. Moreover, it would align Iran's criminal law with international standards, enabling greater cooperation in areas such as cross-border environmental crimes, transport regulation, and anti-corruption efforts.

Institutional coordination remains the linchpin of effective legislative criminal policy. The fragmentation of responsibilities among ministries, municipalities, and judicial authorities weakens the capacity for enforcement and policy coherence. Establishing a centralized national council for crime prevention and legislative coordination could bridge these divides, ensuring that all sectors operate under unified objectives and performance standards. Such a body would oversee data integration, monitor enforcement outcomes, and propose legal updates in response to emerging threats. The experience of countries with advanced governance systems demonstrates that institutional coherence is as important as legislative clarity. Without it, even the most well-drafted laws remain aspirational rather than operational.

The comparative perspective reinforces the conclusion that legislative criminal policy in Iran must transition from reactive enforcement to proactive prevention. The challenges of the 21st century—technological transformation, environmental stress, urbanization, and globalization—require legal systems that anticipate rather than merely respond to risks. Prevention today is as much about information management, education, and transparency as it is about punishment. Iran's constitutional and moral values already provide a strong foundation for such a transformation; what is needed is institutional courage and legislative foresight. Modern criminal policy should integrate traditional Islamic concepts of justice, which emphasize social harmony and

moral education, with contemporary principles of restorative and preventive justice. This synthesis would create a distinctly Iranian model of modern legal governance that is both rooted in cultural authenticity and responsive to global realities.

The broader implication of this study is that law, in its most effective form, functions as a system of governance rather than mere command. Legislative criminal policy should not only define offenses and sanctions but also guide behavior through incentives, education, and structural transparency. The rule of law in transport, urban development, and land governance depends not only on punitive deterrence but also on creating conditions where compliance becomes rational, beneficial, and culturally internalized. When citizens view legal compliance as a path to security, fairness, and collective progress, crime prevention becomes a shared responsibility rather than a state-imposed obligation. In this sense, legislative criminal policy must evolve from an enforcement paradigm to a culture of lawful cooperation.

In conclusion, Iran stands at a decisive turning point in redefining its legislative criminal policy for the modern era. The lessons drawn from transport safety, urban governance, and land management reveal that the path forward lies in coherence, modernization, and participation. Strengthening the rule of law requires not only new legislation but also new institutional behavior—transparent, data-driven, and responsive to social realities. The integration of technological innovation, codification of fragmented laws, promotion of restorative justice, and full operationalization of the cadastre system can collectively transform Iran's legal system into one that is both just and preventive. By aligning criminal legislation with the principles of social welfare, human dignity, and sustainable development, Iran can move toward a model of governance that protects rights, deters wrongdoing, and builds lasting trust between the state and its citizens. In this vision, legislative criminal policy becomes not only a framework for punishment but also a foundation for national integrity, public safety, and social justice.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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