



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>IRAN</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Treatment of musicians and their family members, including those who are considered critics of the government or dissidents, by authorities and pro-government groups, including the Basij and Sepah; treatment upon return</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	January 2018 to 18 July 2024
<b>Topic(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">Treatment by authorities and pro-government groups</a></li><li><a href="#">Treatment upon return</a></li></ol>
<b>Date of completion</b>	19 July 2024
<b>Query Code</b>	Q45-2024
<b>Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)</b>	N/A



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## Disclaimer

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Cite as: EUAA, Country of Origin Information Query, Iran, Treatment of musicians and their family members, including those who are considered critics of the government or dissidents, by authorities and pro-government groups, including the Basij and Sepah; treatment upon return, 19 July 2024, [url](#)



## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Iran

### Treatment of musicians and their family members, including those who are considered critics of the government or dissidents, by authorities and pro-government groups, including the Basij and Sepah; treatment upon return

#### 1. Treatment by authorities and pro-government groups

The 2023 annual report by the United States Department of State (USDOS) described that the government ‘maintained control’ over artistic productions, including music.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the same source indicated that ‘the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance was required to approve song lyrics, music, and album covers to ensure they complied with the country’s moral values, although many underground musicians released albums without seeking such permission.’<sup>2</sup> The prior 2022 annual report by USDOS, added that ‘officials continued to discourage teaching music in schools.’<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, heavy metal and foreign music was considered ‘religiously offensive’ by the authorities, underground concerts were repressed, and musicians and music distributors were arrested.<sup>4</sup> In addition, ‘women remained banned from singing in public.’<sup>5</sup>

The 2023 Amnesty International (AI) report on human rights further added that ‘thousands of people’, including musicians, were ‘subjected to abusive interrogations, arbitrary detention, unjust prosecution, and suspension or expulsion from education or employment for peacefully exercising their human rights.’<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International in 2020 further added that ‘authorities summoned for questioning some Instagram users with large followings’ including musicians, and ‘in some cases, detained them and took over their accounts.’<sup>7</sup> According to multiple sources, hip-hop is considered illegal and rappers were often targeted by the authorities.<sup>8</sup>

According to a 2018 report on cyber threats from Iran by the US-based research institute Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, ‘Iran-originating spearphishing campaigns have also targeted Iranian cultural figures,’ including musicians, ‘regardless of whether they reside

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<sup>1</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>2</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 35-36

<sup>3</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 20 March 2023, [url](#); Center for Human Rights in Iran, She’s a Professional Iranian Singer But is Banned from Singing on Stage in Her Country, 24 January 2018, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> AI, Amnesty International Report 2023/24, The State of the World’s Human Rights: Iran 2023, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> AI, Iran: Human rights in Iran: review of 2019, 18 February 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>8</sup> Irish Times (The), ‘They kill artists softly’: The Iranian rappers challenging the state, 1 April 2023, [url](#); BBC News, Hichkas: The songs that defied the Iranian government, 3 May 2023, [url](#); Daily Mirror, Protests and crackdown: Rappers vs. the regime in Iran, 20 May 2024, [url](#)



in Iran or abroad.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the same source added that ‘these themes of targeting famous pop musicians and their staff—both inside Iran and abroad—are recurrent and do not focus solely on individuals critical of the establishment.’<sup>10</sup>

IranWire, a local news source, indicated in 2016 that ‘since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, religious leaders and hardliners have imposed tight regulations and extensive bans on the country’s musicians, and demanded they conform to and promote strict Islamic values.’<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the same source added that ‘Iranian artists continue to work in a repressive, even hostile climate, and are repeatedly targeted by hardliners.’<sup>12</sup> Musicians also faced ‘harsh regulations from Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, from which they must obtain official permission to hold a concert, a requirement that gives authorities the power to closely control the music scene and ensure it lives up to so-called Islamic norms and standards.’<sup>13</sup>

Incidents of musicians being targeted due to being considered critics of the government or dissidents, as reported by sources, include:

- In October 2022, Rapper Toomaj Salehi was arrested for releasing rap lyrics that criticised the government.<sup>14</sup> In July 2023, Salehi was sentenced to six years and three months in prison by the Isfahan Revolutionary Court on charges of ‘corruption on earth’, and was also given a ‘two-year ban on producing music or singing.’<sup>15</sup> In April 2024, Salehi was sentenced to death after being accused of further charges, according to his lawyer.<sup>16</sup> Salehi has also been found guilty by the Supreme Court of ‘offences, including assistance in sedition, calling for riots, collusion and propaganda against the state.’<sup>17</sup> In June 2024, the death sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court.<sup>18</sup>
- In June 2024, Milad Jalili, a rapper from northwestern Tabriz, was arrested and sentenced to eight months in prison for ‘propaganda activity against the Islamic Republic through the performance of political rap music.’<sup>19</sup>
- In April 2024, the Supreme Court sentenced Kurdish rapper Saman Yasin to five years in prison in Kerman province.<sup>20</sup> Yasin was detained during the 2022 nationwide protests, spent over 18 months in temporary detention, and was initially sentenced to

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<sup>9</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Iran’s Cyber Threat: Espionage, Sabotage, and Revenge, 4 January 2018, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>10</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Iran’s Cyber Threat: Espionage, Sabotage, and Revenge, 4 January 2018, [url](#), p. 45

<sup>11</sup> IranWire, The War on “Sinful” Music Concerts in Iran, 26 May 2016, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> IranWire, The War on “Sinful” Music Concerts in Iran, 26 May 2016, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> IranWire, The War on “Sinful” Music Concerts in Iran, 26 May 2016, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>15</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Iran, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>16</sup> BBC News, Iranian rapper sentenced to death, says lawyer, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> BBC News, Iranian rapper’s death sentence overturned, 23 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> France 24, Iran’s supreme court overturns rapper Toomaj Salehi’s death sentence, 22 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> IranWire, Iranian Rapper Milad Jalili Imprisoned for Political Rap Music, 5 June 2024, [url](#); Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, Iranian Rapper - Activist Jailed For Political Performance, 10 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, Iranian Rapper’s Death Sentence Changed To 5 Years In Prison, 23 April 2024, [url](#); IranWire, Iran Court Sentences Kurdish Rapper Saman Yasin to 5 Years in Exile, 24 April 2024, [url](#)



death.<sup>21</sup> Yasin was considered ‘a vocal critic of Iran's clerical establishment,’ and in October 2022, was found guilty on the charge of ‘waging war against God.’<sup>22</sup>

- In October 2023, a concert by Iranian singer Alireza Ghorbani was cancelled by the authorities in the city of Isfahan because his shows feature female musicians performing onstage.<sup>23</sup>
- In September 2022, Iranian rapper Shervin Hajipour was arrested by the authorities, days after he released a protest song of the nation-wide protests in 2022 concerning the death of Mahsa Amini, who was beaten by Iranian police for not adhering to the dress code.<sup>24</sup>
- In December 2022, it was reported that during the nationwide protests ‘at least 40 Iranian artists, writers, poets, actors, film makers and musicians have been arrested and jailed.’<sup>25</sup>
- In July 2019, convictions were upheld against musicians Nikan Khosravi and Arash Ilkhani on ‘anti-state charges’; Khosravi was sentenced to 12 and a half years’ imprisonment for charges including ‘disturbing public opinion through the production of music containing anti-regime lyrics’ and Ilkhani was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment and a suspended sentence.<sup>26</sup>

Concerning the treatment of family members, according to IranWire, an Iranian female singer named Olduz Pouri faced allegations of being ‘affiliated with political groups abroad’ by the Ministry of Intelligence, as a means to ‘stop her from performing and singing.’<sup>27</sup> According to the article, Pouri, who fled Iran in 2019 after accusations and threats by the authorities, indicated that authorities raided Pouri’s family house twice, reportedly ‘looking for evidence to accuse me or my family of doing something illegal.’<sup>28</sup>

Further information on the treatment of the family members of musicians by authorities and pro-government groups could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

Information specifically on the treatment of musicians by pro-government groups including the Basij and Sepah could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

## 2. Treatment upon return

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<sup>21</sup> Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, Iranian Rapper's Death Sentence Changed To 5 Years In Prison, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> IranWire, Iran Court Sentences Kurdish Rapper Saman Yasin to 5 Years in Exile, 24 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, Iranian Singer Ghorbani, Who Uses Female Musicians On Stage, Sees Concerts Canceled, 17 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> Guardian (The), Iran arrests musician as anthem for protests goes viral, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> OHCHR, Iran: UN experts condemn execution of protestor, raise alarm about detained artists, 8 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 17 January 2020, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>27</sup> IranWire, "They Called Me Seditious Because I'm a Singer", 18 June 2021, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> IranWire, "They Called Me Seditious Because I'm a Singer", 18 June 2021, [url](#)



IranWire indicated that, according to Pouri, her ‘parents were told that if [she] returned to Iran, [she] would be arrested.’<sup>29</sup>

Sources described that the Iranian Foreign Ministry mentioned a potential return to Iran from exile of Nasrallah Moein, a renowned Esfahani singer, residing in the US since the 1979 Islamic revolution.<sup>30</sup> Moein remained officially banned in Iran and according to a lawyer quoted in an local news article, the singer would have to go to jail for ‘at least 28 years’ before he could sing in public.<sup>31</sup>

According to multiple sources, Iranian rapper Amir Tataloo was taken into custody immediately upon his arrival in Iran on 6 December 2023, following his deportation by Turkish police authorities.<sup>32</sup> Tataloo was held in detention and in March 2024, Tataloo was accused during a trial of ‘several offenses including promoting "prostitution," disseminating "propaganda" against the Islamic Republic, and other broadly defined charges of "obscene content”.’<sup>33</sup> tataloo became known for criticizing the Iranian government’s human rights record, but later adopted a conservative stance.<sup>34</sup>

Additional information on the treatment upon return of musicians or further incidents could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

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<sup>29</sup> IranWire, "They Called Me Seditious Because I’m a Singer", 18 June 2021, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> Iran International, Iran Halts Music Fest As It Teases Diaspora Singer's Return, 3 April 2024, [url](#); IranWire, Iranian Foreign Ministry Claims Working on Exiled Singer Moein’s Return, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>31</sup> Iran International, Iran Halts Music Fest As It Teases Diaspora Singer's Return, 3 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty, Iranian Rapper Tataloo Detained Upon Arrival After Being Deported From Turkey, 7 December 2023, [url](#); IranWire, Iranian Musician Amir Tataloo Faces Final Trial, 7 May 2024, [url](#); Iran International, Iranian Pop Singer Given Heavy Prison Sentence, 19 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> Iran International, Iranian Pop Singer Given Heavy Prison Sentence, 19 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>34</sup> IranWire, Iranian Musician Amir Tataloo Faces Final Trial, 7 May 2024, [url](#)

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