

REFUGEE RESEARCH & INFORMATION BRANCH (RRIB)
Information Management Division, NZ Dept of Labour

IRANIAN SECURITY FORCES

An overview of sources for information on Iranian Security Forces, both formal and informal, historical and current.

PLEASE NOTE: There has been much international interest in the Iranian Security Forces since the political unrest in 2009 and early 2010. This Extended Response hopes to cover key reports on each topic, but cannot attempt to include all new research into each service. Please let the RRIB know if you feel that a key resource has been missed out.

This response has been prepared using publicly accessible information currently available to the RRIB. It will be updated as new information becomes available. If further information is required please email: RRIB-Auckland@dol.govt.nz

All links in the body of the document were checked in early November 2010.

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1. IRGC: Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps

(*Pasdaran-e Inqilab, Pasdaran-e Enqelab, [Sepah-e] Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e Islami, Pasdaran-I Inqilab-I Islami*) (Often referred to in brief as the 'Pasdaran' or the 'Sepah'.)

'Its primary role is to protect the revolution and its achievements' according to Article 150 of the 1979 constitution (Buchta, 2004, p8). Since August 2009, the IRGC has defined 'the enemy's "soft threat" 'as the ultimate objective of the IRGC as protectors of the revolution' (Adelkhan, 12 June 2010). Its commander-in-chief is the Supreme Leader, and recent documents estimate the size of the force at around 120,000, not including the Basij (Wehry et al, 2009, p9). Ansari (11 February 2010) notes that much of its force strength comes from conscription.

See Byman et al (2001, pp33-36) for a description of the IRGC's history to the end of the Iran-Iraq war, including an overview of the regimental structure. Cordesman notes that while it is 'the center of Iran's hard-line security forces', it has 'become steadily more bureaucratic' since the end of the Iran-Iraq war (p6).

13 of the 21 cabinet ministers of the Ahmadinejad presidency are former IRGC members (Bednarz and Follath, 16 February 2010; see also Cordesman, 2007, p3). Ansari (11 February 2010) and Illias (2009, pp 9-10) note that the organisation is also becoming increasingly commercially active in the construction, oil, gas and telecommunications industries (see *Iran Focus*, 11-12 May 2010 for a long list of companies associated with the Guards).

Primary Roles

- 'the defender of the system and its representatives against internal enemies, while it continues simultaneously to ... [assist] the army to fend off external threats' (Buchta, p6);
- a variety of land, sea and air forces, in parallel with the conventional armed forces (Cordesman, p4-7);
- monitors internal security in the border areas, especially drug activity;
- deploys relief forces during natural disasters;
- provides 'active assistance of supporters of Tehran's Islamic revolution abroad' (Buchta, p7);
- there are reports of the formation of a 'Martyr's Brigade', 'Suicide Brigade' or 'Lovers of Martyrdom Garrison' of the IRGC, but there is no evidence they have been 'operational' (Alfoneh, Winter, 2007; Frick, 2008).

Sources

Adelkhan, Nima 2010, 'Iran integrates the concept of the "soft war" into its strategic planning', *Terrorism Monitor*, 12 June, Vol. 8, No. 23, pp7-9, <http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM_008_46.pdf>

'IRGC's dominance over Iran's politics and economy' 2010, *Iran Focus*, 11-12 May, <http://www.iranfocus.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20355:irgcs-dominance-over-irans-politics-and-economy--part-

[1&catid=29:exclusive-reports&Itemid=42](#)> (Two part article, click <prev> at bottom of article to see Part II).

Vatanka, Alex 2010, 'Iran's Revolutionary Guards fight the opposition tide', *Journal of International Security Affairs*, Spring (No 18), <<http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2010/18/vatanka.php>>

Bednarz, Dieter & Erich Follath 2010, 'Revolutionary Guards keep stranglehold on Iran', *Spiegel Online*, 16 February, <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,677995,00.html>> (Includes diagram of the IRGC structures)

Ansari, Ali 2010, 'The revolution will be mercantitized', *The National Interest*, 11 February, <<http://nationalinterest.org/article/the-revolution-will-be-mercantitized-3332>>

'Profile: Iran's Revolutionary Guards' 2009, *BBC News*, 18 October, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7064353.stm>

Alfoneh, Ali 2009, 'Indoctrination of the Revolutionary Guards', *Middle Eastern Outlook*, February, No. 2, <<http://www.aei.org/outlook/100005>>

Wehrey, Frederic, Jerrold D. Green, Brian Nichiporuk, Alireza Nader, Lydia Hansell, Rasool Nafisi and S. R. Bohandy, 2009, *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA. <<http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG821/>>

Frick, Matthew, 2008, 'Inside Iran's Revolutionary Guard', *Joint Force Quarterly*, 29 May, <<http://www.military.com/forums/0,15240,168740,00.html>>

'Suicide Brigades' or 'Lovers of Martyrdom':

'Man with alleged ties to Iran martyrs' group cannot be deported' 2010, *National Post (Toronto)*, 8 April, <<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=2779718>> (This links to an IRB decision, cited as Canada (Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness) v. Ameli, 2009 CanLII 80048 (I.R.B.) from 8 December 2009) (There is also a link to a letter purporting to be a recruitment letter from the Brigades).

Alfoneh, Ali, 2007, 'Iran's Suicide Brigades: Terrorism Resurgent', *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter, pp. 37-44 <<http://www.meforum.org/1059/irans-suicide-brigades>>

1.1 Qods Force

(*Quds* or *Ghods*) (Also known in English as the *Al Qods* Brigades) (= Jerusalem Force)

One of the five divisions of the IRGC. The JIR report from 15 June 2007 notes that they are 'an amorphous and secret branch of Iran's IRGC that promotes Islamic revolutionary activities in foreign countries.' Katzman (2008, p16) estimates their numbers at 10 to 15,000 (the APCI puts the numbers at 15,000, 23 September 2008, p8). It was listed on the US terrorist entities sanctions list on the 21st of October 2007 (ibid, p63).

Primary Roles

- It is responsible for 'extraterritorial operations, including terrorist operations' (FAS, 1998, p[2])
- Have been active in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Sudan (FAS, p[2]; Country Reports on Terrorism, 2007; [Cordesman](#), p8)
- Support for foreign operations include 'training, intelligence, financing and arms' (JIR, 15 June 2007 – referring to Iraqi operations; see also Katzman, 24 November 2008, p28)
- Active in Iranian embassies, where they are said to monitor local expatriate communities (APCI, 2008, p9; Frick, 2008, p[3])

Sources

U.S. Department of Defence 2010, *Unclassified Report on Military Power of Iran*, April, <http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/dod_iran_2010.pdf>

Bruno, Greg 2009, 'Iran's Revolutionary Guards', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 22 June, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/14324/irans_revolutionary_guards.html>

Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) 2008, *Evaluation of the August 2008 Country of Origin Information Report on Iran*, 23 September, pp7-10, <http://apci.homeoffice.gov.uk/PDF/eleveth_meeting/APCI.11.2%20Iran.pdf>

'US intelligence and Iranian EFPs in Iraq', 2007, *Jane's Intelligence Digest*, 15 June. (Jane's) (Contact RRIB for copy)

'Qods (Jerusalem) Force; Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC - Pasdaran-e Inqilab)', 1998, *FAS Resource Intelligence Program*, 21 August. <<http://fas.org/irp/world/iran/qods/index.html>>

1.2 Basij Militia

(*Niru-yi Moqavemat-i Basij; Niruyeh Moghavemat Basij; Sepah-e Basij; Basij Mustazafin; Baseej-e Mostazafan, Basijis-e Mostrazafan*) (Also known in English as the Basij Resistance Forces, Mobilisation Resistance Force, Mobilization of the Oppressed, or the Basiji)

Used as ideological 'cannon fodder' (Lorentz, 2007, p53) during the Iran-Iraq war, but the Basij are now used to 'guard public alleyways and urban areas' ([Cordesman](#), 2007, p14). During the Khatami regime they were considered peripheral and unprofessional ([Byman et al](#), 2001, p38), but since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad granted them police powers, they have become more important force in the country (DIS, April 2009, p6-7).

Formally a part of the IRGC, they are an auxiliary force, with different layers of volunteer membership ('Regular', 'Active' and 'Special': Alfoneh, 21 October 2010). 'Today the Basij are present in virtually all sectors of Iranian society; there are specially organized Basij units for university students, local tribes, factory workers and so forth'. (Wehry et al, 2009, pp25-29; see also *IWPR*, June 2010). They are placed regionally across the country, based in local mosques, government offices, factories and schools or universities (Alfoneh, 2010). Note that, since 2005, 40% of entry space at state universities has been set aside for active Basij members,

who are then able to access 'privileges' of membership (Golkar, Summer 2010, pp24-27).

There are two military battalions, the Ashura and the Al-Zahra (JIR, p[3]), of which the Al-Zahra are women and the Ashura are designated riot control forces (Frick, p[5]; Alfoneh, p[2]).

Primary Roles

- Islamic indoctrination of the populace (see e.g. [Wehrey et al](#), pp37-40, for its presence in educational institutions, also Golkar, 2010);
- 'the force defending the country' (in the event of a US invasion);
- to 'fight internal enemies', including taking part in 'soft war' activities such as propaganda and "cultural operations" (Adelkhah, June 2010), internet propaganda (Milani, July/Aug 2010) and expulsion of university students and professors (Golkar, Summer 2010, p25)
- moral police duties, including monitoring segregation of the sexes, dress code violations, alcohol use, indecent materials and illicit communications (including monitoring internet and email, Milani and Alfoneh);
- 'systematic practice of taking over territory that belongs to peasants and farmers' (DIS, p7);
- riot control or quelling 'civilian uprisings' (Cordesman, 2007, p10, 14; see also Section 8 for their role in the 2009 Unrest) (note that Alfoneh believes some basiji deserted when called on in 2009, and other battalions were called in to cover, October 2010);
- emergency relief after natural disasters ([Wehrey et al](#), p47); childhood inoculation drives (Lorentz, p54); electoral monitoring (along with the Interior Ministry).

Sources

Alfoneh, Ali 2010, 'Iran primer: The Basij Resistance Force', *American Institute for Public Policy Research*, 21 October, <<http://www.aei.org/article/102690>>

Milani, Abbas 2010, 'Iran's hidden cyberjihad', *Foreign Policy (FP)*, July/August, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/07/irans_hidden_cyberjihad>

Golkar, Saeid 2010, 'The reign of hard-line students in Iran's universities', *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer, 21-29, <<http://www.meforum.org/meq/pdfs/2748.pdf>> (Discusses the SBO, or Student Basij Organisation).

'Teenage paramilitaries in Iran' 2010, *Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)*, 30 June, <<http://www.iwpr.net/report-news/teenage-paramilitaries-iran>>

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Ansari, Ali 2010, 'The revolution will be mercantiled', *The National Interest*, 11 February, <<http://nationalinterest.org/article/the-revolution-will-be-mercantiled-3332>>

Danish Immigration Service (DIS) 2009, *Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.*, April, 2/2009, <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49fff6102.html>> (see especially section 5.1 for a description of Basij practice and uniforms in Tehran).

Lorentz, John, 2007, *Historical Dictionary of Iran*, 2nd edition, Historical dictionaries of Asia, Oceania and the Middle East, No. 62, The Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland. (Contact RRIB for further information)

1.3 IRGC Intelligence Unit

(*Hefazat-eh Ettelaat-eh Sepah Pasdaran; Edare-ye hefzat va ettela'at pasdaran*) (Wehrey et al, p31, describe them as the *Sazman-e Harassat*) (Also known in English as the Bureau of Security and Intelligence [BSI]; and the Intelligence Protection Organization).

Wehrey et al (2009, p31) state that the Intelligence arm of the IRGC 'collects information on the opposition and separatists, arrests individuals, and imprisons them in sections of the Evin and other prisons controlled exclusively by the IRGC'. They also state that the IRGC lost much of its internal intelligence operations to the MOIS in the 1990's, but has regained power and autonomy since then. (*Iran Focus* [June 2010] believe they were only established in June 2009).

Cordesman estimates their numbers at around 2000, with unquestioning loyalty to the regime (p13). This may have changed recently, as Aryan describes them as 'recently enlarged' (April 2010).

The *Defense and Foreign Affairs* article describes their domestic role thus: 'the organization targets the enemies and opponents of the Islamic Revolution and also participates in their prosecution and trials' (7 November 2007, p4). Aryan (April 2010) includes 'waging the cybercampaign against the Green Movement' among their list of tasks.

Sources

'Iran's new spymaster' 2010, *Iran Focus*, 20 June, <http://www.iranfocus.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20815:irans-new-spymaster&catid=29:exclusive-reports&Itemid=42>

Aryan, Hossein 2010, 'Iran's Green Movement in the doldrums?', *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)*, 26 April, <http://www.rferl.org/content/Irans_Green_Movement_In_The_Doldrums/2024935.html>

'Iran: Leader's representative outlines Guard Corps functions, duties', 2008, *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, source E'temad, 31 December, (Contact RRIB for copy)

'Background report: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Pasdaran', 2007, *Defense and Foreign Affairs*, 7 November, Vol. 25, No. 85, <<http://azadeganiran.com/Pdf/IRGC-Report-Saremi.pdf>>

2. Law Enforcement Forces (LEF)

(*Niruha-ye Entezami; Nirouhay-e Entezami; Hefazat-e Ettela'at-e Nirou-ye Entezami; Niruha-yi Jomhuri-yi Islami; Niruyih Intizamiyih Jumhuriyih [NAJA]*) (Occasionally referred to in the past as the *Komit'haay-e Enqelaab*, or *Komiteh*, for short). (Also known in English as the Disciplinary Forces)

Formed in 1990 from three (one source says four) separate forces – the national police (*Shahr bani*), the Gendarmerie (or rural police) and the Revolutionary Committees (*Komiteh Enghelab-e Islami*) (ACCORD, 2001, p64 [which also refers to the incorporation of some IRGC units] and [Buchta](#), 2004, p11).

The LEF, which is otherwise described as the police force, or the *Islamic Republic of Iran Police* (IRIP), is part of the Ministry of the Interior, but its head is selected by the Supreme Leader (Buchta, 2004, p12; [Samii](#), 2002, p[1]).

Primary Roles

- maintenance of internal security (quelled student protests in 1999, in association with *Ansar-e Hizbollah*; prominent in controlling riots post-election in 2009 - see e.g. *IWPR*, 17 September 2010 for riot police uniforms and motorbikes)
- management of an 'internet crime unit' intended to investigate those "spreading lies and insults against the Islamic system" (*Guardian*, 15 November 2009)
- intelligence collection
- passport and exit visa control
- patrol sensitive border areas, especially to prevent drugs and terrorists crossing into Iran (*Fars*, 23 January 2010; however, see *Payvand*, 6 April 2009 for 'eastern regions')
- interrogations and investigations
- various moral police roles previously undertaken by the Komiteh, including monitoring internet usage and crime (*IWPR*, 15 June 2010; *RFE/RL*, 18 December 2007).

Sources

'Quiet intimidation in Iran' 2010, *Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)*, 17 September, <<http://iwpr.net/report-news/quiet-intimidation-iran>>

'High price of "bad hejab" in Iran' 2010, *Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)*, 15 June, <<http://iwpr.net/report-news/high-price-%E2%80%9Cbad-hejab%E2%80%9D-iran>>

'Iran intensifies war on drug [sic]' 2010, *Fars News Agency*, 23 January, <<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8811031503>>

'Iran moves to silence opposition with internet crime unit' 2009, *The Guardian*, 15 November, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/15/iran-target-mousavi-internet-voice>>

'Iran's police force hands over security of Eastern borders to IRGC', 2009, *Payvand*, source Press TV, 6 April, <<http://www.payvand.com/news/09/apr/1060.html>>

UNHCR / Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), 2001, *Iran: 7th European Country of Origin Information Seminar, Berlin, 11-12 June 2001, Final Report*, 1 November. <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/402d04744.pdf>>

2.1 Edareh Amaken Umumi

(*Amaken-e Omomi, Amaken-e Omoomi; Adareh Amaken; Edare-ye Amaken, Edareyeh Amaken Omumi.*) (Variously translated into English as Department of Public Places; the Public Establishment Office; 'the Tehran morality squad'; the Bureau of Premises; the Public Places Police; the General Directorate for Supervising Public Premises). (The Commission on Human Rights report describes it as the Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and Prohibition of Vice [26 November 2003, p45])

Part of the LEF, the unit involved itself, from 2000 to at least 2007, in repressing journalists ([Samii](#), 2002, p[1-2], Amnesty International, 2004) and controlling freedom of expression (*Guardian*, 25 October 2007). *RSF* describe it as specializing in 'investigating vice' (4 May 2005).

Little information has come to light on the organization since 2008; except for the Baha'i business closure in March 2009.

Primary Roles

- 'concerns itself with the type of music people hear, the mixing of genders in public places and various forms of lewd behaviour' (Samii, 2002). Including:
 - enforcement of moral codes in places of work;
 - retail trade governance;
 - provision of illegal detention centres for 'parallel intelligence services' (HRW, 2004, p18).

Sources

'Closure of a Baha'i business in Semnan', 2009, *Iran Press Watch*, 17 March, <<http://www.iranpresswatch.org/post/1903>>

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) 2008, *Witness Statement*, 17 April, <<http://www.iranhrdc.org/httpdocs/English/pdfs/WitnessStatements/HBWS.pdf>>

'Iran clamps down on coffee shops', 2007, *The Guardian*, 25 October, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/oct/25/books.iran/print>>

'Holy city of Qom is hell for bloggers', 2005, *Reporters Without Borders (RSF)*, 4 May, <http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=13696>

Amnesty International, 2004, *Siamak Pourzand: a Case Study of Flagrant Human Rights Violations*, May, MDE/13/025/2004. <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/025/2004/en/dom-MDE130252004en.pdf>>

UN. Commission on Human Rights, 2003, *Civil and Political Rights, Including Questions of Torture and Detention: Opinions Adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention*, 26 November. E/CN.4/2004/3/Add.1 <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/470b77af0.pdf>>

2.2 Amr Be Ma'ruf va Nahi Az Monkar

(*Amr-e be Maruf; Amr bil Maruf*. Also *Monkarrat, Monkarat*) (Known in English as the 'Morality Forces', the 'Forces for Adjoining Good and Forbidding Evil', 'Enjoining the Good and Prohibiting the Forbidden') (May also be referred to as the *Komiteh*, although these are probably a different group).

The Committees (*Komiteh*) (also sometimes referred to as the *Monkarrat* [*Monkarat*] / *Monsherrad*) were very powerful during the 1980s, prior to their amalgamation into the LEF. There is now some doubt as to whether they retain an autonomous role within the LEF (ACCORD, 2001, pp64-65 [incl. footnote 3]; see also Khatam [Spring 2009] for a history of the units and the role of the Basij in morality policing).

Note that Golkar (Summer 2010, p28) states that the Student Basij work 'hand in glove' with the "'Commanding the Good and Forbidding the Evil" Committees', a reference which implies they are still a separate organisation on campus.

As with other 'morality units' their role associated them with policing dress-code violations and those 'playing loud music' (IRB, 2008). They may also be associated with the 'Guidance Patrols' (or *gasht-e ershad*) linked to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance - see section 4).

Note that the phrase is a quotation from the Koran (9, 71-72), which notes that all Muslims must advise those who they see doing something wrong ('enjoining good') and prevent those who want to commit sins ('forbidding evil').

Sources

Golkar, Saeid 2010, 'The reign of hard-line students in Iran's universities', *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer, 21-29, <<http://www.meforum.org/meq/pdfs/2748.pdf>>

Khatam, Azam, 2009, 'The Islamic Republic's failed quest for the spotless city', *Middle East Report Online*, Spring, <<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer250/khatam.html>>

Siamdoust, Nahid 2008, 'A night with the Morality Police', *Time Magazine*, 22 September, <<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1842911,00.html>>

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2008, *Iran: Enforcement of the Official Dress Code (2005 - Dec. 2007)*, 10 January. IRN102671.E. <www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47d65459c.html>

3. Ministry of Information and Security (MOIS) [Ettelaat]

(*Vezerat-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar, Ettelaat va Amniyat-I Keshvar*). (Known by acronym VEVAK or VAVAK and previously SAVAMA) (Also known in English as the 'Ministry of Intelligence and Security' or the 'Intelligence and Security Ministry')

A notoriously difficult organisation to research (see [Cordesman](#), p13; Global Security, 2005), VEVAK or MOIS was formally established in 1983 as a successor to SAVAMA and SAVAK (e.g. Simpson, 1995, p105). 'It is often difficult to separate the activities of the IRGC, the *Vezerat-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, and the Foreign Ministry', (Cordesman, 2007, p7).

[Wehrey et al](#) (2009, p10) estimate organisational numbers at around 30,000 personnel, and state that during the Khatami era it became 'cautiously tolerant of [the] reformist agenda' (p30). This was reversed under Mohseni-Ejei (also Ejei), the leader since 2005 (p31; see also Fahri, 2007).

Currently under suspicion for its report that there was no 'velvet revolution' in the immediate post-election period in 2009 (Alfoneh, 5 August 2009), there seems to be a tendency for the Ministry to focus on external agents, or known dissidents, such as Adolmalek Rigi, arrested by MOIS in February 2010. Responsibility for monitoring internal dissidents seems to be increasingly divided between a number of intelligence agencies.

Primary Roles

The roles of the ministry are prescribed by Article 10 of its foundation law ('Foundation law of the Islamic Republic's Ministry of Information'), cited in [Buchta](#), 2004, p14):

- external intelligence (Middle East and Central Asia)
- domestic intelligence (including monitoring 'cyber threats', *Press TV*, 26 October 2010)
- monitoring clerical and government officials
- prevention of conspiracies, potential coups and popular unrest within the Republic (see Athaniasdis, 2 Feb 2010, for reference to a banned list of Western organisations that Iranians may no longer contact)
- evidence that they run Section 209 of Evin Prison along with the Judiciary and the IRGC (HRW, January 2008, p20)
- liaison with terrorist groups; conducting terrorist actions (Global Security, 2005)
- possible liaison with *Qods* forces in embassies around the world (Frick, 2008, p[4])
- the 'elimination of Iranian dissidents, both at home and abroad' ([Samii](#), 2002, p[2]).

Sources

"Iran monitors enemy's cyber activities" 2010, *Press TV*, 26 October, <<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/148371.html>>

'Intelligence agents influence nine year sentence for Heshmatollah Tabarzadi' 2010, *International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI)*, 6 October, <<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/10/intelligence-and-security-organizations-influenced-the-nine-year-sentence-2/>>

Abedin, Mahan 2010, 'Iranian spy still a teasing enigma', *Asia Times*, 27 July, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/LG27Ak01.html>

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Simpson, John & Tira Shubart, 1995, *Lifting the Veil: Life in Revolutionary Iran*, Hodder and Stoughton, London. (Contact RRIB for further information)

4. Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance

According to RSF, the arm of the media most responsible for repression of journalism is the Commission for Press Authorisation and Surveillance (Press Supervisory Board - CPJ), a division of the Ministry of Culture (8 April 2008), but the Ministry is also responsible for monitoring online content and publishing.

There may be some link with the so-called *Gasht-e ershad* (Guidance Patrols) which act as moral police in Tehran (Dastgheib, 4 July 2009; see also the haircut guidance from July 2010, *New York Times*).

Primary Roles

- Responsible for controlling the media, including domestic and international. It is capable of closing organisations and encouraging self censorship, including
 - newspapers
 - magazines
 - websites and ISPs
 - blogs
 - telecommunications via other media, for example, texting
 - Grants licenses to journalists and musicians, domestic and international (*Payvand*, 14 July 2010), actors and film directors, fashion designers (*Iran Times*) and publishers
 - Seems to be able to prevent dissenters from travelling abroad (see, e.g. *New York Times*, 3 December 2008)

Sources

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5. "Parallel Institutions" and Plainclothes Agents

Literally *nahad-eh movazi*. IHRDC (April 2009) names them the *nahadhayih ittila'tiyih movazi*, or Parallel Intelligence Apparatus (PIA), active only during the reformist period. HRW (2004, p13) describes them as "various extralegal agents of state coercion", and includes the *Basij* and *Ansar-e-hizbollah* among the group.

"The police force is corrupt and plagued by parallel institutions that perpetrate human rights abuses. Paramilitary groups and plainclothes intelligence agents have been known to violently attack peaceful protests and run illegal secret prisons." (Fund for Peace, 2007).

There are frequent references to 'plainclothes security officers' in standard press reports (e.g. *RSF*, 31 December 2009) without further information on their organisational affiliation. Note that the DIS report from April 2009, states that officials 'may carry out arrests without presenting any form of identification, while wearing plain clothes, not identifying to which state body the arresting office is affiliated.' (DIS, p10)

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5.1 Ansar-e-Hizbollah

(Partisans/Helpers/Followers/Defenders of the Party of God) (*Ansar-i Hezbollah, ~ Hizbullah, Anssar-e [Anzar-e] Hizbollah*).

Although the organisation is usually described groups of 'organized street gangs' (IRB, 2000), or vigilantes, it is commonly accepted that there is a quasi-official nature to their existence (Rubin, 2000, p44-78 *passim*; Cordesman, 2007, p15; HRW, June 2004, p15; Global Security, [n.d.], *Ansar-I Hizbullah*), and that officials and clerics sanction their actions. Wehrey et al (2009, p87-88), note however, that there is tension between Ansar and the IRGC on occasions.

They participated in the attacks on the students in 1999, and attacked President Khatami during the 2000 electoral campaign (RFE/RL, 9 July 2009; Rubin, 2000, Ch3 *passim*). They may also have been responsible for similar attacks on dormitories at Tehran University in June 2009 (see IHRDC, Feb 2010, p15 cited for Section 8 below; but see AI, December 2009, p17, who believe that the plainclothes' officers were members of the Basij).

Members are often members of the Basij, but also veterans of the Iran-Iraq war (*Global Security*).

Primary Roles

- Newspaper publishing (e.g. *Ya Lesarat Hossein*)
- Presence at universities, quashing or inhibiting student unrest (e.g. *ICHRI*, 2 February 2010)
- Attacks on those 'violating the precepts of Islam' (*Global Security*)
 - e.g. women wearing make-up
 - bookstore owners
 - alcohol drinkers
- Upholding the tenets of the early years of the Islamic republic
- Riot police who act with impunity

Sources

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- 'Executive summary', *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran*, <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/print.php?template=C04&CID=31>>

'Ansar-i Hizbullah: Followers of the Party of God', [n.d.], *Global Security*, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/iran/ansar.htm>>

6. Military (Artesh)

(*Artesh-e Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran*). Mostly simply referred to as the *Artesh*. Also known in English as the Islamic Republic of Iran Regular Forces [consisting of Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force] or the Islamic Republic of Iran Armed Services [IRIAS])

'The culture of the regular military is still based on discipline, nationalism and a certain level of professionalism and Westernisation. It does not enjoy the full trust of the clerical establishment due to its past history' (JIAA, 3 September 2007; see also DailyNiteOwl, 2 January 2010; and *Guardian*, 19 July 2009, for issues about their possible alignment with the reformists). [Byman et al](#) (2001, p32) notes that the officer core was 'decimated' at the time of the revolution, then 'Islamized' to ensure Revolutionary support.

For a full history of the conventional military from the early 20th Century to the Khatami era, including an analysis with the IRGC, see the MCIA [200?] document.

Much of the regular army is comprised of conscripts (estimated at 130,000 regulars and 220,000 conscripts in 2008, *Global Security*, July 2008; for a historical view see ACCORD, 2001, p64, cited for 2 above).

Primary Roles

- Maintaining the security of the country's borders (according to the Constitution)
- To carry out 'most operations in the event of a war with its [i.e. Iran's] neighbors' (DeRouen & Heo, 2005, p315; see also Byman et al, 2001, p41)

Sources

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7. Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)

(Sometimes simply referred to as the National Security Council. Also known as the Supreme Council for National Security).

Founded in 1989, the SNSC replaced the Supreme [National] Defence Council. It is headed by the President and includes representatives from the military, the IRGC, the *Majlis*, and nominees from the Supreme Leader (*Global Security*, 10 July 2008; [Wehrey et al](#), p9).

Primary Roles

Its role is to co-ordinate the activities of the Republic in relation to 'general defense and security policies' (*Global Security*, *op cit*), or to be the 'key national defense and security body' ([Byman et al](#), 2001, p24). The body is also one of the groups discussing the nuclear issue.

As well as its advisory role, it has also occasionally intervened directly in domestic security situations. For example it warned the media not to report unrest about fuel shortages in 2007 (*RFE/RL*, 29 June 2007; see also *Payvand*, 14 September 2009), and also banned the satellite television channel Saba TV in 2005, (*RSF*, 27 December 2005).

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8.1 Lists of the protests, detentions, deaths and convictions

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