

# Iran – Country Focus



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## **Country of Origin Information Report**

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## Acknowledgements

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The review carried out by the mentioned departments contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of the EUAA.





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## Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Any event taking place after the finalisation of this report is not included. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the introduction.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EUAA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 17 April 2024. Some limited information has been added during the finalisation of the report until 21 May 2024. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the [Introduction](#).





## Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
<b>Artesh</b>	Regular army
<b>Basij</b>	Mobilisation
<b>Diyeh</b>	Blood money paid to the victim or their closest relative
<b>Efsad fil-arz</b>	A crime of ‘corruption on earth’, punishable by death
<b>FGM/C</b>	Female genital mutilation/cutting
<b>Hadd</b>	Crimes ‘against the rights of God’ under Islamic religious law (plural <i>hudud</i> )
<b>Kolbar</b>	Worker who transports goods on his/her back across the Iran, Iraq, Syria and Türkiye borders (mainly referring to Kurds)
<b>Moharebeh</b>	A crime of ‘waging war against God’, punishable by death
<b>Qesas</b>	Retributive punishment for murder and other violent crimes
<b>Sharia</b>	Islamic law
<b>Sokhtbar</b>	Fuel carrier (mainly referred to Baluches)
<b>Ta’zir</b>	Crimes punished at the discretion of the judge
<b>ASMLA</b>	Arab Struggle for Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz
<b>IRGC</b>	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
<b>IRGC-IO</b>	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Intelligence Organisation
<b>KDPI</b>	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran
<b>KSZK</b>	Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan
<b>MOIS</b>	Ministry of Intelligence and Security
<b>PAK</b>	Kurdistan Freedom Party
<b>PJAK</b>	Free Life Party of Kurdistan





Term	Definition
<b>UN FFM</b>	United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran
<b>UN OHCHR</b>	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights





# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide contextual information of relevance to the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, and to the development of EUAA’s country guidance on Iran.

The report covers the period of 1 January 2023–17 April 2024. Events taking place after the end of the reference period have not been included, apart from some limited information added during the finalisation of the report, until 21 May 2024.

## Methodology

This report was drafted by EUAA and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

This report is produced in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)<sup>1</sup> and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023).<sup>2</sup>

## Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI Specialist Network on Iran and policy experts in EU+ countries in the framework of a Country Guidance development on Iran. The ToR for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

## Collecting information

The information gathered is a result of research using public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources until 17 April 2024. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 21 May 2024.

## Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the Terms of Reference were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report, which was finalised on 10 May 2024. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

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<sup>1</sup> EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> EUAA, EUAA Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)





## Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI Report Methodology, a range of different published documentary sources has been consulted on relevant topics for this report. These include: COI reports by governments; information from civil society, advocacy groups, and humanitarian organisations; reports from international human rights NGOs; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran; Iranian and regionally-based media; academic publications, think tank reports and specialised sources covering Iran. All information from these sources was consulted within time and research constraints posed by Iran's challenging information-gathering environment.

In addition to using publicly available documentary sources, several oral sources were contacted for this report. Some sources who were interviewed chose to remain anonymous for security reasons. Sources were assessed for their background, publication history, reputability and current ground-level knowledge. All oral sources are described in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

## Structure and use of the report

The report covers a general overview including the system of government, political situation and state authorities in chapter one, security situation in chapter two, the legal system and the judiciary including detention and prison conditions in chapter three, treatment of certain profiles and groups of population in chapter four and the key socio-economic situation in Tehran in chapter five.





# 1. General overview

## 1.1. System of government and political situation in the country

### 1.1.1. System of government

In 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran was established<sup>4</sup> based on the principle of *Velayat-e Faqih* ('guardianship of the Islamic Jurist'<sup>5</sup>). The new leaders have increasingly dominated pre-existing institutions and brought them under a political structure governed by religious ruling, which is known as the *nezâm* ('the system').<sup>6</sup> The clerics enforced 'conservative values',<sup>7</sup> and 'Sharia law became the law of the land'.<sup>8</sup> Shia clerics<sup>9</sup> and Shia belief,<sup>10</sup> as well as a Persian-dominated central government<sup>11</sup> came to control 'every aspect of life' in the country.<sup>12</sup>

The Iranian Constitution established 'a hybrid governing system with theocratic authority and republican elements'.<sup>13</sup> Under the Constitution, separation of power exists between the executive, legislative and judiciary bodies.<sup>14</sup> However, the current Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,<sup>15</sup> stands as the highest authority with no fixed term in office,<sup>16</sup> controlling all state institutions and holding religious power in the country.<sup>17</sup> He is the Head of State and commander in chief of the armed forces.<sup>18</sup> Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the Supreme Leader of Iran since August 1989.<sup>19</sup> The office of the Supreme Leader assists the Supreme Leader on matters related to military political affairs and liaises with intelligence and internal security agencies.<sup>20</sup> Any threat to the survival of the Supreme Leader or the Iranian state is considered *moharebeh* ('enmity against God'), which can be punished by death.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>4</sup> CRS, Iran: background and U.S. policy, 23 March 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Le Monde, 'Ayatollah Khamenei's blind paranoia explains the ferocity of repression in Iran', 15 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> MEI, The road to war with Iran is paved with good intentions and serious miscalculations, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Britannica, Iranian Revolution, [1976-1979], 30 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Jerusalem Post (The), An encounter with Marziyeh Amirizadeh: Iranian Christian activist, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> Freedom House, Iran, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Article18, "Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4; JCPA, The Forgotten Arabs of Al Ahwaz: A century-old struggle for liberation from Iran, 21 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> JCPA, The Forgotten Arabs of Al Ahwaz: A century-old struggle for liberation from Iran, 21 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> UANI, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 23 August 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>14</sup> MEI, The road to war with Iran is paved with good intentions and serious miscalculations, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> MEI, Moving to a post-Khamenei era: the role of the Assembly of Experts, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> Freedom House, Iran, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> UANI, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 23 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>18</sup> MEI, The road to war with Iran is paved with good intentions and serious miscalculations, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> MEI, Moving to a post-Khamenei era: the role of the Assembly of Experts, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> UANI, Office of the Supreme Leader, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> JCPA, The Forgotten Arabs of Al Ahwaz: A century-old struggle for liberation from Iran, 21 August 2023, [url](#)



The domestic agenda of the Iranian government conforms to a standard authoritarian model, which involves maintaining complete control over every facet of public life.<sup>22</sup> The office of the Supreme Leader and the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) are at the centre of Iran's governmental system and lead 'major foreign policy and security decision-making'.<sup>23</sup> The Supreme Leader restricts the powers of the elected president, and the unelected Guardian Council limits the powers of the elected parliament.<sup>24</sup>

In Iran, there are elected institutions: the Assembly of Experts, the Parliament, the President,<sup>25</sup> and the City Council.<sup>26</sup> There are also appointed institutions: the Supreme National Security Council, the Guardian Council, the Judiciary, the Expediency Council, the armed forces, and the Cabinet of ministers.<sup>27</sup>

### 1.1.2. Assembly of Experts

The Assembly of Experts (*majles-e khobregân-e rahbari*<sup>28</sup>) is mandated to elect the Supreme Leader and to oversee his activities<sup>29</sup> as stipulated in Article 107 of the Constitution.<sup>30</sup> The Assembly of Experts consists of 88 members,<sup>31</sup> solely jurists,<sup>32</sup> elected by popular vote for an eight-year term.<sup>33</sup> The latest elections for the members of the Assembly of Experts took place on 1 March 2024.<sup>34</sup> On 21 May 2024, the 88 newly elected and re-elected members of the Assembly of experts including the newly elected chairman, Mohammad Ali Movahedi Kermani, a politician and cleric, held the first session.<sup>35</sup>

While former President Hassan Rouhani and 366 cleric candidates out of 510 were excluded by the Guardian Council to run for the elections, the outcome of the elections was reportedly orchestrated in favour of candidates, who could be in line with the views of the Supreme Leader.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Fikra Forum, Navigating Cybersecurity and surveillance: Iran's dual strategy for national security, 29 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> UANI, Organisational chart of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> Freedom House, Iran, 8 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> UANI, Organisational chart of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Mehr News Agency, Introduction to local councils of Iran, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> UANI, Organisational chart of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> GSN, Iran: a question of succession, 4 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> ParsToday, Polls boot Iran's national power: IRGC, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>31</sup> France24, Campagne begins for Iran's legislative elections, 22 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran's exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> ParsToday, Polls boot Iran's national power: IRGC, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran's exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>35</sup> Tasnim News Agency, Iran's new Assembly of Experts holds 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, 21 May 2024, [url](#); Iran International, Iran's Conservatives Bolstered as Assembly of Experts Head Elected, 21 May 2021, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> Iran International, Iran's next ruler: Assembly of Expert's prepares for succession, 7 March 2024, [url](#); Iran International, Iran's Conservatives Bolstered as Assembly of Experts Head Elected, 21 May 2021, [url](#)







### 1.1.3. Parliament

The Iranian Parliament (*Majlis*<sup>37</sup> or the Islamic Consultative Assembly according to the Constitution<sup>38</sup>), has 290 elected members.<sup>39</sup> Members of the parliament are elected with a direct vote by the people of Iran across the country for a period of four years.<sup>40</sup> Under the election law, candidates for the parliamentary elections are required to be Iranian citizens, aged from 30 to 75 years old, having ‘demonstrated practical commitment to Islam, jurisprudence and the Constitution’, and be loyal to the Islamic Republic.<sup>41</sup> The voter must be 18 years old at the time of voting.<sup>42</sup> The latest parliamentary elections took place on 1 March 2024.<sup>43</sup> For more information on the outcome of the latest parliamentary elections, please refer to chapter [1.1.7 Political situation](#).

According to the law, the Parliament oversees the Executive branch. However, in practice,<sup>44</sup> the power of the Parliament is overshadowed by the office of the Supreme Leader<sup>45</sup> and the overall power remains with the Supreme Leader.<sup>46</sup>

### 1.1.4. President

According to Article 113 of the Constitution, ‘After the office of Leadership, the President is the highest official in the country. His has the responsibility for implementing the Constitution and acting as the head of the executive, except in matters directly concerned with (the office of) the Leadership.’<sup>47</sup> In practice, the Supreme Leader holds the ultimate state authority in the country.<sup>48</sup>

On 19 May 2024, Iran’s President, Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, died in a helicopter crash in a mountainous area near Azerbaijan.<sup>49</sup> In the crash the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian also died.<sup>50</sup> Following Raisi’s death,<sup>51</sup> on 20 May 2024, Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reportedly announced the appointment of Mohammad

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<sup>37</sup> MEI, Khomeini’s Sham elections, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> UANI, Parliament, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>40</sup> ParsToday, Polls boot Iran’s national power: IRGC, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> IranWire, Explainer: All you need to know about Iran’s upcoming elections, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> Mehr News Agency, All Iran’s previous parliamentary elections, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran’s exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> AP, Many in Iran are frustrated by unrest and poor economy. Parliament elections could see a low turnout, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> UANI, Parliament, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> AP, Many in Iran are frustrated by unrest and poor economy. Parliament elections could see a low turnout, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>48</sup> UANI, Office of the President, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>49</sup> Reuters, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi killed in helicopter crash, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> Al Jazeera, Iran helicopter crash update: President Raisi, FM Amirabdollahian die, 19 May 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi killed in helicopter crash, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> Al Jazeera, Iran helicopter crash update: President Raisi, FM Amirabdollahian die, 19 May 2024, [url](#)





Mokhber, as the acting President of Iran,<sup>52</sup> based on Article 131 of the Constitution.<sup>53</sup> Mokhber was Raisi's first Vice President.<sup>54</sup>

### 1.1.5. Guardian Council

The Guardian Council<sup>55</sup> (*shora-e negahban-e qanun-e assasi*,<sup>56</sup> also known as the Constitutional Council<sup>57</sup>) is tasked with overseeing elections, including the verification of candidates' qualifications,<sup>58</sup> interpreting the Constitution, and reviewing legislation.<sup>59</sup> According to Article 99 of the Iranian Constitution, the Guardian Council 'has the responsibility of supervising the elections of the Assembly of Experts for Leadership, the President of the Republic, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and the direct recourse to popular opinion and referenda.'<sup>60</sup> The Guardian Council has 12 members<sup>61</sup> consisting of six clerics appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists confirmed by the parliament from a list provided by the Head of the Judiciary, who is also appointed by the Supreme Leader.<sup>62</sup> According to Article 92 of the Constitution, 'Members of the [Guardian] Council are elected to serve for a period of six years, but during the first term, after three years have passed, half of the members of each group will be changed by lot and new members will be elected in their place.'<sup>63</sup>

### 1.1.6. Expediency Council

The Expediency Council (*majma-e tashkhis-e maslahat-e nezam*, also known as Expediency Discernment Council of the System)<sup>64</sup> is mandated to resolve disputes between the Parliament and the Guardian Council related to legislation.<sup>65</sup> It has been established between 1987 and 1989 by the then Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>66</sup> The Expediency Council consists of leading personalities of the state, 'including former presidents, former cabinet ministers, and former legislators, all of whom are directly appointed by the office of the Supreme Leader.'<sup>67</sup>

<sup>52</sup> AP, Who is Iran's first vice president, Mohammad Mokhber, appointed acting president after crash?, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#), p. 29

<sup>54</sup> AP, Who is Iran's first vice president, Mohammad Mokhber, appointed acting president after crash?, 20 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> UANI, the Guardian Council, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> On Elections, national assemblies, 17 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>57</sup> Iran, The Constitutional Council, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> UANI, the Guardian Council, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> Iran International, Iran's Guardian Council's bars candidates to secure succession plans, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>60</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> UANI, the Guardian Council, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> Guardian (The), Iran bars Hassan Rouhani from seeking re-election to key body, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>64</sup> Sweden, FOI, Swedish Defense Research Agency, Proliferation of Iranian missile technology in the Middle East, 23 November 2023, [url](#), p. 2; Pars Times, State Structure, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> UANI, The Expediency Council, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> Maslahat, تاریخچه تشکیل مجمع تشخیص مصلحت نظام ["History of the establishment of the expediency council"], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> UANI, The Expediency Council, 23 February 2024, [url](#)



### 1.1.7. Political situation

In Iran, all branches of the government are dominated by conservatives.<sup>68</sup> The Supreme Leader<sup>69</sup> and ‘the unelected institutions under his control’ hold ultimate political authority in the country<sup>70</sup> including the Guardian Council that can disqualify opposition candidates, not only before the elections but also once they are elected.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) exert notable influence in the political and economic setting of Iranian society.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, women are widely underrepresented in political positions in the country.<sup>73</sup>

Political parties and formations are not central to the political process and at times politics are done amongst the Islamic Republic elites on inter-personal basis.<sup>74</sup> During elections, qualified candidates line up mainly with the political party that is regarded as loyal to the government.<sup>75</sup> The Islamic Republic allows only political parties and factions that are loyal to the state and its ideology to operate.<sup>76</sup> The majority of civic and political organisations have either been banned in the country or restricted, including the legal reformist political parties (*eslahtalab*), which have been prohibited from participation in most elections since 2020.<sup>77</sup>

For the March 2024 parliamentary elections, 48 000 candidates preregistered, including 14 % women,<sup>78</sup> and over 15 000 that passed the Guardian Council’s screening<sup>79</sup> ran for elections.<sup>80</sup> The Ministry of Interior reportedly counted 103 national and provincial parties for the parliamentary elections.<sup>81</sup>

Iran does not have an ‘independent election commission or monitoring body.’<sup>82</sup> The 1 March 2024 parliamentary elections results showed less participations from voters which was seen as ‘a sign of widespread frustration with the system’.<sup>83</sup> The results of the elections for the Parliament and Assembly of Experts were in favour of ‘hardline conservatives’.<sup>84</sup> According to International Crisis Group, the elections occurred during ‘severe economic, security, political and social challenges’ in the country.<sup>85</sup> Iran International cited the leader of Iran’s Reform Front stating that only 7 % of Iranians approved the current situation in the country.<sup>86</sup> In 2023,

<sup>68</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran’s exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook, Iran, n.d., data observed on 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> Freedom House, Iran, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran’s exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook, Iran, n.d., data observed on 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> Leila Alikarami, email communication 11 March 2024, 26 March 2024; UN Women, Iran (Islamic Republic of), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> BTI, 2024 Country report, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 14

<sup>75</sup> IranWire, Explainer: All you need to know about Iran’s upcoming elections, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> Freedom House, Iran, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> Clingendael, Opposition politics of the Iranian diaspora: out of many, one – but not just yet, 27 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> Carmi, O., The 2024 Election Cycle Starts in Iran, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 18 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> Reuters, Key facts about Iran’s elections on Friday, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> Mehr News Agency, All Iran’s previous parliamentary elections, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> Reuters, Key facts about Iran’s elections on Friday, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> IranWire, Explainer: All you need to know about Iran’s upcoming elections, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran’s exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> Chatham House, Iran’s electoral facade, 4 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> International Crisis Group, Closing circles: Iran’s exclusionary 2024 elections, 12 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> Iran International, Politicians pessimistic about possibility of reforms in Iran, 2 January 2024, [url](#)



the Supreme Leader turned 84 year-old, and political groups reportedly started to prepare themselves for his succession.<sup>87</sup>

By April 2023, observers noted a growing secular sentiment amongst some religious officials and common Iranians in the country.<sup>88</sup> In February 2024, media reported that an allegedly leaked study by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance showed that around 73 % of Iranians were in favour of a secular government and supported the separation of religion from the state.<sup>89</sup>

Within the region, the Islamic Republic uses proxy groups to collect intelligence on rival movements, and 'influence political orientation of neighbouring countries'.<sup>90</sup> Further, it uses actively 'hostage diplomacy', which consists of a policy 'using foreign prisoners to extract concessions from the West'.<sup>91</sup>

## 1.2. Iranian armed forces

The Iranian armed forces are made up of three main branches:<sup>92</sup> the *Artesh*, which is Iran's traditional or regular military force,<sup>93</sup> *Sepah-e pasdaran-e enqelab-e eslami*<sup>94</sup> known as the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC),<sup>95</sup> and the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FARAJA).<sup>96</sup> The Army and the IRGC were created on the basis of 'faith and ideology', according to the country's constitution.<sup>97</sup> The *Artesh* is tasked to secure territorial integrity, while the IRGC is mandated to preserve the Islamic Republic since its establishment in 1979<sup>98</sup> by the former Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.<sup>99</sup> In 1988, Iranian authorities created the Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS) to liaise between the *Artesh* and IRGC. The AFGS is the highest military institution in Iran, 'which implements policy and coordinates and monitors activities across services'.<sup>100</sup> The IRGC operates as a parallel army to the *Artesh*.<sup>101</sup> Both armies have their own land, air, and naval forces,<sup>102</sup> however, the IRGC

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<sup>87</sup> USIP, Iran 2024: Political challenges, 17 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> Amwaj, Inside story: how Iran's religious classes are turning increasingly secular, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> Iran International, Government study shows Iranians are less religious than before, 24 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>90</sup> Fikra Forum, Navigating Cybersecurity and surveillance: Iran's dual strategy for national security, 29 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> Le Monde, Iran's domestic challenges offset by international success, 17 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>93</sup> Tehran Times, The illusion of IRGC group, 29 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> Encyclopaedia Iranica, Constitution of the Islamic Republic, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>95</sup> CRS, Iran: background and U.S. policy, 26 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>96</sup> Tehran Times, 72 Police men martyred this year: police chief, 24 December 2023, [url](#); IranWire, Explainer: The Islamic Republic of Iran's Architecture of Suppression, 25 September 2022, [url](#); UANI, Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>97</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> IISS, Watching Iran: the ISR Gulf, 8 May 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>99</sup> UANI, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>100</sup> UANI, Armed Forces General Staff and Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>101</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>102</sup> CRS, Iran: background and U.S. policy, 26 January 2024, [url](#), p. 18



overshadow the *Artesh*<sup>103</sup> due to the IRGC's close links with the Supreme Leader, and its capacity as 'a major military, political and economic force'.<sup>104</sup>

During the reporting period, the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, was the chief of the Iranian armed forces, Abdol Rahim Mousavi the chief of *Artesh*, Hossein Salami the chief of the IRGC, and Ahmad Reza Radan the chief of Law Enforcement Command.<sup>105</sup> Both the *Artesh* and the IRGC report to the Supreme Leader through the AFGS and the Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters (KACHQ). The KACHQ is responsible for the coordination of 'military operations and is responsible for operational command and control'.<sup>106</sup>

In 2019, Iran had 610 000 active military personnel and 1 060 000 military personnel, including reservists. The *Artesh* had 420 000 personnel including<sup>107</sup> 350 000 ground force (with conscripts), 18 000 Navy, 37 000 Air Force, and 15 000 in Air Defence Force.<sup>108</sup>

### 1.2.1. Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

The IRGC is the 'most powerful military-security force and the largest economic cartel' in Iran<sup>109</sup> and consists of ground forces, navy, aerospace force, Quds force, the *Basij* ('mobilisation'<sup>110</sup>) and Intelligence Organisation.<sup>111</sup> In 2019, the IRGC had an estimated 190 000 members including 150 000 ground forces, 20 000 navy personnel, 15 000 aerospace force, and 5 000 Quds Force. Additionally, under IRGC 450 000 *Basij* paramilitary forces operate.<sup>112</sup> That number can rise up to 600 000 upon mobilisation.<sup>113</sup> The IRGC ground forces are divided into provincial corps; each provincial corps has a security unit that includes a security brigade, under which different security battalions operate.<sup>114</sup>

According to Article 150 of the Constitution, 'The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, organized in the early days of the triumph of the Revolution, is to be maintained so that it may continue in its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements.'<sup>115</sup> Since its establishment, following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the IRGC<sup>116</sup> has been mandated to safeguard 'the Islamic Republic against internal and external threats'<sup>117</sup> and to provide a counterbalance to the *Artesh*.<sup>118</sup> The IRGC plays a significant role in Iran's foreign policy and supports armed groups

<sup>103</sup> UANI, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>104</sup> BBC News, Profile: Iran's Revolutionary Guards, 3 January 2020, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>106</sup> UANI, Armed Forces General Staff and Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> US DIA, Iran military power, ensuring regime survival and securing regional dominance, 24 November 2019, [url](#), p. 11; UANI, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>108</sup> CFR, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>109</sup> MEI, Moving to a post-Khamenei are: the role of the Assembly of Experts, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> CEP, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>111</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>112</sup> US DIA, Iran military power, ensuring regime survival and securing regional dominance, 24 November 2019, [url](#), p. 11; UANI, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>113</sup> CFR, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>114</sup> Justice for Iran, Waging war on civilians: exposing Iran's repressive units and crimes against humanity, 7 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 64 and 65

<sup>115</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>116</sup> VoA, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps: powerful group with wide regional reach, 3 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>117</sup> CFR, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>118</sup> VoA, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps: powerful group with wide regional reach, 3 February 2024, [url](#)



in the region including the Hezbollah in Lebanon.<sup>119</sup> For more information on IRGC's regional influence, please refer to chapter [1.2.2 Quds force](#). The Supreme Leader appoints the IRGC commander.<sup>120</sup> The IRGC reports directly to the Supreme Leader and the IRGC 'is also influential in domestic politics'.<sup>121</sup> Former IRGC officers hold important positions within the Iranian state including within the government and the parliament.<sup>122</sup> The IRGC controls *Khatam al-Anbiya*, an 'engineering firm that acts as the organization's construction arm' and is a major business firm for the army.<sup>123</sup> IRGC is listed as a terrorist group by the EU Parliament<sup>124</sup> and by the United States.<sup>125</sup> For more information on recruitment by IRGC, please refer to chapter [1.2.7 Military service](#).

The IRGC reportedly 'fired live ammunition at protesters in the Kurdish city of Mariwand' on the night of 14 September 2023.<sup>126</sup> During the 2022 protests, the use of lethal weapons by the security forces was reported in the capital Tehran, Kurdish regions in the north-west, and Sistan-Baluchistan province in the south-east.<sup>127</sup> For more information on main reported human rights violations by IRGC, please refer to chapter [4. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population](#).

## 1.2.2. Quds force

Iran's Quds Force is a wing of IRGC, which is primarily responsible for IRGC's foreign operations<sup>128</sup>, which strongly 'influences its allied militias across the Middle East, from Lebanon to Iraq, Yemen and Syria'.<sup>129</sup> It is mandated to support Iranian proxies or non-state actors in regional conflicts.<sup>130</sup> Newly recruited members of Quds Force are provided with 9 to 12 months of training at the Mashhad centre in northeast Iran or at the Ben Ali barracks, and they receive ideological training at Imam Hossein University in Babaei Hwy district of Tehran.<sup>131</sup>

## 1.2.3. Basij

In 1979, the former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini established from amongst his 'pious followers'<sup>132</sup> the *sazman-e basij-e mostaz'afin* (The Organisation for the Mobilization of the Oppressed<sup>133</sup>). Known as the *Basij*, the paramilitary religious militia is a volunteer force loyal to the Islamic Republic.<sup>134</sup> The *Basij* is 'responsible for civil defence and social control'. It infiltrates every part of Iranian society.<sup>135</sup> It is tasked to target 'domestic opposition to the

<sup>119</sup> CFR, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>120</sup> UANI, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>121</sup> CFR, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> VoA, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps: powerful group with wide regional reach, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>123</sup> CEP, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>124</sup> EP, Listing of the IRGC as a banned terrorist organisation, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> Reuters, Iran's Revolutionary Guards: from military operations to business empire, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> The National, Iran's IRGC shoot at protesters as demonstrations reignite, 14 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>127</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 6

<sup>128</sup> Britannica, Quds Force, Iranian organisation, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>129</sup> VoA, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps: powerful group with wide regional reach, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> IISS, Watching Iran: the ISR Gulf, 8 May 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>131</sup> Bousset, P., The Quds force in Syria: Combatants, units, and actions, CTC Sentinel, 16 (6), June 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>132</sup> UANI, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>133</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>134</sup> VoA, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps: powerful group with wide regional reach, 3 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>135</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5



Islamic Republic through street violence and intimidation'.<sup>136</sup> *Basij* backs IRGC to maintain order.<sup>137</sup> It has a university-based student component as well that targets student movements.<sup>138</sup> Members of *Basij* have reportedly been 'indoctrinated, vetted and often deliberately deployed away from their hometowns'.<sup>139</sup> For information on recruitment by *Basij*, please refer to chapter [1.2.7. Military service](#) and for more information on main reported human rights violations by *Basij*, please refer to chapter [4. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population](#).

#### 1.2.4. Police force

The Iranian police force is made up of the urban police, the judicial police, Gendarmerie, and the Islamic committee and it operates as a national armed force organisation.<sup>140</sup> It is part of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FARAJA),<sup>141</sup> which was previously known as the Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NAJA).<sup>142</sup> Generally, IRGC personnel or its former commanders get appointed as the commanders of the police force.<sup>143</sup> The U.S.<sup>144</sup> and the EU sanctioned the FARAJA.<sup>145</sup>

A subdivision of the Iranian FARAJA is Iran's Counter-Terror Special Forces (NOPO, *niroo-ye vizhe pasdar-e Velayat*), which is also known as the Iranian Special Police Forces. The NOPO was sanctioned by the EU on 23 January 2023.<sup>146</sup>

Additionally, there is the anti-riot police (*yeganeh vizhe*), which is the only force allowed 'under the Iranian law to respond to and to manage protests'. However, there were also plain-clothed security agents, which were deployed in large numbers during the September 2022 protests.<sup>147</sup>

The Special Units of Iran's Law Enforcement Forces (LEF Special Units), including sub-units such as the Iran's Counter-Terror Special Forces (NOPO) reportedly 'used excessive and lethal force, firing upon unarmed protestors, including women and children, with automatic weapons' during the 2022 protests.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> CEP, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>137</sup> CEP, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>138</sup> HRA, Iran's new hijab bill stirs controversy and concern, 7 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>139</sup> MEI, The road to war with Iran is paved with good intentions and serious miscalculations, 2 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> IranWire, Iranian security forces sharpen blades as discontent rises, 20 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>141</sup> Tehran Times, 72 Police men martyred this year: police chief, 24 December 2023, [url](#); IranWire, Explainer: The Islamic Republic of Iran's Architecture of Suppression, 25 September 2022, [url](#); UANI, Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>142</sup> IranWire, Explainer: The Islamic Republic of Iran's Architecture of Suppression, 25 September 2022, [url](#)

<sup>143</sup> IranWire, Iranian security forces sharpen blades as discontent rises, 20 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>144</sup> UANI, Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> EU, Official Journal of the European Union, L 20 I/1, 23 January 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>146</sup> EU, Official Journal of the European Union, L 20 I/1, 23 January 2023, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>147</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 3

<sup>148</sup> EU, Official Journal of the European Union, L 20 I/1, 23 January 2023, [url](#), p. 16



### 1.2.5. Morality police

The Iranian morality police is a law enforcement patrol<sup>149</sup>, which has been established in 2005.<sup>150</sup> It is known as *gasht-e amr-e be marouf and nahi az munkar* (Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice) or more formally known as the *gasht-e ershad* (Guidance Patrol)<sup>151</sup>. The morality police is tasked to enforce<sup>152</sup> and monitor compliance with the *hijab* rules in public.<sup>153</sup> Following the death of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the morality police, it has reportedly ‘suspended’ street patrols.<sup>154</sup>

On 3 November 2023, the United Nations Human Rights Committee called for the disbandment of the morality police.<sup>155</sup> However, the latter has continued to be active in several cities<sup>156</sup> discretely<sup>157</sup> and resumed its street patrols as of 13 April 2024.<sup>158</sup>

The morality police has both male and female members, with female members dressed in ‘black chadors’ (veil).<sup>159</sup> Women morality police members are mainly deployed to arrest women and intimidate them since male members are not ‘supposed to touch women’.<sup>160</sup>

The morality police has been mostly responsible for assaulting women verbally and harassing them physically, as well as arresting them or closing their business for not observing the mandatory *hijab* (veil).<sup>161</sup> For further information on treatment of women and girls by the morality police, please refer to chapter [4.11.2 Dress-code](#).

### 1.2.6. Iran’s intelligence agencies

Following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, several different intelligence agencies have been created to conduct domestic and foreign surveillance.<sup>162</sup> According to Article 176 of the Constitution of Iran, ‘a Supreme Council for National Security presided over by the President shall be constituted to fulfil [...] coordination of activities in the areas relating to politics,

<sup>149</sup> AI, Iran: authorities doubling down on punishments against women and girls defying discriminatory veiling laws, 26 July 2023, [url](#), p. 5; USIP, Amnesty International: Iran’s hijab enforcement, 27 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>150</sup> CFR, Iran isn’t the only country with morality police, 11 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>151</sup> AI, Iran: authorities doubling down on punishments against women and girls defying discriminatory veiling laws, 26 July 2023, [url](#), p. 5; Time, How Iran’s morality police enforces a strict interpretation of Islamic Law, 10 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>152</sup> Euronews, Explained: why the Islamic headscarf is crucial in Iranian society, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>153</sup> UN OHCHR, UN Human Rights Committee publishes findings on Iran, Kuwait, Korea, Trinidad, United States of America and Venezuela, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>154</sup> MEE, Iran: return of ‘morality police’ patrols met with shock and outrage, 17 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>155</sup> UN OHCHR, UN Human Rights Committee publishes findings on Iran, Kuwait, Korea, Trinidad, United States of America and Venezuela, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>156</sup> CFR, Iran isn’t the only country with morality police, 11 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>157</sup> Le Monde, Iran’s morality police make a comeback, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>158</sup> IranWire, Iran intensifies hijab enforcement amid regional tensions and civil disobedience, 13 April 2024, [url](#); Le Monde, Iran’s morality police make a comeback, 3 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>159</sup> RFE/RL, Return of ‘morality police’ to Iranian streets leaves women fearful but defiant, 20 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>160</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>161</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 43

<sup>162</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran’s Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)







intelligence, social, cultural and economic fields in regard to general defense and security policies'.<sup>163</sup>

The two most powerful intelligence organs in Iran are the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) that operates under the executive branch, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Intelligence Organisation (IRGC-IO) that operates under the armed forces.<sup>164</sup> The IRGC-IO was established in 2009 and operates directly under the command of the Supreme Leader in parallel 'as an ideological counterweight' to the MOIS.<sup>165</sup> The two organs' missions overlap significantly.<sup>166</sup> Both the IRGC-IO and the MOIS 'are highly active on foreign' territory to carry out targeted activities, including 'assassinations'.<sup>167</sup>

The head of IRGC-IO, Brigadier General Mohammad Kazemi<sup>168</sup> reports directly to the head of Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani and above him to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.<sup>169</sup> The head of MOIS, Esmail Khatib<sup>170</sup> reports directly to the President and to the head of Supreme National Security Council. Ultimately, the Supreme Leader remains at the top of formal and informal chains of command.<sup>171</sup>

According to the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the MOIS had 'agents based in Iranian embassies across Europe.' The source also noted that the Iranian intelligence organisations were 'particularly concerned about Arab, Kurdish and Baloch separatist groups'.<sup>172</sup>

Iranian Intelligence organisations<sup>173</sup> reportedly collect information online and intercept electronic messages as well as remove critical content against the Islamic Republic on social media. In addition, they conduct interrogations, wiretap, and monitor people. At times, intelligence agents interrogate family members, friends, and colleagues of their target.<sup>174</sup> The IRGC Intelligence Organisation monitors and targets internal political rivals, while also carrying out 'clandestine activities abroad'.<sup>175</sup>

Iranian Intelligence organisations organise arrests of exiled dissidents from abroad through neighbouring countries.<sup>176</sup> For instance, Rohullah Zam, the Iranian journalist and dissident in exile in France, whose kidnapping was organised by IRGC to Iran via Iraq, was executed in December 2020 in Iran.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, Alireza Akbari, an Iranian-UK citizen, was reportedly

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<sup>163</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>164</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran's Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>165</sup> CEP, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>166</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>167</sup> Khoshnood, A.M and Khoshnood, A., The Islamic Republic of Iran's Use of Diplomats in Its Intelligence and Terrorist Operations against Dissidents: The Case of Assadollah Assadi, International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, 1 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>168</sup> ISW, Iran update, 20 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>169</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran's Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>170</sup> UANI, Esmail Khatib: Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Intelligence, 1 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>171</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran's Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>172</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>173</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran's Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>174</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>175</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>176</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>177</sup> Jerusalem Post (The), Who betrayed Iranian journalist Rohullah Zam, 17 December 2020, [url](#)





executed in Iran in January 2023, after being allegedly lured to return to the country under an alleged ‘Operation Deception’ used by Iranian intelligence agencies to lure dissidents from abroad back to Iran.<sup>178</sup>

While the IRGC-IO uses military-related methods including the use of force, MOIS agents act as civilians to infiltrate and trap individuals.<sup>179</sup>

### 1.2.7. Military service and recruitment

In Iran, military service is mandatory for all Iranian men above 18 years old<sup>180</sup> within *Artesh*<sup>181</sup> for a duration of 21 to 24 months<sup>182</sup>, which was reportedly planned in October 2023 to be reduced by three months.<sup>183</sup> At the end of the military service, conscripts obtain a *cart-e payan-e khetmat* (end of military service certificate). Previously, conscripts were ‘randomly’ assigned to different armed forces including the IRGC, but since 2010, 80 % of the IRGC enlisted individuals join voluntarily.<sup>184</sup>

As noted by Barzoo Eliassi, associate Professor at department of social work, Linnaeus University, Sweden, interviewed by EUAA, IRGC and *Basij* do not use force to recruit their members.<sup>185</sup> Recruitment by IRGC has been based on a ‘radicalised’ ideology. IRGC recruits particularly from amongst the active members of *Basij* or individuals with more ideological background.<sup>186</sup> More than 70 % of the IRGC members come from the *Basij* and some 30 % of them are postgraduate individuals who joined IRGC voluntarily to conduct office related jobs.<sup>187</sup> The IRGC<sup>188</sup> and the *Basij* use financial incentives as a tool to attract and recruit individuals.<sup>189</sup>

*Basij* is also known for recruiting child volunteers in Iranian schools, from elementary to high schools.<sup>190</sup> The average age of its members is between 15 and 30-year old.<sup>191</sup> Members of *Basij*, who are over 15 years old receive two-month mandatory training by IRGC.<sup>192</sup> *Basij* offers technical training generally in underdeveloped regions.<sup>193</sup> Members of *Basij* are allowed to avoid mandatory conscription in the country.<sup>194</sup> At times *Basij* regional and district sections

<sup>178</sup> IranWire, Alireza Akbari: a bloody score is settled in the Islamic Republic, 15 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>179</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>180</sup> Iran International, Iran to shorten mandatory military service to 14 months, 17 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>181</sup> FP, Conscription is not an excuse for Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>182</sup> Iran International, Conscript arrested after killing five in Kerman barracks 22 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>183</sup> IRNA, Iran cuts military service for all conscripts by three months, 22 October 2023, [url](#); GSN, Iran cuts the duration of military service, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>184</sup> Atlantic Council, Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: understanding ‘terrorist organizations’ designations in relation to IRGC, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>185</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>186</sup> IRPP, The terrorism of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, 8 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>187</sup> Atlantic Council, Iran targeted human rights sanctions series: understanding ‘terrorist organizations’ designations in relation to IRGC, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>188</sup> CEP, IRGC, 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>189</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>190</sup> CEP, IRGC, 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>191</sup> UANI, IRGC, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>192</sup> FP, Conscription is not an excuse for Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>193</sup> UANI, IRGC, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>194</sup> UANI, IRGC, 24 January 2024, [url](#)





recruit members and then send them to different IRGC branches or agencies.<sup>195</sup> *Basij* recruits are supporters of the Islamic Republic<sup>196</sup> including individuals from rural areas, as well as poor, uneducated and young Persian people.<sup>197</sup> The *Basij* largely depends on the cooperation of local and regional mosques and targets schools for recruitment.<sup>198</sup> Additionally, it uses *paygah* (clubs) located almost at every mosque throughout the country, where the *Basij* organises religious studies, sport activities and field trips to attract new members for recruitment.<sup>199</sup> For more information on *Artesh*, IRGC and *Basij*, please refer to chapter [1.2. Iranian armed forces](#).

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<sup>195</sup> FP, Conscription is not an excuse for Iran's Revolutionary Guard, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>196</sup> AEI, Pivot to offense, how Iran is adapting for modern conflict and warfare, 1 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>197</sup> UANI, IRGC, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>198</sup> CEP, IRGC, 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>199</sup> UANI, IRGC, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

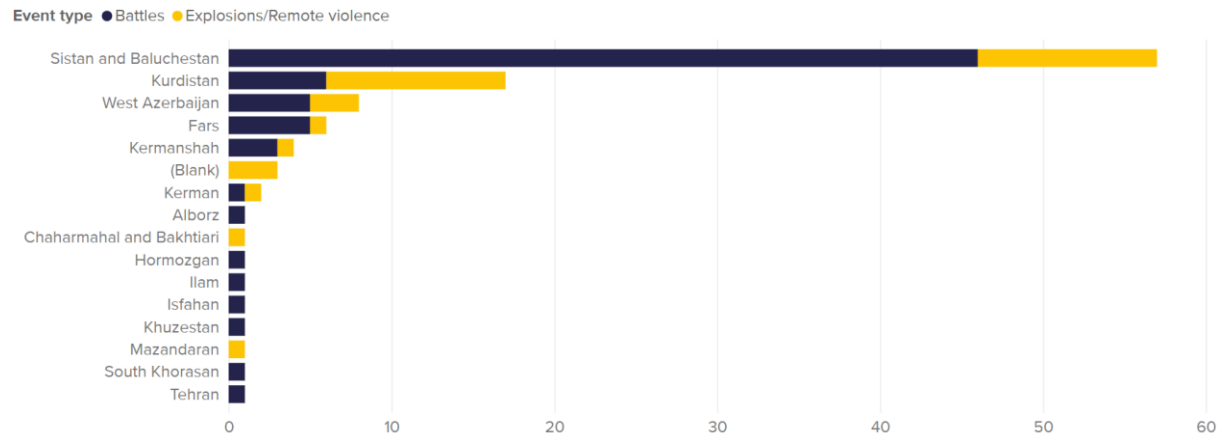




## 2. Security situation

During the period between 1 January 2023 and 5 April 2024, ACLED recorded 78 battles in Iran, including 51 in Sistan and Baluchistan and 6 in Kurdistan, and 33 explosions, including 11 in Kurdistan and 11 in Sistan and Baluchistan.<sup>200</sup>

**Figure 1.** Events by province, 1 January 2023–5 April 2024 (ACLED)



Source: EUAA chart based on ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Iran, data covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 5 April 2024, as of 11 April 2024, [url](#)

Iran has ‘insecure borders with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, and Pakistan’<sup>201</sup>. In the province of Sistan and Baluchistan (bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan), authorities encounter challenges to maintain security<sup>202</sup> due to repeated ‘clashes between Iranian security forces and Sunni militants as well as drug traffickers’.<sup>203</sup> During the reporting period, there were different anti state resistance groups in Iran including Baluch, Kurdish and Arab groups<sup>204</sup> that do not have territorial control.<sup>205</sup> The Islamic Republic utilises its military capabilities to safeguard the country against internal threats including ‘from political and ethnic opposition movements and terrorist groups’ and to defend it against foreign threats.<sup>206</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [1.2 Iranian armed forces](#).

<sup>200</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Iran, data covering 1 January 2023 to 22 March 2024, as of 2 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>201</sup> ISW, Iran update, 23 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>202</sup> Iran International, Border Guard Killed In Confrontation With Armed Men In Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>203</sup> Reuters, Twenty-seven die in Militant attacks on Iran security forces, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>204</sup> FDD, Were terrorists behind the explosions in Iran, 3 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>205</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>206</sup> US DIA, Iran military power, ensuring regime survival and securing regional dominance, 24 November 2019, [url](#), pp. 12, 13



## 2.1. Baluch groups

The Baluch group consists of the Jaish Al-Adl, an 'extremist Sunni Muslim militant group' which operates in southeastern Iran.<sup>207</sup> Jaish Al-Adl is known as the Army of Justice, a Sunni group established in 2012.<sup>208</sup> It originated<sup>209</sup> and is mostly made up of members related to the Jundallah group, a Baluch<sup>210</sup> Sunni separatist group,<sup>211</sup> that carried out armed insurgency against Iranian authorities for two decades.<sup>212</sup> Jundallah group has disintegrated<sup>213</sup> following Iran's crackdown on the group in 2010<sup>214</sup> by arresting and killing its leader, Abdulmalik Rigi.<sup>215</sup>

Jaish Al-Adl is also linked to Ansar al-Furqan group (another Sunni Baluch militia group).<sup>216</sup> The group reportedly claimed responsibility for a 'suspected mine' explosion that targeted a police vehicle in Zahedan.<sup>217</sup> Iranian authorities consider Jaish Al-Adl<sup>218</sup> and Ansar al-Furqan<sup>219</sup> as terrorist groups. In May 2023, there was a surge in violence at the Iranian borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan<sup>220</sup>, with clashes between Iranian border forces and armed men in Sistan-Baluchistan province, in which six Iranian border forces members were killed.<sup>221</sup>

- On 8 July 2023, Jaish Al-Adl fighters attacked a police station in Zahedan, during which two police officers and four militants were killed.<sup>222</sup>
- On 11 August 2023, the Ansar al-Furqan group killed two off duty IRGC members in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>223</sup>
- In December 2023, Ansar al-Furqan carried out numerous attacks against security forces in Sistan and Baluchistan province. The group killed seven policemen in two separate attacks.<sup>224</sup>
- On 15 December 2023, over 11 Iranian security personnel were killed during an attack on a police station in Sistan and Baluchistan province. The attack was claimed by the Jaish Al-Adl.<sup>225</sup> The UN Security Council condemned the attack.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Reuters, The militant group in Pakistan targeted by Iranian strikes, 17 January 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Eleven security personnel killed in Iran police station attack, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>208</sup> AP, Who is Jaish al-Adl, the Sunni group that Iran targeted in an airstrike on Pakistan soil, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>209</sup> Reuters, The militant group in Pakistan targeted by Iranian strikes, 17 January 2024, [url](#); Amwaj, Deadly Sunni militancy in southeastern Iran puts spotlight on Pakistan, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>210</sup> Atlantic Council, Experts react: what's really going on with Pakistan and Iran exchanging attacks, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>211</sup> Iran International, Iran issues USD 2.6 billion verdict against US over alleged terrorist support, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>212</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, May 2023, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>213</sup> US DNI, CTG, Jaish al-Adl (former Jundallah), as of October 2022, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>214</sup> AP, Who is Jaish al-Adl, the Sunni group that Iran targeted in an airstrike on Pakistan soil, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>215</sup> IranWire, Jaish ul-Adl intensifies attacks against Iranian security forces, 5 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>216</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, December 2023, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>217</sup> IranWire, Blast hits police car in Iran's Zahedan; casualties reported, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>218</sup> Amwaj, Deadly Sunni militancy in southeastern Iran puts spotlight on Pakistan, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>219</sup> Mehr News Agency, Chieftain of Ansar al-Furqan terror group captured in SE Iran, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>220</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, May 2023, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>221</sup> AA, 6 Iranian border guards killed in clashes near Pakistan border, 21 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>222</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, July 2023, 3 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>223</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, August 2023, 7 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>224</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, December 2023, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>225</sup> Al Jazeera, Eleven security personnel killed in Iran police station attack, 15 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>226</sup> UN Security Council, Security Council Press Statement on Terrorist Attack in Rasak, Sistan and Baluchistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 December 2023, [url](#)



Many Iranian security forces have been deployed to Baluchistan, particularly in the city of Zahedan following the 2022 and 2023 protests.<sup>227</sup>

## 2.2. Kurdish groups

Several Iranian Kurdish armed groups have been engaged in conflict against the Iranian state for decades, claiming cultural rights, autonomy, and at times independence.<sup>228</sup> Numerous Kurdish factions have camps and bases within the autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq.<sup>229</sup> The Kurdish armed groups include the Kurdish forces, the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KSZK), the Kurdistan Freedom Eagles for East Kurdistan (HAK-R), the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) and the Eastern Kurdistan Units (YRK).<sup>230</sup> As noted by Barzoo Eliassi when interviewed by EUAA, Kurdish groups have rather chosen to conduct political activities rather than military confrontation including from Iraq.<sup>231</sup>

Between September and October 2022, Iranian authorities carried out attacks inside Iraq with ballistic missiles and suicide drones targeting ‘three Iranian Kurdish opposition parties’ including the KDPI in Erbil governorate, Komala in Sulaimani governorate and the PAK in Pirde (road between Erbil and Kirkuk)<sup>232</sup> killing at least 21 members of the aforementioned parties.<sup>233</sup> On 19 March 2023, Iranian and Iraqi authorities signed a border security agreement under which Iraqi authorities vowed that they ‘would not allow armed groups to use its territory in the Iraqi Kurdish region to launch any border-crossing attacks’ on Iran.<sup>234</sup> On 2 April 2023, Iranian military forces reportedly killed one Kurdish civilian in Oshnavieh (West Azerbaijan province) and another one on 10 April in Kermanshah province.<sup>235</sup> In June 2023, the IRGC carried out military operations against the PJAK and other Kurdish armed groups in Kurdish-majority areas in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan and Kermanshah, bordering Türkiye and Iraq.<sup>236</sup> In September 2023, the IRGC deployed forces to the border with Iraq, three days before a deadline set by Iran for Iraq to disarm Iranian separatist groups in Iraqi Kurdistan areas.<sup>237</sup> For information on targeting of Kurds at Iran and Iraq border areas by the Iranian security forces including attacks on *kolbars* (workers who transport goods on their back across the Iran, Iraq, Syria and Türkiye borders<sup>238</sup>), please refer to chapter [4.7.2. Kurds](#).

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<sup>227</sup> BHRG, The ongoing situation marks a clear violence of human rights in the region, 16 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>228</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>229</sup> Arab News, Iran, Iraq security officials protection agreement, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>230</sup> ACLED, Kurdish forces in Iraq, Syria, and Iran, 29 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>231</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>232</sup> Wilgenburg, W., van, Iran’s Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, Fikra Forum, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>233</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Hengaw statistical report, 11 March 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>234</sup> Al Jazeera, Iraq and Iran sign deal to tighten border security, 19 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>235</sup> KHRN, April 2023: Human Rights violations in Iran Kurdistan, 5 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>236</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, June 2023, 6 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>237</sup> Asharq Al-Awsat, Iranian Revolutionary Guard amass on Iraqi’s Kurdistan border, 17 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>238</sup> Iran International, Deadly Toll Rises For Kolbars In Iran’s Western Border Regions, 24 March 2024, [url](#)



## 2.3. Arab groups

Additionally, there are Arab militant groups in Iran, including the armed wing of the separatist Arab Struggle for Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz (ASMLA)<sup>239</sup> (*Harakat al-Nida* in Arabic<sup>240</sup>), which mainly operates in Khuzestan province or abroad and fights for ‘greater autonomy and independence’.<sup>241</sup> On 6 May 2023, the Iranian security forces kidnapped the former ASMLA leader, Habib Chaab (Asyud) in Türkiye, brought him to Iran, where he was executed by the authorities.<sup>242</sup>

## 2.4. Regional security issues

On 3 January 2024, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which 'primarily operates in Afghanistan.'<sup>243</sup> carried out a suicide attack in the city of Kerman killing over 93 civilians.<sup>244</sup>

Between the night of 13 and 14 April 2024, Iran launched massive missile and drone attacks on the Israeli territory.<sup>245</sup> Associated Press cited the Israeli army stating that 99 % of the drones and missiles were intercepted.<sup>246</sup> On 19 April 2024, Israel reportedly carried out an apparent airstrike on Isfahan city near an air base and nuclear site<sup>247</sup> in retaliation to Iran’s attack, which escalated to a direct confrontation between the two countries.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> International Crisis Group, Iran’s Khuzestan: Thirst and Turmoil, 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>240</sup> Iran International, Iran hangs former leader of separatist group, a Swedish dual national, 6 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>241</sup> International Crisis Group, Iran’s Khuzestan: Thirst and Turmoil, 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>242</sup> Iran International, Iran hangs former leader of separatist group, a Swedish dual national, 6 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>243</sup> The New Arab, Why the Islamic State threat to Iran is growing?, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>244</sup> ACLED, Regional overview, Middle East, January 2024, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>245</sup> Al Jazeera, Iran attacks Israel with over 300 drones, missiles, what you need to know, 14 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>246</sup> AP, Israel’s military chief says that Israel will respond to Iran’s weekend missile attack, 16 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>247</sup> AP, Israel, Iran play down apparent Israeli strike. The muted responses could calm tensions — for now, 20 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>248</sup> IISS, Iran and Israel: everything short of war, 17 May 2024, [url](#)



## 3. Legal system and the judiciary

### 3.1. Overview of the judicial system

Iran's judicial system is based on *Sharia* (Islamic law).<sup>249</sup> The principles governing the judicial system are stipulated by the provisions of Articles 156 – 174 of the Iranian Constitution.<sup>250</sup> As per the Constitution, the country's laws and regulations, encompassing civil, criminal, financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, and political domains, are required to adhere to Islamic principles.<sup>251</sup> The judiciary in Iran consists of a Supreme Court, a Supreme Judicial Council, and lower courts.<sup>252</sup>

The Iranian Constitution defines judiciary as an independent power.<sup>253</sup> However, the independence of the judiciary is constrained by the role of the Supreme Leader, who is granted the authority to supervise executive, legislative, and judicial branches.<sup>254</sup> The Supreme Leader has the authority to directly appoint the Head of the Judiciary.<sup>255</sup> The Head of the Judiciary has a renewable five-year mandate<sup>256</sup> to organise the structure of the judicial system and to appoint key officials, such as the Chief Public Prosecutor, the Head of State Chief Inspectorate, the Head of the Administrative High Court, and the Head of Military Courts as well as to hire, promote, and assign judges. Additionally, he has authority to shape the composition of the Supreme Court and to draft judiciary bills, which typically cannot be rejected by the Parliament, and to recommend candidates for the position of a Minister of Justice, who is then selected by the country's president.<sup>257</sup>

In July 2021, Supreme Leader Khamenei appointed Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei to the position of the Head of Judiciary after his predecessor, Ebrahim Raisi, was elected Iran's president. Formerly, Ejei held the positions of the deputy judiciary chief, minister of

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<sup>249</sup> Britannica, Justice of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>250</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#); Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>251</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>252</sup> Britannica, Justice of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>253</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>254</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 1; Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>255</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#); USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 18; FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>256</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 1; Middle East Eye, Iran names hardline cleric as top judge amid calls for probe into the 1980s executions, 2 July 2021, [url](#)

<sup>257</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran's Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 49





intelligence, and prosecutor.<sup>258</sup> Human rights violations have been attributed to both former President Raisi<sup>259</sup> and Ejei<sup>260</sup>.

The key judicial officials – the Head of the Judiciary, the Prosecutor General, the judges of the Supreme Court<sup>261</sup> and its President<sup>262</sup> – are required to be Shia jurists. Next to the positions mentioned above, the head of state Chief Inspectorate, head of Administrative High Court, and head of Military Courts are also members of the clergy.<sup>263</sup> Apart from the regular courts which handle criminal and civil cases, the government has established Clerical Courts, Revolutionary Courts, and the Highest Court of Administrative Justice, which address complaints regarding government officials and institutions.<sup>264</sup> Judges are required to have knowledge in Shia jurisprudence and meet other qualifications set by the Head of the Judiciary.<sup>265</sup>

In its 2023 reports, Freedom House noted that although Iranian courts possessed ‘a degree of autonomy within the ruling establishment,’<sup>266</sup> they overall lacked independence.<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, the judicial system was frequently a tool to suppress members of the opposition and critics of the authorities, leading to arbitrary judgements against political dissidents and human rights advocates.<sup>268</sup> Sources noted that security apparatus gained more influence over the courts in recent years.<sup>269</sup> The lack of judicial impartiality was further compounded by systematic violations of fair trial in cases involving protesters and critics of the authorities.<sup>270</sup> For information on access to fair trial, please refer to chapter [3.7. Due process](#).

In an interview with EUAA, the director of the International Institute for the Study of Kurdish Societies (IISKS), Behrooz Chamanara, noted that the judiciary system was closely intertwined with security agencies. Chamanara noted that ‘the Ministry of Intelligence not only collects information but also fabricates unreal data to be used as “credible evidence” against individuals.’ According to the source, the ministry’s employees participated in the interrogation of detainees. Furthermore, it was virtually impossible to challenge the charges brought in collaboration with the Ministry of Intelligence in court, with lawyers being unable to offer assistance in such cases.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>259</sup> Al, Iran: Ebrahim Raisi must be investigated for crimes against humanity, 19 June 2021, [url](#); Middle East Eye, Iran names hardline cleric as top judge amid calls for probe into the 1980s executions, 2 July 2021, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Iran helicopter cash update: President Raisi, FM Amirabdollahian die, 19 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>260</sup> AP, Iran’s supreme appoints new hard-line judiciary chief, 2 July 2021, [url](#); NIAC Action, Iran’s new Judiciary Chief Has a History of Human Rights Abuses, 8 July 2021, [url](#)

<sup>261</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023 [url](#), p. 18

<sup>262</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>263</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>264</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 49; FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>265</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>266</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>267</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>268</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>269</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#); Chamanara, B, interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024

<sup>270</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 55

<sup>271</sup> Chamanara, B, interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024



In November 2023, the UN Human Rights Committee noted the lack of accountability regarding human rights violations.<sup>272</sup> As noted by AI, in 2022 and in the previous years, no public official faced investigation or accountability for ‘extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and other grave human rights violations.’<sup>273</sup> The death in custody of Mahsa Amini in September 2022 received no proper investigation.<sup>274</sup> Other examples where no proper investigation was conducted include, but are not limited to the reprisals, which followed the 2019 protests,<sup>275</sup> and the use of excessive force against prisoners as well as the deaths of at least eight inmates in Evin prison in October 2022. Furthermore, AI noted continuing impunity related to the mass extrajudicial executions in prison and enforced disappearances of 1988, with many implicated individuals still currently holding prominent positions within the government. In July 2022, a court in Sweden sentenced a former Iranian official to life in prison over crimes committed during the 1988 prison massacres.<sup>276</sup>

In July 2023, Ali Khamenei reportedly addressed the issues of malpractice and corruption in the judicial system during a meeting with judiciary officials.<sup>277</sup>

## 3.2. Punishments under the law

Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 7 of which prohibits torture and considers inhumane punishments, such as amputation, a crime under international law.<sup>278</sup> As noted by UN OHCHR, in the latest periodic report regarding ICCPR, Iran noted that the Covenant was ‘an integral part of the domestic legal system’ and was treated as domestic law. However, as found by the Human Rights Committee, ‘in cases of disparity, the domestic law took precedence over the Covenant.’<sup>279</sup>

The current Penal Code of Iran consists of Books One to Five.<sup>280</sup> The 1991 Islamic Penal Code of Iran was amended in 2013: known as New Islamic Penal Code, the Penal Code comprised five books: Book One – Generalities, Book Two – *Hudud* (Crimes against “rights of God”), Book Two – *Qesas* (Retaliation), Book Three – *Diyat* (Financial compensation), and Book Five

<sup>272</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the Islamic Republic in Iran, CCPR/C/IRN/CO/4, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>273</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200

<sup>274</sup> EP, European Parliament resolution of 6 October 2022 on the death of Mahsa Jina Amini and the repression of women’s rights protesters in Iran, 6 October 2022, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200

<sup>275</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the Islamic Republic in Iran, CCPR/C/IRN/CO/4, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>276</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200

<sup>277</sup> NPR, Iran’s supreme leader lashes out at his own judiciary for corruption, 1 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>278</sup> Devi, S., Iranian cases throw spotlight on use of punitive amputation, *The Lancet, World Report*, vol. 400, 20 August 2022, [url](#), p. 553

<sup>279</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the Islamic Republic in Iran, CCPR/C/IRN/CO/4, 3 November 2023, [url](#), para 5

<sup>280</sup> Ecol.net, Iran, Islamic Republic – Law guide (as of May 2023), n.d., [url](#)



– *Ta'zirat* (Discretionary punishments),<sup>281</sup> corresponding to the categories of crimes<sup>282</sup> under the Islamic criminal law.<sup>283</sup> In March 2021, the amended version of the Penal Code (Books One to Five) entered into force.<sup>284</sup> As noted by Leila Alikarami in the correspondence with EUAA, 'some amendments were made to the *Ta'zir* section in June 2020,' in the result of which some *ta'zir* punishments were reduced.<sup>285</sup> It was not possible to obtain the English translation of the amended Penal Code within the time constraints of this report.

The Iranian Penal Code encompasses traditional *Sharia* punishments and stipulates corporal punishments, including the death penalty, for a wide range of offences.<sup>286</sup> As noted by USDOS, in 2023, flogging could be used as a punishment for at least 148 offences, while the punishment of amputation was used for 20 offenses.<sup>287</sup> For some crimes, flogging has been used alongside a prison sentence or fines.<sup>288</sup> For more information, please refer to [4.10.5. Behaviour perceived as transgressing religious and moral codes](#)

### 3.2.1. *Hadd* punishments

*Hadd* (plural *hudud*, fixed corporal punishments<sup>289</sup>) is 'a punishment fixed in the Quran and *hadith* for crimes considered to be against the rights of God'<sup>290</sup> The 'measure, degree, and method' of *hadd* punishments are fixed in *Sharia*.<sup>291</sup> *Hadd* punishments imply death penalty and other severe punishments,<sup>292</sup> such as limb amputation for theft and robbery, flogging for drinking alcohol, stoning for adultery, and death for murder.<sup>293</sup> As the nature of *hadd* crimes is determined by *Sharia*, these offences cannot be commuted or pardoned.<sup>294</sup> *Hadd* punishments require strict application of evidence, including testimonies by eyewitnesses.<sup>295</sup> *Hadd* crimes are covered in the Book Two of the Penal Code.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Tavana, M. H., Three Decades of Islamic Criminal Law Legislation in Iran: A Legislative History Analysis with Emphasis on the Amendments of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code, EJIMEL (Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, Vol. 2, 2014, [url](#), pp. 25, 29

<sup>282</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#)

<sup>283</sup> Tavana, M. H., Three Decades of Islamic Criminal Law Legislation in Iran: A Legislative History Analysis with Emphasis on the Amendments of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code, EJIMEL (Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, Vol. 2, 2014, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>284</sup> Ecol.net, Iran, Islamic Republic – Law guide (as of May 2023), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>285</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>286</sup> Britannica, Justice of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>287</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 8-9

<sup>288</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>289</sup> Iran, Islamic Penal Code, The Islamic Republic of Iran, Translated into English by: Mohsen Mir Mohamad Sadeghi, PhD. Certified English Translator to the Judiciary, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>290</sup> Oxford Reference, *Hadd*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>291</sup> ECPM and Iran Human Rights, The Death Penalty in Law and In Practice – Iran, July 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>292</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#); BAMF, Länderreport 35 – Iran, May 2021, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>293</sup> Devi, S., Iranian cases throw spotlight on use of punitive amputation, The Lancet, World Report, vol. 400, 20 August 2022, [url](#), p. 553

<sup>294</sup> FIDH, Iran/death penalty. A state terror policy, April 2009, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>295</sup> Oxford Reference, *Hadd*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>296</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#); US Library of Congress – Blogs, FALQs: Execution by Stoning and Privacy Laws Related to Sexual Crimes in Iran and Afghanistan, 30 April 2021, [url](#).



As noted by Leila Alikarami, *hadd* punishments included sexual intercourse outside marriage/adultery (*zena, zina*), sodomy and homosexual acts between men (*levat, livat*), lesbian relationship (*mosaheqeh, mosahaqa*), procuring of prostitution (*qavadi*), false accusation of fornication/sodomy (*qazf*), defamation of the Prophet (*sabb-e nabi*), consumption of alcohol/intoxicant (*shorb-e-khamr*), robbery/theft, waging war against God (*moharebeh ba khoda*), corruption on earth (*efsad fil-arz*), and rebellion (*baghy*).<sup>297</sup> For information on *hadd* crimes punishable by death, please refer to chapter [3.9. Death penalty](#).

As noted by Leila Alikarami, some Iranian activists and dissidents, particularly those belonging to ethnic or religious minorities, were at risk of being charged with offences that could result in severe *hadd* punishments, including for offences such as *moharebeh* and *efsad fil-arz*.<sup>298</sup>

As noted in the joint report by the Norwegian, Belgian, and Swiss migration authorities (Landinfo, CGRS, and SEM) in 2021, the crime of *moharebeh* is defined in Article 279 of the Penal Code as ‘taking up arms against the life, assets or honour of the people or with the intent to intimidate them in a way that causes insecurity.’<sup>299</sup> For the cases charged under the crime of *moharebeh*, the judge has the discretion of opting for one of the four punishments: the death penalty (by hanging), crucifixion, amputation of the right hand and the left foot, or banishment.<sup>300</sup>

The crime of *efsad fil-arz* is defined in Article 286 of the Penal Code as follows:

‘Any person, who extensively commits felony against the bodily entity of people, offenses against domestic or international security of the state, spreads lies, disrupts the economic system of the state, commits arson and destruction of properties, distribution of poisonous and bacterial and dangerous materials, and establishment of, or aiding and abetting in, places of corruption and prostitution, [on a scale] that causes severe disruption in the public order of the state and insecurity, or causes harsh damage to the bodily entity of people or public or private properties, or causes distribution of corruption and prostitution on a large scale, shall be considered as *mofsed-e-fel-arz* [corrupt on earth] and shall be sentenced to death.’<sup>301</sup>

In its 2023 report, USDOS noted that adultery remained punishable by stoning, although the Head of the Judiciary ‘instructed judges to impose a moratorium on stoning in 2002.’<sup>302</sup> There have been no reported instances on implemented stoning punishments since 2010,<sup>303</sup> largely

<sup>297</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>298</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>299</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 32

<sup>300</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#), Art. 182, 183; Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 32

<sup>301</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#), Art. 286

<sup>302</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>303</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 44; USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 7



due to international pressure, notably after the campaign to save a women sentenced to stoning for adultery in 2010.<sup>304</sup>

### 3.2.2. Qesas punishments

Crimes punished by *qesas* (*qisas*, retribution-in-kind) are covered in the Book Three of the Penal Code.<sup>305</sup> *Qesas* are retributive ‘eye for an eye’ punishments<sup>306</sup> for murder and other violent crimes, which gives the closest relative of a murder victim the right to seek retribution by taking the life of the perpetrator with the court’s approval.<sup>307</sup> Since murder is specifically addressed and punished within *qesas* laws, the Iranian Penal Code does not explicitly state that convicted murderers are subject to the death penalty but stipulates that they are subject to *qesas* as retribution to be demanded by the victims’ family or closest relatives.<sup>308</sup> The death penalty can also be handed down to juvenile offenders, as *Sharia* sets the age of criminal responsibility at 9 years for girls and 15 years for boys.<sup>309</sup>

Norway based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO)<sup>310</sup> reported that at least 282 persons, including 15 women and 2 juvenile offenders who were under 18 at the time of the offence, were executed based on *qesas* in 2023,<sup>311</sup> compared to 288 in 2022, 183 in 2021 and 211 in 2020. According to the source, in the period between 2010 and 2023, there were at least 2 431 executions carried out as a *qesas* punishment.<sup>312</sup> According to IHRNGO, due to the understanding of *qesas* as ‘the right of the victim’s family, the family members were ‘encouraged [...] to carry out the executions themselves.’ In 2023, IHRNGO reported on two such instances. In the first, a man ‘was executed by his parents in Ilam Central Prison for the honour killing of his sister. In the second case, a man was hanged by his maternal uncle in Rasht Central Prison for killing his cousin.’<sup>313</sup>

As noted by IHRNGO, the Penal Code outlines that *qesas* is not applicable in certain cases: to the father and paternal grandfather of the victim (Article 301); a man who kills his wife and her lover in the act of adultery (Article 302); Muslims and adherents of recognised religions (‘protected persons’) who kill adherents of unrecognised religions (‘unprotected persons’) (Article 310); a person who kills someone who has committed a *hadd* offence punishable by death (Article 302); and a person who kills a rapist (Article 302).<sup>314</sup> For the information on

<sup>304</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 44

<sup>305</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#); Iran Best Lawyer, The Islamic Penal Code of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>306</sup> FIDH, Iran/death penalty. A state terror policy, April 2009, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>307</sup> Britannica, Justice of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>308</sup> IHRNGO, Qisas/Murder Executions and Forgiveness in 2022, 8 June 2023, [url](#); IHRNGO, Executions for Murder Charges in 2023, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>309</sup> IHRNGO, Qisas/Murder Executions and Forgiveness in 2022, 8 June 2023, [url](#); IHRNGO, Executions for Murder Charges in 2023, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>310</sup> NGO Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) is a Norway-based human rights NGO, which monitors the death penalty and other human rights issues in Iran. See, IHRNGO, We aim to create an abolitionist movement in Iran by increasing awareness about the death penalty, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>311</sup> IHRNGO, Executions for Murder Charges in 2023, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>312</sup> IHRNGO, Qisas/Murder Executions and Forgiveness in 2022, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>313</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 2024, [url](#), pp. 43-44, 83

<sup>314</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 2024, [url](#), p. 31



qesas regarding honour killings, please refer to chapter [3.3. Punishments related to violence against women](#) and chapter [4.11.8. Domestic and honour-related violence](#).

According to the Penal Code, relatives of a homicide victim have the option to give forgiveness to the perpetrator by choosing financial compensation, *diyeh* (blood money), as a retribution, which allows the perpetrator to be released, or pardoning the perpetrator and relinquishing *diyeh* claims.<sup>315</sup> In cases where the crime is deemed to disrupt public order and endanger societal safety, the state reserves the authority to impose a further penalty even if the blood avengers chose to forgo their claim for retaliation.<sup>316</sup>

The annual suggested *diyeh* amounts are established by the Head of the Judiciary based on inflation and other considerations, yet the victim's family retains the autonomy to choose their own preferred sum. They may request an amount lower or higher than the indicative figure, without any defined upper limit. As reported by IHRNGO, in March 2023, the *diyeh* was fixed at 900 million tomans (18 000 euros) in case of a murder of a Muslim man and 450 million tomans (9 000 euros) of a Muslim woman.<sup>317</sup> IHRNGO noted that the amount of *diyeh* set by families was often higher than the figure determined by the head of judiciary, which itself was often beyond the financial reach of most families and there were cases, in which persons had been executed because they could not pay the requested *diyeh*.<sup>318</sup>

As noted by IHRNGO, which has been compiling forgiveness reports since 2015, families of murder victims who opted for forgiveness or *diyeh* exceeded those who insisted on the death penalty. For 2023, IHRNGO recorded 857 forgiveness cases, based on media reports and its network in Iran, which was the highest number since 2015.<sup>319</sup>

The frequency of retribution sentences in cases related to bodily harm has reportedly increased since 2015.<sup>320</sup> In August 2022, the Tehran Criminal Prosecutor's Office was reportedly instructed to carry out the sentences of blinding as a retaliation in three separate cases, involving two men and one woman,<sup>321</sup> whose actions led to victims' losing their eyesight in 2018, 2017, and 2011 respectively.<sup>322</sup> Information on other instances of the application of retribution in cases of bodily harm could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

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<sup>315</sup> IHRNGO, Qisas/Murder Executions and Forgiveness in 2022, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>316</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 33

<sup>317</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 57

<sup>318</sup> IHRNGO, Qisas/Murder Executions and Forgiveness in 2022, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>319</sup> IHRNGO, Executions for Murder Charges in 2023, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>320</sup> RFE/RL, Iran Prepares To Blind Three People In 'Eye-For-An-Eye' Judicial Punishment, 3 August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>321</sup> RFE/RL, Iran Prepares To Blind Three People In 'Eye-For-An-Eye' Judicial Punishment, 3 August 2022, [url](#); Iran International, Iran Sentences Three To Be Blinded in 'Eye-For-An-Eye' Move, 3 August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>322</sup> Iran International, Iran Sentences Three To Be Blinded in 'Eye-For-An-Eye' Move, 3 August 2022, [url](#)



### 3.2.3. *Diyeh* punishments

Crimes punished under *diyeh* (*diya*, plural *diyat*, blood money) are covered in Book Four of the Iranian Penal Code.<sup>323</sup> *Diyeh* punishments are determined by *Sharia*<sup>324</sup> and, similarly to *hadd* punishments, they are pre-determined and unchangeable.<sup>325</sup> According to Article 448 of the Penal Code, *diyeh* is mandated by *Sharia*<sup>326</sup> as compensation for unintentional homicide or bodily harm, intentional homicide and bodily harm in cases where the claim to retribution (*qesas*) is waived, and intentional harm in situation where retribution is not applicable.<sup>327</sup> *Diyeh* is paid to the victim or their closest relative,<sup>328</sup> excluding the spouse.<sup>329</sup>

In adherence to Article 549 of the Penal Code, the amount for *diyeh* is set yearly by the Head of the Judiciary.<sup>330</sup> For information on the amount of *diyeh* and its application for *qesas* crimes, please refer to chapter [3.2.2. Qesas punishments](#).

### 3.2.4. *Ta'zir* punishments

Crimes punished under *ta'zir* (plural *ta'zirat*) are covered in Book Five of the Penal Code.<sup>331</sup> *Ta'zir* punishments are not determined by *Sharia*<sup>332</sup> and a specific punishment for a *ta'zir* crime is at the discretion of the judge.<sup>333</sup> As summarised by Landinfo, CGRD, and SEM, crimes punishable by *ta'zir* can be divided into the following categories:

- Crimes against the internal and external security of the state (Articles 498-512 and Articles 610-611), including:
  - Establishing a group to disrupt national security (Article 498),
  - Membership in a group with the purpose of disrupting national security, or insulting Iranian ethnicities, divine religions or Islamic schools of thought recognised under the Constitution with the intent to cause violence or tensions, or with the knowledge that such consequences will follow (Article 499),
  - Spreading propaganda against the system, or conducting any deviant educational or proselytising activity that contradicts or interferes with the sacred law of Islam (Article 500),
  - Colluding and conspiring to commit crimes against national or foreign security (Article 610).

<sup>323</sup> IHRDC, English Translation of Books I & II of the New Islamic Penal Code, 4 April 2014, [url](#); Iran Best Lawyer, The Islamic Penal Code of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>324</sup> FIDH, Iran/death penalty, A state terror policy, April 2009, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>325</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>326</sup> Karimi Law Firm, Personal injury in Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>327</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 33

<sup>328</sup> FIDH, Iran/death penalty, A state terror policy, April 2009, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>329</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 33

<sup>330</sup> IHRNGO, Qisas/Murder Executions and Forgiveness in 2022, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>331</sup> IHRDC, Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book Five, 15 July 2013, [url](#)

<sup>332</sup> FIDH, Iran/death penalty, A state terror policy, April 2009, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>333</sup> ECPM and Iran Human Rights, The Death Penalty in Law and In Practice – Iran, July 2023, [url](#), p. 6



- Insulting sacred religious values and attempts on the life of authorities (Articles 513-515), such as:
  - Insulting Islamic sanctities, (Article 513)
  - Insulting the Supreme Leader, (Article 514)
- Forgery and falsification’ (Articles 523-542)
- Offences against public morals and decency (Articles 637-641), for instance:
  - Illicit relationship between a man and a woman such as touching and kissing’ (Article 627)
  - Un-Islamic dress code (bad hejab) (Article 638)
  - Encouraging people to depravity and immorality (Article 639)
- Theft and stealing of others’ property (Articles 651-667)
- Public consumption of alcoholic drinks, gambling, and vagrancy (Articles 701-713).<sup>334</sup>

*Ta’zir* punishments include imprisonment, flogging, fines, and other penalties.<sup>335</sup> The offences and the punishments are classified into eight degrees, with the severity decreasing from the harshest in the first degree to the mildest in the eighth.<sup>336</sup> As reported in 2023, *ta’zir* punishments were also applied in cases of drug-related offences.<sup>337</sup>

### 3.3. Punishments related to violence against women

The Islamic Penal Code does not explicitly criminalise violence against women.<sup>338</sup> In 2021, the ‘Bill to Protect the Dignity and Security of Women Against Violence’ was formally introduced in the Iranian Parliament but, due to significant opposition, its enactment did not proceed.<sup>339</sup> In April 2023, local media reported that the Parliament approved the ‘general outlines’ of the bill<sup>340</sup> to toughen punishments for perpetrators of violence against women, including by increasing prison sentences for murder.<sup>341</sup> While the effectiveness of the proposed legal changes has been questioned,<sup>342</sup> information regarding the progress of its adoption was not available within the time constraints of this report.

As noted by Human Rights Watch in December 2023, Iranian law was lacking means to provide adequate protection for victims of domestic violence: all intentional homicide cases were punishable under *qesas* punishments and, in case of forgiveness by the next of kin, were ending up with a prison sentence of less than 10 years.<sup>343</sup> In January 2023 a court sentenced a man who had beheaded his 17-year-old wife to 8 years and 2 months in prison, following the forgiveness by her family.<sup>344</sup>

<sup>334</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), pp. 34-35

<sup>335</sup> ECPM and Iran Human Rights, The Death Penalty in Law and In Practice – Iran, July 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>336</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>337</sup> ECPM and Iran Human Rights, The Death Penalty in Law and In Practice – Iran, July 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>338</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>339</sup> Rezaei Zadeh, M., Iran Under Fire Amid New Restrictions on Women’s Rights, Stimson, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>340</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “Protect” Women with New Bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>341</sup> VoA, Iran Plans to Toughen Penalties for Violence Against Women, 10 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>342</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “Protect” Women with New Bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>343</sup> HRW, Iranian Society Under Crackdown, Execution of a Victim of Child Marriage in Iran, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>344</sup> CNN, He beheaded his wife in Iran. His prison sentence? Eight years and two months, 18 January 2023, [url](#)







In email correspondence with EUAA, Leila Alikarami noted that physical abuse might be punishable under the provisions of the Penal Code, with blood money being required in some cases.’ The expert noted that ‘Article 614 of the Penal Code amended in 2020 identified punishment for physical injury which can also be used in domestic violence cases.’ As per this Article, the punishment of ‘sixth degree imprisonment’ and payment of the blood money, if requested by the victim would apply.<sup>345</sup> Killings related to the protection of honour are addressed according to *Sharia* and often entail reduced sentences for the perpetrators.<sup>346</sup>

According to the Penal Code, rape is punishable by the death penalty as a *hadd* punishment for sexual intercourse outside marriage (*zina*). In case of repentance, a perpetrator can avoid the *hadd* punishment and be punished by a *ta’zir* punishment of the sixth degree, which can result in up to 2 years imprisonment, flogging with up to 99 lashes, fines up to 80 million IRR [approximately 1 750 euros<sup>347</sup>], and other penalties.<sup>348</sup> Conviction under rape charges requires a testimony from a group of witnesses, consisting of either four Muslim men or a combination of three men and two women, or two men and four women.<sup>349</sup> July 2023, media reported on the execution of three men in Hormozgan province on charges of drugging and raping women, after setting up an ‘illegal beauty institute’.<sup>350</sup>

### 3.4. Criminal Courts

The criminal courts in Iran are divided into Criminal Courts One, Criminal Courts Two, Revolutionary Courts, Juvenile Courts, and Military Courts.<sup>351</sup> In cases involving the death penalty, crimes with security-related charges (*moharebeh*, *efsad fil-arz*, and *baghy*) and drug-related offences fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts. Other criminal charges punishable by the death penalty, such as murder and rape (as well as, for instance, adultery<sup>352</sup> and LGBTIQ-related cases<sup>353</sup>) are tried by Criminal Courts.<sup>354</sup> Political and press crimes are often classified as security offences, resulting in their jurisdiction falling under Revolutionary Courts.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>346</sup> USCIRF, Country Update: Iran, September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>347</sup> The calculation was made based on the European Commission’s official monthly accounting rates for the euro for Iranian rial (IRR) for April 2024, EC, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#), accessed 17 April 2024

<sup>348</sup> Kanhaiya, Case Study of Rape Laws of Iran, Journal of Legal Research and Juridical Sciences, vol. 2, issue 3, 23 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 117-119

<sup>349</sup> Kanhaiya, Case Study of Rape Laws of Iran, Journal of Legal Research and Juridical Sciences, vol. 2, issue 3, 23 April 2023, [url](#), pp. 118

<sup>350</sup> Iran International, Three Men Hanged In Iran For Rape At Fake Beauty Clinic, 4 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>351</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>352</sup> IHRNGO, Leila Kholghi and Abolfazl Barat Vakili Sentenced to Death for Adultery, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>353</sup> Al, Iranian LGBTI defender sentenced to death, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>354</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 57

<sup>355</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 39





### 3.4.1. Criminal Courts One

Criminal Courts One (*dadgah-e keifari I*) are established in the capital cities of the provinces<sup>356</sup> and, upon the decision of the Head of the Judiciary, may be also established in counties.<sup>357</sup> Dealing with more serious crimes than the Criminal Courts Two,<sup>358</sup> these courts have jurisdiction to hear the cases related to:

- Crimes punishable by death penalty,
- Crimes punishable by life imprisonment,
- Crimes punishable by limb amputation or crimes related to causing a bodily harm, punishable by more than a half of *diyeh*,<sup>359</sup>
- Crimes punishable by *ta'zir* punishments of I-IV<sup>360</sup>
- Political crimes and press crimes.<sup>361</sup>

### 3.4.2. Criminal Courts Two

Criminal Courts Two are established at the county level<sup>362</sup> and have a general jurisdiction to adjudicate all cases that are outside the jurisdiction of other courts,<sup>363</sup> such as Criminal Courts One, Juvenile Courts, and Revolutionary Courts, including the cases falling under *ta'zir* punishments of degrees V to VIII.<sup>364</sup> As noted by Leila Alikarami, the jurisdiction of Criminal Courts Two includes but is not limited to such crimes and offences as:

- All moral offences (except adultery committed by married couples, punishable by the death penalty), including:
  - violations of dress code, including improper wearing or lack of the *hijab* ('bad *hijab*'), inappropriate tattoos, hairstyles, clothing, etc.;
  - sexual offences falling below the threshold of adultery or rape;
  - charges related to homosexual acts of non-penetrative character;
- Assaults and battery that do not result in death or severe injury;
- Defamation, excluding the *hadd* crime of defamation of the Prophet;
- *Ta'zir* crimes such as theft, breach of trust, fraud and misrepresentation, forgery, and crimes against public order that are beyond the jurisdiction of the Criminal Courts One.<sup>365</sup>

<sup>356</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>357</sup> Iran Best Lawyer, A comprehensive analysis of the Iranian legal system – Part 2, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>358</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>359</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#); Iran Best Lawyer, A comprehensive analysis of the Iranian legal system – Part 2, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>360</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>361</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#); Iran Best Lawyer, A comprehensive analysis of the Iranian legal system – Part 2, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>362</sup> Iran Best Lawyer, A comprehensive analysis of the Iranian legal system – Part 2, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>363</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>364</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>365</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024





As noted by Leila Alikarami, as defined in Article 299 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Head of the Judiciary could decide to establish general county courts (sg. *dadgah-e 'omumi-ye bakhsh*) instead of Criminal Courts Two in some regions. These courts are less specialised and hear cases related to various smaller offences and are composed in some instances of only one judge and one secretary. In these situation, more serious cases are sent to larger cities.<sup>366</sup>

### 3.4.3. Revolutionary Courts

Revolutionary Courts are located in provincial capitals and, at the discretion of the Head of the Judiciary, are also established in sub-provincial judicial districts (*shahrestan*). In instances where a city lacks a branch of the Revolutionary Court, typically in smaller towns, criminal cases are referred to the nearest city's Revolutionary Court.<sup>367</sup>

Revolutionary Courts (*dadgah-e enqelab*) were established following the 1979 revolution as a temporary measure to prosecute high-ranking officials of the former monarchy. Despite the absence of a constitutional provision for their establishment, Revolutionary Courts have become institutionalised and continuously function in parallel to the regular criminal justice system.<sup>368</sup> Revolutionary Courts were integrated into the judicial system through Article 297 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, while Article 303 of the same code granted them the authority to prosecute certain offences involving political opponents, including:

- procuring weapons and explosives to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 187 of the Penal Code),
- waging war against God (*moharebeh*, Article 279),
- corruption on earth (*efsad fil-arz*, Article 286),
- rebellion (*baghy*, Article 287),
- espionage on behalf of foreigners (Article 502),
- insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Supreme Leader (Article 514),
- gathering and collusion against the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 610).<sup>369</sup>

Having the jurisdiction to prosecute all cases related to national security, Revolutionary Courts also address crimes which involve drugs and psychotropic substances.<sup>370</sup> Moreover, under Article 303 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Revolutionary Courts also handle cases involving financial crimes endangering the stability and economy of the country (such as forging currency), trafficking or counterfeiting of goods, economic offences disrupting the country's production system through unauthorised sale of goods or arms, smuggling of cultural heritage or national assets abroad, illegal reproduction of audio-visual works, crimes related to Iran's public and private health institutions,<sup>371</sup> and confiscation of assets gained

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<sup>366</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>367</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>368</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 19

<sup>369</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>370</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>371</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024





through activities deemed illegal under Article 49 of the Constitution, such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud, and gambling among others.<sup>372</sup>

In September 2023, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI) noted that cases tried at Revolutionary Courts were adjudicated by one judge, who, in most cases, acted as both judge and prosecutor, while a prosecutor would be present only to give an appearance of a proper court in instances of international attention or when certain parts of the hearing were broadcasted.<sup>373</sup>

Sources noted that Revolutionary Courts and judges employed at them lacked impartiality<sup>374</sup> and were implicated in fair trial violations,<sup>375</sup> including denial of access to legal aid in cases involving ‘extensive interrogations under severe conditions.’<sup>376</sup> For more information please refer to chapter [3.7. Due process](#) and chapter [3.9. Death penalty](#).

As noted by FIDH and LDDHI, the Office of the Revolutionary Courts formally assigned cases to be heard in particular branches of the Revolutionary Courts. The cases potentially involving death penalty were generally assigned ‘to a few hand-picked branches’ whose judges followed ‘the wishes of the security and intelligence agencies.’ According to FIDH and LDDHI, in three decades of observation, the biggest number of cases in which defendants faced death sentences and lengthy prison terms were sent to branches 15, 26, 28, and 29 of Revolutionary Courts in Tehran, and branch 1 of the Revolutionary Courts in other cities.<sup>377</sup>

#### 3.4.4. Juvenile Courts

Juvenile Courts (*dadgah-e atfal va noujavanan*) are situated in sub-provinces (*shahrestan*), with the number of branches varying among them.<sup>378</sup> According to Article 298 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, each sub-province is required to have at least one Juvenile Court; if such a court has not been yet established, cases within its jurisdiction are to be addressed by a Criminal Court Two. As per Article 315 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, in instances where a minor commits an offence falling under the jurisdiction of the Criminal Court Two or the Revolutionary Court, in cases in which multiple judges are involved, a specialised division within the Criminal Court One is to handle the case; the defendant in these cases should ‘benefit from all privileges pertaining to Juvenile Courts.’<sup>379</sup> As noted by an expert interviewed by Landinfo, CGRS, and SEM in 2021, in cases related to national security and perceived as political (and particularly in cases where the offender had ‘an ethnic minority background, e.g. Kurdish’) it was likely that s/he would still be tried by the Revolutionary Court, despite being a minor and in violation of the legal requirements.<sup>380</sup>

<sup>372</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#); Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>373</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>374</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3; Al, “Don’t Let Them Kill Us, Iran’s Relentless Execution Crisis Since the 2022 Uprising, April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>375</sup> Al, “Don’t Let Them Kill Us, Iran’s Relentless Execution Crisis Since the 2022 Uprising, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 15, 19

<sup>376</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 57

<sup>377</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>378</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>379</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>380</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 43



In cases where a crime is committed by several persons, comprising both minors and adults, a Juvenile court also handles the case of the adult(s), provided that each person's involvement in the crime is equally significant. However, if the persons have distinct roles and levels of involvement in the crime, the Juvenile court will try only persons under 18.<sup>381</sup> If the defendant reaches 18 before the start of the trial, the proceeding will be continued by a Juvenile Court. In case the defendant turns 18 before the beginning of the trial, the case is to be transferred to a Criminal Court with appropriate jurisdiction; in these cases, 'the defendant will still benefit from the privileges of trials in Juvenile courts.'<sup>382</sup>

## 3.5. Appellate Courts

### 3.5.1. Courts of appeal

Courts of appeal (singular: *dadgah-e tajdid-e nazar*) are located in the capital city of every province and hold authority to review all appeals except for those falling within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, such as criminal cases punishable with more severe penalties.<sup>383</sup> The law also specifies that as per Article 427 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, sentences falling under degree VIII of *ta'zir* punishments and sentences where *diyeh* amounts to or is less than 1/10 of the full *diyeh* are exceptions and cannot be appealed.<sup>384</sup>

After receiving a court's decision, the person has a period of 20 days to lodge an appeal to a relevant appellate body.<sup>385</sup> As noted by Leila Alikarami, in order to file an appeal, a person must provide valid legal grounds, which are specified in Article 434 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. These grounds encompass situations where the judgement contradicts the law, significant evidence was overlooked by the court, the documentation or testimonies used in the judgement were incorrect or falsified, the court had no jurisdiction to handle the case, or the judge was not eligible to hear the trial on legal grounds.<sup>386</sup> In criminal cases, the Prosecutor also has the authority to appeal verdicts.<sup>387</sup>

In an interview with EUAA, an expert on the Kurdish population and regions in Iran noted that most people tried on political and security charges would appeal in an appeal court and the Supreme Court. However, the source pointed out that the authorities 'do not follow the regular procedures when dealing with some people,' particularly those seen as 'security concerns'.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>382</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>383</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>384</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>385</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#);

Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>386</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>387</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 46

<sup>388</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview with EUAA, 20 March 2023



### 3.5.2. The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court (*divan-e 'ali-ye keshvar*), headquartered in Tehran, serves as the highest appellate authority for both civil and criminal cases.<sup>389</sup> The establishment of the Supreme Court is mandated by Article 161 of the Constitution, which assigns it the responsibility of ‘supervising the correct implementation of the laws by the courts’ to maintain consistency in judicial procedures.<sup>390</sup> The Head of the Supreme Court is required to have expertise in Islamic law and is nominated for a term of five years by the Head of the Judiciary.<sup>391</sup>

The Supreme Court has branches across different parts of the country, each staffed with has three judges: a chief justice and two associate justices.<sup>392</sup> As reported in September 2023, the Supreme Court had 52 branches, 45 of which were in Tehran.<sup>393</sup>

The Supreme Court ‘does not issue a substantive decision’ and reviews cases solely on matters of ‘the application and interpretation of law’, sending cases to the lower court for a second review upon a defendant’s appeal. If a lower court upholds its initial decision, the case is sent to the Supreme Court General Council, provided that the Supreme Court still maintains its previous ruling.<sup>394</sup>

In January 2024, the Supreme Court reportedly overturned the death sentence of a police officer convicted of fatally shooting a protester in November 2022, resulting in the case being returned to a court for a new trial.<sup>395</sup> In May 2024, a Kurdish political prisoner was executed on charges of *moharebeh* and *efsad fil-arz* through ‘armed action and membership in a Salafi jihadi group’ as one of persons<sup>396</sup> detained in 2009. In 2017, the Supreme Court reportedly overturned his death sentence, referring the case back to the Revolutionary court in Tehran. After the Revolutionary Court reissued the death sentence in December 2018, the Supreme Court confirmed it in February 2020.<sup>397</sup>

## 3.6. Special Clerical Courts

Special Clerical Courts operate independently from the judiciary and are overseen directly by the Supreme Leader in their function to investigate clerical dissent,<sup>398</sup> coming from both Shia and Sunni clerics. The rulings of these courts are final and cannot be appealed.<sup>399</sup>

<sup>389</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>390</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>391</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>392</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>393</sup> FIDH and LDDHI, The Iran Notes, September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>394</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#), see also Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 48

<sup>395</sup> IranWire, Iranian Police Official Has Death Sentence Overturned, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>396</sup> IRHNGO, Kurdish Political Prisoner Anwar Kherzi Executed After 14+ Years on Death Row, 1 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>397</sup> Iran International, Kurdish Prisoner Executed After 14 Years’ Incarceration, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>398</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 49; USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 19-20

<sup>399</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 49



Special Clerical Courts were used to prosecute Shia clerics for expressing ‘controversial ideas’ and taking part in activities unrelated to religious matters, such as journalism or ‘reformist political activities.’<sup>400</sup> Following the outbreak of the protests in September 2022, there were reports on trials of Sunni clerics,<sup>401</sup> particularly those in Sistan and Baluchistan province and the Kurdish provinces.<sup>402</sup> For example, as reported by Kurdistan Human Rights Network,<sup>403</sup> between March and June 2023, the Special Clerical Court of Hamadan in north-western Iran sentenced at least six Sunni Kurdish clerics to suspended prison sentences, flogging, and the revocation of their clerical status for supporting demands of the protesters in Sanandaj, Saqqez, Dehgolan, and Sarvabad.<sup>404</sup>

### 3.7. Due process

The right to a fair trial is emphasised in the ICCPR, including the right to ‘the presence of an impartial judge, interrogator, investigator, and the presence of chosen competent and independent counsel.’<sup>405</sup>

Despite the existence of legal safeguards, sources reported widespread violations of due process<sup>406</sup> within the country’s judicial system, which was impacted by ‘a structural lack of independence and impartiality.’<sup>407</sup> Iranian courts were criticised for failing to ensure ‘the minimum guarantees’<sup>408</sup> of fair trial<sup>409</sup> before an independent and impartial court.<sup>410</sup>

In Iranian domestic legislation, rights to fair trial and due process are established by several constitutional provisions. According to Article 32 of the Constitution, no person can be arrested without lawful orders and procedures. Upon arrest, the accused must receive a written notification of the charges, and a provisional dossier must be submitted to a competent court within 24 hours.<sup>411</sup> Article 37 of the Constitution upholds the presumption of innocence and requires a competent court to provide proof of guilt. As per Article 165 of the Constitution, trials should be open to the public, except when the court determines that this would compromise ‘public morality or discipline’ or in case of private disputes between two

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<sup>400</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 19-20

<sup>401</sup> USCIRF, Country Update: Iran, September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>402</sup> CHRI, Special Report: Sunni Clerics in the Crosshairs of Islamic Republic Repression, 15 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>403</sup> Kurdistan Human Rights Network is a France-based NGO which documents human rights violations in Iran, see Kurdistan Human Rights Network, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>404</sup> Kurdistan Human Rights Network, Iran clergy tries two Sunni Kurdish clerics for backing protests, 8 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>405</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>406</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, [url](#), p. 4; UN OHCHR, Respect lives, voices of Iranians and listen to grievances, pleads UN Human Rights Chief, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>407</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 55, see also para. 63

<sup>408</sup> UN OHCHR, Respect lives, voices of Iranians and listen to grievances, pleads UN Human Rights Chief, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>409</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, n.d., [url](#); USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>410</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 40

<sup>411</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)



parties if they request not to have a public trial. Article 168 of the Constitution stipulates that political and press offences must be tried in open court sessions with a jury present.<sup>412</sup> According to Article 305 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, cases involving political and press crimes should be held in open hearings<sup>413</sup> and require the presence of a jury.<sup>414</sup>

Reporting on trials related to the 2022 protests, which resulted in prison sentences, death sentences, and flogging punishments,<sup>415</sup> sources noted that these trials were conducted behind closed doors<sup>416</sup> and/or in secrecy<sup>417</sup> and in a summary manner.<sup>418</sup> Moreover, sources noted the use of torture during pre-trial interrogations<sup>419</sup> to extract confessions to be used in courts as evidence,<sup>420</sup> and the airing of coerced confessions on state and state-affiliated media<sup>421</sup> prior to conviction.<sup>422</sup> As noted by the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (UN IFFM) on Iran, the protests-related cases were heard in only one court session, which sometimes lasted mere minutes and lacked exculpatory witnesses.<sup>423</sup> In most cases, the accused persons did not have access to the materials of their cases during investigations, which impeded their ability to prepare a defence. Furthermore, some protesters faced two separate trials for the same offence, organised in parallel: one in a Criminal Court and one in a Revolutionary Court.<sup>424</sup>

Sources reported on significant violations of the rights to a fair trial and due process, in which persons were sentenced to death.<sup>425</sup> The legal proceedings resulting in death sentences were conducted ‘in a summary fashion amid repeated calls by the State authorities to expedite the trials and carry out executions’, in the result of which the executions of several

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<sup>412</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>413</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>414</sup> Soltani, M. and Shooshinasab, N., Update: An Overview of the Iranian Legal System, July/August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>415</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, [url](#), p.198

<sup>416</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 59

<sup>417</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, [url](#), p.198

<sup>418</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 55, 59

<sup>419</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 56

<sup>420</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p.198; USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 5-6, 19; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 56

<sup>421</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p.198; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 56; USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 19

<sup>422</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 56

<sup>423</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 59

<sup>424</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 58

<sup>425</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200; IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 12





protesters took place just weeks after their arrest and/or the conviction date,<sup>426</sup> reportedly to ‘instil fear and put an end’ to the protests.<sup>427</sup>

Judges employed at Criminal and Revolutionary Courts reportedly exhibited bias against protesters and persons perceived as political opposition, often relied on confessions obtained through torture and ill-treatment to convict protesters, and disregarded complaints about torture and ill-treatment.<sup>428</sup> Practices violating due process were carried out particularly by Revolutionary Courts,<sup>429</sup> which generally handled cases of political prisoners and overall issued the biggest number of death sentences.<sup>430</sup> Violations of due process occurred at every stage of criminal proceedings organised by Revolutionary Courts, including procedures at initial prosecution and pretrial investigation, trials at the first instance courts, and review procedures by higher courts.<sup>431</sup> Including in cases resulting in death sentences, judges of Revolutionary Courts ignored claims of torture and ill-treatment.<sup>432</sup>

As noted by expert Behrooz Chamanara, interviewed by EUAA, the severity of court sentences revealed geographical disparities. According to the expert, ‘while a particular offence might warrant a 10-year sentence in Tehran, it could result in a death penalty in areas like Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchistan.’ The source also noted that persons who participated in demonstrations in these regions often faced more severe consequences. In numerous cases, Kurdish and Baluchi defendants faced harsher sentences when they were detained in cities such as Tehran, Urmia, or Isfahan.<sup>433</sup>

The UN FFM on Iran found that the authorities did not investigate cases where defendants retracted their self-incriminating confessions in court, as well as cases where claims of coerced confessions were raised, including publicly by the defendants, their lawyers, and family members. Moreover, the authorities proceeded with executions despite claims of confessions obtained under torture.<sup>434</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [3.8. Treatment in detention and prison conditions](#) and chapter [3.9. Death penalty](#).

### 3.7.1. Access to legal representation

Article 35 of the Constitution guarantees defendants the right to choose a lawyer in all types of court proceedings. In cases, where a defendant cannot do it, they should be provided with legal aid.<sup>435</sup> Additionally, Article 314 of the Code of Civil Procedure allows persons accused in criminal cases to have up to three lawyers of their own choice. According to the Law on

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<sup>426</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 62

<sup>427</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>428</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 55, see also para. 63

<sup>429</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 5-6

<sup>430</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 5-6, 19

<sup>431</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 19

<sup>432</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>433</sup> Chamanara, B., interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024

<sup>434</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 63

<sup>435</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)



Criminal Courts and Decision of the Supreme Court on Uniformity of Procedure, defendants facing charges punishable by death or life imprisonment must have a lawyer present, with judgements issued without legal representation being subject to annulment by the Supreme Court. The Single Article Act on Choosing of Counsel by Litigants, mandates courts to accept lawyers chosen by the defendants, with rejection invalidating court decisions and holding judges accountable for disciplinary action.<sup>436</sup>

Sources noted that access to a lawyer was frequently denied during the investigation period<sup>437</sup> at pre-trial interrogations.<sup>438</sup> In court procedures involving protesters, access to lawyers was also denied during the trial and the appeal stage.<sup>439</sup> In some instances, defendants were denied access to independently chosen lawyers,<sup>440</sup> including during the trial,<sup>441</sup> and forced instead to engage lawyers from the list endorsed by the Head of Judiciary. As noted by the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI),<sup>442</sup> this list comprises lawyers who either cooperate with the state security establishment or lack the resources to adequately defend their clients.<sup>443</sup> Furthermore, in the cases related to the 2022 protests, lawyers appointed by the court did not ‘provide adequate legal representation’, with the result of protesters having been ‘denied all due process and fair rights.’ The fees of these lawyers were reportedly also beyond the means the families could afford.<sup>444</sup>

The UN FFM on Iran noted that there was a ‘limited number of lawyers on the approved list of the head of the judiciary’ in some provinces. Moreover, these lawyers had ‘close links to judicial authority’ and were often biased against protesters. Some defendants were able to choose a lawyer of their choice only at the appeal stage, after the verdict had been issued.<sup>445</sup> In the interview with EUAA, an expert noted that ethnic minorities, including Kurds, mostly did not have access to lawyers, including in cases where executions were carried out.<sup>446</sup> Another expert interviewed by EUAA noted that ‘in Kurdish regions, intelligence services wield significant influence over the judiciary’, resulting in constraints on lawyers’ activities. As noted by the same source, only a few selected lawyers were appointed as trustees of the court, greatly restricting the options for activists seeking legal representation. The selection process strongly favoured lawyers with ties to the authorities, leaving persons facing charges with only

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<sup>436</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koochshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 52

<sup>437</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 40, 57, USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 5-6, 19

<sup>438</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 56

<sup>439</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>440</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 59

<sup>441</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 57

<sup>442</sup> The Centre for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) is an US-based NGO which reports on human rights situation in Iran. See, CHRI, Who We Are, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>443</sup> CHRI, Iran Protests: At Least 44 Defense Attorneys Arrested Since September, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>444</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>445</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 57

<sup>446</sup> Eliassi, B., interview with EUAA, 14 March 2024



one or two choices in some Kurdish cities. Consequently, political activists were effectively deprived of the chance to be defended by an independent legal representative.<sup>447</sup>

### 3.7.1. SANA system

The SANA system is used to get access to judicial documents,<sup>448</sup> including by Iranians living abroad.<sup>449</sup> In correspondence with EUAA, Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate Leila Alikarami noted that the SANA system was designed to facilitate judicial affairs. To access the system, users must register and verify their identity, after which they receive the SANA code. Upon that, the users can access judicial notifications, case notifications and appointment scheduling and view details of complaints and petitions. The services of the SANA system consist of the following: viewing electronic summonses/notifications, receiving electronic appointments, obtaining a certificate of having no criminal record, and viewing case details.<sup>450</sup>

## 3.8. Treatment in detention and prison conditions

### Treatment in detention

Article 39 of the Constitution prohibits ‘all affronts to the dignity and repute’ of arrested, detained, and imprisoned persons, while Article 38 prohibits any form of torture to coerce confessions or obtain information.<sup>451</sup> According to Article 169 of the Penal Code, a confession obtained under any mental or physical mistreatment is deemed invalid.<sup>452</sup> Furthermore, Article 578 of the Penal Code stipulates a prison term ranging from six months to three years, in addition to *qesas* punishment and blood money, for judicial personnel found guilty of the use of ill-treatment and torture to extract confessions. In cases where ill-treatment and torture are carried out under an order, only the person issuing such order is to be punished. However, all the involved persons are to face punishment if the torture leads to death:<sup>453</sup> in such cases, the personnel involved must be charged with homicide, while those who issued the orders are held accountable for ordering homicide.<sup>454</sup>

Despite the abovementioned legal safeguards, sources reported on ill-treatment and torture in detention,<sup>455</sup> including sexual assault<sup>456</sup> and rape,<sup>457</sup> as well as denial of medical care.<sup>458</sup> Torture and ill-treatment were particularly reported in relation to treatment of persons involved

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<sup>447</sup> Charmanara, B., interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024

<sup>448</sup> Landinfo, CGRS and SEM, Iran – Criminal procedures and documents, December 2021, [url](#), p. 89

<sup>449</sup> ITSaaz, Judicial Electronic Service System for Iranians Abroad, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>450</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>451</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>452</sup> ABC, IHRDC, Impact Iran, and HRA, Alternative Report to Human Rights Committee, For the periodic review of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Right to Fair Trial and Due Process, 9 October – 3 November 2023, [url](#), para. 18

<sup>453</sup> ABC, IHRDC, Impact Iran, and HRA, Alternative Report to Human Rights Committee, For the periodic review of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Right to Fair Trial and Due Process, 9 October – 3 November 2023, [url](#), para. 18

<sup>454</sup> Rahmani, T. and Koohshahi, N.M., Introduction to Iran’s Judicial System, JLPG, Vol. 45, 2016, [url](#), p. 53

<sup>455</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 198; Iran Wire, Exclusive: IranWire Investigations Confirm Torture and Overcrowding in Prison System, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>456</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>457</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 5, 10

<sup>458</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 198



in the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ protests,<sup>459</sup> with security forces frequently using torture and ill-treatment during arrests and interrogations.<sup>460</sup> As noted by the UN FFM on Iran, Iranian public officials purposely used torture to obtain a confession or information or as a means of punishments and intimidation of protesters, including to prevent participation in protests.<sup>461</sup> Human Rights Watch highlighted the lack of proper investigation into numerous allegations of torture against detainees.<sup>462</sup>

The UN FFM on Iran noted that persons detained during the protests, including children, faced torture and ill-treatment upon their arrests and transfer to various detention facilities: police stations, detention facilities of IRGC and Ministry of Intelligence, and prisons operated by Iran’s prison organisation (State Organisation for Prisons and Correctional and Educative Measures). Detainees faced ‘various forms of physical and psychological abuse amounting to torture’, during prolonged and repeated interrogation and prolonged solitary confinement, and were denied access to medical care. Verbal abuse included ‘insults of a sexual nature or based on ethnicity and religion’ and ‘threats of death, rape and harm to family members.’<sup>463</sup> Minors were reportedly detained in official and unofficial detention facilities for extended periods, without knowing the reason for their detention and without having contact with their families, or access to legal aid, and were ‘subjected to severe physical, psychological and sexual torture, including rape.’<sup>464</sup>

AI noted a ‘pattern’ of sexual violence to which persons detained in relation to the 2022 protests were subjected to in detention.<sup>465</sup> Sexual and gender-based violence was used against women, men, and children, including LGBTIQ persons. The most severe forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, took place in unofficial places of detention run by the IRGC and the Ministry of Intelligence.<sup>466</sup>

AI reported that dozens of detainees died while in custody under ‘suspicious circumstances,’ with reports of physical torture and/or denial of medical healthcare.<sup>467</sup> Similarly, the UN FFM on Iran reported on ‘several cases of deaths in custody as a result of torture,’ noting that ‘injured survivors were denied medical care or did not report the torture when they were released, owing to a fear of reprisals.’<sup>468</sup> In August 2023, a 31-year old protester arrested during the Women, Life, Freedom protests,<sup>469</sup> who had received three death sentences, all of

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<sup>459</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 10; HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, n.d., [url](#); EP, European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2023 on the EU response to the protests and executions in Iran, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>460</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>461</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 42

<sup>462</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>463</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 43

<sup>464</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 44

<sup>465</sup> AI, Iran: Child detainees subjected to flogging, electric shocks and sexual violence in brutal protest crackdown, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>466</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 43, 46

<sup>467</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p.198

<sup>468</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 45

<sup>469</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



which were overturned,<sup>470</sup> died in Nowshahr prison in Mazandaran province in northern Iran after reportedly being subjected to severe torture.<sup>471</sup> In February 2024, a political prisoner, sentenced in 2020 on national security charges, reportedly committed suicide in Urmia Prison.<sup>472</sup>

AI reported on at least 72 deaths in prisons and detention centres in the period between 2010 and 2021, including 46 deaths resulting ‘from physical torture or other ill-treatment on the hands of intelligence and security agents or prison officials’ and 11 deaths ‘in suspicious circumstances’ with no information about the cause of the death available. 15 deaths reportedly occurred in March 2021, when prison guards used lethal firearms to suppress protests over Covid-19 safety.<sup>473</sup> In October 2022, under unclear circumstances, some sections of Evin prison were destroyed by fires, resulting in the deaths of at least eight people. Prisoners trying to escape the fire were reportedly attacked by security forces.<sup>474</sup> In 2021, following the emergence of footage showing assaults and mistreatment of inmates in Evin prison, six prison guards faced criminal charges.<sup>475</sup> In recent years, repeated hunger strikes by political prisoners against ill-treatment in detention were reported.<sup>476</sup>

### Prisons' conditions

Sources noted that prisons in Iran are overcrowded,<sup>477</sup> lack sanitation and ventilation, adequate provision of food and water, are short of beds, and suffer from insect infestation.<sup>478</sup> In February 2024, IranWire reported that Shibani prison close to Masjed Soleyman city in southwestern Iran, which was notorious for poor health standards and cruel treatment of inmates, housed over 5 000 inmates despite its intended capacity of 3 500. ‘[D]uring times of protests and heightened arrests,’ the prison ward 5, known ‘as the “security” ward’ and used mostly for political prisoners, reportedly housed up to 250 detainees while being intended for 150 inmates. Prison cells housed an average 35-40 prisoners in a cell, who reported suffering from hunger and receiving insufficient medical help.<sup>479</sup>

The UN FFM on Iran noted that the conditions of detention of persons arrested in connection with the 2022 protests, including women and children, were ‘appalling in both official and non-official detention centres,’ so that detention there amounted ‘to inhuman, cruel, or degrading treatment, and in certain instances, constituted torture.’<sup>480</sup> UN further described that

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<sup>470</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 61

<sup>471</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>472</sup> Iran International, Political Prisoner ‘Commits Suicide’ in Iranian Prison, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>473</sup> AI, Iran: Details of 72 deaths in custody since 2010, 15 September 2021, [url](#)

<sup>474</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>475</sup> Guardian (The), Iran investigates Evin prison guards after abuse video leak, 31 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>476</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>477</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 198; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>478</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 198; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 51

<sup>479</sup> Iran Wire, Exclusive: IranWire Investigations Confirm Torture and Overcrowding in Prison System, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>480</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 50



cells were small, overcrowded, and unsanitary, had no bedding, ‘with the lights on 24 hours a day, or in total darkness’, with most of the people detained in relation to the protests receiving ‘insufficient and poor quality food and water.’ Moreover, they were denied medical care or given only basic medication, even in cases of serious medical conditions.<sup>481</sup>

As noted by USDOS, the political crimes law has several provisions on the detention of political criminals, including their separation from ordinary criminals, and permission of regular family visits and correspondence. However, the segregation of political prisoners from the general inmate population was disregarded and political prisoners were threatened by the authorities to be transferred to criminal wards, where assaults by fellow prisoners ‘were more likely.’ This was consistent with the previous reports on ‘a deliberate practice’ when political prisoners were held in wards with ‘allegedly violent and dangerous criminals, with the goal of “breaking” the political prisoners’ will.’<sup>482</sup> Access to political prisoners by UN representatives of international humanitarian NGOs has been denied.<sup>483</sup>

### 3.9. Death penalty

Iran is among the leading practitioners of the death penalty globally.<sup>484</sup> Sources reported that some offences for which people were sentenced to death in Iran did not meet the classification of the ‘most serious crimes’<sup>485</sup> as defined by ICCPR<sup>486</sup> ratified by Iran.<sup>487</sup> These offences included crimes such as drug trafficking, financial corruption, vandalism, and actions safeguarded by international human rights law, such as the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression.<sup>488</sup> Cruel and inhumane methods were reportedly among the methods employed in executions, such as hanging by cranes.<sup>489</sup> In 2023, seven executions were carried out in public.<sup>490</sup>

As noted by AI, the death penalty was wielded as a tool of political repression against protesters, political dissidents, and ethnic minorities.<sup>491</sup>

<sup>481</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 51

<sup>482</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 20-21

<sup>483</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 21-22; USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>484</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>485</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 61

<sup>486</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 22

<sup>487</sup> HRW, Iranian Society Under Crackdown, Alarming Rise of Executions in Iran, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>488</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, [url](#), p. 200

<sup>489</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7; USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 6-7

<sup>490</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 44

<sup>491</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200



### 3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code

Under the Penal Code, crimes punishable with the death penalty comprise offences punishable under *hadd*, *qesas*, and *ta'zir*. As reported by IHRNGO and Together Against Death Penalty (ECPM),<sup>492</sup> death penalty under *hadd* punishments is applicable for the following offences:

- sexual offences, such as incest, rape, adultery (*zina*), sodomy or consensual homosexual penetrative sex (*levat*), and intercrural sex where the 'active party' is a non-Muslim and the 'passive party' is a Muslim (*tafkhez*); for more information, please refer to chapter [4.12 LGBTIQ persons and activists for LGBTIQ rights](#);
- offences against the state, such as waging war against God (*moharebeh*), corruption on earth (*efsad fil-arz*) and rebellion (*baghy*), and offences against the religion, such as insulting the prophet (*sabol-nabi*) and apostasy (*ertedad*);
- repeat offences on the fourth occasion, including theft, adultery, sodomy, lesbian sex (*mosahegheh*), intercrural sex, pimping, insulting the prophet, alcohol consumption, false accusation of sodomy or adultery (*qadf*) and the crimes of *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.<sup>493</sup> for more information, please refer to chapter [4.12 LGBTIQ persons and activists for LGBTIQ rights](#).

Crimes punishable by the death penalty under *ta'zir* punishments comprise drug-related offence, while *qesas* punishments are applied for intentional and unintentional homicide.<sup>494</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [3.2.2 Qesas punishments](#).

The legal accountability which can lead to the death penalty in Iran extends to crimes committed when younger than 18 years old.<sup>495</sup> As noted by USDOS, in adherence with *Sharia* as interpreted by Iran's judiciary, execution of minors is permissible beginning at 9 years old for girls and 13 for boys, which are the legal ages of maturity.<sup>496</sup> As noted by IHRNGO and ECPM, almost all juvenile offenders executed since 2013 received the death penalty based either on *hadd* or *qesas* punishments.<sup>497</sup> In 2023, out of the two confirmed cases of executions of juvenile offenders, one was executed at the age of 17, while the other remained incarcerated until turning 18 before facing execution.<sup>498</sup> Both were convicted of murder. Additionally, three other persons executed in 2023 were suspected to have been juvenile offenders.<sup>499</sup> As noted by AI, in 2022, several persons were executed for crimes committed at below 18 years of age, while many others were on death row.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>492</sup> Together against death penalty (ECPM) is an international association advocating against the death penalty, see, ECPM, History, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>493</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>494</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 27, 31

<sup>495</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200

<sup>496</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>497</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 32

<sup>498</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>499</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 83

<sup>500</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200



### 3.9.2. Implementation of the death penalty

The number of executions in Iran significantly increased in recent years,<sup>501</sup> and particularly since the beginning of 2023.<sup>502</sup> In March 2024, IHRNGO and ECPM reported that at least 834 persons, including 22 women and 2 minors, were executed in Iran in 2023, which was a 43 % increase from the figures of 2022.<sup>503</sup> In previous years, 582 persons were reportedly executed in 2022,<sup>504</sup> compared to 333 in 2021<sup>505</sup> and 267 in 2020.<sup>506</sup> In April 2024, AI reported on at least 853 persons executed in Iran during 2023, including 481 for drug-related offences.<sup>507</sup> The actual number of executions was believed to be higher than the figures revealed.<sup>508</sup> Furthermore, 85 % of the total number of executions were carried out without an official announcement, with only 5 % of the executions on drug-related charges being announced by the authorities.<sup>509</sup>

The rise in executions was partially attributed to an increase in executions for drug-related offences.<sup>510</sup> In 2023, at least 471 executions were carried out on drug-related charges, compared to 256 in 2022, 126 in 2021, and an average of 24 per year between 2018 and 2020.<sup>511</sup> According to Global Organised Crime Index, in 2023, heroin and methamphetamine were the main illicit drugs as part of organised crime in the country, mainly originated 'from Afghanistan and destined for Turkey, EU, the Gulf region and beyond'.<sup>512</sup>

According to IHRNGO and ECPM, 282 of the executions carried out in 2023 were related to murder charges and 20 to charges of rape or sexual assault. In 19 cases, the charges leading to the execution were unknown.<sup>513</sup>

IHRNGO and ECPM noted on a rise of executions based on the national security charges: in 2023, at least 39 persons were executed on charges related to the offences of *moharebeh*, *efsad fil-arz*, and *baghy*,<sup>514</sup> compared to 15 persons executed for these offences in 2022.<sup>515</sup> As reported by AI, in 2023, seven persons were executed in connection with their participation in

<sup>501</sup> HRW, Iranian Society Under Crackdown, Alarming Rise of Executions in Iran, 14 December 2023, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 200

<sup>502</sup> HRW, Iranian Society Under Crackdown, Execution of a Victim of Child Marriage in Iran, 21 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>503</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 13

<sup>504</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2022, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>505</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 14

<sup>506</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>507</sup> AI, Iran executes 853 people in eight-year high amid relentless repression and renewed 'war on drugs', 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>508</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 77; AI, Iran executes 853 people in eight-year high amid relentless repression and renewed 'war on drugs', 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>509</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>510</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 14; AI, Iran executes 853 people in eight-year high amid relentless repression and renewed 'war on drugs', 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>511</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>512</sup> GOCI, Iran, 27 September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>513</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>514</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), pp. 11, 46

<sup>515</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 14





the protests: six in connection with the Women, Life, Freedom protests and one in connection with the nationwide protests of November 2019.<sup>516</sup>

A substantial number of executions involved ‘members of marginalised ethnic groups’, particularly the Baluch. According to the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center, as quoted by USDOS, members of ethnic minority groups made up 28 % of the total executions during 2023, with 21 % of the executed persons (172 persons) constituted by Baluch, who constitute only 5 % of the total population in Iran.<sup>517</sup> In 2023, IHRNGO and ECPM documented the execution of at least 167 Baluch, including 3 women. Of these, 22 persons were executed on murder charges (*qesas*) and 7 on security-related charges. As noted by the source, the largest number of Baluch, 138 persons, were executed on drug-related offences,<sup>518</sup> where they were overrepresented.<sup>519</sup>

Moreover, in 2023, two men were executed on charges of blasphemy and one for adultery,<sup>520</sup> which were the first executions on these charges in 10 years.<sup>521</sup> As reported by IranWire, in May 2023, in ‘an extremely opaque judicial process’, two men were reportedly executed on charges of ‘insulting the Prophet’ and ‘insulting Islamic sanctities,’ which constitute a *hadd* punishment, for administrating Telegram channels where they reportedly expressed this type of insults.<sup>522</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [4.10.4. Blasphemy](#).

Furthermore, Iranian authorities executed two dual nationals and two Afghan nationals.<sup>523</sup> The persons with dual nationalities executed were an Iranian-British national and former senior employee of the Ministry of Defence, sentenced to death on *efsad fil-arz* charges for espionage,<sup>524</sup> and an Iranian-Swedish national of Arab minority background kidnapped in Türkiye in 2019 and sentenced to death on *efsad fil-arz* charges for forming a terrorist group and planning and implementing terrorist operations.<sup>525</sup> Among foreign nationals, Afghan, Iraqi, and Pakistani nationals were reportedly most frequently sentenced to death in Iran.<sup>526</sup>

In 2023, at least 512 executions were reportedly carried out based on death sentences issued by Revolutionary courts,<sup>527</sup> which was nearly double the 273 executions in 2022.<sup>528</sup> In April 2024, AI noted that 520 executions were conducted in accordance with death sentences issued by Revolutionary Courts.<sup>529</sup> Overall, since 2010, sentences by Revolutionary Courts

<sup>516</sup> AI, Iran executes 853 people in eight-year high amid relentless repression and renewed ‘war on drugs’, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>517</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>518</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 89

<sup>519</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 89

<sup>520</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>521</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>522</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Unjust Executions for “Insulting the Prophet”, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>523</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 46

<sup>524</sup> IHRNGO, Former Senior Official Alireza Akbari Executed for Espionage Charges, 14 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>525</sup> IHRNGO, IHR: Extradition of Habib Asyoud to Iran Must be Condemned, 1 November 2020, [url](#)

<sup>526</sup> Egan, B., The politics of capital punishment for foreign nationals in Iran, University of Oxford, Death Penalty Research Unit (DPRU) Research Papers, DPRU Research Paper No. 3, December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>527</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>528</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 14

<sup>529</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 77; AI, Iran executes 853 people in eight-year high amid relentless repression and renewed ‘war on drugs’, 4 April 2024, [url](#)



have resulted in at least 4 541 executions. As reported by IHRNGO and ECPM, executions took place in 30 out of 31 provinces in 2023, with Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province being the only one with no executions reported. The highest number of executions were carried out in Tehran/Alborz (173), followed by Sistan and Baluchistan (68), Kerman (67), Fars (54), and Isfahan (48 executions).<sup>530</sup>

In January 2024, Iran executed four persons for alleged plans to conduct an attack over an Isfahan based factory producing equipment for Iran's Ministry of Defence. The appeal of the convicted was rejected by the Supreme Court.<sup>531</sup>

### 3.9.3. Use of the death penalty against critics of the authorities

After the onset of the nation-wide protests in September 2022, the authorities repeatedly declared their intentions to conduct rapid trials and executions, including in public, for persons accused of capital offences committed during the protests. On 6 December 2022, the judiciary announced that death sentences against persons found guilty of *moharebeh* and *efsad fil-arz* would be carried out imminently. The announcement followed the conviction of several persons on capital charges related to the protests.<sup>532</sup>

Executions of people involved in the 2022 protests started in December 2022, when 22-year-old Mohsen Shekari was executed less than two weeks after being convicted on charges of *moharebeh* for injuring a *Basij* officer during the protests.<sup>533</sup> The same month, 23-year-old Majid-Reza Rahnavaard was publicly executed in Mashhad, Khorasan-e Razavi province, after being convicted by a Revolutionary Court on charges of *moharebeh* for killing two *Basij* officers in November 2022.<sup>534</sup> Both were reportedly tortured and made confessions which were broadcasted by state media.<sup>535</sup> In 2023, eight other protesters were reportedly executed either on national security-related and/or murder charges.<sup>536</sup> The trials were conducted with grave violations of due process, with the accused being subjected to torture to produce self-incriminating confessions, while families were pressured to remain silent.<sup>537</sup>

Iranian authorities do not provide information about the number of death sentences imposed particularly on protesters. However, as found by the UN FFM on Iran, at least 28 persons were reportedly sentenced to capital punishment in connection with the 2022 protests as of

<sup>530</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2024, [url](#), p. 77

<sup>531</sup> Reuters, Iran executes four people it says are linked to Israeli intelligence -state media, 29 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>532</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>533</sup> BBC News, Mohsen Shekari: Iran carries out first execution over protests, 8 December 2022, [url](#); IHRNGO, Protester Mohsen Shekari's Execution Must be Met with Serious Consequences, December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>534</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>535</sup> BBC News, Mohsen Shekari: Iran carries out first execution over protests, 8 December 2022, [url](#); Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#); USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>536</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>537</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#); IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50



January 2024.<sup>538</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that 11 out of 25 death sentences were overturned by the Supreme Court as of September 2023.<sup>539</sup>

As noted by IHRNGO and ECPM, protesters were charged with security-related crimes or murder, sometimes facing double jeopardy. Since 2020, the charges of *moharebeh* and *efsad fil-arz* have led to the highest number of executions of protesters and in all these cases, except of the case of Mohsen Shekari, the killing of armed forces members was used ‘to incite support’ for the execution. As suggested by IHRNGO and ECPM, due to the increasing domestic and international pressure, the Iranian authorities would likely use *qesas* charges ‘to evade accountability and shift responsibility to the victims’ families’.<sup>540</sup>

- In January 2024, Mohammad Ghobadlu was executed following his conviction for killing a policeman and injuring five others by running them over with his car during a protest in the town of Parand, near Tehran.<sup>541</sup> Ghobadlu was reportedly given two death sentences: one on the charges of *efsad fil-arz* and another for murder. His execution was carried out despite the suspension of *efsad fil-arz* charges for further investigations. It was reported that Ghobadlu had suffered from bipolar disorder since the age of 15 and was coerced to confess his guilt under torture.<sup>542</sup>
- In October 2022, Saman Yassin, a Kurdish musician was arrested on in October 2022 for his support of the protest, including in several posts on Instagram. Yassin was charged with the crime of *moharebeh* and sentenced to death, while being subjected to ‘severe physical and psychological torture’ in detention.<sup>543</sup> The death sentence was eventually overturned by the Supreme Court and the Revolutionary Court sentenced Yassin to five years of exile in Kerman province.<sup>544</sup>
- Iranian rapper<sup>545</sup> Toumaj Salehi was arrested in October 2022,<sup>546</sup> likely due to his music and online activities. Accused of *efsad fil-arz*<sup>547</sup> and charged with ‘propagandistic activity against the government, cooperation with hostile governments, and forming illegal groups with the intention of creating insecurity in the country’,<sup>548</sup> Salehi reportedly endured torture in detention<sup>549</sup> and spent 252 days in solitary confinement before being moved to the general prison ward. In July 2023, Salehi was sentenced to six years and three months imprisonment.<sup>550</sup> In January 2024, the

<sup>538</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 61

<sup>539</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>540</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, 5 March 2023, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>541</sup> AP, Iran executes another prisoner detained during nationwide protests that erupted in 2022, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>542</sup> Article19, Iran: The ‘state-sanctioned murder’ of protester Mohammad Ghobadlu, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>543</sup> Article19, Tightening the Net: Iran one year on from the Mahsa Jhina Amini uprising, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>544</sup> IranWire, Iran Court Sentences Kurdish Rapper Saman Yasin to 5 Years in Exile, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>545</sup> AI, Iran: 14 People Sentenced to Death in Relation to Protests, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>546</sup> Article19, Tightening the Net: Iran one year on from the Mahsa Jhina Amini uprising, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>547</sup> AI, Iran: 14 People Sentenced to Death in Relation to Protests, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>548</sup> Article19, Tightening the Net: Iran one year on from the Mahsa Jhina Amini uprising, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>549</sup> AI, Iran: 14 People Sentenced to Death in Relation to Protests, n.d., [url](#); Article19, Tightening the Net: Iran one year on from the Mahsa Jhina Amini uprising, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>550</sup> Article19, Tightening the Net: Iran one year on from the Mahsa Jhina Amini uprising, 15 September 2023, [url](#)



Revolutionary Court in Isfahan added new charges against Salehi, sentencing him to death at the end of April 2024.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> BBC News, Iranian rapper sentenced to death, says lawyer, 24 April 2024, [url](#)



## 4. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population

### 4.1. Political opposition and other dissenting groups

The Iranian Constitution permits the establishment of political parties and associations by political, professional, and religious (Islamic and recognised religious minorities) groups on the condition that they ‘do not violate the principles of freedom, sovereignty, national unity, or Islamic criteria, or question Islam as the basis of the country’s system of government.’<sup>552</sup> In practical terms, this allows only political entities that are in alignment with the state ideology.<sup>553</sup> While compliant political organisations operated relatively freely, they tended to be small and lacking widespread membership. Independent parties, opposition groups, civil society organisation, and trade unions were banned.<sup>554</sup>

Reformist groups in Iran have come under increased repression since 2009, when the so-called Green Movement protests against the results of the 2009 presidential elections were brutally suppressed. Leaders of the Green Movement – Mir Hossein Mousavi, Zahra Rahnava, and Mehdi Karubi – have remained under house arrest despite the absence of formal charges since 2011.<sup>555</sup> Monarchists, who support Reza Pahlavi, the son of the last Shah, do not have any institutional or organisational base inside Iran.<sup>556</sup> In March 2024, a former deputy interior minister, Mostafa Tajzadeh, faced additional charges<sup>557</sup> while serving a prison sentence in Evin prison.<sup>558</sup> Tajzadeh was arrested by agents of the IRGC's Intelligence Organisation on charges of ‘acting against national security’ and ‘spreading falsehoods with the intent to disrupt public order’ in July 2022<sup>559</sup> after he criticised of the authorities on social media<sup>560</sup> and was sentenced to five years in prison in October 2022.<sup>561</sup>

Iranian Kurdish opposition groups exiled in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI) include the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), the Komala (Komeleh) Party, Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK). Following the outbreak of the nationwide protests in September 2022, the Iraq-based Iranian Kurdish opposition groups were accused of inciting the protests.<sup>562</sup> Most of the Iranian Kurdish parties are located in Iraq, in the areas under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The exception is

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<sup>552</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>553</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>554</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 197

<sup>555</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>556</sup> MEMRI, Iranian Monarchists Are to Be Blamed For the Failure of The Opposition, 20 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>557</sup> IranWire, Iranian Reformist Tajzadeh Faces New Charges Amid Ongoing Jail Time, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>558</sup> RFE/RL, Prominent Iranian Reformist Tajzadeh Sentenced To Five Years In Prison, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>559</sup> Human Rights Watch, Iran: Arrest of High-Profile Critics, 12 July 2022, [url](#)

<sup>560</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>561</sup> RFE/RL, Prominent Iranian Reformist Tajzadeh Sentenced To Five Years In Prison, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>562</sup> Rudaw, Kurdish Iranian groups protest planned wall around Koya camp, 23 February 2024, [url](#)



PJAK, whose fighters are in the Qandil mountains on the Iran-Iraq border, which is the area under the control of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).<sup>563</sup>

The political crimes law, enacted in January 2016, defines 'a political crime' as actions 'committed against the administration, political bodies, and domestic and foreign policies with the aim of reforming the country's affairs.'<sup>564</sup> Actions such as 'insulting and defaming government officials as well as visiting heads of state or political representatives' are classified as political crimes if they are conducted without an intention of 'damaging the foundation of the ruling establishments'. However, the intention 'to damage the foundation of the ruling establishment' bring these actions under charges related to national security crimes, instead of the scope of political crimes. The determination of whether an act constitutes a political crime lies with the courts and the Public Prosecutor's Office.<sup>565</sup> As noted by the expert Behrooz Chamanara, with the absence of a [clear] definition of which actions constitute a political crime, 'the authorities often denied the existence of political prisoners, despite the incarceration of numerous political activists.'<sup>566</sup>

As noted by the UN FFM on Iran, following the outbreak of the 'Women, Life, Freedom' protests in September 2022, 'both real and perceived dissent, opposition, and protest activities' were harshly suppressed with the use of 'vaguely defined' criminal charges that allow for 'broad interpretation.' The criminal charges which opponents of the Iranian authorities faced in Criminal and Revolutionary Courts included the following: 'spreading propaganda against the system,' 'gathering and colluding to commit crimes against security,' 'disrupting the public order,' 'forming of and membership in a group or association with the intent to undermine the country's security,' 'spreading lies with intent to disturb the public opinion,' 'insulting the Supreme Leader' and 'insulting the sanctities of Islam'.<sup>567</sup> For more information on the 'Women, Life, Freedom' protests in September 2022, please refer to chapter [4.2. Protesters](#).

Prosecutors reportedly frequently imposed 'strict penalties' for minor violations by people expressing dissent.<sup>568</sup> Critics of the government frequently faced charges carrying the death penalty, such as *moharebeh*, *efsad fil-arz*, 'anti-revolutionary behaviour,' 'siding with global arrogance,' and 'crimes against Islam.' The official data on the number of persons imprisoned for their political convictions is unavailable. Citing NGO United for Iran, USDOS reported that at least 1 074 persons were considered as 'prisoners of conscience' in 2023.<sup>569</sup>

In relation to the protests, a surge in the number of flogging sentences imposed on political and civil society activists, particularly on charges of 'disturbing public order and publishing

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<sup>563</sup> Wilgenburg, W., van, Iran's Pressure Campaign on Iranian Kurds Continues, Fikra Forum, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 13 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>564</sup> US, Library of Congress, Iran: Political Offenses Defined, 9 February 2016, [url](#)

<sup>565</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 20; USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>566</sup> Chamanara, B., interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024

<sup>567</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 53, 54

<sup>568</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>569</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 19-20



falsehoods with the intention of disturbing the public opinion’, was reported.<sup>570</sup> Reporting on criminal charges and convictions imposed on people expressing political dissent and oppositions, the UN FFM on Iran noted:

‘Such convictions were rendered possible, *inter alia* due to vague and undefined exception clauses to constitutionally recognised rights and provisions in the Islamic Penal Code, including those related to “insulting” Islam, religious figures or the authorities. Such provisions are open to broad interpretation, contravening the principle of legality. They have been commonly used with respect to protected speech, to repress real or perceived dissent and opposition, including in the context of the protests [Islamic Penal Code, Articles 262, 513, 514 and 609.] Some of those offences are punishable by death, lengthy prison sentences or sentences that amount to torture and ill-treatment, such as flogging.’<sup>571</sup>

Government critics ‘in the ethnic regions’ were frequently labelled as ‘separatists.’ As noted by IHRNGO and ECPM, the presence of armed groups in these regions gave the authorities a pretext to justify death sentences by framing them as part of counterterrorism and counter-separatism efforts. According to the data of IHRNGO, at least 154 persons were executed between 2010 and 2023 for their association with prohibited political and armed groups. Of those, 76 (49 %) were Kurdish, 45 (29%) Baluch and 24 (16 %) Arabs, the majority of whom were Sunni Muslims.<sup>572</sup> In 2023, a Kurdish political prisoner, arrested by IRCG forces while trying to cross to Türkiye and sentenced to death on charges of *moharebeh* because of his membership in the Komala party and murdering a traffic officer, was secretly executed in Kermanshah Central Prison.<sup>573</sup>

Persons perceived as opponents to the Islamic Republic, including activists and journalists, faced restrictions on their freedom of movement, including obstacles to leave the country.<sup>574</sup> In addition, former political prisoners were subjected to travel bans, bans on returning to their professions for years after their release, or, in some case, ‘imposed internal exile.’ Some political prisoners were granted suspended sentences and released on bail, with the condition that any involvement in further political activities would result in their re-incarceration.<sup>575</sup> In January 2024, a Revolutionary Court in Karaj reportedly sentenced two women activists to six years in prison and two years in exile on charges related to their political activities.<sup>576</sup> In February 2024, a revolutionary court in Orumiyeh, Western Azerbaijan province, sentenced a Sunni Kurdish cleric to death and 16 years in prison on charges of *efsad fil-arz* as well of ‘harming the territorial integrity or independence of the country’ and ‘propaganda against the state.’ As reported by media, he was arrested following a critical speech at a memorial

<sup>570</sup> Iran International, Iran Sharply Increases Lashing Sentences Against Activists, 8 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>571</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 54

<sup>572</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 88

<sup>573</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 47

<sup>574</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>575</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>576</sup> HRA, Maryam Jalal Hosseini and Fatemeh Tadrissi Receive Lengthy Prison Sentences and exile, 16 January 2024, [url](#); IranWire, Iranian Women Activists Handed Long-Term Sentences, 16 January 2024, [url](#)



ceremony of a killed protester and was sentenced solely based on a report by the Ministry of Intelligence.<sup>577</sup>

In an interview with EUAA, Barzoo Eliassi noted the presence of ‘a cyber army’ both within and outside Iran, tasked to monitor opinions shared online. Additionally, as noted by Eliassi, if complaints against someone outside Iran would be lodged with the Iranian authorities, this person would be summoned by the authorities upon their return to Iran.<sup>578</sup>

At the end of January 2023, a group of parliament members reportedly proposed amendments to Article 512 of the Book Five of the Penal Code,<sup>579</sup> which deals with incitement of others with the aim to disrupt national security. The proposed changes would extend the scope of this Article by including punishments to ‘anyone with a good job or with a good social standing or anyone who is a cultural, scientific, or military figure, even those with a high standing in their family’<sup>580</sup> in case they disseminate information contrary to the official position.<sup>581</sup> A conviction in this case would lead to imprisonment for up to 15 years,<sup>582</sup> potentially including also the death penalty if combined with the charge of *ifsad-fil-arz*.<sup>583</sup> Information about the enforcement of the bill was not found within the time constraints of the report. For more information, see chapter [3.9.3. Use of the death penalty against critics of the authorities](#).

## 4.2. Protesters

In mid-September 2022, nationwide and unprecedented protests erupted following the death of Mahsa (Zhin) Amini, an Iranian-Kurdish woman, in the custody of the ‘morality police’, who arrested Amini at a train station in Tehran for violating the mandatory *hijab* law.<sup>584</sup> Fuelled by the authorities’ denial about the violence which led to her death, protests broke out during Amini’s funeral in her hometown Saqqez in Kurdistan province<sup>585</sup> and spread to all 31 provinces of the country.<sup>586</sup> The protests took the slogan ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ (*Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*),<sup>587</sup> originally coming from ‘the Kurdish freedom movement.’<sup>588</sup> The protests continued for several months<sup>589</sup> and were particularly intense in regions inhabited by ethnic

<sup>577</sup> Kurdish Human Rights Network, Sunni Kurdish cleric sentenced to death for ‘spreading corruption on earth’, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>578</sup> Eliassi, B., interview with EUAA, 14 March 2024

<sup>579</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 15 June 2023, A/HRC/53/23, [url](#), para. 38

<sup>580</sup> MEMO, Iran may criminalise social media comments, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>581</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 15 June 2023, A/HRC/53/23, [url](#), para. 38; MEMO, Iran may criminalise social media comments, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>582</sup> MEMO, Iran may criminalise social media comments, 1 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>583</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 15 June 2023, A/HRC/53/23, [url](#), para. 38

<sup>584</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 13, 16; HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p.197

<sup>585</sup> Reuters, What has changed in Iran one year since Mahsa Amini protests erupted?, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>586</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 4

<sup>587</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 39

<sup>588</sup> Kurdish Institute Brussels, “Jin – Jiyan – Azadi” (“Women, Life, Freedom”) – The Kurdish slogan that rings loudly in the Iranian streets today, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>589</sup> Reuters, Sporadic protests continue in Iran as Mahsa Amini anniversary passes, 17 September 2023, [url](#)





minorities, who have long been subjected to state discrimination, such as Kurds in the northwest of the country and Baluches in the southeast.<sup>590</sup> ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ protests posed one of the most significant challenges against the country’s Shia clerical rule since the 1979 Revolution.<sup>591</sup> The protests spotlighted widespread grievances of the population, including discrimination against women and ethnic minorities.<sup>592</sup> Led by women and youth, the protests were unprecedented in their duration and reach as well as in the severity of the authorities’ violent reaction.<sup>593</sup>

In 2023, media reported on several protests. In February 2023, to commemorate 40 days since the execution of two men under protest-related charges,<sup>594</sup> demonstrations were reported in several neighbourhoods of Tehran,<sup>595</sup> the cities of Karaj, Isfahan, Qazvin, Rasht, Arak, Mashhad, Sanandaj, Qorveh, and Izeh in Khuzestan province, Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchistan province,<sup>596</sup> and Sanandaj, capital of Kurdistan province.<sup>597</sup> On 15 March 2023, videos circulating online depicted alleged anti-government protests in different cities during the celebrations of *Chaharshanbe Soori*, an annual fire festival deemed un-Islamic by hard-liners.<sup>598</sup> At the anniversary of Mahsa Amini’s death, alleged ‘sporadic protests’ were showed on social media, particularly in Hamadan.<sup>599</sup> In anticipation of potential unrests, security forces were reportedly deployed to Amini’s hometown, and, according to social media posts, to several cities within Kurdistan.<sup>600</sup>

### State response to the protests

The Constitution allows for public demonstrations if they adhere to Islamic principles,<sup>601</sup> effectively restricting the right to peaceful assembly.<sup>602</sup> Demonstrations require government authorisation,<sup>603</sup> and public gatherings deemed critical are outlawed.<sup>604</sup> Security forces have frequently dispersed unauthorised gatherings, resorting to detention of protesters and use of lethal force against them.<sup>605</sup>

<sup>590</sup> Reuters, What has changed in Iran one year since Mahsa Amini protests erupted?, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>591</sup> AP, Iran executes first known prisoner arrested in protests, 9 December 2022, [url](#); AP, Iran says 22,000 arrested in protests pardoned by top leader, 13 March 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Sporadic protests continue in Iran as Mahsa Amini anniversary passes, 17 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>592</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 4

<sup>593</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 13

<sup>594</sup> AP, Protests hit multiple Iran cities for first time in weeks, 17 February 2023, [url](#); Reuters, Overnight protests rock Tehran, other Iranian cities, videos show, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>595</sup> Reuters, Overnight protests rock Tehran, other Iranian cities, videos show, 17 February 2023, [url](#); AP, Protests hit multiple Iran cities for first time in weeks, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>596</sup> Reuters, Overnight protests rock Tehran, other Iranian cities, videos show, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>597</sup> AP, Protests hit multiple Iran cities for first time in weeks, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>598</sup> AP, Videos show scattered protests during Iran’s fire festival, 15 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>599</sup> Reuters, Sporadic protests continue in Iran as Mahsa Amini anniversary passes, 17 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>600</sup> Reuters, Mahsa Amini death anniversary sees heavy security in Iran, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>601</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>602</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21

<sup>603</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>604</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 21

<sup>605</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)



The protests were violently suppressed by the authorities,<sup>606</sup> with sources reporting on mass arrests,<sup>607</sup> killings of protesters and bystanders, and beatings.<sup>608</sup> Security forces reportedly used excessive force, such as unlawful use of live ammunition,<sup>609</sup> including handguns, and automatic weapons.<sup>610</sup> The UN FFM on Iran reported that ‘security forces targeted vital body parts of the protesters and bystanders,’ caused ocular injuries, and used multiple metal pellets, which amounted to indiscriminate use due to the risk of causing serious injuries to protesters and bystanders. It also noted a pattern according to which the security forces targeted ‘specific protesters, based on discriminatory grounds, such as gender and ethnicity.’<sup>611</sup>

In November 2021, reportedly peaceful protests of farmers and residents of Isfahan over water shortages were dispersed by security forces, resulting in 120 arrests.<sup>612</sup> In May 2022, protests sparked in Khuzestan province and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province over surging food prices and a fatal building collapse in Abadan, Khuzestan province.<sup>613</sup> These protests, which spread to over 20 cities in 6 provinces and lasted around 2 weeks,<sup>614</sup> were suppressed by security forces with live ammunition, birdshot guns, tear gas, and water cannons against the protesters.<sup>615</sup>

Besides the anti-riot police (*yegan-e vizhe*), which is the sole authorised entity under Iranian law to handle protests with less-lethal means, heavy deployments of other security forces, including the *Basij* paramilitary militia and ‘plain-clothed security agents’ in some areas were reported. The disproportionate use of force was particularly prevalent in areas with more extensive and long-lasting protests, including the capital Tehran, Kurdish regions in the northwest of the country, and Sistan and Baluchistan province in the southeast, including the cities of Divandareh, Garmsar, Hamedan, Kerman, Marivan, Mashhad, Mehrshahr, Rasht, Saghez, Sanandaj, and Shiraz.<sup>616</sup>

As of September 2023, 551 people, including 49 women and 68 children, were reportedly killed in protests, with deaths documented across at least 26 provinces. The highest number of deaths were reported in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities: Sistan and Baluchistan province, provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah, and parts of Western Azerbaijan.<sup>617</sup> The highest single-day death toll was recorded on 30 September 2022, when 104 persons were

<sup>606</sup> HRW, Iran: Security Forces Kill, Torture, Abuse Children, 25 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>607</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>608</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 197

<sup>609</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 197; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 32

<sup>610</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 24

<sup>611</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 24, 26, 26, 30

<sup>612</sup> Zamaneh media, Isfahan Fatal Crackdown: Water Protests and the Iranian Regime’s new Dilemma, 8 December 2021, [url](#)

<sup>613</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 197

<sup>614</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 40

<sup>615</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 197

<sup>616</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), paras. 6, 10

<sup>617</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 22; see also AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, [url](#), p. 197 and HRW, Iran: Security Forces Kill, Torture, Abuse Children, 25 April 2023, [url](#)



killed after Friday prayers in Zahedan city, Sistan and Baluchistan province.<sup>618</sup> Moreover, as reported by AI, thousands of protesters refrained from seeking medical treatment out of fear of being arrested.<sup>619</sup> The UN FFM on Iran noted that the Ministry of Health issued official instructions for medical personnel to report persons seeking medical assistance for injuries.<sup>620</sup>

Facilities in which the protesters were held included police stations, prisons, and ‘unidentified or unofficial secret detention sites’, such as military barracks, sports venues, private residences, ruined buildings, and underground rooms owned by the Ministry of Interior or the intelligence branch of IRGC. Detainees were often unregistered or registered with delay ‘and sometimes only after being coerced into making confession.’<sup>621</sup> Hundreds of children, some as young as 10, were reportedly arrested and detained together with adults, with some of them taken to juvenile detention centres or mental health facilities.<sup>622</sup> In April 2023, Human Rights Watch reported that minors detained during the 2022 protests were killed, tortured, sexually assaulted, and disappeared by Iran’s security forces and denied access to due process by Iranian judiciary.<sup>623</sup> For more information, see chapter [3.8 Treatment in detention and prison conditions](#).

### Aftermath of the protests

After the start of the ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ protests, the IRCG urged the judiciary to prosecute persons spreading ‘false news and rumours.’<sup>624</sup> The authorities targeted various groups with arrests and detentions, including protesters’ family members seeking justice,<sup>625</sup> journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers offering protesters legal aid, healthcare professionals, and others expressing solidarity with the protests: teachers, artists, athletes, and social media influencers.<sup>626</sup> Protests-related arrests, summonses for questioning, threats, and job dismissals reportedly continued throughout 2023.<sup>627</sup>

As reported by the UN FFM on Iran, Iranian authorities stated that the average age of persons arrested was 15.<sup>628</sup> Among the reasons for arrests were ‘dancing, chanting or writing slogans on walls and honking car horns’<sup>629</sup> and, in case of women, posting photos without wearing

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<sup>618</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 22

<sup>619</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p. 197

<sup>620</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 31

<sup>621</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 38

<sup>622</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 39

<sup>623</sup> HRW, Iran: Security Forces Kill, Torture, Abuse Children, 25 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>624</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>625</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 33

<sup>626</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), paras. 31, 33

<sup>627</sup> Reuters, What has changed in Iran one year since Mahsa Amini protests erupted?, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>628</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 34

<sup>629</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 33



*hijab*.<sup>630</sup> As noted by the UN FFM on Iran, some of the women were arrested at their home, indicating the use of surveillance to identify them.<sup>631</sup> The arrested protesters were frequently subjected to *incommunicado* and prolonged solitary confinement.<sup>632</sup> T The UN FFM on Iran noted that in most cases, the detainees were released after their families paid exorbitant bail amounts.<sup>633</sup>

On 6 November 2022, the Iranian Parliament passed a resolution urging the judiciary to impose severe punishments, including the execution of ‘rioters’, arguing that this would serve as an effective deterrent to others.<sup>634</sup> Many protesters were charged under such crimes as ‘propaganda against the state,’ ‘assembly and collusion to act against national security,’ ‘insulting the Supreme Leader,’ ‘establishing or being a member of a group to disrupt national security,’ and ‘destroying public facilities and equipment to disrupt public order’, as well as *efsad fil-arz* and *moharebeh* carrying the death penalty.<sup>635</sup> For information on death sentences, please refer to chapter [3.9. Death penalty](#).

On 5 February 2023, marking the 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran,<sup>636</sup> the authorities declared a general amnesty supposedly encompassing persons arrested, charged, or detained amid the ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ protests.<sup>637</sup> Persons convicted of theft,<sup>638</sup> *moharebeh*, as well as those convicted of ‘spying, armed action, committing murder or causing injury, membership in certain groups, having contact with agents of foreign intelligence services or destroying public property’ were excluded from the amnesty.<sup>639</sup> Human Rights Watch noted that the amnesty excluded human rights defenders serving or charged with lengthy sentences and protesters facing the death penalty.<sup>640</sup>

The preconditions for a state pardon included ‘admission of guilt and expression of remorse,’ even for persons not convicted of any offence, which, as noted by the UN FFM on Iran, violated their right to presumption of innocence.<sup>641</sup> On 1 March 2023, as reported by AP, the Head of the Judiciary announced that the Supreme Leader had pardoned 22 628 persons detained amid the protests, out of a total of 82 656 prisoners and persons facing charges.<sup>642</sup> Some persons who had been released under the amnesty were subsequently re-arrested, sentenced, or summoned,<sup>643</sup> including on new charges.<sup>644</sup> In its 2023 human rights report,

<sup>630</sup> Article19, Tightening the Net: Iran one year on from the Mahsa Jhina Amini uprising, 15 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>631</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 37

<sup>632</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023, [url](#), p.198; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 41

<sup>633</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 41

<sup>634</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 25

<sup>635</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 23

<sup>636</sup> Reuters, Iran marks revolution anniversary, hackers interrupt state TV coverage, 13 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>637</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>638</sup> AP, Iran says 22,000 arrested in protests pardoned by top leader, 13 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>639</sup> The New York Times, Iran Announces Amnesty, but It May Not Spare Many Protesters, 5 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>640</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>641</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 60

<sup>642</sup> AP, Iran says 22,000 arrested in protests pardoned by top leader, 13 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>643</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>644</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview with EUAA, 20 March 2024



USDOS noted that many of the prisoners released under the general amnesty had already spent years in prison, with some resorting ‘to hunger strikes to protest their prolonged imprisonment and poor conditions.’<sup>645</sup>

The authorities have not provided any information on the number of persons killed by security forces during the protests,<sup>646</sup> and frequently attributed deaths to ‘rioters’ or claiming deaths by suicides or accidents.<sup>647</sup> According to official information, 75 law enforcement officers died and another 7 000 were injured in the protests.<sup>648</sup>

Overall, the investigation into the protests focused on the actions of protesters, without addressing the conduct of security forces and judiciary members.<sup>649</sup> In March 2024, a police chief of Bandar Anzali in the north of the country was sentenced to death for killing a protester in November 2022<sup>650</sup> reportedly following international attention to unlawfulness of Iranian security forces. As noted by Iran Focus, the authorities used a *qesas* punishment while using *moharebeh* and *efsad fil-arz* punishments for protesters, which showed that ‘unlawful killings by security forces and protest actions leading to injury or death are considered categorically different by Iran’s judiciary.’<sup>651</sup>

In August 2023, AI reported that relatives of protesters and bystanders killed by security forces were subjected to targeting by the authorities in the attempts to silence them, including by means of arrests and detention, prosecution on national security charges (which sometimes resulted in prison and flogging sentences) as well as interrogations, surveillance, and threats.<sup>652</sup> Mahsa Amini’s uncle was reportedly arrested days before the anniversary of her death,<sup>653</sup> while her father was briefly arrested and cautioned against commemorating it; therefore, the family could not hold the planned vigil at her grave.<sup>654</sup> In April 2024, the father of one of the protesters killed during the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ protests in Dehghan, Kurdistan province, was reportedly arrested for the second time, after being temporarily released on bail in July 2023.<sup>655</sup>

## 4.3. Human rights defenders, activists, and lawyers

### Human rights defenders and activists

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<sup>645</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

<sup>646</sup> Reuters, What has changed in Iran one year since Mahsa Amini protests erupted?, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>647</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2022/2023, 2023 [url](#), p. 200; Reuters, What has changed in Iran one year since Mahsa Amini protests erupted?, 12 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>648</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 22

<sup>649</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>650</sup> VoA, Iran sentences police officer to death for killing protester, 27 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>651</sup> Iran Focus, Questionable Motives behind Iran’s Death Sentence for Police Officer who killed Protester, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>652</sup> AI, Iran: Harassment of families of victims unlawfully killed during protests must end, 21 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>653</sup> Reuters, Iran detains Mahsa Amini’s uncle as anniversary of her death, protests loom, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>654</sup> Reuters, Sporadic protests continue in Iran as Mahsa Amini anniversary passes, 17 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>655</sup> Kurdistan Human Rights network, Father of slain protester arrested again in Dehghan, 10 April 2024, [url](#)



NGOs addressing human rights or political issues face restrictions and pressure.<sup>656</sup> As noted by Iran International on 30 April 2024, Iranian authorities continued crackdown on charity NGOs.<sup>657</sup>

Following the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ protests,<sup>658</sup> human rights defenders, who had openly expressed solidarity with the protesters and defence lawyers representing persons implicated in protest-related cases, faced various reprisals.<sup>659</sup> Sources reported that human rights defenders faced harassment, arbitrary arrests,<sup>660</sup> detentions,<sup>661</sup> and criminal prosecution,<sup>662</sup> including on charges of committing crimes against the country’s national security,<sup>663</sup> and torture and ill-treatment in detention.<sup>664</sup> Moreover, human rights defenders and lawyers were reportedly summoned and interrogated by intelligence services,<sup>665</sup> threatened with suspension and suspended from legal practice.<sup>666</sup> Furthermore, in 2023, the authorities reportedly increased pressure on human rights activists advocating for the abolishment of the death penalty, including by imposing criminal charges on them.<sup>667</sup> During the same period, security agencies reportedly arrested at least 325 women activists in various cities of the country.<sup>668</sup>

In the period between 16 September 2022 and 30 November 2022, at least 218 human rights defenders were either arrested or convicted, marking a doubling of the figure for 2018.<sup>669</sup> As part of the general amnesty declared by the Supreme Leader in February 2023, 29 human rights defenders were reportedly released from detention.<sup>670</sup> In April 2023, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, a human rights defender advocating against ill-treatment and torture in prison, was sentenced by a revolutionary court in Tehran to six years in prison for ‘gathering and colluding against national security’ and a one-year prison sentence for producing ‘propaganda against

<sup>656</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>657</sup> Iran International, Iran’s government continues crackdown on charity NGOs, 30 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>658</sup> CHRI, Iran Protests: At Least 44 Defense Attorneys Arrested Since September, 10 January 2023, [url](#); UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 51

<sup>659</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 80

<sup>660</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 51

<sup>661</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 80; Frontline Defenders, Iran should unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>662</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 15 June 2023, A/HRC/53/23, [url](#), para. 51; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 80

<sup>663</sup> Frontline Defenders, Iran should unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders, 17 February 2023, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>664</sup> Article19, Iran: Families forced to remain silent as second man executed, 16 December 2022, [url](#); UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 80

<sup>665</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 51; UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 80

<sup>666</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 80

<sup>667</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 104

<sup>668</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Statistics report on wide-spread violations of women’s rights in Iran during 2023, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>669</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 51

<sup>670</sup> Frontline Defenders, Iran should unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders, 17 February 2023, [url](#)



the state.’ She also received additional penalties, including a two-year travel ban, a prohibition on residing in Tehran, and a two-year ban on joining political and social groups.<sup>671</sup>

## Lawyers

In January 2023, CHRI reported that at least 44 defence lawyers had been arrested since September 2022, with 27 of them being subsequently released.<sup>672</sup> According to the UN FFM on Iran, 157 defence lawyers faced different forms of judicial harassment, with 57 of them being arrested. The UN FFM on Iran noted that lawyers were targeted for their professional activities, including providing legal assistance to protesters and their families, advocating against torture and ill-treatment of their clients, as well as for expressing solidarity with the protests and speaking to the media, which led to pressure on bar associations to take disciplinary actions against many lawyers and restrictions of lawyers’ practice rights by Criminal and Revolutionary Courts.<sup>673</sup> Two women lawyers reportedly died shortly after being detained ‘in connection with their work on the protest.’<sup>674</sup>

In July 2023, the Prosecutor’s Office in Bukan, Kurdistan province, accused 55 lawyers of supporting Mahsa Amini’s family ‘by signing a statement offering legal assistance.’ In August 2023, Saleh Nikbakht, the lawyer representing Amini’s family, appeared before a Revolutionary Court in Tehran, charged with ‘propaganda against the state’ because of media interviews,<sup>675</sup> in which he had contested the official forensic report of Amini’s death. Several days after receiving the 2023 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought on behalf of Mahsa Amini in December 2023, Saleh Nikbakht was sentenced to one year in prison.<sup>676</sup>

Three out of more than 30 lawyers detained in September 2022 had in their practice cases of defending converts to Christianity, who were convicted to various prison terms.<sup>677</sup> In January 2024, a lawyer who had defended converts to Christianity was summoned to the prosecutor’s office in his hometown of Bandar-e Mahshahr.<sup>678</sup> Female lawyers in Iran face more challenges including enforced *hijab* and harassment in court rooms.<sup>679</sup>

## 4.4. Journalists and media workers

Press freedom is guaranteed by Article 24 of the Constitution ‘except when it is detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public.’<sup>680</sup> The 1986 press law, amended in 2000 and 2009, enables the authorities to impose control over journalists to make sure that

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<sup>671</sup> Frontline Defenders, Golrokh Iraee Refused to Ask for Pardon or Appear Before Court of Appeal, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>672</sup> CHRI, Iran Protests: At Least 44 Defense Attorneys Arrested Since September, 10 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>673</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 81

<sup>674</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 82

<sup>675</sup> HRW, Iran – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>676</sup> Iran International, Lawyer for Mahsa Amini’s Family Receives Harsh Sentence, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>677</sup> Asia News, Iran jailing lawyers, even those defending Christian converts, 11 September 2022, [url](#); Article18, Defenders of Christians among over 30 lawyers arrested, 8 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>678</sup> Article18, Lawyer who defended Christians summoned to prosecutor’s office, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>679</sup> OMCT, Iran: lawyers increasingly criminalised for defending imprisoned protestors, 24 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>680</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)



they do not ‘endanger the Islamic Republic,’ ‘do not offend the clergy and the Supreme Leader,’ and do not ‘spread false information.’ The Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has accused independent media of being manipulated by foreign forces.<sup>681</sup> Censorship is imposed on newspapers, magazines, and online platforms.<sup>682</sup>

Foreign-based websites, including news and major social media sites, are reportedly subject to filtering. Satellite dishes (TV antennas that provide access to international channels) are prohibited and Persian-language broadcasting from abroad is frequently jammed. Access to thousands of websites, especially those related to international news, political opposition, and human rights, is heavily restricted. In recent years, authorities have targeted journalists who have exposed corruption cases involving officials convicting them on charges of defamation and disseminating false news.<sup>683</sup>

In its 2024 Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Iran 176<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries, one place up from 2023. RFS noted that Iran has solidified its position as one of the most repressive countries in terms of press freedom, with journalists facing arbitrary arrests, interrogations, imprisonment, surveillance, intimidation, and unfair trials conducted by Revolutionary Courts.<sup>684</sup> The situation deteriorated notably after the 2022 protests,<sup>685</sup> with over 100 journalists and media workers being arrested, detained, prosecuted, and convicted in relation to their work, such as conducting investigations, publishing opinions, and writing about victims of the protests and their families.<sup>686</sup> Since the start of the protests, an increase in detentions of female journalists was reported.<sup>687</sup> According to NGOs, as mentioned by the UN FFM on Iran, 31 women journalists, which is a record figure, were arrested during the protests.<sup>688</sup> Moreover, female journalists and activists were put under greater pressure with the increased monitoring of online platforms by the authorities.<sup>689</sup>

Journalists who were arrested in protest-related cases were given severe prison sentences, ranging from 12 months to 18 years, along with travel bans and the suspension of their work permits. For instance, in January 2023, journalist Nazila Maroufian received a two-year prison sentence, a five-year travel ban and a fine, after being charged with ‘propaganda against the state’ and ‘spreading false news’<sup>690</sup> because of her interview with Mahsa Amini’s father, who contested claims about her health issues causing her death in custody.<sup>691</sup> In July 2023, following a complaint from the IRGC, a court in Tehran banned Behrooz Behzadi, the editor-in-chief of *Etemad* newspaper, from engaging in journalistic activities for one year, after finding

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<sup>681</sup> RSF, Iran, n.d., [url](#), assessed 7 May 2024

<sup>682</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>683</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>684</sup> RSF, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>685</sup> RSF, Iran, n.d., [url](#); UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 32

<sup>686</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 83

<sup>687</sup> RSF, An unprecedented number of women journalists are now detained in Iran, 8 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>688</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 83

<sup>689</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>690</sup> HRANA, Journalist Nazila Maroufian Sentenced to One Year in Prison, 4 September 2023, [url](#); UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 33

<sup>691</sup> RSF, An unprecedented number of women journalists are now detained in Iran, 8 November 2022, [url](#)





him guilty of ‘publishing false content’, including coverage of arrests of cinematographers and artists expressing solidarity with the protests.<sup>692</sup>

In January 2024, journalists Niloufar Hamed, who initially reported on Mahsa Amini’s hospitalisation, and Elaheh Mohammadi, who tried to cover Amini’s funeral,<sup>693</sup> were temporarily released on bail pending their appeal verdict,<sup>694</sup> after spending 15 months in prison.<sup>695</sup> Both were detained in October 2022<sup>696</sup> and sentenced to 13 and 12 years in prison respectively<sup>697</sup> on various charges, including collaborating with the U.S. government.<sup>698</sup> Following the circulation of a photo showing the journalists outside the prison without *hijabs*, the judicial authorities made a statement on their intention to prosecute Hamed and Mohammadi for breaching the mandatory *hijab* law.<sup>699</sup> As noted by RSF, their release was part of the government’s attempt to reconcile with the media ahead of the legislative elections of March 2024.<sup>700</sup>

According to RSF, 24 journalists were in detention as of 7 May 2024.<sup>701</sup> Media noted that, based on a report by an NGO defending freedom of information, at least 91 journalists and media activists were subjected to prosecution by the judiciary and security apparatus in the period from 1 January 2024 to 30 March 2024, with at least 12 journalists and media activists being detained.<sup>702</sup> In February 2024, media reported that, based on a document accessed by a hacker activist group, a revolutionary court in Tehran convicted *in absentia* 44 foreign-based journalists and media activists (including journalists working for Persian-language media outlets abroad such as Iran International, BBC Farsi, Manoto, Radio Farda, GEM TV, and Voice of America) on charges of ‘propaganda against the government’.<sup>703</sup>

## 4.5. Education personnel

In its Freedom in the World report for 2023, Freedom House noted that academic freedom in Iran was limited. The source reported that the Supreme Leader Khamenei had warned that universities should not become involved in political activities, while students reportedly noted tighter restrictions at universities, including stricter implementation of mandatory *hijab*

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<sup>692</sup> Iran International, Editor-in-Chief of Iranian Reformist Daily Received One-Year Ban, 29 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>693</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>694</sup> Reuters, Two Iranian journalists jailed on protest charges temporarily releases – state media, 14 January 2024, [url](#); AP, 2 Iranian journalists jailed for their reporting on Mahsa Amini’s death are released on bail, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>695</sup> RFS, RSF fears that two newly freed Iranian women journalists could be jailed again, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>696</sup> RSF, An unprecedented number of women journalists are now detained in Iran, 8 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>697</sup> Reuters, Two Iranian journalists jailed on protest charges temporarily releases – state media, 14 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>698</sup> AP, Iran sentences 2 journalists for allegedly collaborating with US. Both covered Masa Amini’s death, 22 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>699</sup> RFS, RSF fears that two newly freed Iranian women journalists could be jailed again, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>700</sup> RFS, Iran’s ‘criminal’ journalists: a predatory judiciary casts a shadow over supposed pre-election reconciliation, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>701</sup> RSF, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>702</sup> IranWire, Iran Prosecutes over 90 Media Professionals This Year, 3 April 2024, [url](#); Iran Focus, 91 Journalists, Media Activists Persecuted in Iran in Past 3 Months, 4 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>703</sup> Iran International, Iran Convicted 44 Foreign-Based Journalists in Absentia, Leaked Document Reveals, 23 February 2024, [url](#)



requirements, since the election of Raisi as president<sup>704</sup> in June 2021.<sup>705</sup> Persons working with academia, and especially those who travel to Europe for their work, frequently faced espionage charges, which are brought by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security.<sup>706</sup>

In recent years, teachers were engaged in frequent protests over economic and work conditions.<sup>707</sup> Authorities reportedly responded to these protests with arbitrary arrests and detentions,<sup>708</sup> including imposing solitary confinement and deprivation of the right to family contacts or visits on the teachers' union activists taking part in the nationwide teachers' protests,<sup>709</sup> which started in May 2022.<sup>710</sup>

HRANA reported that demonstrations in support of 'Women, Life, Freedom' protests were held in 143 universities across Iran, with more than 550 students being arrested in the first months of the protests.<sup>711</sup> The Supreme Council ordered imminent dismissals of university academic staff suspected of supporting the protests.<sup>712</sup> Teachers, as well as university academic staff, who supported students during the protests, reportedly faced arbitrary arrests and detentions<sup>713</sup> and various administrative measures, including suspension,<sup>714</sup> dismissal,<sup>715</sup> forced retirement, and salary reductions, attributed to their participation in the protests and refusal to adhere to the mandatory *hijab* law.<sup>716</sup> In June 2023, the Iranian Teachers' Union's Coordination Council reported, as quoted by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFR/RL) that 'over 250 teachers and cultural union activists were arrested, imprisoned, dismissed, or exiled' during 2022, with cases being 'fabricated against many teachers.'<sup>717</sup>

Teachers and teacher trade union leaders were charged with national security offences,<sup>718</sup> with the reporting by the CHRI on at least 24 convictions of teachers on national security charges as of September 2023.<sup>719</sup> In February 2024, several teachers were reportedly summoned for questioning, including on the charges of 'assembly and collusion against national security'. A teacher from Lordegan city in the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province in

<sup>704</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>705</sup> USIP, The Iran Primer, Raisi: Profile of President-elect, 20 July 2021, [url](#)

<sup>706</sup> Chamanara, B., interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024

<sup>707</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>708</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41; IFMAT, More than 200 teachers arrested during the last two months, 24 June 2022, [url](#); Iran International, 230 Teachers Arrested in Iran in Past Two Months, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

<sup>709</sup> Iran International, 230 Teachers Arrested in Iran in Past Two Months, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

<sup>710</sup> IFMAT, More than 200 teachers arrested during the last two months, 24 June 2022, [url](#); Iran International, 230 Teachers Arrested in Iran in Past Two Months, 26 June 2022, [url](#)

<sup>711</sup> Iran International, Students in Iran Protest Dismissal, Suspension of Professors, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>712</sup> Chamanara, B., interview with EUAA, 22 March 2024

<sup>713</sup> CHRI, Academic Year in Iran Begins with Imprisonment of Teachers, Arbitrary Arrests, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>714</sup> Iran International, Students in Iran Protest Dismissal, Suspension of Professors, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>715</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 78; Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023, Iran, n.d., [url](#); Iran International, Students in Iran Protest Dismissal, Suspension of Professors, 28 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>716</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 78

<sup>717</sup> RFE/RL, Iranian Authorities Keep Up Pressure On Teachers Over Support Of Protests, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>718</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 78

<sup>719</sup> CHRI, Academic Year in Iran Begins with Imprisonment of Teachers, Arbitrary Arrests, 28 September 2023, [url](#)



the southwest of the country reported that the Supreme Court had upheld his dismissal due to his support of the Women, Life, Freedom protests.<sup>720</sup>

As noted by UN FFM on Iran, Iranian authorities attempted to retain and hire academic personnel loyal to the Islamic Republic, while excluding others, particularly those involved in union activism and civil society organisations.<sup>721</sup> Quoting *Etemad* newspaper, the UN FFM on Iran reported that ‘universities were undergoing a “purification” process,’ resulting in layoff or expulsion of some academics and administrators, which was a continuing trend.<sup>722</sup> The dismissals reportedly included teachers and academic staff expressing criticism of the government, high school principals refusing collaboration with security forces, and women principals rejecting the mandatory *hijab* and religious programs.<sup>723</sup>

In March 2023, teachers protested against a slow response by the authorities to suspected poisonings of female schoolchildren which silently affected over 7 000 schoolgirls in multiple cities of the country’s 28 provinces. Protests took place in Ahvaz, Isfahan, Karaj, Mashhad, Rasht, Sanandaj, Saqqez, and Shiraz. Activists who claimed affiliation with Iran’s Coordinating Council of Teachers Syndicates reported that the police used force, pepper spray, and water cannons against protesters in the cities of Mashhad, Rasht, and Saqqez.<sup>724</sup> In early May 2024, teachers reportedly protested across the country in favour of education reforms. As reported by RFE/RL, four protesters detained in Tehran faced violence by security forces.<sup>725</sup>

## 4.6. Draft evaders and deserters

In October 2023, Iranian authorities reportedly planned to lower compulsory military service for all conscripts by three months, ‘based on their specific service location and the nature of their assigned missions,’ the new duration was planned to be between 14 months to a maximum of 21 months based on the location and the mission.<sup>726</sup> Soldiers reportedly suffered ‘physical and psychological pressures’ due to lengthy mandatory service period that at times resulted in ‘suicide or violent acts’.<sup>727</sup> For more information on conscription, please refer to chapter [1.2.7. Military service](#).

After completing their compulsory military service, Iranian men obtain the *cart-e payan-e khetmat* (end of military service certificate), a legal document that they need until they retire.<sup>728</sup> This document is required for example when they apply for an exit permit from the country unless they have an exemption.<sup>729</sup> As indicated by Barzoo Eliassi, leaving the country without

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<sup>720</sup> RFE/RL, Iranian Authorities Keep Up Pressure On Teachers Over Support Of Protests, 5 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>721</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 78

<sup>722</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 79

<sup>723</sup> CHRI, Academic Year in Iran Begins with Imprisonment of Teachers, Arbitrary Arrests, 28 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>724</sup> AP, Teachers protest over suspected Iran schoolgirl poisonings, 7 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>725</sup> RFE/RL, Iranian Teachers Rally Nationwide to Protest Lack of Reforms, 5 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>726</sup> IRNA, Iran cuts military service for all conscripts by three months, 22 October 2023, [url](#); GSN, Iran cuts the duration of military service, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>727</sup> Iran International, Conscript arrested after killing five in Kerman barracks 22 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>728</sup> FP, Conscription is not an excuse for Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>729</sup> Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Multiple Exit Stamp, n.d., [url](#)



completing the mandatory military service may stop individuals from returning to the country. Iranian authorities systematically screen, including upon return to the country, to find out who did not complete the military service.<sup>730</sup> For more information on mandatory military service, please refer to chapter [1.2.7. Military service](#).

Under the Iranian Penal Code, whoever ‘effectively encourages combatants or those in military forces to rebel, escape, surrender, or disobey military orders’ are considered as ‘*moharebeh*’ and can be sentenced to imprisonment.<sup>731</sup>

In an interview with EUAA, an expert working for the French authorities, indicated that Iranian authorities would punish the same way any Iranian for desertion or refusal of military service; however, if Baluches or Kurds demonstrate opposition to the military institution, they could be easily suspected of being political opponent and thus can be treated severely by the authorities.<sup>732</sup> As noted by Barzoo Eliassi, Kurds could be punished harsher than Persians if they desert because the Islamic Republic associates their desertion as a sign of disloyalty and distrust to the state. A Kurdish deserter can be imprisoned or get a fine, or at times, Kurds would leave the country to avoid the mandatory military service.<sup>733</sup> For information on Kurds and Baluches in Iran, please refer to chapter [4.7. Ethnic minorities](#). According to Article 988 of the Iranian Civil Code, ‘Iranian nationals cannot abandon their nationality except if [...] they have completed their national military service’.<sup>734</sup>

Information on the treatment of draft evaders and deserters by the Iranian authorities could not be found within the time constraints of this report. For more information, please refer to the EUAA COI Query response [Iran – Desertion/draft evasion](#) published on 9 February 2022.

## 4.7. Ethnic minorities

### 4.7.1. Overview

In January 2024, the population of Iran was estimated at 83.5 million.<sup>735</sup> As of 2016, Persians constituted 61 % of the Iranian population, followed by Azeris (16 %), Kurds (10 %), Lors (6 %), Arabs (2 %), Baluches (2 %), Turkmen (2 %) and others (1 %) including Qashqai, Mazandarani, Talysh, and Gilaki.<sup>736</sup>

Azeris live mainly in the northwestern provinces of East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, Ardabil, and Zanjan as well as in Tehran, with a smaller populations found in Hamadan, Qazvin and Karaj. Iranian Kurds live mostly in the provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah, which is a mountainous region on the border with Türkiye and Iraq, as well as in West Azerbaijan, Hamadan, Ilam, Northern Khorasan, and Lorestan. Baluches live in southeastern province of

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<sup>730</sup> Eliassi, B., interview, 14 March 2024 and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>731</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book five, [url](#), 15 July 2013, p. 3

<sup>732</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>733</sup> Eliassi, B., interview, 14 March 2024 and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>734</sup> FAO, Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [url](#), p. 96

<sup>735</sup> IFP, Iran’s population surges past 83.5mn, 28 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>736</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 2: Ethnic diversity, 3 September 2013, [url](#)



Sistan and Baluchistan, Arabs in the southwestern province of Khuzestan and Lors in the provinces of Lorestan, Bakhtiari, and Kohgiluyeh va Boyer-Ahmed in the west of the country.<sup>737</sup> The regions where Kurdish, Baluch and Arab groups of population reside are economically the most deprived parts of the country.<sup>738</sup>

According to Article 19 of the Iranian Constitution, ‘All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; colour, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.’<sup>739</sup> However, in August 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran reported that ethnic and religious minorities in Iran continued to be targeted by the authorities<sup>740</sup> in particular Kurds, Baluches and Arabs.<sup>741</sup>

In 2023, as reported by USIP, scores of activists, including members of ethnic and religious minorities remained ‘in prison on vague national security charges or were serving sentences after grossly unfair trials.’<sup>742</sup> In November 2023, the UN Human Rights Committee raised alarm about the ‘very high number of executions’ in Iran and questioned ‘the disproportionate use of the death penalty against members of minorities’.<sup>743</sup> According to Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRA), in 2023, there were 324 cases of arrests of people from ethnic minorities, including 156 without a warrant.<sup>744</sup>

#### 4.7.2. Kurds

On 22 January 1946, following the Second World War, Kurds established an autonomous state named ‘The Republic of Mahabad’<sup>745</sup> in northwestern Iran,<sup>746</sup> the present-day Kurdish-inhabited areas of the country.<sup>747</sup> A manifesto by the leader of the Mahabad Republic, Qazi Muhammad, suggested some key policies including ‘autonomy for the Kurdish people within Iran’ and ‘the use of Kurdish as the official language of education and administration in the Kurdish regions’.<sup>748</sup> In December 1946, the Republic of Mahabad was re-taken by Iran.<sup>749</sup>

Following the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, Kurds’ claim for a greater autonomy has not been accepted by the new government, which resulted in a revolt<sup>750</sup> and led to a conflict between the IRGC and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). During the conflict, Kurdish villages were destroyed and about 10 000 Kurds were reportedly killed.<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>737</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 2: Ethnic diversity, 3 September 2013, [url](#)

<sup>738</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024

<sup>739</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>740</sup> UN General Assembly, Seventy-eight session, situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/78/326, 24 August 2023, [url](#), para. 36

<sup>741</sup> Eliassi, B., interview, 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>742</sup> USIP, Report: Iran’s torture, sexual assaults and killings, 12 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>743</sup> UN OHCHR, UN Human Rights Committee publishes findings on Iran, Kuwait, Korea, Trinidad, United States of America and Venezuela, 3 November 2023, [url](#) p. 11

<sup>744</sup> HRA, Annual report, 2023, Annual Statistical Report of Human Rights Conditions in Iran, 20 December 2023, [url](#), pp. 11 and 58

<sup>745</sup> CFR, 1920 – 2022, Kurds’ long struggle with statelessness, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>746</sup> KCS, An enduring legacy: the Republic of Mahabad & Qazi Muhammad, 23 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>747</sup> CFR, 1920 – 2022, Kurds’ long struggle with statelessness, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>748</sup> KCS, An enduring legacy: the Republic of Mahabad & Qazi Muhammad, 23 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>749</sup> CFR, 1920 – 2022, Kurds’ long struggle with statelessness, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>750</sup> CFR, 1920 – 2022, Kurds’ long struggle with statelessness, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>751</sup> Al, Iran: Human Rights abuses against the Kurdish minority, 30 July 2008, [url](#), p. 5



As noted by Barzoo Eliassi, Kurds are predominantly Sunni and partly Shia. A Kurd cannot become the president of Iran or occupy high positions in politics. Only the twelve-Imam Shia Muslims have access to high positions within the government.<sup>752</sup> Kurds continue to be perceived by the Islamic Republic ‘as a threat to the foundation of the country’,<sup>753</sup> and Iranian government restricts cultural and political activities amongst Kurds.<sup>754</sup> As noted by an expert on Kurdish population and regions, being Kurdish and Sunni in Iran is a double disadvantage.<sup>755</sup>

Kurds do not have the right to education in their mother tongue.<sup>756</sup> For instance, earlier in 2010, Iranian authorities prohibited the use of Kurdish language in all schools in the city of Saqiz in Eastern Kurdistan. Teachers and educational personnel were instructed to use only Persian language.<sup>757</sup> Recent information on the enforcement of the prohibition could not be found within the time constraints of this report. Barzoo Eliassi noted that Kurdish regions are sidelined by the Islamic Republic. As there is no work in Kurdish areas, they go to Tehran, Karaj or Tabriz for work. In these cities, authorities often screen Kurds to see to what class or ethnic group they belong to.<sup>758</sup> In each governmental office there is a security office, known as the *herasat* that is tasked to carry out interviews, asking questions<sup>759</sup> through a process known as *gozinesh* (screening)<sup>760</sup> including questions on Kurdish independence, armed groups, political affiliation, among others.<sup>761</sup> The many Kurds in Tehran do not belong to any privileged group - political and economic factors push them to leave their regions.<sup>762</sup>

Some Kurds work as *kolbars* at the borders with Iraq, Syria and Türkiye.<sup>763</sup> They are perceived and treated as smugglers by the authorities and the Iranian border forces shoot them when they cross the border from Iraq. As reported by Iran International, between March 2023 and March 2024, 44 *kolbars* died and over 400 were severely injured due to ‘direct shootings by Iran’s military forces, landmine explosions, harsh weather conditions, fatal falls from heights, and drowning incidents’ at the border between Iran and Iraq, with 90 % increase in incidents compared to the previous year.<sup>764</sup> On 12 and 13 April 2024 two Kurdish *kolbars* were killed by the Iranian border forces in two separate incidents.<sup>765</sup> According to Kurdistan Human Rights

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<sup>752</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>753</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024

<sup>754</sup> HRW, Iran, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>755</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024

<sup>756</sup> Eliassi, B., interview, 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>757</sup> ANF, Iran banned use of Kurdish language in schools, 27 November 2010, [url](#)

<sup>758</sup> Eliassi, B., interview, 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>759</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024

<sup>760</sup> Eliassi, B., interview, 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>761</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024

<sup>762</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>763</sup> Iran International, Deadly toll rises for kolbars in Iran’s western border region, 24 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>764</sup> Iran International, Deadly toll rises for kolbars in Iran’s western border region, 24 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>765</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Iranian forces’ direct fire claims another kolbar’s life in one day, 14 April 2024, [url](#)



Network monthly report of April 2023, Iranian authorities executed a Kurdish political prisoner, who was a *kolbar* and charged with ‘taking up arms against the state’.<sup>766</sup>

There are also Kurdish women *kolbars*, who carry heavy goods. They dress as men to avoid sexual assault and social pressure. They are more vulnerable also within their families.<sup>767</sup> In Iran being Kurdish, Sunni and woman creates many layers of ‘oppression’ such as religious, ethnic, and gender, which are a disadvantage for Kurds.<sup>768</sup> For additional information on the security situation of Kurdish groups, please refer to chapter [2. Security situation](#).

Living mainly at the border with Iraq,<sup>769</sup> by July 2023, numerous Iranian Kurds fled to Iraq, where some have relatives. They fled following authorities’ crackdown on protestors related to the ‘Women, life, freedom’ protest. Some Kurds fled with tourist visas.<sup>770</sup> For information on the situation at Iran and Iraq border, please refer to chapter [2. Security situation](#).

During the 2022 protests, Kurds were disproportionately targeted by the Islamic Republic including arrest, torture, and execution.<sup>771</sup> On 15 June 2023, the UN OHCHR reported that death sentences related to Kurds seemed disproportionate.<sup>772</sup>

According to the UN Secretary-General, between January and June 2023, the government of Iran executed 14 Kurds.<sup>773</sup> In January 2023, Iranian authorities executed three Kurds on charges of ‘deliberate murder’ and ‘narcotic drugs,’ in Kermanshah and Karaj prisons.<sup>774</sup> On 10 March 2023, another Kurd was executed in Dizel Abad prison on charges of ‘intentional murder’.<sup>775</sup>

Barzoo Eliassi noted that some Kurds served the IRGC or *Basij*, joining them mainly for economic reasons and, at times, they denounced their community members if they were involved in activism. However, they would avoid participating in direct attacks against Kurdish armed groups. Kurds that served the IRGC and *Basij* were perceived by their community as *jash* (collaborator) or ‘traitors’, which made them a legitimate target by Kurdish armed groups. Family members of those Kurds who fought against Kurdish armed groups could be targeted by the latter groups.<sup>776</sup> For information on Kurdish groups, please refer to chapter [2. Security situation](#).

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<sup>766</sup> KHRN, March 2023: Human Rights violations in Iran Kurdistan, 1 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>767</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>768</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>769</sup> Al Jazeera, Iran says deal agreed with Iraq for disarming, relocation of Kurdish rebels, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>770</sup> VoA, 10 Months since Iran’s protests, Kurdish exiles in limbo, 22 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>771</sup> KCS, A rise in executions of Kurds and Baloch by Iran, 5 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>772</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 49

<sup>773</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 49

<sup>774</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, In Kermanshah and Karaj prisons, three Kurdish prisoners were executed by hanging, 5 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>775</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, With the execution of a prisoner in Dizel Abad Prison, Kermanshah, the number of Kurdish prisoners executed in 130 days reached 52, 11 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>776</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024



### 4.7.3. Yarsan Kurdish community

Yarsanism (*Ahl-e Haqq*, ‘People of the Truth’<sup>777</sup>) was founded in 14<sup>th</sup> century in western Iran.<sup>778</sup> Yarsan Kurds primarily inhabit the Kurdish provinces in the western part of Iran, comprising a community of approximately three million followers.<sup>779</sup>

The community reportedly faced several difficulties such as ‘registering their children as Yarsan at birth, restrictions on building places of worship, and the constant fear of persecution’.<sup>780</sup> In March 2023, Iranian security forces apprehended Kaveh Salimi, a follower of Yarsan faith in Kermanshah and took him to an unknown location.<sup>781</sup> In May 2023, Iranian security forces reportedly arrested two followers of the Yarsan faith in Sahneh, Kermanshah Province.<sup>782</sup> In November 2023, Iranian authorities released the spokesman of the Consultative Assembly of Yarsan Civil Activists,<sup>783</sup> who had been arrested in September 2022 and sentenced by a revolutionary court on charges of ‘propaganda activities’ because of his media interviews regarding the 2022 protests.<sup>784</sup>

### 4.7.4. Faili Kurds

Faili Kurds (Feyli<sup>785</sup>) are a border-cross ethnic group residing mainly at the Iran and Iraq border and are Shia Muslims.<sup>786</sup> In Iran, they reside primarily in the provinces of Kermanshah and Ilam, where they are known as *Sawqi*, in particular in Ilam province.<sup>787</sup> The term Faili Kurds comes from Arabic meaning ‘Kurds from the Zagros Mountains’.<sup>788</sup> Following the Baath party’s takeover of power in Iraq in 1968, many Faili Kurds were ‘stripped of their Iraqi citizenship’ and were forcibly exiled to Iran.<sup>789</sup> According to UNHCR, Faili Kurds ‘became stateless, or without a nationality and unable to enjoy the rights and benefits.’<sup>790</sup>

Until 1970, 40 000 Faili Kurds were moved to Iran<sup>791</sup> and their expulsion reportedly continued during the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. The latest statistics reported by UNHCR in 2008 indicated

<sup>777</sup> BBC News, In pictures: Inside Iran’s secretive Yarsan faith, 13 November 2019, [url](#)

<sup>778</sup> HRA, Yarsanism, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>779</sup> BBC News, In pictures: Inside Iran’s secretive Yarsan faith, 13 November 2019, [url](#); Iran International, Concerns grow over Iranian protester awaiting execution, 24 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>780</sup> Iran International, Concerns grow over Iranian protester awaiting execution, 24 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>781</sup> HRA, Yarsan follower Kaveh Salimi arrested, 7 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>782</sup> Kurdpa, Sahneh: Arrest of two Yarsani Kurdish civic activists by security forces, 25 May 2023, [url](#); HRA, Two Yarsan believers arrested in Kermanshah, 24 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>783</sup> Kurdpa, Siavash Hayati, the spokesperson of the Consultative Assembly of Yarsan Civil Activists and the Secretary of the United Kurdish Front, was sent on leave., 11 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>784</sup> Kurdpa, The deprivation of Siavash Hayati, the spokesman of the Consultative Assembly of Civil Activists of Yarsan and the secretary of the United Front of Kurds from a medical break, 12 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>785</sup> Chamanara, B., interview, 22 March 2024, and email communication, 10 April 2024

<sup>786</sup> Minority Rights Group, Faili Kurds in Iraq, 6 November 2007, [url](#)

<sup>787</sup> Chamanara, B., interview, 22 March 2024, and email communication, 10 April 2024

<sup>788</sup> Liebl, V., Culture in military operations, A Case Study: Operation Provide Comfort, MCUP, 1 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>789</sup> Shafaq News, The continuing struggle for justice: The plight of the Feyli Kurds in Iraq, 7 April 2023, [url](#); UNHCR, Feili Kurds in Iran seek way out of identity impasse, 28 May 2008, [url](#); CFRI, Genocide as a state-building mode in Iraq, 13 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>790</sup> UNHCR, Feili Kurds in Iran seek way out of identity impasse, 28 May 2008, [url](#)

<sup>791</sup> CFRI, Genocide as a state-building mode in Iraq, 13 July 2023, [url](#)





that, in 2007, there were 7 000 registered Faili Kurds in Iran.<sup>792</sup> An expert noted that Faili Kurds are not considered as citizens in Iran.<sup>793</sup>

#### 4.7.5. Baluches

The Baluch region is spread between Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan<sup>794</sup>, and within Iran it comprises the provinces of eastern Hormozgan, southern Kerman, southern Khorasan, and Sistan and Baluchistan,<sup>795</sup> where the majority of Baluches live.<sup>796</sup> As the majority of Baluches are Sunni Muslims,<sup>797</sup> they are both an ethnic and religious minority in Iran.<sup>798</sup> Over 100 000 people in the province lacked ‘official documents and are considered stateless’.<sup>799</sup> As noted by the Iran Primer, the Baluch community is based on a tribal and clan system.<sup>800</sup>

Baluch-inhabited provinces are economically disadvantaged<sup>801</sup> Similar to Kurdish *kolbars*, some of the Baluch population work as *sokhtbar* (fuel carrier).<sup>802</sup> They carry fuel to Pakistan, and every year, ‘dozens’ are shot dead or injured by the Iranian security forces, who consider them as smugglers.<sup>803</sup> In March 2024, security forces killed an Iranian Baluch fuel carrier in southeastern Mirjaveh city.<sup>804</sup>

The Baluch population has continued to be targeted by the Islamic Republic since 1979.<sup>805</sup>

Iranian authorities executed 13 Baluches between January and mid-April 2023<sup>806</sup>, followed by over 31 Baluch prisoners in May 2023<sup>807</sup> and another nine Baluches in August 2023.<sup>808</sup> In 2023, Iranian authorities also executed five Baluch women.<sup>809</sup> On 10 March 2023, a Baluch prisoner was executed in the central prison of Shiraz on charges of drug-related crimes.<sup>810</sup> Similarly, another one was executed in the Zahedan prison in July 2023,<sup>811</sup> and another one in Yazd central prison in January 2024.<sup>812</sup> For more information on the situation in Baluch-inhabited areas, and Baluch armed groups, please refer to chapter [2. Security situation.](#)

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<sup>792</sup> UNHCR, Faili Kurds in Iran seek way out of identity impasse, 28 May 2008, [url](#)

<sup>793</sup> Chamanara, B., interview, 22 March 2024, and email communication, 10 April 2024

<sup>794</sup> Guardian (The), Where is Balochistan and why is it the target of Iran and Pakistan strikes, 18 Janvier 2024, [url](#)

<sup>795</sup> MEMO, Is Iran afraid of Baloch awakening? 3 October 2023, [url](#); USIP, Iran’s troubled provinces: Baluchistan, 21 February 2021, [url](#)

<sup>796</sup> USIP, Iran’s troubled provinces: Baluchistan, 21 February 2021, [url](#)

<sup>797</sup> France24, Iran’s Baloch population leads anti-regime protests six months after Mahsa Amini’s death, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>798</sup> France24, Balochistan, a restive border region at heart of Iran-Pakistan strikes, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>799</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 49

<sup>800</sup> USIP, Iran’s troubled provinces: Baluchistan, 21 February 2021, [url](#)

<sup>801</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>802</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>803</sup> IranWire, The dangerous lives of Baluch fuel carriers, 27 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>804</sup> IranWire, Iranian fuel carrier killed in military firing, 3 injured, 25 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>805</sup> MEMO, Is Iran afraid of Baloch awakening? 3 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>806</sup> UNSG, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 49

<sup>807</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, 142 prisoners executed in Iran during May 2023, 1 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>808</sup> VoA, Iran hangs 11 Baloch minority members in 2 days, rights group say, 2 Augst 2023, [url](#)

<sup>809</sup> IHRNGO, Women executed in Iran in 2023, 8 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>810</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, A Baluch prisoner executed secretly in Shiraz prison, 14 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>811</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, The death sentence of a Baluch prisoner was executed in the Zahedan prison, 10 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>812</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Execution of a Baluch Inmate in Yazd Prison-Iran, 11 January 2024, [url](#)



## 4.8. Religious minorities

According to estimates of 2022, the majority of the Iranian population was Muslim (99.4 %), 90 % to 95 % of whom were Shia Muslims and 5 % to 10 % Sunni Muslims.<sup>813</sup> Based on 2020 estimates, 0.7 % were Christians, 0.3 % Baha'is, 0.3 %, agnostics, and 0.2 % others (including Zoroastrian, Jewish, Hindu).<sup>814</sup>

Recognised religious minorities in Iran are granted five seats in the parliament,<sup>815</sup> without taking into consideration the size of their communities.<sup>816</sup> According to Article 64 of the Constitution, the Zoroastrians and Jews have the right to elect one representative each, the Assyrian and Chaldean Christians have the right to elect one representative jointly, and the Armenian Christians have the right to elect one representative in the north and one in the south of the country.<sup>817</sup>

### 4.8.1. Freedom of religion and belief

According to Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution of 1979, 'Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognised religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.'<sup>818</sup>

### 4.8.2. Christians

As of May 2023, only 16 Protestant churches remained in Iran<sup>819</sup> and, by September 2013, there were three different Christian groups in Iran including Armenians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians.<sup>820</sup> In 2023, there were numerous Armenian Christian churches in Isfahan city,<sup>821</sup> including the All-Saviour's Cathedral (*kalisa-ye vank*) or the Church of the Saintly Sisters.<sup>822</sup> Ethnic Armenians, Assyrians, and a small expatriate community are the only Christians recognised by the Islamic Republic.<sup>823</sup> Most of the Christians run family business in the country due to the discrimination they face when they are applying for jobs in the public sector.<sup>824</sup>

The Christian community is not mixed with others in Iran. For instance, in Isfahan there is a Christian district called Jolfa, where most Christians live, and have their social life including

<sup>813</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022, International Religious Freedom Report for 2022, 26 October 2022, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>814</sup> US, CIA, The World Factbook, Iran, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>815</sup> AP, Many in Iran are frustrated by unrest and poor economy. Parliament elections could see a low turnout, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>816</sup> Mehr News Agency, What role political parties, minorities play in Iran's vote, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>817</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>818</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>819</sup> Article18, 10 years since forced closure of Iran's largest Persian-speaking church, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>820</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 1: Diverse religions, 3 September 2013, [url](#)

<sup>821</sup> Iran International, Hundreds try to enter church in Iran to celebrate Christmas, 27 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>822</sup> Tehran Times, Vank Cathedral: a sip of Iran's rich architectural culture in Isfahan, 10 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>823</sup> Article18, "Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>824</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024



going to restaurants or coffee shops.<sup>825</sup> Only those Christians who were able to prove that they were Christians before the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 are allowed to exercise their religion.<sup>826</sup> Christianity is categorised under ‘political-security crimes’ and is seen by the Islamic Republic ‘as a Western religion’.<sup>827</sup> Any Iranian returnee could be harassed and tracked by the Islamic Republic if they were identified as being involved in Christian related activities abroad.<sup>828</sup> According to a joint report by Article18, OpenDoors, Middle East Concern (MEC) and CSW Everyone Free to Believe, ‘Christians who actively express their faith – and especially converts from Islam – are subject to arrest and prosecution by the State’. In 2023, 166 Christians were reportedly arrested in Iran. Most of the arrested Christians (including converts) ‘were not informed of the reason for their arrest, neither did they receive any charges’.<sup>829</sup>

### House-churches

Most Christian converts meet in private places, which are known as house-churches in Iran<sup>830</sup> including ‘converts to Christianity from a Muslim background, as well as ethnic Armenian and Assyrian Christians who wish to worship in the national language (Persian), as many do not speak or understand any other language.’<sup>831</sup> Iranian house-churches refer to apartments, where 10 to 15 believers gather for their rituals. Iranian authorities carry out raids on house-churches to arrest its members and confiscate anything that can be used as proof against them including their personal electronic devices.<sup>832</sup>

Some of the converts to Christianity go to the church secretly as the Islamic Republic is monitoring them.<sup>833</sup> Iranian intelligence agents monitor activities of converts online as well.<sup>834</sup> In 2023, over 50 Christian converts were arrested at their homes or at house-churches in Tehran, Karaj, Rasht, Orumiyyeh, and Aligoudarz cities.<sup>835</sup> For more information on converts, please refer to chapter [4.10.1. Conversion](#).

### Proselytising

Christians are not allowed to preach their religion to other Iranians or invite them to their churches<sup>836</sup>, and they ‘are not permitted to hold services or possess religious materials in Persian.’ They can be imprisoned if they preach their religion or invite ‘people of Muslim background’ to participate in church related activities.<sup>837</sup> The Iranian intelligence reportedly

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<sup>825</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>826</sup> Article18, 10 years since forced closure of Iran’s largest Persian-speaking church, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>827</sup> Fox News, Iran violently clamps down on Christians amid reports of torture, fines and floggings, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>828</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>829</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 8, 18

<sup>830</sup> Article18, Why do most Iranian Christians worship in house-churches?, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>831</sup> Article18, Persian-speaking Iranian Christians have no place where they can worship collectively, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>832</sup> Hudson Institute, Good news from Iran: a million new Christian believers, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>833</sup> Fox News, Iran violently clamps down on Christians amid reports of torture, fines and floggings, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>834</sup> OpenDoors, World watch list 2024, situation of religious freedom for Christians, 13 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>835</sup> Article18, Over 50 Christians in five cities arrested in new crackdown, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>836</sup> BBC, Iran: The Christians celebrating Easter in secrete, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>837</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 4



banned proselytising in Persian language in churches in Iran.<sup>838</sup> As of March 2024, having a Bible in Persian was reportedly a crime.<sup>839</sup> Proselytising people in Iran is a crime ‘punishable by death’.<sup>840</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [3.2.4. Ta’zir punishments](#).

### 4.8.3. Baha’is

The Baha’i religion is not recognised in Iran<sup>841</sup> and its followers are perceived by the Islamic Republic as a non-Muslim religious group.<sup>842</sup> The Baha’is have historically faced ‘systematic ideological, political, educational, and economic pressure’ in Iran<sup>843</sup> and have been increasingly targeted by the Islamic Republic<sup>844</sup> Iranian authorities refer to the Baha’i religion as a ‘deviant sect of Islam’<sup>845</sup> and to Baha’is as ‘heretics’.<sup>846</sup> The Baha’is were targeted in all aspects of their lives in Iran.<sup>847</sup> Iranian law reportedly deprived Baha’is from their freedom of religion and authorities continued to arrest and target Baha’is ‘on vague national security charges’.<sup>848</sup>

According to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Baha’i community in Iran continued to be ‘most severely’ targeted. They faced arrests, harassment, raids on their homes, confiscation of their personal belongings and properties, refusal to access universities or obtain work permits, imprisonment, and destruction of their cemeteries.<sup>849</sup> In July 2023, authorities arrested numerous Baha’is in Gilan province.<sup>850</sup>

According to Iran International report of October 2023, several women from the Baha’i community were targeted in the country,<sup>851</sup> including 10 women arrested in Isfahan and 3 in Yazd by ‘the agents the Ministry of Intelligence’.<sup>852</sup> In 2023, Iranian security forces have arrested several Baha’is in Hamadan, Mehrshahr, Yazd, Karaj, Alborz, and Tehran.<sup>853</sup> In Karaj and Hamedan cities, 30 houses were raided and 19 Baha’is were detained.<sup>854</sup> In January 2024,

<sup>838</sup> Fox News, Iran violently clamps down on Christians amid reports of torture, fines and floggings, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>839</sup> Fox News, Iran violently clamps down on Christians amid reports of torture, fines and floggings, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>840</sup> Jerusalem Post (The), An encounter with Marziyeh Amirizadeh: Iranian Christian activist, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>841</sup> HRW, ‘the boot on my neck’, 1 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>842</sup> Iran International, Iran’s persecution of Baha’i minority intensifies, 5 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>843</sup> BIC, Iranian thought leaders call for an end to the ‘historical shame’ of Baha’i persecution, 22 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>844</sup> Minority Rights Group, Baha’i in Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>845</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF condemns Iran’s religious persecution of Baha’is, 15 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>846</sup> VoA, Iran arrests Baha’is, citing Israel links, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>847</sup> CHRI, ‘Our homes are no refuge’ Baha’i minority in Iran facing intensified state assault, 17 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>848</sup> HRW, Iran, Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>849</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, (27 February to 31 March 2023), A/HRC/52/67, 7 February 2023, [url](#), para. 68

<sup>850</sup> VoA, Iran arrests Baha’is, citing Israel links, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>851</sup> Iran International, Escalating ‘persecution’ targets Baha’i community in Iran, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>852</sup> BIC, Twenty-six Baha’is in Iran sentenced to 126 years in prison as 10 Baha’i women arrested in Isfahan, and 3 Baha’is in Yazd, 26 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>853</sup> USCIRF, USCIRF condemns Iran’s religious persecution of Baha’is, 15 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>854</sup> BIC, More than 20 Baha’i homes invaded in violent raids and many arrested in Iran as crackdown intensifies, 10 November 2023, [url](#)



the Iranian authorities grabbed by force land plots of Baha'i families in the village of Ahmadabad in Mazandaran province.<sup>855</sup>

#### 4.8.4. Zoroastrians

Zoroastrianism is the oldest<sup>856</sup> pre-Islamic religion in Iran<sup>857</sup> dating back around 3 500 years.<sup>858</sup> Zoroastrians mainly live in Tehran, with communities being found also in Yazd and Kerman.<sup>859</sup> The Iranian Constitution recognises Zoroastrians as a religious minority.<sup>860</sup> The community is granted 'freedom of worship and representation in parliament'.<sup>861</sup> As of September 2023, the Zoroastrian member of Parliament was Esfandiyar Ekhtiyari.<sup>862</sup> Zoroastrians were reportedly active in society, holding jobs such as university professors and employees of the government.<sup>863</sup>

In 2023, the community accounted an estimated 50 000 members in Iran.<sup>864</sup> The main Zoroastrian fire temple is in Yazd province,<sup>865</sup> and their holy book is called Avesta.<sup>866</sup> On 30 January 2023, Zoroastrians in Iran celebrated their annual Sadeh festival in the city of Yazd.<sup>867</sup> Zoroastrians of Yazd and Kerman resisted conversion to Islam imposed by the Arab conquest of Persia.<sup>868</sup> The number of Zoroastrians in Iran declined 'due to emigration, conversion to Islam, harassment and discrimination'.<sup>869</sup>

### 4.9. Other ethnic and religious groups

Iranian Arabs live mainly in Khuzestan province. As reported in September 2013, there were around 1.5 million Iranian Arabs, which represented 2 % of the overall population.<sup>870</sup> The Islamic Republic perceives the political claims of the Iranian Arabs as an interference of Saudi Arabia. Their claims are regarded as against the national security and the territorial integrity of Iran, according to Eliassi Barzoo.<sup>871</sup> In February 2023, a Revolutionary Court in Ahwaz, Khuzestan province, sentenced to death six Ahwazi Arabs 'on the charge of 'enmity against God' (*moharebeh*) in relation to armed operations carried out by a separatist group that led to deaths among security forces'.<sup>872</sup> On 20 February 2023, one Ahwazi Arab Iranian was

<sup>855</sup> BIC, Farmers displaced and farmlands seized as Iran's government intensifies Baha'i religious persecution, 4 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>856</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 1: Diverse religions, 3 September 2013, [url](#)

<sup>857</sup> Iran International, Zoroastrian fest keeps fire of protests burning in Iran, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>858</sup> RFI, Iran's Zoroastrians keep ancient, sacred flame burning, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>859</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 1: Diverse religions, 3 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>860</sup> RFI, Iran's Zoroastrians keep ancient, sacred flame burning, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>861</sup> RFI, Iran's Zoroastrians keep ancient, sacred flame burning, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>862</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 1: Diverse religions, 3 September 2013, [url](#)

<sup>863</sup> RFI, Iran's Zoroastrians keep ancient, sacred flame burning, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>864</sup> France24, Iran's Zoroastrians keep ancient, sacred flame burning, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>865</sup> RFI, Iran's Zoroastrians keep ancient, sacred flame burning, 23 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>866</sup> Tehran Times, Zoroastrians celebrate fire and light in mid-winter festival, 30 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>867</sup> IranWire, Iran's Zoroastrians hold annual festival in Yazd, 31 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>868</sup> Zoroastrian.net, Zoroastrians of Iran, 14 November 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>869</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 1: Diverse religions, 3 September 2013, [url](#)

<sup>870</sup> USIP, Iran minorities 2: Ethnic diversity, 3 September 2013, [url](#)

<sup>871</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>872</sup> Al, Iran: six Ahwazi Arabs at grave risk of execution, 12 May 2023, [url](#)



executed by the authorities<sup>873</sup> on charges of ‘enmity against God (*moharebeh*)’ following his arrest over protests in Khuzestan province in 2011.<sup>874</sup> For more information on Ahwazi Arab groups, please refer to chapter [2. Security situation](#).

Azeris in Iran have a longer political integration into the societal elites and economically they are more prosperous.<sup>875</sup>

There are various Sufi Muslim groups in Iran including Naqshbandi, Qaderi, Khaksari,<sup>876</sup> and Gonabadi dervishes.<sup>877</sup> On 17 October 2023, a member of the Gonabadi dervish order was arrested in Kashan and his personal belongings, including his laptop and mobile phone, were confiscated.<sup>878</sup>

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, there were an estimated 80 000 Jews in Iran; however, as of February 2024, there were between 5 000 and 8 000 Jews in Iran.<sup>879</sup> Most Jews moved out of the country due to hostility against Zionist ideology and ‘hate speech against Jewish’ community in the country.<sup>880</sup> However, Jews can practice their religion legally in Iran.<sup>881</sup>

## 4.10. Individuals transgressing religious and moral codes

### 4.10.1. Conversion

Iranian authorities do not allow conversion from Islam to another religion.<sup>882</sup> Most Iranians are considered Muslims, and conversion to Christianity is seen as apostasy.<sup>883</sup> For more information on punishment related to apostasy, please refer to chapter [4.10.2. Apostasy](#). A Muslim in Iran can be subject to arrest, assault, or death penalty in case of conversion to another religion.<sup>884</sup> Persons who converted from Islam are coerced by the Islamic Republic to leave the country.<sup>885</sup>

The Islamic Republic does not recognise the Christian converts in the country.<sup>886</sup> Conversion from Islam to Christianity is perceived as a crime and can be punished by death in Iran.<sup>887</sup> For

<sup>873</sup> Al, Iran: chilling execution spree with escalating use of death penalty against persecuted ethnic groups, 2 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>874</sup> HRANA, Hassan Abyat Executed in Ahvaz, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>875</sup> Eliassi, B., interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 20 March 2024

<sup>876</sup> Chamanara B, interview, 22 March 2024, and email communication, 10 April 2024

<sup>877</sup> IranWire, Iranian Gonabadi Dervish freed nearly after five years in Prison, 25 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>878</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Arrested two individuals in Kashan and Iranshahr by security forces, 19 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>879</sup> Iran International, Iran compels Jews and minorities to honor Islamic revolution, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>880</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>881</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>882</sup> Iran International, Cleric says some Iranian Muslims converting to other religions, 11 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>883</sup> OpenDoors, World watch list 2024, situation of religious freedom for Christians, 13 September 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>884</sup> IranWire, Bulgaria grants asylum to Iranian Christian convert sentenced to death, 2 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>885</sup> Church Times, Christian converts under pressure to leave Iran, 23 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>886</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>887</sup> Jerusalem Post (The), An encounter with Marziyeh Amirizadeh: Iranian Christian activist, 15 May 2023, [url](#)



more information, please refer to [3.2. Punishments under the law](#), and for information on Christians, please refer to chapter [4.8.2. Christians](#). Christian converts are subject to arrests and ill-treatment by the Islamic Republic. They are also exiled ‘in remote parts of the country’ or forced to undertake re-education with Islamic clerics and ‘pressured to return to Islam’, in particular after their release.<sup>888</sup> At times converts are targeted by their families<sup>889</sup> and their extended family members and society at large.<sup>890</sup> Authorities imprison Christian converts for ‘crimes against national security’.<sup>891</sup>

On 13 February 2024, a Christian convert who had returned to Iran in 2017, was arrested by the Iranian authorities in Tehran, and taken to Ward 209 of Evin Prison after being summoned several times before her arrest.<sup>892</sup> In January 2024, a 60-year-old Iranian convert was sentenced to six years of imprisonment for ‘acting against national security’ by promoting Christianity.<sup>893</sup>

#### 4.10.2. Apostasy

Iranian authorities held back from codifying apostasy as a crime in the Penal Code fearing international criticism.<sup>894</sup> However, according to Article 167 of the Iranian Constitution, judges can rely on *Sharia* in matters not covered by the codified law and still charge converts from Islam with ‘apostasy’.<sup>895</sup> In case of the absence of a particular law, the judge has to deliver judgments ‘on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic *fatawa*’ (verdict).<sup>896</sup> This allows ‘scope for Islamic law sanctions to be applied for apostasy’.<sup>897</sup> An Iranian pastor was released in February 2023 after being sentenced to death for ‘apostasy’, but was instead sentenced to receive lashes and two-year of exile of 2 000 kilometres away from home.<sup>898</sup> According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) report of January 2024, ‘apostasy’ is punished by death based on the Iranian law.<sup>899</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [3.2.1. Hadd punishments](#) and chapter [3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code](#).

#### 4.10.3. Atheism

In Iran it is not legal or recognised to be identified as an atheist or as non-religious person.<sup>900</sup> As reported by BBC Iran, numerous individuals in younger generations considered themselves

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<sup>888</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 5, 8, 31

<sup>889</sup> OpenDoors, World Watch Research, December 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>890</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>891</sup> OpenDoors, World Watch Research, December 2023, 10 January 2024, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>892</sup> Article18, Christian convert baptised in Malaysia given prison sentence on return to Iran, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>893</sup> Iran International, Iranian Christian convert faces imprisonment, 6 January 2024, [url](#); Article18, Christian convert, 60, summoned to begin prison sentence for house-church leadership, 5 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>894</sup> Article18, Apostasy never codified in Iranian law “due to international pressure”, 17 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>895</sup> Article18, Iran country profile, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>896</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>897</sup> Article18, Iran country profile, 27 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>898</sup> Article18, Arbitrarily detained pastor released from prison but faces flogging and exile, 1 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>899</sup> HRW, Iran: events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>900</sup> Humanists International, The Freedom of Thought Report, Iran, 24 October 2023, [url](#)



atheists or agnostics.<sup>901</sup> Information on the treatment of atheists in Iran could not be found within the time constraints of this report.

#### 4.10.4. Blasphemy

Blasphemy is punished by death under the Iranian law.<sup>902</sup> According to the *hudud* punishments, insulting the Prophet and Islamic sanctities is punished by death.<sup>903</sup> Article 262 of the Iranian Penal Code stipulates that ‘Anyone who swears at [...] the Great Prophet [...] or any of the Great Prophets, shall be considered as *Sab ul-nabi* [a person who swears at the Prophet], and shall be sentenced to the death penalty.’<sup>904</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [3.2.1. Hadd punishments](#) and chapter [3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code](#).

In May 2023, the Iranian government ‘executed two individuals for blasphemy’<sup>905</sup> on charges of promoting on social media ‘atheism and insulting religious and Islamic sanctities’<sup>906</sup> including ‘insulting the Prophet’.<sup>907</sup> The execution of the aforementioned two men was ordered by the judiciary based on Articles 262 and 513 of the Iranian Penal Code.<sup>908</sup> UN human rights experts raised concerns over the execution of the two men on charges of blasphemy and ‘following grossly unfair trials’.<sup>909</sup> In March 2024, Iranian authorities arrested Maryam (Marzieh) Khalili, who was further charged with ‘spreading propaganda against the regime’, ‘insulting the Supreme Leader’, and ‘blasphemy’ by the Revolutionary Court of Isfahan.<sup>910</sup>

#### 4.10.5. Behaviour perceived as transgressing religious and moral codes

Consumption of alcohol is referred to as *shorb-e-khamr* (intoxicant) in Penal Code of Iran.<sup>911</sup> According to HRW report of January 2024, consumption of alcohol in the country can be punished by death under the Iranian law.<sup>912</sup> For more information on punishments related to consumption of alcohol, please refer to chapter [3.2.1. Hadd punishments](#) and chapter [3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code](#).

<sup>901</sup> BBC, Iran: The Christians celebrating Easter in secrete, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>902</sup> France24, Iran hangs two men for blasphemy as executions arise amid unrest, 8 May 2023, [url](#); Minority Rights Group, Criminalising blasphemy: implications for Iran’s religious minorities, 12 December 2023, [url](#); HRW, Iran: events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>903</sup> IranWire, Iran’s unjust executions for ‘insulting the prophet’, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>904</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book one and two, 4 April 2024, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>905</sup> Minority Rights Group, Criminalising blasphemy: implications for Iran’s religious minorities, 12 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>906</sup> RFI/RL, Iran hangs two men for blasphemy, 8 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>907</sup> Humanists International, The Freedom of Thought Report, Iran, 24 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>908</sup> IranWire, Iran’s unjust executions for ‘insulting the prophet’, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>909</sup> UN OHCHR, Iran: UN experts condemn recent executions, urge moratorium on death penalty, 9 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>910</sup> HRANA, Maryam Khalili detained by security forces in Isfahan, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>911</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book one and two, 4 April 2024, [url](#), p. 50

<sup>912</sup> HRW, Iran: events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)





Extramarital relations are ‘severely’ punished under the Islamic *hudud* crimes, as per the Iranian Penal Code. Extramarital relations are referred to as *zina* (adultery).<sup>913</sup> Iranian courts at times punish individuals charged with adultery to death by stoning.<sup>914</sup> In November 2023, a woman was sentenced to death by the Iranian authorities for adultery.<sup>915</sup> For more information on punishments for *zina* under *hadd* punishments, please refer to chapter [3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code](#).

In Iran, there are limitations on marriage between persons of different faiths.<sup>916</sup> While Muslim men are permitted to marry women belonging to the constitutionally recognised minority religions,<sup>917</sup> marriage between a female Muslim with a non-Muslim man is prohibited under Article 1059 of Iranian Civil Code.<sup>918</sup>

## 4.11. Women and girls

### 4.11.1. Women’s rights

Following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, authorities imposed a series of restrictions on women and girls’ rights.<sup>919</sup> Since then, women and girls have continued to face ‘legal, political, economic and social challenges’ in the country<sup>920</sup> including lowering the marriage age for girls, restrictions on divorce, child custody, nationality, travel, inheritance and dress code.<sup>921</sup> These restrictions ‘deeply impacted women’s lives in the country.’<sup>922</sup> Iranian women have been prohibited to enter workspace without the *hijab*,<sup>923</sup> they have also been banned to dance in public, or to ride a bicycle.<sup>924</sup> A husband may prevent his wife from employment or traveling abroad.<sup>925</sup> Women have also been banned from joining the army or performing public sport activities,<sup>926</sup> or to become president. In some legal cases, they are considered as half of a man.<sup>927</sup>

As noted by an expert interviewed by EUAA, in rural areas, control on women is ‘tight’ as families know each other, and girls and women are known in the local communities, while in

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<sup>913</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book one and two, [url](#), 4 April 2024,

<sup>914</sup> Le Monde, Iran sentences woman to death for adultery, 4 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>915</sup> AP, Iran sentences a woman to death for adultery, state media say, 3 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>916</sup> Iran International, Hardliners in Iran promote polygamy, obedience of wives, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>917</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>918</sup> Iran, Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [url](#), p. 105

<sup>919</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>920</sup> Iran International, Hardliners in Iran promote polygamy, obedience of wives, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>921</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>922</sup> HRW, Unveiling resistance: the struggle for women’s rights in Iran, 26 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>923</sup> IranWire, My story of Forced hijab in Iran, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>924</sup> Boniadi, N., Iran women are still fighting, Time, 14 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>925</sup> Reuters, How Iran treats women, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>926</sup> IranWire, My story of Forced hijab in Iran, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>927</sup> Boniadi,N., Iran women are still fighting, Time, 14 September 2023, [url](#)



big cities such as Mashhad, Isfahan, and Tehran, the majority of the people are educated and open-minded and this allows girls more freedom including in the way they wish to dress.<sup>928</sup>

On 30 August 2023, a group of six special rapporteurs ‘have expressed their ‘grave concerns regarding the ongoing institutionalisation of gender-based inequality and discrimination in different spheres of life, violence against women and girls including, but not limited to, the criminalisation of women protesting the compulsory veiling laws in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as gendered violence committed offline and online against women human rights defenders, including those who challenge State laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls on the grounds of sex and gender.’<sup>929</sup>

#### 4.11.2. Dress-code

In Iran, women and girls are required to wear a dark *hijab*, which is known as *chador* (veil).<sup>930</sup> The black *chador* and *hijab* had been a ‘political symbol’ for women and girls before they became compulsory following the 1979 Revolution.<sup>931</sup> After 1979, the country’s new Supreme Leader, Khomeini ‘decreed that all women had to wear the veil [*hijab*<sup>932</sup>] – regardless of religion or nationality’.<sup>933</sup> They are also required under the Iranian law to wear ‘long, loose-fitting clothing to disguise their figures’.<sup>934</sup> The Iranian Penal Code criminalises the lack of *hijab* in the public space<sup>935</sup> as stipulated in its note to Article 638: ‘Women, who appear in public places and roads without wearing an Islamic *hijab*, shall be sentenced to ten days to two months’ imprisonment or a fine.’<sup>936</sup> Laws of the country control strictly Iranian women’s lives through the mandatory *hijab*.<sup>937</sup> According to AI, mandatory *hijab* for women ‘is entrenched in Iran’s Penal Code and other laws and regulations that enable security and administrative bodies to subject women to arbitrary arrest and detention and deny them access to public institutions including hospitals, schools, government offices and airports if they do not cover their hair.’<sup>938</sup>

In Iran, women and girls are required to wear a *hijab* when they turn nine years old.<sup>939</sup> At times, the government of Iran enforced compulsory *hijab* on girls at the age of seven.<sup>940</sup> According to the Shia Islam rituals in Iran, girls at the age of nine attend a ceremony known as

<sup>928</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>929</sup> UN OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 30 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>930</sup> USIP, Female protests in Iran: tools of resistance, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>931</sup> The National, Iran sentences jailed Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi to additional prison term, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>932</sup> BBC, Iran protests: Mahsa Amini’s death puts morality police under spotlight, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

<sup>933</sup> BBC, Iranian women - before and after the Islamic Revolution, 8 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>934</sup> BBC, Iran protests: Mahsa Amini’s death puts morality police under spotlight, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

<sup>935</sup> HRW, Unveiling resistance: the struggle for women’s rights in Iran, 26 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>936</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book five, 15 July 2013, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>937</sup> The National, Iran sentences jailed Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi to additional prison term, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>938</sup> AI, Iran: International community must not be deceived by dubious claims of disbanding ‘morality police’, 6 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>939</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Iranian President signs decree restricting how women can dress, 15 August 2022, [url](#)

<sup>940</sup> UN General Assembly, Seventy-eight session, situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/78/326, 24 August 2023, [url](#), para. 44





*taklif* (a legal charge or obligation<sup>941</sup>) during which clerics introduce religious obligations including ‘praying, fasting and modest dress’ such as *hijab*.<sup>942</sup>

On 3 February 2023, the head of legal and judicial commission of the Iranian Parliament reportedly stated that ‘a draft bill was being considered to suspend identity cards of women, who refuse to comply with compulsory’ *hijab*, and to prevent them from banking services till ‘they paid a fine.’<sup>943</sup> On 30 March 2023, the Iranian Ministry of Interior reportedly announced that the ‘country’s judiciary, law enforcement and other relevant bodies would take action against those breaking the norms’ including compulsory *hijab*.<sup>944</sup> On 21 May 2023, a ‘chastity and *hijab* culture protection bill’ was presented by the government to the parliament,<sup>945</sup> which was approved on 20 September 2023<sup>946</sup> for a period of a three-year trial.<sup>947</sup> The bill, which is officially titled ‘Protection of Family Through Promotion of Hijab and Chastity Culture’,<sup>948</sup> includes punishments of up to ten years of imprisonment for women and girls who do not comply with the *hijab* rules.<sup>949</sup> The bill considers non-wearing of the *hijab* by women and girls in Iran as ‘nudity’.<sup>950</sup> In April 2024, the bill was rejected by the Guardian Council for ‘alleged formal deficiencies’ and the council ‘called for revisions to clarify ambiguous terms.’<sup>951</sup> For more information on the role of the Guardian Council, please refer to chapter [1.1.5 Guardian Council](#).

Following the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022 in police custody,<sup>952</sup> Iranian women increasingly refused to wear a headscarf although authorities continued to target them.<sup>953</sup> In January 2023, the Iranian Prosecutor General reportedly instructed the Iranian Law Enforcement Command to impose the mandatory *hijab* ‘decisively’.<sup>954</sup> For more information, please refer to chapters [1.2.5. Morality police](#) and [3.3. Punishments related to violence against women](#).

Authorities carried out widespread campaigns to enforce the mandatory *hijab* rules by monitoring women and girls in public spaces including in vehicles and airports.<sup>955</sup> The police, the *Basij*, and the morality police reportedly enforced the mandatory *hijab* rules by taking

<sup>941</sup> Oxford Reference, *Taklif*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>942</sup> USIP, Khamenei at coming-of-age ceremony for girls, 6 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>943</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 41

<sup>944</sup> UN General Assembly, Seventy-eight session, situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/78/326, 24 August 2023, [url](#), para. 46

<sup>945</sup> Mashregh News, *لايحه حمايت از فرهنگ عفاف و حجاب* [chastity and hijab culture protection bill], 21 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>946</sup> Al Jazeera, Iran’s parliament approves ‘hijab’ bill; harsh punishment for violations, 20 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>947</sup> Mizan Online News Agency, *گزارش کمیسیون قضائي و حقوقي* [report of the Legal and Judiciary Commission], 12 September 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>948</sup> Iran International, Iranian Lawmaker Calls New Punitive Hijab Bill ‘Compassionate’, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>949</sup> Le Monde, Iran Lawmakers vote to toughen penalties for women flouting dress code, 20 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>950</sup> USIP, Parliament passes new ‘Hijab and Chastity’ bill, 25 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>951</sup> Iran International, Iranian Lawmaker Calls New Punitive Hijab Bill ‘Compassionate’, 12 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>952</sup> Le Monde, Iranian teenager dies in suspicious circumstances reminiscent of Mahsa Amini death, 30 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>953</sup> The National, Iran sentences jailed Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi to additional prison term, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>954</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC53/23, 15 June 2023, [url](#), para. 41

<sup>955</sup> Al, Iran: Draconian campaign to enforce compulsory veiling laws through surveillance and mass car confiscations, 6 March 2024, [url](#)





justice in their hands, which led to violence against women.<sup>956</sup> The Iranian morality police is the main body tasked to enforce behaviour and *hijab* rules based on a 'strict interpretation of Iranian Islamic law'.<sup>957</sup> For more information on morality police, please refer to chapter [1.2.5. Morality police.](#)

In April 2023, the Iranian Ministries of Health and Education reportedly banned women from using health and educational services if they did not comply with the mandatory *hijab* rules.<sup>958</sup> On 15 April 2023, Iranian authorities reportedly announced a new domestic surveillance programme to monitor women including with street cameras (known as FARAJA cameras<sup>959</sup>) to check whether they comply with the *hijab* rules.<sup>960</sup> However, Iranian women continued to defy authorities with non-compliance with the compulsory *hijab* in the streets and on social media.<sup>961</sup>

By July 2023, some women were sent to mental hospitals or were obliged to do forced labour as a punishment for non-compliance with the *hijab* rules.<sup>962</sup> During the same period, the morality police reportedly conducted patrols in the streets to impose 'strictly' the dress code rules.<sup>963</sup> On 1 October 2023, the morality police reportedly attacked 16-year-old Armita Geravand in the metro in Tehran for non-compliance with the compulsory *hijab* rules,<sup>964</sup> who reportedly died on 28 October 2023, 'after suffering from brain damage'.<sup>965</sup> Following this event, UN human rights experts stated being aware of 'reprisals against other women, including celebrities, for refusing to comply with the mandatory dress code'.<sup>966</sup> In November 2023, there were reportedly 2 850 *hijab* guards conducting patrols to monitor compliance with the *hijab* rules in Tehran's subway stations.<sup>967</sup>

Authorities increasingly targeted women who did not comply with the required rules. By way of examples:

- In January 2024, a woman was punished with 74 lashes and fine for her non-compliance with the *hijab* rules in public.<sup>968</sup>
- On 6 February 2024, Iranian authorities reportedly banned women from exercising sport activities in the city parks in the province of Khorasan.<sup>969</sup>

<sup>956</sup> UN General Assembly, Seventy-eight session, situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/78/326, 24 August 2023, [url](#), para. 45

<sup>957</sup> France, OFPRA, DIDR, Iran: Women adopt behaviour perceived as transgressive of the social norms assigned to them, 24 July 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>958</sup> CFR, Women this week : Iran bans women without hijabs from education and health services, 7 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>959</sup> Article19, Iran: tech-enabled 'hijab and chastity' law will further punish women, 22 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>960</sup> VoA, Iran's new Hijab surveillance system met with Internet defiance, derision, 23 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>961</sup> The New Arab, On streets and social media, women challenge IRCG general's obligatory hijab campaign, 25 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>962</sup> The New Arab, Iranian authorities refer women defying hijab law to psychiatric hospitals and funeral centres, 25 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>963</sup> Euronews, Explained: why the Islamic headscarf is crucial in Iranian society, 18 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>964</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Hijab and Coma: Armita Geravand; the latest victims of forced hijab in Iran, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>965</sup> BBC News, Armita Geravand: Iranian girl who collapsed on Tehran metro dies, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>966</sup> UN OHCHR, Wave of attacks on girls and women, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>967</sup> RFE/RL, Classified on Iran's 'hijab's guards' unveil government cover-up, 29 November 2023, [url](#); Iran International, Newspaper faces persecution in Iran for revealing hijab document, 29 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>968</sup> IranWire, Iran woman whipped for not wearing hijab, 8 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>969</sup> IranWire, Women in Northeast Iran province barred from exercising in parks, 6 February 2024, [url](#)



- In February 2024, Zainab Mousavi, an Iranian female comedian ‘has been summoned to serve a two-year prison sentence’ following her speech against the compulsory *hijab* in a comedy video.<sup>970</sup>

According to sources, the morality police in the Capital announced the restart of its street patrols as of 13 April 2024 to enforce *hijab* rules by women and girls.<sup>971</sup> For more information please refer to chapter [3.3. Punishments related to violence against women](#).

### 4.11.3. Marriage and restrictions related to divorce

The marriage law allows men to marry four wives at the same time while women are allowed to marry only one husband.<sup>972</sup> Iran also allows men an unlimited number of temporary marriages (which is known as *sigheh*<sup>973</sup>) for an arranged period.<sup>974</sup> Women need a male guardian’s consent for marriage.<sup>975</sup> The husband can divorce ‘incontestably’ while a woman could divorce with constrained reasons such as proving ‘an intolerable level of spousal abuse’,<sup>976</sup> husband’s addiction, imprisonment or refusal to support the family financially.<sup>977</sup> Wives can obtain divorce only by the order of a judge in a court while a verbal acknowledgment is sufficient for men to file a divorce.<sup>978</sup> Divorce proceedings initiated by women last longer in courts, which ‘often resulting in women giving up some of their rights’ including the ‘payment of *mahriye*’ (dower payment) to accelerate the settlement.<sup>979</sup>

In Iran, it is religiously accepted if the husband states the word ‘*talaq*’ (divorce) three times in front of an assembly or a council in the absence of his wife. It is known as the ‘triple *talaq*’, which is a form of divorce often practised in Sunni-majority regions of Iran<sup>980</sup> including in Kermanshah and Kurdistan provinces.<sup>981</sup> The divorce is not legally settled but rather arbitrarily and in a sudden manner that often impacts women economically and emotionally.<sup>982</sup>

### 4.11.4. Forced and child marriage

The law in Iran forbids forced marriage, however, the law ‘does not consider the marriage of a girl under the age of 15 to be forced’.<sup>983</sup> According to the UN Women’s report of 2023, Iran does not have ‘legally defined marriageable age for either girls or boys.’<sup>984</sup> As indicated by Leila

<sup>970</sup> IranWire, Iranian comedian Zeinab Mousavi summoned to serve prison sentence, 6 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>971</sup> IranWire, Iran intensifies hijab enforcement amid regional tensions and civil disobedience, 13 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>972</sup> Iran International, Hardliners in Iran promote polygamy, obedience of wives, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>973</sup> Iran International, Tehran’s ‘revolutionary’ mayor faces financial, marital scandals, 8 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>974</sup> Reuters, How Iran treats women, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>975</sup> Iran International, Hardliners in Iran promote polygamy, obedience of wives, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>976</sup> Reuters, How Iran treats women, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>977</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 2022, 26 March 2024

<sup>978</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>979</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 2022, 26 March 2024

<sup>980</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 2022, 26 March 2024

<sup>981</sup> Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024

<sup>982</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 2022, 26 March 2024

<sup>983</sup> France, OFPRA, DIDR, Iran: Women adopt behaviour perceived as transgressive of the social norms assigned to them, 24 July 2023, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>984</sup> UN Women, Legislating and enforcing the minimum age of marriage: A comparative study of experiences and lessons learned in ending the legalization of child marriage, n.d., [url](#), p. 21



Alikarami, child marriage is legally allowed by Iran’s Civil Code, which leads to forced marriage of numerous girls every year.<sup>985</sup> According to the latest statistics recorded by Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) between 2018 and 2019, 16 510 girls between 10 and 14 years old were married in urban areas and 19 895 in rural areas. During the same period, 332 841 girls between 15 and 19 years old were married in urban areas and 228 237 in rural areas.<sup>986</sup> As the majority of the child marriages and forced marriages were not legally registered,<sup>987</sup> the actual numbers could be higher.<sup>988</sup>

Prior to the Islamic Republic period in Iran, the legal marriage age for girls was 18 and 20 for boys, which has been abolished by the order of Ayatollah Khomeini following the Islamic Revolution in 1979.<sup>989</sup> Since then, the legal age of marriage for girls continued to be lowered over the years<sup>990</sup> from 18 to 9 years old.<sup>991</sup> According to HRW, the Iranian civil code permits girls to marry at the age of 13 years old,<sup>992</sup> and according to Reuters, ‘younger girls may also marry with special paternal and judicial consent’. A woman requires her father’s permission to marry, however, a court may disregard his refusal.<sup>993</sup>

Islamic Jurisprudence in Iran allows fathers and paternal grandfathers to determine a daughter’s marriage.<sup>994</sup> On 9 April 2023, the Iranian Parliament approved the general outlines of a draft bill on ‘Preventing harm to women and improving their safety against maltreatment’, of which Article 34 indicates that ‘if the guardian of a girl forces her to marry he would face prison and payment of a fine’.<sup>995</sup>

As noted by an expert interviewed by EUAA, forced marriage was more present in rural areas and its occurrence depended on a family social and economic background.<sup>996</sup> Forced marriages in Iran reportedly impacted various social classes, and victims had ‘no legal or social protection’.<sup>997</sup> On 24 September 2023, a 17-year-old girl reportedly committed suicide after being forced by her grandfather to marry her cousin in Harsin, Kermanshah province, Iran.<sup>998</sup>

<sup>985</sup> Alikarami L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>986</sup> SCI, Iran Statistical Yearbook 1397, 6 January 2021, [url](#), p. 173

<sup>987</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “protect” women with new bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>988</sup> France, OFPRA, DIDR, Iran: Women adopt behaviour perceived as transgressive of the social norms assigned to them, 24 July 2023, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>989</sup> KAYHANLIFE, Thousands of child marriages are celebrated in Iran each year, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>990</sup> Iran International, Hardliners in Iran promote polygamy, obedience of wives, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>991</sup> Boniadi, N., Iran women are still fighting, Time, 14 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>992</sup> HRW, Iran: events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>993</sup> Reuters, How Iran treats women, 6 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>994</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Suicide of a 17-year-old girl in Harsin following forced marriage pressure, 27 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>995</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “protect” women with new bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>996</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>997</sup> France, OFPRA, DIDR, Iran: Women adopt behaviour perceived as transgressive of the social norms assigned to them, 24 July 2023, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>998</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Suicide of a 17-year-old girl in Harsin following forced marriage pressure, 27 September 2023, [url](#)



#### 4.11.5. Widows

A widowed woman in Iran ‘only inherits one-eighth’ from her husband’s property<sup>999</sup> under the Iranian Civil Code.<sup>1000</sup> However, the husband inherits the entire property of his spouse in case of her death.<sup>1001</sup> In Kurdish regions, some of the widows have been working as *kolbars*.<sup>1002</sup> For more information on kolbars, please refer to chapter [4.7.2 Kurds](#).

According to the latest data recorded by the SCI between 2018 and 2019, there were 175 0624 widows in urban areas (including 142 between 10 and 14 years old and 652 between 15 and 19 years old), and 647 411 in rural areas (including 84 between 10 and 14 years old and 541 between 15 and 19 years old).<sup>1003</sup>

#### 4.11.6. Violence against women and girls

In Iran, violence against women continues to be perpetrated including physical, legal, and social violence.<sup>1004</sup> In February 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran stated that he was ‘alarmed at the continuing violence against women and girls, including cases of killings, physical and sexual abuse.’<sup>1005</sup>

On 9 April 2023, the Iranian parliament approved the general outlines of a draft bill on ‘Preventing harm to women and improving their safety against maltreatment’,<sup>1006</sup> which is also known as the bill on ‘Protection, Dignity and Safety of Women against Violence’.<sup>1007</sup> However, IranWire cited Pegah Banihashemi, a legal expert, stating that ‘the bill does not address some of the important issues affecting Iranian women, including domestic violence and “honor” killings’.<sup>1008</sup> For information on domestic violence and honour killing, please refer to chapter [4.11.8. Domestic and honour-related violence](#).

In 2023, HRA recorded 363 cases of violence against women in Iran including 26 cases of rape and sexual assault, 82 cases of murder, 28 cases of honour killings (including 4 men being killed in a result of honour killings), and 7 cases of acid attacks.<sup>1009</sup> For more information on punishments related to violence against women, please refer to chapter [3.3. Punishments related to violence against women](#).

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<sup>999</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1000</sup> Iran, Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [url](#), p. 86

<sup>1001</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1002</sup> BMC women’s health, Identification of causes and consequences of Kolber among Iranian Kurdish women: a grounded theory study, 5 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1003</sup> SCI, Iran Statistical Yearbook 1397, 6 January 2021, [url](#), p. 173

<sup>1004</sup> Wilson Center, Iran: violence against women, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1005</sup> UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, (27 February to 31 March 2023), A/HRC/52/67, 7 February 2023, [url](#), para. 8

<sup>1006</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “protect” women with new bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1007</sup> IP, New bill protects women against violence, 9 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1008</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “protect” women with new bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1009</sup> HRA, Annual report, 2023, annual statistical report of human rights conditions in Iran, 20 December 2023, [url](#), p. 48



As reported by Human Rights Watch, between January and March 2023, schoolgirls in 58 schools were allegedly poisoned in 10 provinces across Iran.<sup>1010</sup> According to AI, girls' schools were deliberately attacked with chemical gas in Iran.<sup>1011</sup> Schools in several cities were targeted with 'suspected poisoning attacks on the students' impacting 13 000 schoolgirls.<sup>1012</sup>

In August 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran reported on continued violence against women and girls in Iran including 'cases of deliberate killings, as well as sexual and physical violence.'<sup>1013</sup>

According to an AI report of December 2023, following the arrests during the 2022 protests, women and girls were 'raped and sexually abused' by different Iranian security forces including the IRGC, the *Basij*, the Ministry of Intelligence, the Public Security Police, the Investigation Unit of Iran's police, and the Special Forces of the police.<sup>1014</sup> As noted by the UN FFM on Iran, State authorities perpetrated sexual and gender-based violence against women (as well as men and children) in places of detention such as 'rape, including with an object, threats of rape, electrocution to the genitalia, forced nudity, groping, touching and other forms of sexual violence'.<sup>1015</sup> In February 2023, it was reported that a court had imprisoned a police commander accused of raping a teenage girl in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchistan province.<sup>1016</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [3.8. Treatment in detention and prison conditions](#).

### Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

In Iran, FGM/C, which is known as *khatna* or *sonat* (circumcision),<sup>1017</sup> is another form of violence against women's sexual rights,<sup>1018</sup> which has been practised during the reporting period in the country<sup>1019</sup> on girls as young as six-week<sup>1020</sup> to ten years old.<sup>1021</sup> FGM/C is mainly carried out by traditional locale female circumcisers, who are known as *dayeh* or *bibis* (midwives), or at times by elderly female family members, based on the region.<sup>1022</sup> FGM/C has been practised mainly in four provinces of Iran including in Hormozgan, West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah and Kurdistan, with the highest number in Hormozgan province.<sup>1023</sup> According to

<sup>1010</sup> HRW, Iran: events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1011</sup> AI, Iran: millions of schoolgirls at risk of poisoning, 19 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1012</sup> Iran International, Poisoning at Iran schools unabated; Regime urges media not to cover news, 11 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1013</sup> UN General Assembly, Seventy-eight session, situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/78/326, 24 August 2023, [url](#), para. 12

<sup>1014</sup> AI, Iran: Security forces used rape and other sexual violence to crush "Woman Life Freedom" uprising with impunity, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1015</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), para. 46

<sup>1016</sup> Reuters, Overnight protests rock Tehran, other Iranian cities, videos show, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1017</sup> Stop FGM Middle East, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1018</sup> Kameel Ahmady, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Iran, 5 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1019</sup> UNFPA, Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions, 10 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1020</sup> Stop FGM Middle East, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1021</sup> Equality Now, On the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death, a UN submission sheds light on dire human rights for women and girls in Iran, 16 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1022</sup> Stop FGM Middle East, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1023</sup> Kameel Ahmady, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Iran, 5 November 2023, [url](#); for more information, see the Persian version: Kameel Ahmady, ختنه زنانه (ختنه دختران) [Female FGM], 5 November 2023, [url](#)





USDOS, there were no recent reports on instances of FGM/C in Iran.<sup>1024</sup> According to FGM/C Research Initiative, the FGM/C practice exists in the country but there is lack of reliable data.<sup>1025</sup>

As noted by Leila Alikarami, while there is no specific law for punishing female genital mutilation/cutting, FGM/C, ‘can be considered as bodily harm, which leads to legal prosecution and punishment under the Penal Code.’ Additionally, FGM/C can be punished under Article 663 of the Penal Code addressing *diyeh* punishments, which states that:

‘Cutting or removal of either of the two parts of genital organs of a woman results in half of her full blood money (*diyeh*). Cutting or removing a part of it bears proportionate *diyeh*. In this ruling, there is no distinction between virgin and non-virgin, minor and adult, healthy and disabled individual.’<sup>1026</sup>

While authorities have not made any noticeable efforts to abolish the FGM/C practice in the country,<sup>1027</sup> the Supreme Leader reportedly expressed his opinion on the matter in 2014 stating that ‘female circumcision is not obligatory’.<sup>1028</sup>

#### 4.11.7. Trafficking in women and girls

According to IranWire, in Iran, there is a lack of legal framework to protect women from being trafficked, and thus due to socio-economic factors, they are often sexually exploited.<sup>1029</sup> Numerous Iranian women and girls have been ‘victims of sex trafficking in cafes, hotels, and massage centres’ in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.<sup>1030</sup> Iranian women have also been trafficked to Gulf countries.<sup>1031</sup>

On 20 May 2023, Iranian authorities reportedly executed the leader of a network that ‘trafficked Iranian women to neighbouring countries for prostitution.’<sup>1032</sup> The convicted individual was charged with ‘corruption on earth for establishing and managing a wide network of prostitution at the international level, which has been attracting Iranian and foreign girls’.<sup>1033</sup> The convicted individual lured some of the girls via social media.<sup>1034</sup> According to Global Organised Crime Index, as a result of the absence of transparency in Iran, accurate statistics cannot be found on women and girls being trafficked.<sup>1035</sup>

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<sup>1024</sup> USDOS, Iran 2022 Human Rights Report, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 54

<sup>1025</sup> FGMCRI, Middle East, Regional prevalence, FGM is reported in at least five Middle Eastern countries: Iraq, Iran, Oman, the UAE, and Yemen, 2 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1026</sup> Alikarami, L., email correspondence with EUAA, 3 April 2024

<sup>1027</sup> Stop FGM Middle East, Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1028</sup> Rayehe Mozafarian, The point of view of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Female Genital Mutilation, Stop FGM Middle East, 7 June 2014, [url](#)

<sup>1029</sup> IranWire, Human trafficking in Iran: dearth of transparent data, compensation, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1030</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in persons report: Iraq, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1031</sup> GOCI, Iran, 27 September 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>1032</sup> VoA, Iran, leader of women trafficking network executed, 20 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1033</sup> The New Arab, Iran executes convicted ringleader of women trafficking network, 20 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1034</sup> Jerusalem Post (The), Iranian leader of women trafficking network executed by Islamic Republic, 20 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1035</sup> GOCI, Iran, 27 September 2023, [url](#), p. 3



As noted by USDOS, victims of sex trafficking in Iran were charged for adultery, being treated as persons having ‘sexual relations outside of marriage and can be punished by death’. Iranian authorities ‘continued punishing potential adult and child sex trafficking victims through lashings, public shaming, forced confessions, imprisonment, and death penalty.’ For more information on punishment related to adultery, please refer to chapter 3.2.1. Hadd punishments and chapter 3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code.

#### 4.11.8. Domestic and honour-related violence

According to HRW, there is no law in the country on domestic violence to ‘prevent abuse and protect survivors’.<sup>1036</sup> Domestic violence can be criminalised as a physical assault; however, two male witnesses are required to the violence. Additionally, marital rape is not considered a crime in Iran.<sup>1037</sup>

Honour-related killings include women and girls who often refused forced marriages, who were victim of rape, who got divorced, who had sexual relationships, or were engaged in adultery.<sup>1038</sup> As noted by Leila Alikarami, honour killings ‘are implicitly sanctioned by the law’. At times ‘honour crimes take the form of forced self-immolation, allowing the woman’s death to be reported as suicide or an accident’.<sup>1039</sup> Honour-related violence is widespread in Iran, however, there ‘are no reliable and comprehensive figures about the scale on which this occurs’.<sup>1040</sup>

In 2023, at least 122 cases of femicide were reported in several cities in Iran, including 24 cases in Tehran province (comprising 7 related to honour killings) and 15 cases in Urmia province (including 9 honour killings).<sup>1041</sup> According to HRW, in 2023, there was a surge in cases of ‘femicide’ in the country.<sup>1042</sup> Human Rights Watch reported that 27 women and girls were killed in honour killings by their family members between mid-March 2023 and mid-May 2023.<sup>1043</sup>

During the past two years, 165 women were killed by their family members in Iran including 65.5 % by their husbands (108 cases), 10.3 % by their brothers (17 cases), 7.9 % by their fathers (18 cases), 5.5 % by their sons (9 cases) and 10.9 % by others (18 cases).<sup>1044</sup> Additionally, perpetrators included fathers-in-law, sons-in-law, suitors, fiancées and uncles.<sup>1045</sup> Perpetrators reportedly used different weapons and methods to kill their victims including by bullet, knife,

<sup>1036</sup> HRW, Iran: Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1037</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 2022, 26 March 2024

<sup>1038</sup> MEI, Iranian women campaign to stop the rise in “honor killings”, 26 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>1039</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 2022, 26 March 2024

<sup>1040</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, general Country of Origin Information on Iran, available at EUAA, 19 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1041</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, International women's day: statistical report on widespread violations of women's rights in Iran during 2023, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1042</sup> HRW, Iran: Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1043</sup> HRW, Iran: Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1044</sup> Shargh daily, هر چهار روز یک زن کشته می‌شود [‘every four-day a woman is being killed’], ۱۴ تیر ۱۴۰۲ [‘5 July 2023’], 5 July 2023, [url](#); Shargh daily is a Tehran based newspaper covering political, economic, cultural and sport related topics, about us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1045</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, International women's day: statistical report on widespread violations of women's rights in Iran during 2023, 7 March 2024, [url](#)





by strangulation, immolation, pushing, and beating with hammer. The main reasons for femicides were family disputes, in addition to honour-related violence and money-related issues.<sup>1046</sup> In cases of honour killings, if the perpetrator is the father, he does not face *qesas* punishment.<sup>1047</sup> For more information on *qesas* punishments, please refer to chapter [3.2.2. Qesas punishments](#).

#### 4.11.9. Access to justice

Article 20 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that ‘All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria.’<sup>1048</sup> However, in practice, the Constitution ‘gave the women fewer social rights and personal liberties’.<sup>1049</sup> As noted by Leila Alikarami, ‘women are treated differently in many aspects of Iranian law and the judicial system, solely on account of their gender’.<sup>1050</sup> Iran’s former Supreme Leader Khomeini reportedly abolished the family protection law<sup>1051</sup> and replaced the family protection courts with the civil courts,<sup>1052</sup> following his arrival to power in 1979. The family protection law, which was enacted in 1967, had given ‘women the right to seek a divorce, raised the age of marriage to eighteen for girls, and allowed a man to take a second wife only with the consent of his first wife and the permission of a family court.’<sup>1053</sup>

As noted by Alikarami, family-related rights were absorbed by a Civil Code which preserved male authority in the household. Additionally, there is a ‘lack of legal instruments protecting women’ in Iran, which ‘has created a climate of impunity for acts of violence against women perpetrated by the state and non-state actors’.<sup>1054</sup>

Courts in Iran are generally presided by clerics, and in matters of family disputes, the judges often decided in favour of the husband.<sup>1055</sup> As of June 2023, there were 121 female judges in Iran serving in family courts and drafting verdicts, however, only male judges were allowed to sign the verdicts, not female judges.<sup>1056</sup>

According to AI, the majority of Iranian women who were arrested during the protests and suffered torture and rape by the Iranian security forces, including by the IRGC, feared to complain to the judiciary. As noted further by AI, prosecutors and judges had ignored and

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<sup>1046</sup> Shargh daily, هر چهار روز یک زن کشته می‌شود [‘every four-day a woman is being killed’], ۱۴ تیر ۱۴۰۲ [‘5 July 2023’], 5 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1047</sup> IranWire, Iran’s Islamic Republic Claims to “protect” women with new bill, 14 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1048</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1049</sup> USIP, Part 3: Iran Laws on women, 13 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1050</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>1051</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Statistics report on wide-spread violations of women’s rights in Iran during 2023, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1052</sup> Atlantic Council, Iran and the women’s question, 4 February 2019, [url](#)

<sup>1053</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Statistics report on wide-spread violations of women’s rights in Iran during 2023, 7 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1054</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>1055</sup> Wilson Center, Iran: violence against women, 4 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1056</sup> Iran International, Female judges in Iran not authorised to sign rulings: MP, 10 June 2023, [url](#)





covered up complains of rape and used ‘torture-tainted “confessions” to bring spurious charges against survivors and sentence them to imprisonment or death’.<sup>1057</sup>

## 4.12. LGBTIQ persons and activists for LGBTIQ rights

In Iran, same-sex relationships continues to remain a taboo under social, religious and legal constraints.<sup>1058</sup> Homosexuality is depreciatively referred to as ‘*hamjensbazi* (faggotry)’ by the Islamic Republic in Iran and authorities have increasingly used hate speech against LGBTIQ individuals.<sup>1059</sup> Iranian authorities also refer to LGBTIQ persons as “deviant” and “sick”.<sup>1060</sup> On 21 March 2023, Iranian and International organisations addressed a joint statement to the UN Human Rights Council on Iran indicating that ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Intersex people [...] are subject to systematic discrimination’ in Iran.<sup>1061</sup> As noted by Leila Alikarami, LGBTIQ persons in Iran ‘often face social stigma, discrimination, and violence from their families, communities, and even healthcare providers’.<sup>1062</sup>

Iran's legal system ‘discriminates’ against LGBTIQ individuals and criminalises same-sex acts under the Islamic *hadd* crimes.<sup>1063</sup> Based on the Iranian Penal Code, sex between men is defined as *livat* and between women as *mosahaqa*.<sup>1064</sup> Same-sex relations in Iran are punished by death<sup>1065</sup> under the Iranian penal code, which enforces harsh punishments against consensual same-sex acts.<sup>1066</sup> Article 234 of the Islamic Penal Code stipulates that:

‘The *hadd* punishment for *livat* shall be the death penalty for the insertive/active party if he has committed *livat* by using force, coercion, [...] otherwise, he shall be sentenced to one hundred lashes. The *hadd* punishment for the receptive/passive party, in any case [...] shall be the death penalty.’<sup>1067</sup>

For more information on punishment related to *livat*, please refer to chapter [3.2.1. Hadd punishments](#) and chapter [3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code](#).

Men who are considered homosexual could face mistreatment in detention.<sup>1068</sup> In February 2024, the UN Fact-Finding Mission reported on sexual violence in places of detention, such as

<sup>1057</sup> AI, Iran: Security forces used rape and other sexual violence to crush “Woman Life Freedom” uprising with impunity, 6 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1058</sup> Sayed Mohsen Pourmohseni Shakib, Sajjad Razaee, Ashkan Naseh, Personality traits in homosexual men with different sex roles in Iran, available at ACCSCIENCE Publishing, 31 July 2023, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>1059</sup> 6Rang, Silencing protests: officials hate speech against LGBT people as a tool of suppression, 30 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 6 and 9

<sup>1060</sup> Iran International, Iranian LGBTQ activists call for protests on Amini anniversary, 11 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1061</sup> HRW, Joint NGO Statement on Iran to Member States of the United Nations Human Rights Council, 21 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1062</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>1063</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book one and two, 4 April 2014, [url](#); Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>1064</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book one and two, [url](#),

<sup>1065</sup> HRW, Iran: events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1066</sup> Alikarami, L., email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>1067</sup> IHRDC, Translation of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Book one and two, 4 April 2014, [url](#), p. 46

<sup>1068</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024



‘rape, including with an object, threats of rape, electrocution to the genitalia, forced nudity, groping, touching and other forms of sexual violence’ against LGBTIQ individuals (and others) in Iran.<sup>1069</sup>

Homosexual women are ‘badly’ perceived by the society and are targeted.<sup>1070</sup> For more information on punishment related to lesbian relationship, please refer to chapter [3.2.1. Hadd punishments](#) and chapter [3.9.1. Crimes punishable with the death penalty under the Penal Code](#).

As noted by Leila Alikarami, activists and lawyers advocating for LGBTIQ rights face censorship, harassment, and arbitrary arrest by the Islamic Republic. Iranian authorities often refer to vague laws such as ‘morality’ or ‘national security’ to silence dissent and target individuals who promote LGBTIQ rights.<sup>1071</sup> In February 2024, Iranian authorities arrested Elham Choubdar, a 26-year-old LGBTIQ activist in Urmia (West Azerbaijan province) and sent her to the women section of Urmia central prison to serve three-year imprisonment. Choubdar was initially sentenced to death on charges of ‘corruption on earth by propagation of homosexuality’, ‘promotion of Christianity’, and ‘collaboration with opposition parties’ in September 2023; however, the death sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court, and she was temporarily released on bail, before receiving a new sentence.<sup>1072</sup>

The transgender community in Iran continues facing ‘discrimination and threats of physical and psychological abuse’.<sup>1073</sup> Despite Iranian authorities’ and clerics’ acceptance that Iranians conduct surgery to change their sex,<sup>1074</sup> and gender-affirming surgeries are officially recognised in the country<sup>1075</sup>, transgender people do not have equal access to mental health. They also encounter ‘disrepute, infamy, stigma, and as well as sexual abuse, social discrimination, and a lack of family social support’.<sup>1076</sup> In 2023, an estimated number of 4 000 transgender people were residing in Iran.<sup>1077</sup> On 26 June 2023, five transgender Iranians were arrested in Afsariyeh district of Tehran following their dispute with a religious vigilante who targeted them for their physical appearance. Legal action has been taken against them after they have undergone forced confession.<sup>1078</sup>

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<sup>1069</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/67, 2 February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>1070</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>1071</sup> Alikarami, L, email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024

<sup>1072</sup> Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, LGBTQ+ community activists apprehended in Urmia, 28 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1073</sup> Rudaw, “At war with my own body:” Iran’s transgender community still at risk, 26 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1074</sup> Expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications, interview 14 March 2024, and email communication, 4 April 2024

<sup>1075</sup> Rudaw, “At war with my own body:” Iran’s transgender community still at risk, 26 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1076</sup> Frontiers, Young transgender individuals’ lived experiences of facing life’s challenges: a qualitative study in Iran, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1077</sup> Frontiers, Young transgender individuals’ lived experiences of facing life’s challenges: a qualitative study in Iran, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1078</sup> HRANA, Five transgender individuals arrested and coerced into confession, 26 June 2026, [url](#)



## 5. Socio-economic situation in Tehran

### 5.1. Mobility and admittance

During the reporting period, little information could be found regarding residency registration requirements in Tehran city specifically. This section, therefore, mainly focuses on the broader aspects of mobility and admittance in Iran.

Iran is a country with a rapid expansion of urban areas and a rise in the urban population.<sup>1079</sup> The urbanisation rate has increased from 71 % in 2011 to 75.5 % in 2020. Annually, around 1 % of working-age adults reportedly move to a new city, suggesting a notable degree of economic mobility.<sup>1080</sup> The provinces of Tehran and Alborz have experienced a higher level of urbanisation, compared to other provinces in Iran.<sup>1081</sup>

According to the law, Iranian nationals are required to register their address within 20 days of changing the place of residence to access administrative and government services.<sup>1082</sup> It is possible to register one's place of residence online, via the website of the Civil Registry Organisation.<sup>1083</sup>

As noted by USDOS, the law guarantees 'freedom on internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation' and these rights are generally respected by the authorities, albeit with certain exceptions concerning 'released prisoners, women, and migrants.' After release from prison, some persons were subjected to internal exile, effectively prohibiting them from residing in or travelling to certain provinces. Similarly, refugees reportedly encountered restrictions limiting their residence or travel to specific provinces.<sup>1084</sup>

As of 2023, Iran is the largest refugee-hosting country in the world,<sup>1085</sup> hosting 3.4 million Afghan refugees and persons 'in refugee-like situations', who were issued documentation by the Iranian government. The total estimated number of Afghan population in the country is 4.5 million. Furthermore, Iran is hosting around 12 000 refugees from Iraq.<sup>1086</sup> For the information on the situation of Afghan refugees in Iran, please refer to EUAA COI report [Iran – Situation of Afghan refugees](#) published in December 2022.

<sup>1079</sup> Enayatrad, M., et al, Determining the Levels of Urbanisation in Iran Using Hierarchical Clustering, Iranian Journal of Public Health, 48 (6), 2019, [url](#)

<sup>1080</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), p. 10

<sup>1081</sup> Enayatrad, M., et al, Determining the Levels of Urbanisation in Iran Using Hierarchical Clustering, Iranian Journal of Public Health, 48 (6), 2019, [url](#)

<sup>1082</sup> IRNA, اعلام آخرین نشانی خود را در سامانه ثبت احوال ثبت کنید [Register your last address in the civil registration system], 22 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1083</sup> Heyvalaw, اعلام اینترنتی تغییر نشانی در سازمان ثبت احوال [Online declaration of the change of address in the Civil Registry Organisation], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1084</sup> USDOS, Iran 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 47

<sup>1085</sup> Statista, Ranking of the largest refugee-hosting countries as of 2023, 11 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1086</sup> WFP, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Annual Country Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8





Between 2021 and 2022, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) recorded 84 000 internal displacements in Iran due to earthquakes, floods, and storms.<sup>1087</sup>

As reported by the European Network on Statelessness (ENS) and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI) in November 2019, Faili Kurds, Khavari Afghans, and Baluch population in Sistan and Baluchistan province were either affected by or at risk of statelessness.<sup>1088</sup> For more information, please refer to chapter [4.7. Ethnic minorities](#).

## 5.2. Socio-economic overview

### 5.2.1. Economy

Iran is classified as a lower middle-income country. The country faces longstanding economic challenges due to sanctions, limited trade and foreign relations, fluctuating oil prices, depreciation of its currency, and impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Iran also grapples with the challenge of hosting a growing number of refugees and risks posed by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, droughts and floods, which exacerbate the strain on livelihoods and infrastructure.<sup>1089</sup>

The World Bank noted that in 2022/2023 (from March to March as per the Iranian calendar year) Iran's economy experienced moderate growth for the third consecutive year. Real gross domestic product (GDP) reportedly grew by 3.8 %, <sup>1090</sup> with private consumption, which grew by 8.7 %, being the main driver of this growth. Despite sanctions, the country's oil sector has reportedly expanded, while the agriculture sector managed to overcome contractions experienced in previous years, thanks to an increased amount of rainfall.<sup>1091</sup> The service sector grew in 2022/2023 by 2.7 %, compared to 6.5 % growth in 2021/2022. The sector's expansion was driven largely by growth in transport and storage, wholesale and retail, and information and telecommunication services.<sup>1092</sup>

Iran's currency, the rial, has seen a constant depreciation in its value, reaching 600 000 rials to the dollar in February 2023<sup>1093</sup> and record low at 613 500 in March 2024.<sup>1094</sup> In January 2023, according to the official statistics, inflation in the country surged to over 53 %.<sup>1095</sup> Reporting on 2022/2023, World Bank noted that for the fourth consecutive year, consumer prices in Iran grew by over 40 %, with food prices accounting for around 40 % of the total inflation, followed by housing prices.<sup>1096</sup> Rising inflation hits harder lower-income households,

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<sup>1087</sup> ICMC, Country Profile – Iran, Islamic Republic Of, Displacement Data, [url](#)

<sup>1088</sup> ENS and ISI, Stateless in Iran, Country Position Paper, November 2019, [url](#), pp. 12-14

<sup>1089</sup> WFP, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Annual Country Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 8

<sup>1090</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), pp. ix, 11

<sup>1091</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1092</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), pp. ix, 11

<sup>1093</sup> AP, Iran's currency hits new low amid anti-government protests, 2 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1094</sup> AP, Iran's currency hits a record low, 24 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1095</sup> AP, Iran's currency hits new low amid anti-government protests, 2 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1096</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 8





as 80 % of their budget is allocated to food and housing expenses, while their real wages fall.<sup>1097</sup>

With a population of 9.5 million people, Tehran is the second largest city in the Middle East<sup>1098</sup> and the economic centre of the country.<sup>1099</sup> Tehran hosts over half of Iran's main industries, including manufacturing of electrical equipment, textiles, automobiles, cement, chemical products,<sup>1100</sup> and offers higher level of welfare compared to many the country's poorer provinces.<sup>1101</sup> In the Global Liveability Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) for 2022, Iran was ranked 163<sup>rd</sup> out of 172 countries.<sup>1102</sup>

## 5.2.2. Employment

As of 2021, the population of Iran was estimated at 85 million people, almost a quarter of whom were below 14 years old.<sup>1103</sup> The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported that 23.5 million of Iranians over 15 years old were employed in 2022.<sup>1104</sup> The World Bank reported that employment in Iran saw a moderate growth of 1.1 % in 2022/2023; however, the labour market could not reach its pre-pandemic level and still lacked 700,000 jobs compared to 2019/2020. Jobs were lost particularly in the agriculture sector, which suffered severely from drought and water shortages.<sup>1105</sup>

As noted by the World Bank, labour participation in the country in 2022/2023 stood at 40.9 %, a decrease from 44.1 % in 2019/2020, and revealed a significant gender gap (68.2 % for men and 16.6 % for women).<sup>1106</sup> According to ILO data, in 2019, 51.2 % of employed Iranians were engaged in services, 31.4 % in industry, and 17.4 % in the agriculture sector.<sup>1107</sup>

Based on the Iranian Statistical Centre's data of July 2023, the labour participation rate in Tehran province was 40 % and the employment rate 36.9 %.<sup>1108</sup> Many rural residents reportedly migrated to urban areas, and particularly to Tehran, in search of employment, driven by prolonged drought, lack of jobs in the agriculture sector, and hard economic situation.<sup>1109</sup> Across the country, many who were 'listed as employed' did not have formal employment contracts.<sup>1110</sup>

<sup>1097</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>1098</sup> Ziabari, K., The Tragedy of Tehran, Gulf International Forum, 1 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1099</sup> Britannica, Tehran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1100</sup> Qatar, Qatar Embassy in Tehran – Islamic Republic of Iran, General Information about Tehran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1101</sup> Ziabari, K., The Tragedy of Tehran, Gulf International Forum, 1 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1102</sup> EIU, The Global Liveability Index 2022, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>1103</sup> ILO, Islamic Republic of Iran, The Employment – Environment – Climate Nexus, Employment and environmental sustainability factsheet, November 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-2

<sup>1104</sup> ILOSTAT explorer, [Filter: Employment by sex and age (thousands) – Annual, Iran, Islamic Republic Of, latest period], accessed on 4 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1105</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), pp. ix, 4

<sup>1106</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1107</sup> ILO, Islamic Republic of Iran, The Employment – Environment – Climate Nexus, Employment and environmental sustainability factsheet, November 2022, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>1108</sup> Financial Tribune, Seven Provinces Register Double-Digit Unemployment, 10 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1109</sup> IranWire, Unemployment Pushes Educated Iranians to Big Cities, 7 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1110</sup> RFE/RL, Majority of Iranians Shunning Workforce Amid Rise In Discontent, 13 February 2024, [url](#)





### 5.2.3. Unemployment

According to the World Bank, in 2022/2023, the unemployment rate in Iran reached a record low of 9 %.<sup>1111</sup> In July 2023, the Statistical Centre of Iran reported that the unemployment rate in Tehran province was 7.6 %, while the provinces of Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Khuzestan, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Hormozgan, Lorestan, and Sistan and Baluchistan had the highest unemployment rate ranging from 10 to 12.5 %.<sup>1112</sup>

While the Iranian government claimed to have further reduced the unemployment rate to 7.6 %, Iran's Parliamentary Research Centre suggested that the real figure was 2.5 times higher. Furthermore, RFR/RL noted that the official data on unemployment also included underemployed persons, including those who worked 'only one hour a week.'<sup>1113</sup> Sources noted that the decline in unemployment in Iran was related to a rise in the economically inactive population,<sup>1114</sup> as long-term unemployed people stopped seeking work.<sup>1115</sup> In mid-February 2024, an official from the Labour Ministry noted that 58.5 % of Iran's population was considered inactive, as people in this category were neither having a job, nor looking for one.<sup>1116</sup>

According to the World Bank, in 2022/2023, unemployment in Iran varied among subgroups, being the lowest among men (7.7 %) and much higher among university graduates (12.9 %), women (15.8 %) and the youth (22.6 %).<sup>1117</sup> Based on the data of the Iranian Statistical Centre, persons with higher education degrees comprised nearly 41 % of the total unemployed in the second quarter of 2023, while persons in the age group between 18 and 35 accounted for over 70 % of the country's unemployed.<sup>1118</sup>

### 5.2.4. Poverty

According to official figures the poverty rate in Iran has increased from 19 % to 30 % in a decade.<sup>1119</sup> As noted by the World Bank Group, the number of Iranians living below the international poverty line (6.85 dollars [EUR 6.30] a day in 2017 purchasing power parity terms) increased from 20 % to 28.1 % between 2011 and 2020, which corresponded to 9.5 million people countrywide living in poverty.<sup>1120</sup> Moreover, the level of deprivation of impoverished Iranians and the severity of poverty have reportedly increased.<sup>1121</sup> In May 2023, Iran

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<sup>1111</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1112</sup> Financial Tribune, Seven Provinces Register Double-Digit Unemployment, 10 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1113</sup> RFE/RL, Majority of Iranians Shunning Workforce Amid Rise In Discontent, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1114</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 4; Iran International, Iran Claims Lower Unemployment but Numbers Say Otherwise, 5 January 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Majority of Iranians Shunning Workforce Amid Rise In Discontent, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1115</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1116</sup> RFE/RL, Majority of Iranians Shunning Workforce Amid Rise In Discontent, 13 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1117</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), pp. 4-5

<sup>1118</sup> Iran Focus, Youth Account for 70% Of Unemployed Population In Iran, 20 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1119</sup> Economist (The), Iran rethinks its role as a regional troublemaker, 14 December 2023, [url](#); Iran International, Iran Poverty Rate Reached Over 30 % Since 2018, 31 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1120</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), p. 14

<sup>1121</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), p. 15



International reported that, based on the data by the Ministry of Interior, around 60 % of Iranians live under the relative poverty line.<sup>1122</sup>

Poverty in Iran is more evident in rural areas, with half of rural population being poor. In 2020, over 50 % of agricultural labourers and 36 % of people self-employed in agriculture and non-agricultural jobs were poor. Geographically, poverty has affected the Southeast and Northwest regions more,<sup>1123</sup> while in the Tehran metropolitan area and the Central region, which were home to 40 % of Iran's population, 24 % of the country's poor resided.<sup>1124</sup> Furthermore, while overall poverty in the country has increased between 2011 and 2020, Iran's urban centres, including the capital Tehran, have seen almost no rise in poverty rates.<sup>1125</sup> As further noted by the World Bank Group, 'the poor have larger households, lower education levels, and are more likely to be headed by a woman, especially if she is divorced'.<sup>1126</sup> Child labour was reported in Tehran's informal settlements and impoverished areas.<sup>1127</sup>

### 5.2.5. Food security

Iran is confronted with increased climate change challenges, including severe droughts, more frequent floods and dust storms.<sup>1128</sup> Drought and desertification force many Iranians to migrate to urban areas for livelihoods.<sup>1129</sup> The country's food security, as well as its agricultural production is threatened by water shortages,<sup>1130</sup> while economic downturn, depreciation of the Iranian rial and trade restrictions have negatively impacted 'the import of raw materials and thus the availability of food and non-food items'.<sup>1131</sup>

### 5.2.6. Housing

In Iran, housing is largely a privatised sector. Housing construction and development is carried out by individual landowners, realtors, small-scale developers and corporate developers, primarily focused on condominium construction. In Iranian cities, including the capital, individual ownership predominates, with market dynamics regulating purchase and rental prices.<sup>1132</sup> Official data for 2023 on income and expenditures of households in Tehran indicated that housing accounted for 50 % of the total expenses, compared to the average in the country of 38 %.<sup>1133</sup> The absence of public housing reportedly contributed to the persistently high cost of housing.<sup>1134</sup>

<sup>1122</sup> Iran International, Iran Poverty Rate Reached Over 30 % Since 2018, 31 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1123</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>1124</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), p. 30

<sup>1125</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>1126</sup> World Bank Group, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, Iran Poverty Diagnostic, November 2023, [url](#), pp. 6

<sup>1127</sup> Ziabari, K., The Tragedy of Tehran, Gulf International Forum, 1 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1128</sup> World Bank (The), Islamic Republic of Iran, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>1129</sup> Economist (The), Iran rethinks its role as a regional troublemaker, 14 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1130</sup> World Bank (The), Iran Economic Monitor, Spring/Summer 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>1131</sup> WFP, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Annual Country Report 2023, n.d., [url](#), p. 9

<sup>1132</sup> Yousefi, S. and Farahani, I., Spatial inequality in Tehran, a structural explanation, Urban Research & Practice, Volume 15 (1), 2019, [url](#)

<sup>1133</sup> Iran Focus, Housing Accounts for Half of Spending by Tehran Households, 15 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1134</sup> Yousefi, S. and Farahani, I., Spatial inequality in Tehran, a structural explanation, Urban Research & Practice, Volume 15 (1), 2019, [url](#)



In January 2023, the Central Bank of Iran reported that an average price for one square meter in Tehran was 480.7 million rials (1 265 dollars).<sup>1135</sup> In mid-March 2024, the Statistical Centre of Iran revealed that housing prices in Tehran had surged to over 830 million rials (1 353 dollars) per square meter, a figure confirmed by the Central Bank of Iran. A pro-government media outlet, 90 Egtesadi, as reported by Iran Focus, noted on a 60 % decline in housing transactions in 2023.<sup>1136</sup> The decline in people's purchasing power was reportedly the main factor contributing to their inability to obtain housing.<sup>1137</sup> To avoid high rental costs, some residents of Tehran reportedly relocated to smaller towns surrounding the capital.<sup>1138</sup>

In 2020, the existence of shanty settlements was reported in all 22 districts of Tehran.<sup>1139</sup> These settlements were constructed illegally<sup>1140</sup> and remained poorly developed. Official data indicated that nearly four million people lived in 'informal settlements and impoverished areas' in Tehran province, with the majority concentrated in the city of Tehran. These settlements suffered from poor sanitary conditions and irregular access to water and heating.<sup>1141</sup> The situation with water supply and sanitation in Iran has reportedly improved, particularly in regard to accessibility to water supply in urban areas.<sup>1142</sup>

### 5.2.7. Healthcare

Primary healthcare is free of charge in Iran.<sup>1143</sup> Healthcare is provided under the nationwide Iranian Primary Health Care (PHC) network, established in 1985. Sources report good results achieved by PHC, such as vaccination coverage and reduction of child mortality,<sup>1144</sup> 'despite the negative impact of sanctions – i.e., high inflation, increasing out-of-pocket expenses, reduced income and access to medicine and health equipment.'<sup>1145</sup> As noted by World Health Organization (WHO), the main basic health insurance providers in Iran were the Social Security Organisation, the Iranian Health Insurance Organisation, and the military insurance scheme. In 2018, 7 % of Iranians had private insurance, and around 8.5 % were uninsured.<sup>1146</sup>

PHC was the main provider of healthcare in Tehran. In mid-2022, Iran had 18 242 health houses, 5 489 health posts and over 5 489 healthcare centres; in addition, each province had

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<sup>1135</sup> Tehran Times, Housing price increases 2.9 % in Tehran city, 2 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1136</sup> Iran Focus, Average Housing Price in Tehran at 830 million Rials, 1 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1137</sup> Iran Focus, Housing Accounts for Half of Spending by Tehran Households, 15 March 2024, [url](#); Iran Focus, Average Housing Price in Tehran at 830 million Rials, 1 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1138</sup> Iran International, Iranians Voice Deep Concern Over Exorbitant Rents, 10 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1139</sup> Ziabari, K., The Tragedy of Tehran, Gulf International Forum, 1 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1140</sup> Wynn, M., et al, Housing development and the smart city: a case study of Tehran, Iran, Journal of Infrastructure Policy and Development, 7 (2), 2022, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>1141</sup> Ziabari, K., The Tragedy of Tehran, Gulf International Forum, 1 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1142</sup> WHO, Situation, Strategies, Programs, Challenges, and Joint Priorities of The Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME), and the World Health Organization (WHO), in Islamic Republic of Iran, November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>1143</sup> UNHCR, Iran, Health, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1144</sup> WHO, The Islamic Republic of Iran: a primary health care case study in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, [url](#), p. 2; Doshmangir, L. et al, Iranian primary health care network: challenges and ways forward, Primary Health Care Research and Development, 9 January 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1145</sup> WHO, The Islamic Republic of Iran: a primary health care case study in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>1146</sup> WHO, The Islamic Republic of Iran: a primary health care case study in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, [url](#), p. 2



at least one university of medical sciences.<sup>1147</sup> Based on 2017 data, 18 % of all hospitals in Iran were situated in Tehran province, with 51 % of them being state-owned. In the capital, 46 % of the hospitals were state-owned, compared to 73 % nationwide.<sup>1148</sup>

Several safety accidents in hospitals in Tehran have been reported. In 2020, an explosion resulting from a gas leak at Sina Athar Medical Centre killed 19 people,<sup>1149</sup> after which officials admitted inadequate infrastructure and poor safety measures of many hospitals.<sup>1150</sup> In January 2024, a fire was reported in the prominent medical centre Ghandi Hospital<sup>1151</sup> in northern Tehran,<sup>1152</sup> again causing concerns regarding the safety of medical facilities.<sup>1153</sup> The Ministry of Health reportedly revoked the licences of 100 hospitals and placed an additional 250 under probation.<sup>1154</sup>

### 5.2.8. Education

All children in Iran have access to primary and secondary education, with all school children, including refugees and undocumented children, following the same national curriculum.<sup>1155</sup> As of 2022, the literacy rate in Iran was estimated at 89 %<sup>1156</sup> with 85 % for women<sup>1157</sup> and 93 % men.<sup>1158</sup>

The education system in Iran had significant disparities in resource distribution between provinces, notably evident in the contrast between such provinces as Sistan, Baluchistan and Kurdistan and more prosperous regions such as Tehran, Alborz, and Isfahan. Moreover, high school dropout rates were reported, particularly in less-developed regions.<sup>1159</sup> In 2018, according to the data of Well-being Organization, the government documented around 327 000 children in Tehran who were not attending school between March and June of the same year.<sup>1160</sup>

<sup>1147</sup> WHO, The Islamic Republic of Iran: a primary health care case study in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>1148</sup> Yousefi, S. and Farahani, I., Spatial inequality in Tehran, a structural explanation, *Urban Research & Practice*, Volume 15 (1), 2019, [url](#)

<sup>1149</sup> Iran International, Tehran Hospital Buildings In Neglect and Unsafe: Official, 29 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1150</sup> Iran International, Tehran Hospital Buildings In Neglect and Unsafe: Official, 29 December 2023, [url](#);

Iran International, 100 Hospitals in Iran Have License Revoked, 250 on Probation, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1151</sup> VoA, Fire Breaks Out at Tehran Hospital, *Iran State Media Reports*, 25 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1152</sup> Iran International, 100 Hospitals in Iran Have License Revoked, 250 on Probation, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1153</sup> IranWire, Tehran Hospital Blaze Highlights Security Challenges In Iran, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1154</sup> Iran International, 100 Hospitals in Iran Have License Revoked, 250 on Probation, 4 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>1155</sup> UNHCR Iran, Education, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1156</sup> World Bank (The), Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above) – Iran, Islamic Rep., UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed by the World Bank on 19 September 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1157</sup> World Bank (The), Literacy rate, adult total (% of females ages 15 and above) – Iran, Islamic Rep., UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed by the World Bank on 19 September 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1158</sup> World Bank (The), Literacy rate, adult total (% of males ages 15 and above) – Iran, Islamic Rep., UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed by the World Bank on 19 September 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1159</sup> IranWire, Dropouts, Disparities and Shortages: Schooling in Iran's Poorer Provinces, 23 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1160</sup> Iran Focus, Millions of Iranian Children Deprived of Education, 19 September 2018, [url](#)





As of 2022, the gross ratio<sup>1161</sup> of enrolment to tertiary education in Iran stood at 61 %, <sup>1162</sup> both for men<sup>1163</sup> and for women.<sup>1164</sup> In the Academic Ranking of World Universities,<sup>1165</sup> University of Tehran was placed in the 301-400 range in both 2021 and 2022 and in the 401-500 range in 2023.<sup>1166</sup> Overall, in 2023, ten Iranian universities were ranked among the top 1 000 universities in the world.<sup>1167</sup>

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<sup>1161</sup> As defined by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, gross enrolment ratio is the ratio of total enrolment ‘regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year.’ See, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Gross enrolment ration, n.d., <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/gross-enrolment-ratio>

<sup>1162</sup> World Bank (The), School enrollment, tertiary (% gross) – Iran, Islamic Rep., 19 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1163</sup> World Bank (The), School enrollment, tertiary, men (% gross) – Iran, Islamic Rep., 19 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1164</sup> World Bank (The), School enrollment, tertiary, female (% gross) – Iran, Islamic Rep., 19 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>1165</sup> In the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), 2 500 universities are ranked and the details of the best 1 000 of them are published. For the methodology, see Shanghai Ranking, Shanghai Ranking’s Academic Ranking of World Universities, Methodology 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>1166</sup> Shanghai Ranking, University of Tehran, n.d., [url](#)

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# Annex 1: Bibliography

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Leila Alikarami, email communication 11 March 202, 26 March 2024. Alikarami is an expert on Iranian law, qualified attorney, and a member of Iran's Central Bar Association since 2002. She has extensive expertise on the situation of women in Iran. She is based outside Iran.

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## Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The reference period should be 1 January 2023 – 17 April 2024

The report covers the general political situation, the security situation including armed confrontations, the legal system and the judiciary, detention and prison conditions, treatment of certain profiles and groups of population, and socio-economic situation, including focus on Tehran (economy, health care, education, food security, poverty and employment, housing and living conditions including water and sanitation).

### General overview

#### System of government and political situation in the country

- Structure
- Policies and methods

#### Iranian authorities

- IRGC
- *Basij*
- morality police
- Intelligence agencies

#### Military service and recruitment

#### Security situation

- Armed confrontations

#### Legal system and the judiciary

This chapter should cover the overall structure of the judiciary in Iran, including such topics as independence of judiciary and corruption of the judicial system, the types of punishments under the Penal Code, and court procedures, particularly for persons involved in or supporting the 2022 protests, and subsequent punishments

- criminal law and punishments under *Sharia* (*hadd*, *qesas*, *ta'zir*)
- types of criminal courts, including juvenile and revolutionary courts
- appellate courts
- due process and access to legal aid
- treatment in detention and prison conditions
- death penalty

#### Treatment of certain profiles and groups of population

- Persons expressing political dissent and opposition or perceived as such
- Protesters, including minors
- Human rights defenders and activists



- Journalists and media workers
- Education personnel
- Draft evaders and deserters
- Ethnic and religious minorities, including Kurds and Yarsan, Baluches, freedom of religion and belief, Christians and Baha'is, Zoroastrians, and other religious and ethnic minorities
- Individuals transgressing religious and moral codes including conversion, apostasy, atheism, blasphemy, and other behaviours perceived as transgressing religious and moral codes
- Situation of women and girls including restrictions on women's rights and dress code, violence against women and girls including forced and child marriage, domestic and honour-related violence and access to justice
- LGBTIQ persons and activists for LGBTIQ rights

#### **Socio-economic situation with focus on Tehran**

- Access and residency requirements for Tehran
- Key socio-economic indicators in Tehran including economy, employment, poverty, food security, healthcare, education, housing and living conditions (including water and sanitation)







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