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Governor Competence in Emergency Management and Crisis Containment at the Local Territory

Mohammad Reza Yazdanyar
PhD in Islamic Jurisprudence and Law

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the legal competence of Iranian governors in managing emergency situations and containing crises within the local territory. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical legal approach and relies on the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Law on the Definitions and Criteria of Country Divisions, the National Crisis Management Law of 2019, the executive regulations concerning the duties and powers of governors and governors general, and other relevant rules governing public administration, civil protection, inter institutional coordination, and the maintenance of public order. The findings indicate that governors, as the highest representatives of the central government at the provincial level and as chairs of provincial crisis management headquarters, possess important responsibilities in risk reduction, preparedness, coordination of executive agencies, mobilization of public resources, organization of emergency response, supervision of relief operations, protection of public safety, and restoration of essential services. Their competence is therefore not limited to administrative supervision but extends to operational leadership and decision making in situations requiring rapid, coordinated, and legally accountable action. Nevertheless, the effective exercise of these powers depends on the observance of the principles of legality, proportionality, accountability, inter institutional cooperation, protection of citizens' rights, and respect for the distribution of authority between national, provincial, and local institutions. The article concludes that strengthening the professional, legal, organizational, and decision making capacities of governors, clarifying overlapping jurisdictions, improving coordination with the National Crisis Management Organization, and establishing transparent mechanisms for supervision and accountability are essential for effective local crisis governance in Iran.

Introduction

Effective management of emergency situations and the containment of crises within the local territory is among the most fundamental functions of government, aimed at protecting the lives and property of citizens, preserving public order, and ensuring the continuity of vital services (Jafari,2023, p.24). Within the administrative and political legal order of Iran, governors (farmandaran), as the highest executive authorities of the central government at the county level, bear a pivotal responsibility for leadership, coordination, and crisis governance (Katouzian,2022, p.112).

The growing complexity of natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts, together with manmade crises, has made the precise identification of the legal competence of governors increasingly urgent (Rezaei,2024, p.45).

Under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly Article 103, and ordinary legislation including the National Crisis Management Law of 2019 and the Regulation on the Duties and Powers of Governors General and Governors of 1998 with its subsequent amendments, the governor chairs the county headquarters for prevention, coordination, and command of crisis response operations (Ahmadi,2021, p.88).

Corresponding Author:* ***Mohammad Reza Yazdanyar* *(Mohammad.yazdanyar1358@yahoo.com)*

The governor's competence in this field is not confined to administrative supervision; in emergency conditions it extends to field command of operations, mobilization of the facilities of executive agencies, coordination among public and local institutions, and rapid decision making to contain the crisis (Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,2019). Nevertheless, the distribution of authority among national, provincial, and local levels, and the boundary between the competence of the governor and that of the governor general in declaring a state of emergency and directing operations, raise complex legal questions that require careful analysis (Mousavi,2023, p.67).

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical method, drawing on library sources and legal documents, to examine the foundations, limits, and challenges of gubernatorial competence in emergency management and crisis containment at the local level (Habibi,2020, p.15). The significance of the research lies in clarifying existing legal gaps, strengthening inter institutional coordination, and enhancing the effectiveness of local governance in responding to unforeseen events (Karimi,2022, p.52). The central question of the article is what competences and powers the Iranian legal system provides for governors in containing crises, and what legal and practical challenges arise in the exercise of these competences (Sharifi,2024, p.34).

Statement of the Problem

Emergency situations and crises, whether natural or manmade, are inseparable features of contemporary public administration, and their management places the state under an obligation to act promptly, coherently, and with clear legal authority (Jafari,2023, p.30). In the Iranian legal order, the local territory is the first arena in which a crisis manifests itself and the first level at which an effective response must be organized. Accordingly, the governor, as the highest representative of the central government in the county and as chair of the county headquarters for prevention, coordination, and command of crisis response operations, is the principal authority vested with the duty to lead emergency management at the local level (Mousavi,2023, p.70).

The National Crisis Management Law of 2019 has established a structured framework of duties and powers for this purpose. Article ۸ and its first note envisage the organizational structure of crisis management at the provincial and county levels under the supervision of the governor general and the governor respectively, proportionate to the volume of duties, geographic scope, climatic conditions, and regional sensitivities. Article 11 provides that, following the occurrence of a hazard or incident, the governor shall inform the governor general and, where necessary, declare an emergency situation and assume command of crisis response operations; where the governor considers the intensity of the crisis to exceed the response capacity of the county, the matter shall be reported to the governor general, who, upon approval, assumes command of operations while notifying the head of the National Crisis Management Organization. Where the governor general does not confirm the governor's report, responsibility for commanding operations and for declaring the termination of the emergency situation remains with the governor (Legal Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,2019).

Despite this normative framework, the exercise of gubernatorial competence in practice faces several difficulties.

First, the boundary of authority among the county, provincial, and national levels is not always precise, and overlaps in the command of operations may produce delays in decision making, particularly during the critical early hours of a disaster (Rezaei,2024, p.487).

Second, the governor's power to mobilize the resources of executive agencies, military and law enforcement forces, public non-governmental institutions, and municipal authorities depends upon the cooperation of institutions that are not uniformly subject to local direction, so that coordination often rests upon informal arrangements rather than enforceable legal duties (Ahmadi,2021, p.92).

Third, the relationship between emergency powers and the principle of legality, together with the protection of citizens' rights, requires clearer criteria for the declaration and termination of emergency conditions and for the proportionality of restrictive measures (Habibi,2020, p.20).

Fourth, the institutional position of the governor in relation to the National Crisis Management Organization, the provincial headquarters, the security council, and the municipal councils create a layered system of authority in which accountability is difficult to trace (Karimi,2022, p.56). Fifth, the professional, technical, and legal capacity of governors to make rapid and defensible decisions under conditions of uncertainty and incomplete information remains insufficiently examined in the existing literature, which has tended to focus on national level structures rather than on the local level of crisis governance (Sharifi,2024, p.38). Sixth, the question of financial and logistical autonomy of the county administration in emergencies, including access to credit and emergency budgets, has not been adequately clarified, and this limitation constrains the practical effectiveness of the governor's command authority (Mousavi,2023, p.74).

Given these considerations, the present study addresses the following questions: what are the legal foundations and the precise scope of the governor's competence in emergency management and crisis containment within the local territory under Iranian

law; what are the principal legal and practical obstacles to the effective exercise of this competence; and what reforms in legislation, organization, and inter institutional coordination are required in order to strengthen local crisis governance while preserving the principles of legality, accountability, and the protection of public rights (Jafari,2023, p.36). Answering these questions is essential because the effectiveness of the entire national crisis management system ultimately depends upon the capacity of the local level, where the crisis occurs and where the first response must be delivered, to act with clarity of authority and with sufficient resources (Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,2019).

Concepts and Definition of Terms

Governor Competence

In the administrative and legal system of Iran, governor competence refers to the legal capacity, authority, and official responsibility vested in the governor as the highest representative of the central government at the county level. This competence encompasses administrative supervision, coordination of executive agencies, preservation of public order, and specific statutory duties assigned under the National Crisis Management Law and other related regulations to lead emergency response, mobilize local resources, and manage crisis containment (Katouzian,2022, p.115; Ahmadi,2021, p.92).

Emergency Management

Emergency management is defined as the continuous process and organized system of planning, risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery designed to protect human life, property, and the environment from the adverse impacts of natural and manmade disasters. Within the Iranian framework, it involves structured institutional mechanisms operating at national, provincial, and county levels to mitigate risks and restore community resilience (Jafari,2023, p.28; Mousavi,2023, p.68).

Crisis Containment

Crisis containment refers to the set of rapid, coordinated operational measures undertaken during or immediately after the occurrence of a hazard to limit the spread of damage, prevent secondary disasters, secure vital infrastructure, deliver immediate relief, and restore baseline public safety and essential services within the affected territory under the direct command of designated local or provincial authorities (Rezaei,2024, p.50; Habibi,2020, p.22).

Local Territory

The local territory designates the subnational geographic and administrative jurisdiction of the county, recognized as a fundamental unit of country divisions under Iranian administrative law. It represents the primary spatial domain where local governance is exercised, executive policies are implemented, and direct responses to localized emergencies and regional incidents are organized and executed (Karimi,2022, p.58).

National Crisis Management Law

The National Crisis Management Law of 2019 is the principal legislative statute governing disaster prevention, coordination, and response operations across all administrative levels in Iran. It establishes the organizational architecture, including the national, provincial, and county crisis management headquarters, defines the distribution of operational command powers between governors and governors general, and outlines the legal responsibilities of executive institutions in disaster risk governance (Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,2019).

Literature Review

The role of local authorities in disaster governance and the legal frameworks governing emergency response has been subjects of significant academic inquiry in Iran and internationally. In the Iranian context, early research primarily focused on the general administrative duties of governors. Katouzian (2015) examined the institutional position of governors as the highest local representatives of the state, highlighting their coordination role among executive agencies. Later, following the enactment of the National Crisis Management Law in 2019, scholars began to analyze the specific command and control functions assigned to local officials.

Jafari (2021) conducted a comparative study of crisis management structures in Iran, arguing that the 2019 law significantly shifted the paradigm toward a more centralized command structure under the Ministry of Interior, while increasing the statutory responsibilities of governors at the county level.

Mousavi (2022) analyzed the legal challenges of inter institutional coordination during emergencies in the provinces of Tehran and Kermanshah, concluding that overlapping jurisdictions between the governor's headquarters and municipal authorities often lead to delays in resource mobilization. In a similar vein, Ahmadi (2023) examined the accountability mechanisms for local officials during natural disasters, noting that while governors have broad powers to declare emergency situations, the lack of specific criteria for these declarations creates legal ambiguity regarding the proportionality of their subsequent actions.

Internationally, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction has influenced studies on the decentralization of crisis management. Comfort (2018) highlighted that the effectiveness of disaster response depends on the "local first" principle, where local authorities such as governors or mayors are empowered with sufficient legal autonomy and financial resources. In a comparative study of the United States and France, Coppola (2021) noted that countries with a clear legal distinction between administrative oversight and operational command during emergencies achieve higher rates of resilience.

Recent Iranian scholarship has begun to integrate these international standards. Rezaei (2024) explored the concept of "local resilience" in Iranian administrative law, suggesting that the competence of governors must be supported by specialized training and technical advisory boards to be effective during complex crises. Furthermore, Sharifi (2024) identified that the primary gap in existing literature is the lack of detailed analysis concerning the governor's power to mobilize military and law enforcement forces under Article 11 of the 2019 law, which remains a contentious area of administrative and security law. Despite these contributions, few studies have provided a unified legal analysis that integrates the governor's administrative status, their operational command authority, and the protection of citizens' rights within the specific framework of the National Crisis Management Law of 2019. The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining governor competence through a holistic lens that encompasses both the limits of statutory power and the requirements of effective local governance (Habibi,2020; Karimi,2022; Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, 2019).

The legal meaning and scope of local crisis management

The first question in assessing a governor's competence is what kind of event falls within the legal framework of crisis management. Article 3 of Iran's National Crisis Management Law distinguishes a hazard, a crisis, an emergency situation, and the broader process of crisis management. It defines crisis management as a continuing cycle encompassing risk prediction and reduction, preparedness, response, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. An emergency situation may arise when an incident is imminent or after it has occurred, provided that extraordinary response measures are required. Consequently, a county governor's responsibilities cannot be understood solely as actions taken after damage has occurred. They must also be examined in relation to preparedness, the use of warnings, and coordination before a foreseeable event develops into a disaster (National Crisis Management Law, 2019, arts. 1 and 3). (irancodify.com)

The law also places a boundary around its own subject matter. Its definition of a hazard excludes military, security, and social matters from that particular definition. This does not mean that such matters are unregulated or that a governor has no responsibilities under other laws. It means that the crisis-management powers examined in this article must not automatically be extended to every form of public disorder or security incident. Identifying the legal character of the event is therefore an initial condition for identifying the competent authority, the applicable procedures, and the permissible measures (National Crisis Management Law, 2019, art. 3(a)). (irancodify.com)

This distinction has practical consequences. A localized flood, for example, may begin as a forecast hazard requiring monitoring and preventive coordination; develop into an imminent incident requiring warning or evacuation; and then become an emergency requiring rescue, relief, and restoration of essential services. The governor's relevant responsibilities change across these stages. An effective legal analysis should therefore examine not merely who commands operations during the most acute phase, but also how information, plans, personnel, and resources are prepared beforehand. The Sendai Framework similarly treats understanding risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and preparing for effective response as connected priorities rather than separate activities (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2015, pp. 13-14). (undrr.org)

The governor's position in Iran's administrative structure

In this article, "governor" refers to the farmandar, the government-appointed executive authority at county level, while "governor general" refers to the ostāndār at provincial level. This distinction matters because the two officials occupy different positions in the chain of escalation established by the National Crisis Management Law. The regulation determining their duties and powers provides an additional administrative basis for the county governor's role: its Article 24 extends the governor general's specified duties and powers to the governor within the county, subject to the exception stated in that article. Among the duties listed in Article 2 is taking measures and coordinating action to prevent, control, and contain crises arising from natural disasters. The regulation should nevertheless be read alongside the later, more specific provisions of the 2019 crisis-management statute when identifying who may declare an emergency and command a particular response (Regulation on the Duties and Powers of Governors General and Governors, 1998, arts. 2(25) and 24; National Crisis Management Law,2019, art.11). (irancodify.com)

The governor's role is primarily one of territorial coordination and lawful operational leadership, not unrestricted control over every institution located in the county. Specialist agencies retain their statutory responsibilities, technical expertise, personnel systems, and applicable rules. A governor can bring those agencies into a common decision-making process and, when the crisis-management law applies, exercise the powers assigned to the chair of the county headquarters. The distinction between coordinating an agency's contribution and taking over all its professional functions is essential: rescue, medical care, infrastructure repair, and public communication remain tasks requiring the competent bodies to act within their respective legal mandates (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 10, 13, and 14). (irancodify.com)

Local authority also exists alongside constitutionally recognized local councils. Article 103 of Iran's Constitution requires government-appointed territorial officials, including governors, to observe council decisions within the councils' lawful powers. Crisis coordination should therefore involve municipalities and councils without treating an emergency as a general suspension of their legal functions. This interpretation is consistent with Article 10 of the crisis-management law, which provides for the participation of relevant municipal and local authorities in the county headquarters during an emergency (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, art. 103; National Crisis Management Law,2019, art.10). (wipo.int)

The county headquarters as the institutional basis of competence

The governor's authority is exercised through an institutional structure rather than through personal discretion alone. Under the first note to Article 8 of the National Crisis Management Law, organizational structures corresponding to the national crisis-management organization's functions are to be designed at provincial and county levels under the governor general and governor respectively. Their design must take account of workload, geographical extent, climatic conditions, and regional sensitivities. Article 10 then establishes headquarters at national, provincial, and county levels and places the county headquarters under the chairmanship of the governor (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts.8 and 10). (irancodify.com)

These provisions have two implications. First, a county's arrangements should reflect its actual risk profile: a coastal county, an earthquake-prone urban county, and a sparsely populated county exposed to seasonal flooding may require different monitoring arrangements, equipment, routes, and response partnerships. Second, the existence of a governor's legal power does not, by itself, guarantee operational capacity. Staff, reliable communications, trained agency representatives, plans, and accessible information are necessary if that power is to be exercised effectively. This is an analytical inference from the law's requirement for locally appropriate structures, reinforced by the Sendai Framework's emphasis on assessing technical, financial, and administrative capacity at both local and national levels (National Crisis Management Law, 2019, art. 8, note 1; UNDRR,2015, p.17). (irancodify.com)

Article 10 provides that the headquarters meets periodically in ordinary circumstances and may be convened by its chair whenever an emergency or crisis requires it. In emergency conditions, decisions are taken and communicated by the chair and are binding under the provision. The same article addresses the involvement of the mayor and district head of the affected area and the observer roles of relevant council representatives. Thus, the headquarters is both a command mechanism and a forum through which institutions with different mandates receive a common operational direction (National Crisis Management Law,2019, art.10). (irancodify.com)

Declaration, command, and termination of an emergency

Article 11 provides the central rule for determining the governor's operational competence. Following a hazard or incident within one county, the governor informs the governor general, declares an emergency if necessary, and assumes command of crisis-response operations. Once emergency conditions have ceased, the governor declares their termination. The notification duty is significant: county-level command begins locally, but it is connected from the outset to the provincial authority that may need to provide assistance or assume command if the situation exceeds county capacity (National Crisis Management Law,2019, art. 11(a)). (irancodify.com)

The law does not make provincial command automatic whenever an incident is serious. Where the governor assesses the incident as beyond the county's response capacity, the governor reports this assessment to the governor general. If the governor general confirms it, the governor general informs the head of the national crisis-management organization and assumes command. If the governor general does not confirm the report, command and responsibility for declaring the end of the emergency remain with the county governor. Article 11 also separately addresses an incident extending beyond the territory of a single county: in that situation, the governor general may declare an emergency and command the response at provincial level (National Crisis Management Law,2019, art. 11(b)). (irancodify.com)

The statutory sequence establishes a capacity-based and territorial approach to escalation. The relevant questions are where the event is occurring, whether

the county can respond adequately, whether provincial confirmation has occurred, and who currently holds command. A sound operational practice would record the governor's assessment, the request for escalation, the higher authority's decision, and the time at which command changes. The law establishes the command sequence; the proposed record of each transition is an accountability measure inferred from that sequence, not an additional procedure expressly set out in Article 11. Clear records can reduce the risk that two authorities issue conflicting instructions or that neither assumes responsibility while an escalation request is pending (National Crisis Management Law, 2019, art. 11; UNDRR,2015, p.17). (irancodify.com)

The law also establishes a distinct arrangement for the city of Tehran: declaration and termination of emergency conditions and command of crisis-response operations there belong to the Minister of Interior. It would therefore be inaccurate to describe the county governor's Article 11 power as applying without exception to every locality. At national level, Article 11 provides a further escalation process where an event exceeds provincial response capacity (National Crisis Management Law,2019, art. 11 and note 2). (irancodify.com)

Prevention, risk information, and preparedness

Although Article 11 is the clearest provision on command during an emergency, effective containment begins before that power needs to be exercised. Article 4 of the National Crisis Management Law establishes national and provincial instruments for risk reduction and preparedness and response. Article 9 assigns the national crisis-management organization functions concerning information systems, hazard identification, early warning, and preparation of relevant plans. Article 12 assigns the provincial and county headquarters duties that include facilitating coordination, accelerating emergency services, implementing national decisions, and preparing information on losses. Read together, these provisions place the governor within a continuing planning and coordination system rather than an improvised response structure activated only after a disaster (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 4, 9, and 12). (irancodify.com)

At county level, the practical content of preparedness may include identifying exposed settlements, access roads, hospitals, shelters, communication vulnerabilities, and the personnel or equipment likely to be needed first. This is a proposed application of the statutory planning duties, not a claim that each item is separately prescribed in the cited articles. Preparedness is strongest when plans identify responsible agencies and are tested against plausible scenarios: a warning that cannot be communicated, an evacuation route that becomes impassable, or a shelter whose capacity has not been checked may reveal a weakness before an actual emergency does. The Sendai Framework calls for location-based risk information, periodic assessment, training, contingency planning, early warning, and response exercises at local level (UNDRR,2015, pp.14-15, 21-22). (undrr.org)

Preparedness also requires a distinction between the governor's coordinating duty and the technical responsibilities of specialist bodies. The law assigns particular functions to the Red Crescent, ministries, meteorological and scientific institutions, health authorities, and infrastructure providers. The governor should be able to obtain and act upon their warnings, identify failures of coordination, and bring their representatives together; the governor should not replace specialist assessments with unsupported administrative judgments. This distinction is especially important when deciding whether an anticipated hazard requires extraordinary measures before damage occurs (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 3, 9, 13, and 14). (irancodify.com)

Interagency coordination and access to resources

A crisis rarely follows the boundaries of a single agency's mandate. Flood response, for instance, may simultaneously require rescue, hospital capacity, road access, electricity, drinking water, temporary accommodation, and reliable public information. The value of county-level command lies in establishing priorities across these functions and resolving conflicts in timing or resource use. Article 13 of the National Crisis Management Law requires covered institutions, when responding to a crisis and upon the request of the headquarters chair, to place their available facilities and equipment at the headquarters' disposal. Article 14 separately allocates substantive duties to particular bodies, including rescue and emergency accommodation functions involving the Red Crescent and other relevant institutions (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 13 and 14). (irancodify.com)

The governor's coordination power must nevertheless be described accurately. The law's inclusion of military, security, and police institutions among covered bodies does not mean that a county governor possesses an unrestricted power to command all such forces for any purpose. The scope of the crisis-management law, the conditions attached to the participation of institutions, and the distinct legal rules governing each body remain relevant. In particular, Article 3's exclusion of military, security, and social matters from its definition of a hazard prevents an unqualified equation between disaster-response command and general security command. The legally defensible position is narrower: the governor coordinates and commands the applicable crisis response within the

authority conferred by the crisis-management law and other relevant rules (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 2, 3, 10, 13, and 14). (irancodify.com)

Written directions are particularly important in this setting. Article 22 requires officials of covered institutions to implement written decisions and instructions issued within the law by the specified authorities, including the chairs of county, provincial, and national headquarters, activate their available capacities within the designated period, and report their performance. Failure to comply or report may be treated as a violation under Article 21. Accordingly, legally effective coordination involves more than a meeting or verbal request: the applicable instruction, its legal basis, the addressee, the required action, and the reporting deadline should be sufficiently clear to permit implementation and later review (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 21-22). (irancodify.com)

Public communication and the protection of affected people

Operational command cannot contain a crisis unless people receive information they can understand and use. Article 3 includes rapid warning and evacuation among response activities, while Article 14 assigns public-warning and communication-related functions to designated institutions. The governor's practical task is to ensure that operational decisions and public messages are coordinated: an evacuation instruction should correspond to usable routes, available transport where needed, and known destinations. Conflicting messages from different agencies can undermine a legally sound decision even when rescue resources are available (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 3 and 14). (irancodify.com)

Communication should also account for differences among affected residents. People with disabilities, older residents, children, people needing continuing medical treatment, and those unable to receive a standard electronic warning may require different means of notification or assistance. This is not a claim that the Iranian crisis-management statute provides an exhaustive list of accommodations. It is an assessment of what effective, inclusive implementation requires, informed by the Sendai Framework's emphasis on accessible information, attention to those disproportionately affected, and continuity of essential services (UNDRR,2015, pp. 13, 19, 21-22). (undrr.org)

The governor must also work with local institutions without collapsing their legal identities into the county headquarters. Article 10 expressly includes specified municipal and council participation during emergencies. Local councils and municipalities may hold information about neighborhoods, public facilities, and residents' immediate needs that provincial or national institutions do not possess. Their participation can improve decisions about shelter, transport, and distribution of aid, while the governor's role is to integrate that knowledge into a coordinated response. The Sendai Framework likewise treats engagement with communities and clearly assigned local responsibilities as elements of effective disaster governance (National Crisis Management Law, 2019, art. 10; UNDRR,2015, pp. 17-18). (irancodify.com)

Financial competence and the limits of emergency discretion

Command authority does not itself create an unlimited county budget. The National Crisis Management Law provides financial mechanisms through specified national appropriations, emergency funds, and rules governing the expenditure of existing agency resources. Article 16 concerns budgetary provision for prevention, risk reduction, and preparedness. Article 17 concerns resources for response to incidents and crises and sets conditions for their use. Article 18 allows certain executive-agency managers at national and provincial levels to use specified appropriations for crisis response with the approval of the Minister of Interior or the governor general, as applicable. It does not expressly grant an identical approval power to every county governor (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 16-18). (irancodify.com)

This distinction is consequential. A county governor may identify an urgent requirement and direct the coordination of the response under Article 11, yet the expenditure needed to meet that requirement may still depend on an agency's available appropriation or a provincially approved financial mechanism. A practical response plan should therefore specify, before an incident, who holds the relevant funds, who may approve expenditure, how urgent procurement is documented, and when provincial assistance must be requested. The proposition is a recommendation derived from the separation between operational command and the statute's financial provisions; it is not a claim that Article 18 confers unrestricted purchasing authority upon the governor. The Sendai Framework similarly connects effective local risk management with adequate financial and administrative means (UNDRR,2015, pp. 17-18). (irancodify.com)

Legality, accountability, and the end of emergency powers

The urgency of a crisis does not remove the need to identify the legal basis and limits of a decision. The definition of an emergency situation in Article 3 turns on the need for extraordinary response measures, and Article 11 specifies who may declare and terminate that situation at each level. These provisions support a disciplined approach: the authority should determine why exceptional

coordination is necessary, which area is affected, what measures are required, and whether the conditions justifying the declaration still exist. When those conditions cease, the legally competent official should declare the emergency over. A decision that continues beyond its necessity is difficult to reconcile with the statutory distinction between ordinary administration and emergency response (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 3 and 11). (irancodify.com)

Accountability is not confined to decisions made by the governor. Article 21 addresses failures by officials of covered institutions to perform their legal duties and requires the designated authorities, including governors where applicable, to report violations to the competent bodies. Article 22 addresses noncompliance with lawful written instructions. Article 23 provides for civil or criminal responsibility, as applicable, where a person entrusted with duties under the law is at fault and harm results. These provisions show that a coordinated response requires an auditable chain of duties: what was instructed, who was responsible, what resources were available, what was done, and why a necessary step was omitted (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 21-23). (irancodify.com)

Evaluation must extend beyond whether an emergency meeting took place. Articles 24 and 25 establish monitoring, reporting, and indicators of crisis-management performance, including disaster mortality and direct economic loss. At county level, maintaining reliable records of warnings, response times, service disruption, assistance delivered, and unmet needs can support the wider statutory evaluation system. Such county-level measures are proposed applications of the law's monitoring framework, not a substitute for the indicators formally adopted by the competent authorities (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 24-25; UNDRR,2015, p.17). (irancodify.com)

Recovery and the continuing significance of local leadership

The end of an emergency declaration is not the end of crisis management. Article 3 treats rehabilitation and reconstruction as part of the management cycle, aimed not only at restoring services and livelihoods but also at improving the affected community's capacity to withstand future events. Article 12 assigns the provincial and county headquarters a role in preparing statistics and information about losses, while Article 19 addresses the financing of reconstruction and rehabilitation through the mechanisms specified there. The governor's local knowledge can assist in identifying damaged services, coordinating assessments, and communicating needs to provincial and national authorities, even where another institution holds the principal funding or reconstruction mandate (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 3, 12, and 19). (irancodify.com)

Recovery presents a further legal and policy choice: restoring the previous situation may reproduce the vulnerability that made the event so damaging. Rebuilding a road, school, hospital, or settlement without regard to the identified hazard can convert immediate recovery into future risk. The Sendai Framework recommends planning for recovery in advance and using reconstruction to reduce rather than recreate exposure, while consulting affected people where relocation is considered. Applied to the county, this means that post-incident assessments should inform later planning and that reconstruction proposals should be coordinated with the legally responsible institutions and the communities concerned (UNDRR,2015, pp. 21-22). (undrr.org)

Taken together, the Iranian provisions establish a substantial but bounded county-level competence. The governor chairs the county headquarters, may declare and terminate an emergency within the conditions of Article 11, commands the applicable local response, and can use the headquarters to coordinate legally required institutional contributions. That competence is strengthened by advance planning and clear written instructions; it is limited by the law's subject matter, the escalation of command where local capacity is exceeded, the separate powers of specialist bodies, and the financial and accountability rules governing public action. The central issue is therefore not whether the governor possesses an abstract power to "manage crises," but whether the county administration can exercise its defined powers promptly, with adequate information and resources, while preserving a clear record of responsibility (National Crisis Management Law,2019, arts. 3, 8, 10-13, and 16-25; UNDRR,2015, pp.13, 17, 21-22). (irancodify.com)

Conclusion

The analysis of Iran's legal framework shows that the governor's competence in emergency management and crisis containment rests on a clear statutory foundation and a defined institutional structure. The National Crisis Management Law of 2019 places the governor at the head of the county crisis management headquarters and assigns this authority the power to declare an emergency, command response operations, and coordinate the contributions of executive, relief, municipal, and local institutions. This competence, however, is not unlimited. It is bounded by the subject matter of the law, by the escalation of command to the governor general where county capacity is exceeded, by the continuing statutory mandates of specialized agencies, and by the financial and accountability provisions that govern the use of public resources. The study also indicates that the effectiveness of gubernatorial competence depends less on the

formal grant of authority than on the conditions under which that authority is exercised. Advance planning, reliable risk information, trained personnel, clear written instructions, and accessible resources are all necessary to transform legal power into timely action. The governor's position between the local administrative structure and the provincial response system requires a careful balance between operational leadership and respect for the legal identities of other institutions, particularly local councils and municipalities. Where these conditions are met, the local level can serve as the first and most effective line of response; where they are absent, command authority may remain formally intact but practically weak. The study therefore concludes that the strengthening of local crisis governance requires an integrated approach that combines legal clarity, institutional capacity, financial predictability, and consistent evaluation of performance before, during, and after emergencies.

Recommendations

- ✓ First, the legal boundaries of the governor's command authority, particularly with regard to the participation of military, security, and law enforcement institutions, should be clarified through precise executive guidance, so that disaster response decisions are not confused with general security decisions and humanitarian priorities remain protected.
- ✓ Second, professional crisis management offices should be established within each governorate, staffed by trained specialists in planning, risk assessment, logistics, and public communication, in order to ensure continuity of expertise and reduce dependence on individual officials.
- ✓ Third, a predictable county emergency budget should be created, accessible to the governor for immediate response within defined limits, so that urgent procurement and relief measures are not delayed by lengthy provincial or national approval procedures.
- ✓ Fourth, written decisions and instructions issued by the county headquarters should be systematically recorded, together with their legal basis, the responsible institution, the required action, and the reporting deadline, in order to facilitate implementation and subsequent review.
- ✓ Fifth, post incident evaluation should be institutionalized through mandatory assessments that examine the speed of warning and response, the adequacy of coordination, the performance of responsible agencies, and the unmet needs of affected residents, with the results used to revise local plans.
- ✓ Sixth, county level risk assessment should be integrated into annual local planning, ensuring that hazard maps, early warning arrangements, evacuation routes, and shelter capacities are not only prepared but also tested through periodic simulation exercises involving all local stakeholders.
- ✓ Seventh, coordination with municipal and local council authorities should be strengthened during both the preparedness and response phases, in accordance with their lawful functions, so that local knowledge of neighborhoods, facilities, and residents' needs can inform operational decisions.
- ✓ Eighth, training programs for governors and county officials should include legal instruction on the scope and limits of emergency powers, on accountability for decisions taken under conditions of uncertainty, and on the protection of the rights of affected persons, including those who require special assistance.
- ✓ Ninth, communication systems should be designed to reach residents through multiple channels, and public messages should be coordinated through the headquarters in order to prevent conflicting instructions during an emergency.
- ✓ Tenth, reconstruction and rehabilitation measures should be linked to the findings of post disaster assessments, so that recovery reduces existing vulnerabilities rather than reproducing the conditions that increased the damage in the first place.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed to data analysis, drafting, and revising of the paper and agreed to be responsible for all the aspects of this work.

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