



# Common Claims

## Iran

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## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide information on common claim sets in the Iranian caseload. The paper looks at issues including race/nationality, religion, particular social groups, political opinion and state protection. It also provides information on Iran's security environment and its social welfare system.

## Refugee convention

### Race/Nationality

**Ethnic and religious minorities face discrimination in their day-to-day lives in Iran.** Although the Iranian Constitution guarantees equality for ethnic minorities, all rights are subordinate to undefined Islamic interests.<sup>1</sup> The imprisonment of individuals from ethnic minorities for practicing their culture, language and faith is an ongoing concern.<sup>2</sup> Under President Rouhani, authorities have permitted some courses teaching minority-languages and literature in universities and schools; however, this is closely monitored and controlled.<sup>3</sup> Minorities are disproportionately represented among political and national security-related charges.<sup>4</sup> Sustained efforts to promote minority rights—particularly if perceived to undermine the Islamic Revolution—often lead to adverse attention from Iranian authorities.<sup>5</sup>

### Arabs

**Arabs who seek to assert cultural or political rights are at a higher risk of facing adverse attention from the Iranian authorities.**<sup>6</sup> Arabs, more so than other ethnic groups, who are politically active are likely to attract adverse attention from the authorities, especially in border provinces. Those who advocate for greater autonomy or self-determination face a high risk of official harassment, monitoring, imprisonment and mistreatment.<sup>7</sup> Although the Constitution allows the use of non-Persian

<sup>1</sup> 'Contested Notions of National Identity, Ethnic Movements and Democratisation in Iran', Yesiltas, O, *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2016, pp. 57–58, CIS38A80123751.

<sup>2</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (11 January 2021)', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.9, 20210216093019

<sup>3</sup> 'Non-Persian Mother Languages Treated as "National Security Threat" in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 26 February 2021, 20210301141754; 'Rouhani's Unlikely Supporters', LobeLog (United States), 17 May 2017, CXC9040667578. Rouhani's 10-point election platform included a commitment to introduce mother-tongue education in schools and universities. The instruction consequently introduced are limited to some courses in some school. No schools are permitted to teach all courses in a minority language. 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941441.

<sup>4</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.23, 20200414083132; 'Iran: UN expert says ethnic, religious minorities face discrimination', United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 22 October 2019, 20200423092940; 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941441

<sup>5</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, pp.193-194, 20210407093348; 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.23, 20200414083132; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.16, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>6</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.25, 20200414083132

<sup>7</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.25, 20200414083132

languages in media and education<sup>8</sup>, schools in Iran only teach in Persian (with the exception of some courses on minority languages and literature in some schools).<sup>9</sup> Arabic-language radio and satellite television signals, including those run by separatist groups, are received in Khuzestan (pron. *hooz-e-stan*).<sup>10</sup> Although Ahwazi cultural activities are allowed, authorities will attempt to prevent activities perceived as political.<sup>11</sup> Arabs in Khuzestan might face adverse attention for political activism, demonstrations, flying their own flag or wearing traditional Arab garments as a form of protest.<sup>12</sup> Particularly during periods of tension, Arabs have been arrested for non-violent activities, including journalism or cultural activities, such as organising Arabic poetry or music events.<sup>13</sup> The risk of an Arab attracting the interest of the authorities is dependent upon them being perceived as a threat to the Islamic Republic's constitutional underpinnings or territorial integrity.<sup>14</sup> During 2020, several Ahwazi prisoners remained forcibly disappeared.<sup>15</sup>

**Iran has frequently violently suppressed protests, and targets high-profile Arab activists in the lead-up to or aftermath of significant events.** Arab protests in Khuzestan focus on identity, environmental degradation and social issues.<sup>16</sup> Environmental degradation in Khuzestan is significant, and has led to urban migration as well as unrest.<sup>17</sup> In July 2021, security forces quashed peaceful

<sup>8</sup> 'Contested Notions of National Identity, Ethnic Movements and Democratisation in Iran', Yesiltas, O, *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2016, p. 57, CIS38A80123751

<sup>9</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.12, 20200228105335; 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941441; 'Iran: Sweeping Arrests of Ahwazi Arab Activists', Human Rights Watch (United States), 29 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE5399; 'Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox', Bradley, J R, *Washington Quarterly* (United States), January 2006, p. 184, CIS17983

<sup>10</sup> 'In Orbit Satellite Coverage', ArabSat, n.d., CISED50AD5078; 'Iran's Ethnic Tinderbox', Bradley, J R, *Washington Quarterly* (United States), January 2006, p. 185, CIS17983

<sup>11</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 10, CIS7B83941872

<sup>12</sup> 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 15, CIS7B83941441; 'Iran's Ahwazis Continue to Suffer as Two More Disappeared Activists are Executed', *Global Voices*, 3 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA23541; 'Detention of a cultural activist by Iran Regime's Ministry of Intelligence in south-western Iran', *Iran Human Rights Monitor* (United States), 6 November 2017, CXC90406617111; 'Ahwazi Arabs support their football team in courageously national style', *Ahwaz Monitor*, 18 March 2017, CXC9040666963; 'Protests over pollution in Iran's Khuzestan province 'a national threat'', *Middle East Eye* (United Kingdom), 17 February 2017, CXC9040666965

<sup>13</sup> 'Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 10, CIS7B83941872; 'A Framework of Violence: Repression of the Arab Ethnic Minority in the Islamic Republic of Iran', *Iran Human Rights Documentation Center* (United States), 25 September 2014, p. 12, CIS2F827D91379; 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 16, CIS7B83941441; 'Ahvaz Resident Hassan Heydari Released on Bail', *Human Rights Activists News Agency*, 18 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35609

<sup>14</sup> 'Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 10, CIS7B83941872. The Islamic Republic's Constitution explicitly denies the equal rights to those members of religious minorities and political groups that seek to undermine the Islamic Revolution. 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 13, CIS7B83941441

<sup>15</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.192, 20210407093348

<sup>16</sup> 'No country for minorities: the inequality of state repression in Iran', *Open Democracy*, 02 June 2020, 20200602095134; 'Iran 2016 Human Rights Report', US Department of State, 3 March 2017, p. 42, OGD95BE926964; 'Khorramshahr unrest takes a bloody turn as police opens fire on protesters', *Iran Human Rights Monitor* (United States), 1 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA30513; '3 Arab Activists Arrested in Ahvaz', *Human Rights Activists News Agency* (United States), 6 March 2017, CXC9040663871; 'Ahwaz's environmental woes at the epicenter of crisis in Iran', *al-Arabiya* (United Arab Emirates), 16 February 2017, CXC9040662422;

<sup>17</sup> 'Residents Abandoning Regions With Increasingly Fierce Sandstorms', *Radio Farda* (Czech Republic), 30 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26890; 'Drinking water crisis in Iran', *Iran Human Rights Monitor* (United States), 13 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33427

protests over severe water shortages in Khuzestan, firing live ammunition and birdshots at protestors. At least eight protestors and bystanders were killed by security forces and dozens injured, including children.<sup>18</sup> Dozens of protestors and activists were detained, including many Ahwazi Arabs.<sup>19</sup> Protests in support quickly spread to other provinces including Tehran, and turned political in nature.<sup>20</sup> In total, hundreds of people have been arrested and at least 12 protestors have been killed by security forces.<sup>21</sup> Over 300 people have been arrested in Khuzestan alone.<sup>22</sup> Activists, protestors and bystanders caught up in the wave of arrests have been subject to raids, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment.<sup>23</sup>

**In May 2020, 30 Ahwazi Arabs, including several children, were detained in Khuzestan Province; it is unclear why and if they were charged with anything.**<sup>24</sup> In the same month, there were at least two other group arrests of Ahwazi Arabs in the southern provinces of Iran.<sup>25</sup> During 2019, 800 Ahwazi Arabs in Khuzestan province were arrested on security related charges.<sup>26</sup> Many Arabs joined the nationwide November 2019 demonstrations, and some of the most intense protests and rioting occurred in Khuzestan Province (see '[November 2019 protests](#)').<sup>27</sup> During the protests, security forces used excessive force against ethnic minorities, including Arabs in Khuzestan, which recorded amongst the highest number of deaths of any province.<sup>28</sup> At least 100 Ahwazi demonstrators were killed and 2,500 imprisoned.<sup>29</sup> Ahwazi Arabs (along with individuals from other minority groups) who did not participate in the protests, were accused of doing so by the authorities and were arrested.<sup>30</sup> Hundreds of Ahwazi Arab children were arrested in Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province in connection with the protests, some as young as nine years old<sup>31</sup> Excessive force is occasionally used

<sup>18</sup> '[Iran: Security forces use live ammunition and birdshot to crush Khuzestan protests](#)', Amnesty International, 23 July 2021, 20210726093414

<sup>19</sup> '[Iran: Security forces use live ammunition and birdshot to crush Khuzestan protests](#)', Amnesty International, 23 July 2021, 20210726093414

<sup>20</sup> '[Monthly Report July 2021, Iran Human Rights Monitor](#)', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 02 August 2021, 20210803102718; '[Iran: Deadly Repression of Khuzestan Protests](#)', Human Rights Watch (HRW), 29 July 2021, 20210730090511; '[Several Arrested After Protest Rally in Front of Tehran City Theater](#)', Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 02 August 2021, 20210803120142

<sup>21</sup> '[Monthly Report July 2021, Iran Human Rights Monitor](#)', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 02 August 2021, 20210803102718; '[HRANA Newly Identifies 190 Detainees from the Recent Protests in Khuzestan for a Total of 361 Arrested](#)', Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 05 August 2021, 20210809120351

<sup>22</sup> '[Iran Protests: Tehran Demonstrators Jailed as Arrests Continue in Khuzestan](#)', Iran Wire, 05 August 2021, 20210805141522

<sup>23</sup> '[Iran: Security forces use ruthless force, mass arrests and torture to crush peaceful protests](#)', Amnesty International, 11 August 2021, 20210812085529;

[Protesters arrested in Khuzestan, detained under torture and pressure](#)', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 14 August 2021, 20210817131552

<sup>24</sup> 'Iran Security Forces Arrest Dozens of Ahwazi Arabs Including Children', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 June 2020, 20200604121912

<sup>25</sup> 'Iran Security Forces Arrest Dozens of Ahwazi Arabs Including Children', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 June 2020, 20200604121912

<sup>26</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.16, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>27</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>28</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.3-4, 20200228105335; 'Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown', Human Rights Watch, 25 February 2020, 20200226112021

<sup>29</sup> 'After being wrongly arrested in Iran, Ahwaz man kills himself', Middle East Monitor, 31 December 2019, 20201109142344; 'U.S. says Iran may have killed up to 1,000 protesters', NBC News, 6 December 2019, 20201109142510; 'No country for minorities: the inequality of state repression in Iran', Open Democracy, 02 June 2020, 20200602095134

<sup>30</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.7, 20200903090643

<sup>31</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.22, 20200903090643

to suppress protests.<sup>32</sup> Ahwazi Arabs participated in the nation-wide December 2017–January 2018 protests. Khuzestan recorded the second largest number of protesters arrested.<sup>33</sup>

**Arabs (among others) face mistreatment in detention.** Those arrested frequently complain of beatings and torture whilst in custody.<sup>34</sup> An Ahwazi Arab died while in detention in June 2019.<sup>35</sup> An Arab individual on political charges died in custody in June 2018; authorities did not tell his family where they buried the body.<sup>36</sup> Two Arab men were executed in February 2018, although it is unclear what the charges were.<sup>37</sup> Arabs outside Iran reported that 22 Arabs were executed in secret in November 2018 after being detained following an attack on a military parade.<sup>38</sup> In August 2019, two Arabs were executed for 'enmity against God'.<sup>39</sup> In October 2019, the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced plans to execute 30 Ahwazi Arabs; however, it is unclear if this occurred.<sup>40</sup> Of the 120 people executed between 2010 and 2019 for political affiliation with banned political and militant groups, 17 were Arab (14 per cent).<sup>41</sup> In March 2021, four Arab prisoners were executed on political charges; they were reportedly tortured while in prison.<sup>42</sup> In June 2019, an Arab detainee in Ahvaz died in what rights groups claim was concerning circumstances.<sup>43</sup> Allegations are made about physical

<sup>32</sup> 'Khorramshahr unrest takes a bloody turn as police opens fire on protesters', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 1 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA30513; 'Iran: Sweeping Arrests of Ahwazi Arab Activists', Human Rights Watch (United States), 29 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE5399; 'Iran: Investigate Reported Killings of Demonstrators', Human Rights Watch (United States), 29 April 2011, CXCB3E63420841

<sup>33</sup> Only in Tehran were more protesters arrested. 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 17, CIS7B83941441

<sup>34</sup> '[Iran: Tortured Ahwazi Arabs at risk of execution](#)', Amnesty International, 12 February 2021, 20210215110913; 'No country for minorities: the inequality of state repression in Iran', Open Democracy, 1 June 2020, 20200602095134; 'Ahwazi: Iran Executes Ahwazi Arab men "Tortured to Confess"', Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 7 August 2019, 20200421075105; 'Iran arrests Ahwazi Activist allegedly tortured in prison', Middle East Monitor, 21 January 2019, 20200421081659; 'Khorramshahr unrest takes a bloody turn as police opens fire on protesters', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 1 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA30513; 'Iran: Sweeping Arrests of Ahwazi Arab Activists', Human Rights Watch (United States), 29 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE5399; 'Iran: Investigate Reported Killings of Demonstrators', Human Rights Watch (United States), 29 April 2011, CXCB3E63420841

<sup>35</sup> 'Iran: Authorities must investigate death in custody of Ahwazi Arab detainee', Amnesty International, 28 June 2019, 20190705104449

<sup>36</sup> 'Arab Rights Activist Hatam Morammezi Dead After One Year of Detention in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 6 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA28967. 'Iran: Young Arab activist killed under torture', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 5 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA28796. This was the sixth suspicious death in custody in 2018.

<sup>37</sup> 'Iran: Two men executed in Ahwaz', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 21 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA22674. 'Iran's Ahwazis Continue to Suffer as Two More Disappeared Activists are Executed', Global Voices, 3 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA23541

<sup>38</sup> 'Report on the human rights situation covering 2018 – Iran', Amnesty International, 26 February 2019, p.4, 20190308090902; 'Fears mounting for detained Ahwazi Arabs amid reports of secret executions', Amnesty International, 13 November 2018, 20190215142112

<sup>39</sup> 'Ahwazi: Iran Executes Ahwazi Arab men "Tortured to Confess"', Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 7 August 2019, 20200421075105

<sup>40</sup> 'Iran is using terrorism charges to execute 30 Ahwazi activists', Middle East Monitor, 2 October 2019, 20200421081549

<sup>41</sup> Ethnic minorities are overrepresented in executions for political affiliation. An overview of IHR reports between 2010 and 2019 shows that among the 120 people who have been executed for affiliation with banned political and militant groups, 65 were Kurds (55%), 29 Baluchis (25%) and 17 Arabs (14%). It is important to note that most of those executed among the ethnic groups were Sunni Muslims. See: 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2019', Iran Human Rights, 01 April 2020, p.53, 20200402073515

<sup>42</sup> '[Iran: Tortured Ahwazi Arabs at risk of execution](#)', Amnesty International, 12 February 2021, 20210215110913; '[Iran: Four Ahwazi Arab Men Secretly Executed](#)', Amnesty International, 18 March 2021, 20210319091554; '[Relatives Visit Ethnic Arab Prisoners in Khuzestan Jail Only to Be Handed Corpses Minutes Later](#)', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 March 2021, 20210305100023

<sup>43</sup> 'Ahvazi Arab Detainee Suspiciously Dies In Custody', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 29 June 2019, 20190704094209; 'Iran: Authorities must investigate death in custody of Ahwazi Arab detainee', Amnesty International, 28 June 2019, 20190705104449

mistreatment, including sexual violence and forced confessions,<sup>44</sup> of Arabs in custody.<sup>45</sup> Sexual violence and forced confessions are used against many Iranian prisoners (see 'torture' and 'cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'); it could not be determined if Arabs were disproportionately affected by these crimes, or if Arabs are disproportionately represented among executed prisoners. Ahwazi Arabs were largely excluded from temporary furlough measures introduced to stop the spread COVID-19 (see 'prison conditions').<sup>46</sup>

**A trend of conversions to Sunni Islam among Arabs worries the regime, resulting in intimidation and adverse attention.** An estimated 70 to 80 per cent of Iranian Arabs are Shia.<sup>47</sup> The Arabs in Khuzestan are mostly Shia, whereas the Arabs in Bushehr and Hormuzgan are mostly Sunni.<sup>48</sup> Reports as far back as 2008 indicate a trend of Arab conversion to Sunni Islam, in part due to disenchantment with the regime.<sup>49</sup> It is unknown how many have converted; commentators write of a 'large number',<sup>50</sup> 'many',<sup>51</sup> 'some'<sup>52</sup> and a 'growing movement'.<sup>53</sup> DFAT assesses conversions are 'not widespread'.<sup>54</sup> A September 2018 report noted that the trend began in 2008 but quickly dissipated.<sup>55</sup> Because the traditional schools of Sunni Islam are sanctioned in Iran, authorities have responded by charging some converts with adherence to Wahhabism, erroneously charging them for involvement in

<sup>44</sup> 'Iran: Internal Politics and U.S. Policy and Options', US Congressional Research Service, 20 May 2020, p.16, 20201105133537; 'Iran: Authorities must investigate death in custody of Ahwazi Arab detainee', Amnesty International, 28 June 2019, 20190705104449; '2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices—Iran', US Department of State, 11 March 2010, Section 6, OGD95BE923167

<sup>45</sup> 'Iran: Internal Politics and U.S. Policy and Options', US Congressional Research Service, 20 May 2020, p.16, 20201105133537; 'Iran: Authorities must investigate death in custody of Ahwazi Arab detainee', Amnesty International, 28 June 2019, 20190705104449; 'Shocking video shows Iranian guards forcing Ahwazi Arabs to bark in detention', Al Arabiya, 3 October 2017, 20201105125442; 'Eighth Ahwazi Arab killed under torture by Revolutionary Guards', Ahwaz News Agency, 14 November 2012, CX302013; 'Ahwazi Arabs', Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, June 2010, p. 3, CIS20365; 'Iranian-Arab activists draw harsh sentences', Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 15 August 2014, CX324616

<sup>46</sup> 'While Iran Releases some Prisoners, Ahwazi and Other Prisoners Face Imminent Death', The Washington Institute, 7 April 2020, 20200421083536

<sup>47</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.24, 20200414083132; 'A Framework of Violence: Repression of the Arab Ethnic Minority in the Islamic Republic of Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 25 September 2014, p. 15 fn. 166, CIS2F827D91379; 'Ahwazi Arabs', Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (Belgium), June 2010, p. 1, CIS20365

<sup>48</sup> 'Iran/death penalty: a state terror policy', International Federation for Human Rights (France), 28 April 2009, p. 35, CIS17337

<sup>49</sup> 'The Struggle for Arabistan: Tensions and Militancy in Iran's Khuzestan Province', Zambelis, C, Terrorism Monitor (United States), vol. 12, no. 2, 23 January 2014, CX317491; 'Iraqi Militants Encourage People of Khuzestan to Launch Jihad against Iran', Fadhil Ali, R, Terrorism Monitor (United States), vol. 9, no. 37, 14 October 2011, CX274544; 'Shiites on the rise in Sunni Gaza, Sunnis on the rise in Shiite Iran', al-Arabiya (Saudi Arabia), 14 April 2011, CX317492; 'Minority report: Prospects for security in oil-rich Khuzestan', Jane's Intelligence Review (United Kingdom), January 2008, p. 55, CIS19941

<sup>50</sup> 'Two Sunni converts may face death penalty in Iran after being charged with 'causing corruption on earth'', International Campaign for Sunni Prisoners in Iran, 12 December 2014, CX1B9ECAB9070

<sup>51</sup> 'More than 20 Sunni converts arrested at Qur'an study meeting, Ahwaz', International Campaign for Sunni Prisoners in Iran, 27 February 2014, CX1B9ECAB9070

<sup>52</sup> 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples—Iran Overview', July 2014, CX324703; 'Amnesty International—Urgent Action: UA 280/13: Iran: Ahwazi Arab men at risk of imminent execution', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 4 October 2013, CX316918

<sup>53</sup> 'Iraqi Militants Encourage People of Khuzestan to Launch Jihad against Iran', Fadhil Ali, R, Terrorism Monitor (United States), vol. 9, no. 37, 14 October 2011, CX274544

<sup>54</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.24, 20200414083132

<sup>55</sup> 'The Shia Arabs of Khuzestan', Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), 25 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA36309

security incidents, and arresting Sunni preachers.<sup>56</sup> Some converts have been prosecuted for 'spreading corruption on earth' (which can result in the death penalty) or other charges.<sup>57</sup>

**A court case in Sweden indicates that the Iranian authorities have conducted surveillance of the Ahwazi Arab community in Europe.** In December 2019, an Iraqi Swede, Raghdan al-Hraishawi, was sentenced to two and a half years in prison by a Swedish court on charges of spying on the Ahwazi community in Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands.<sup>58</sup> Al Hraishawi collected personal information for Iran about Ahwazi Arabs under the pretence of working for an online Arabic newspaper. Between 2015 and 2019 he undertook surveillance of Ahwazi Arabs in several European countries including filming conference delegates and demonstrators at Ahwazi events, photographing number plates and obtaining internet log-in details of members of the community.<sup>59</sup> The Judge presiding over his case noted that al-Hraishawi had contacts within the Iranian intelligence service who he communicated with by email and phone and in person.<sup>60</sup>

## Kurds (including Faili Kurds)

**Kurds who seek to assert cultural or political rights might face adverse attention from Iranian authorities.** Kurds (along with other ethnic minority groups) face discrimination in gaining access to university studies, employment, business licences and economic aid, getting permission to publish books and exercising their civil and political rights.<sup>61</sup> Generally, Iran does not target Kurds specifically because of their ethnicity or religion.<sup>62</sup> However, those who attempt to publicly assert cultural or political rights have an increased risk of coming to the attention of the state.<sup>63</sup> DFAT assesses that

<sup>56</sup> 'Two Sunni converts may face death penalty in Iran after being charged with 'causing corruption on earth', International Campaign for Sunni Prisoners in Iran, 12 December 2014, CX1B9ECAB9070; 'A Framework of Violence: Repression of the Arab Ethnic Minority in the Islamic Republic of Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 25 September 2014, p. 40, CIS2F827D91379; 'Iran: Nine Ahwazi Arab men arrested after converting to Sunni Islam', International Campaign for Sunni Prisoners in Iran, 3 February 2014, CX1B9ECAB9077; 'Iran's Beleaguered Sunnis', The Atlantic (United States), 6 January 2016, CX6A26A6E16239

<sup>57</sup> 'Two Sunni converts may face death penalty in Iran after being charged with 'causing corruption on earth', International Campaign for Sunni Prisoners in Iran, 12 December 2014, CX1B9ECAB9070; 'Another Sunni convert is arrested in Ahwaz, southwestern Iran', International Campaign for Sunni Prisoners in Iran, 13 March 2014, CX1B9ECAB9177; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Note by the Secretary-General', United Nations General Assembly, 27 August 2014, p. 13, CIS2F827D91669

<sup>58</sup> 'Sweden jails man for spying on Ahwazi community for Iran', Reuters, 20 December 2019, 20191223151624; 'Sweden sentences Iraqi man of spying for Iran', David Keyton, Associated Press (AP), 20 December 2019, 20191223095516

<sup>59</sup> 'Sweden jails man for spying on Ahwazi community for Iran', Reuters, 20 December 2019, 20191223151624

<sup>60</sup> 'Sweden sentences Iraqi man of spying for Iran', David Keyton, Associated Press (AP), 20 December 2019, 20191223095516

<sup>61</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.54, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.27, 20200414083132; 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, CIS7B83941441; 'Iran – Failing on all Fronts', Amnesty International, 30 June 2019, p. 9, 20190704101420

<sup>62</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.27, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941872. That said, in June 2018, Iranian authorities banned Kurdish costumes and language being spoken publicly in a governorate in West Azerbaijan province. 'Iran officials ban Kurdish clothes and language in public places', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 13 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA29303

<sup>63</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.27, 20200414083132; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.54, 20210331113214; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, pp.193-194, 20210407093348; 'Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI', Danish Immigration Service, 07 February 2020, p.19, 20200210101317; 'Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941872; The Islamic Republic's Constitution explicitly denies the equal rights to those members of religious minorities and political groups that seek to undermine the Islamic Revolution. 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 13, CIS7B83941441.

those who advocate for greater Kurdish rights and autonomy or self-determination face a high risk of official harassment, monitoring, imprisonment and mistreatment.<sup>64</sup> Kurds (along with other ethnic minorities) who speak out against violations to their rights face arbitrary detention, prolonged detention, disappearances, physical abuse, torture, unfair trials and imprisonment.<sup>65</sup>

**The authorities do not necessarily differentiate between members and supporters of Kurdish political parties; treatment is arbitrary and depends on the intelligence officer involved.**<sup>66</sup> Kurds who undertake low-level activities such as participating in an assembly of protestors or in a general strike may be accused by the authorities of cooperating with banned opposition parties.<sup>67</sup> Kurdish activists are frequently incorrectly accused (and charged) with belonging to a political party.<sup>68</sup> Most Kurdish activists who are arrested are not actually party members, but instead supporters or people who have no affiliation with a party.<sup>69</sup> There was a wave of arrests of Kurdish activists in western Iran at the start of the year.<sup>70</sup> Between January and February 2021, at least 96 Kurds were arrested including civil society activists, environmentalists, labour rights activists, university students and individuals with no known history of activism.<sup>71</sup> Most were arrested without warrants and remain imprisoned, without access to lawyers.<sup>72</sup> During 2020, over 500 Kurds were arrested for politically motivated reasons and charged with vague national security offences.<sup>73</sup> Many were given lengthy prison sentences, ranging from one month to 17 years and at least four were executed following unfair trials.<sup>74</sup> Since May 2020, at least eight Kurdish journalists have been arrested.<sup>75</sup> In 2019, Kurdish prisoners charged with national security offences represented almost half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran.<sup>76</sup> Dozens of Kurds were arrested following the November 2019 protests (see '[November 2019 Protests](#)').<sup>77</sup> More than half of the casualties caused by the state's crackdown

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Recent example: 'Kurdistan Teachers Association Member Held After Peaceful Protests', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 19 February 2019, 20190219094735; 'Police arrest more than a dozen amid general strike sweeping Kurdish provinces', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 13 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35379; 'Kurdish cultural activists arrested ahead of poetry reading', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 10 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31396

<sup>64</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.27, 20200414083132; '[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.53, 20210331113214

<sup>65</sup> '[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.53, 20210331113214

<sup>66</sup> '[Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI](#)', Danish Immigration Service, 07 February 2020, p.20, 20200210101317

<sup>67</sup> '[Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI](#)', Danish Immigration Service, 07 February 2020, pp.19-20, 20200210101317

<sup>68</sup> '[Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI](#)', Danish Immigration Service, 07 February 2020, p.22, 20200210101317

<sup>69</sup> '[Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI](#)', Danish Immigration Service, 07 February 2020, p.22, 20200210101317

<sup>70</sup> '[36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran](#)', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509; '[IHR Warns of Crackdown on Kurdish and Baluch Citizens in Iran](#)', Iran Human Rights, 26 January 2021, 20210127132810; '[15 Kurdish Civil Activists Arrested in Different Cities in Iran](#)', Iran Human Rights, 12 January 2021, 20210114111720

<sup>71</sup> '[36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran](#)', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509; '[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.10, 20210624120211

<sup>72</sup> '[36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran](#)', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509

<sup>73</sup> '[36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran](#)', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509

<sup>74</sup> '[36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran](#)', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509

<sup>75</sup> '[Iran detained at least 8 Kurdish journalists starting in mid-2020: 3 remain behind bars](#)', Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), New York, 12 May 2021, 20210513110032

<sup>76</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.16, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN General Assembly, 18 July 2019, p.20, 20190819104518. Similar figures are not yet available for 2020.

<sup>77</sup> 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.25, 20200219090219; 'Fearing arrest, wounded Kurdish protesters avoid clinics as Iranian security forces crackdown continues', Kurdistan 24, 19 November 2019, 20200421135502

on protestors were recorded in the Kurdish regions.<sup>78</sup> During 2018, 828 arrests of Iranian Kurds were registered.<sup>79</sup> In the months after the December 2017–January 2018 protests, authorities summoned numerous Kurdish activists and threatened them with national security charges.<sup>80</sup> Separately, in late March 2018, authorities charged over 40 people in the largely Kurdish province of Kermanshah with participating in the protests.<sup>81</sup>

**A disproportionately large number of Kurds are executed in Iran.**<sup>82</sup> The majority of people executed in Iran for belonging to a banned political or militant group are Kurds. Between 2010 and 2020, of the 129 people executed for their affiliation to banned political and militant groups, 69 were Kurds (53 per cent).<sup>83</sup> During 2020, there was a significant increase in the number of executions in Kurdish regions compared to previous years.<sup>84</sup> In 2020, at least 69 Kurds were executed.<sup>85</sup> Kurdistan Province recorded the highest execution rate in 2020.<sup>86</sup> At least four Kurds were executed in unfair trials during the year.<sup>87</sup> A Kurdish prisoner was executed in April 2020<sup>88</sup> and a further two were executed in July 2020.<sup>89</sup> During the first half of 2019, at least 17 Kurdish prisoners were executed; 14 for murder and three for drug-related offences.<sup>90</sup> Sources estimate between 53 and 69 Kurdish citizens were executed in Iranian prisons in 2018, for charges based on religious and political activities.<sup>91</sup> This included three high profile Kurdish political prisoners that were executed in September 2018.<sup>92</sup> Kurdish rights activists have also been executed.<sup>93</sup>

**Cultural and political activities among Kurds are restricted by the Iranian authorities and there are reports of excessive use of force against, and extrajudicial killings, of Kurds.**<sup>94</sup> There has been a measure of improvement in cultural freedom under President Rouhani, with some middle

<sup>78</sup> 'Iran Focusing on Minorities Following Protests, Experts Say', Voice of America, 23 November 2019, 20191125153334

<sup>79</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN General Assembly, 18 July 2019, p.20, 20190819104518

<sup>80</sup> 'Iran Falsely Accuses Human Rights Activists of Undermining National Security', Iran News Update, 30 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA25442

<sup>81</sup> '43 People Charged in Iran's Kermanshah Province For Protesting Against the State', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 30 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA25444

<sup>82</sup> 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020', Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, pp.85-86, 20210331091914; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.27, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN General Assembly, 18 July 2019, p.20, 20190819104518

<sup>83</sup> 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020', Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.86, 20210331091914

<sup>84</sup> 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020', Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.86, 20210331091914

<sup>85</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (14 May 2021)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.3, 20210624120211

<sup>86</sup> 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020', Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.86, 20210331091914

<sup>87</sup> '36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509

<sup>88</sup> 'Political Prisoner Extradited From Iraqi Kurdistan, Executed in Iran', Iran Human Rights, 11 April 2020, 20200414115935

<sup>89</sup> 'Two Kurdish Political Prisoners Executed Despite "Serious Questions" in the Case', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 15 July 2020, 20200716142534

<sup>90</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN General Assembly, 18 July 2019, p.21, 20190819104518

<sup>91</sup> 'Iran's harsh treatment of ethnic minorities', Arab News, 28 July 2019, 20190801171418; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p. 52, 20190508143726

<sup>92</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - February 2019', United Nations Human Rights Council, 8 February 2019, p. 5, 20190405133750; 'Outcry against Secret Executions of Zanyar and Loghman Moradi and Ramin Hossein Panahi', Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 10 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35080; Human Rights Watch World Report 2019', Human Rights Watch, 17 January 2019, pp. 289-290, 20190118091502

<sup>93</sup> 'Iran publicly executes five Kurdish rights activists in Urmia', Cheleng, S, ARA News, 21 May 2016, CX6A26A6E4422; 'Freedom in the World 2016 - Iran', Freedom House, 7 March 2016, NGE43874C130

<sup>94</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.54, 20210331113214; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2020', Human Rights Watch, 14 January 2020, 20200115082903; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN General Assembly, 18 July 2019, p.21, 20190819104518

schools in Kurdistan being permitted to use Kurdish in some courses, and a Kurdish language and literature course being made available at the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj.<sup>95</sup> In July 2020, a Kurdish teacher and civil society activist from Kurdistan Province was sentenced to 10 years in prison for teaching students Kurdish.<sup>96</sup> There are ongoing reports of authorities using excessive force against, and committing extrajudicial killings of, border couriers in the Kurdish provinces.<sup>97</sup>

**It is likely there are less than 8,000 stateless Faili Kurds in Iran.** DFAT is not aware of examples where Faili Kurds have been singled out for mistreatment.<sup>98</sup> In several waves from the late 1960s, up to 300,000 Faili Kurds and other Iraqis were accused of being 'Iranian', stripped of their citizenship and property, and expelled to Iran. The most significant of these events occurred in 1980, when Saddam Hussain deported all persons 'of Persian origin' under Decree 666.<sup>99</sup> Since 2002, registered Iraqi refugees in Iran have received regularly updated 'amayesh' cards, enabling a permit to reside, access to basic services (including schooling, medical insurance and bank accounts) and the ability to obtain work permits.<sup>100</sup> Many stateless Faili Kurds in Iran are registered and possess amayesh cards, though some are undocumented. The number of registered Faili refugees in Iran is likely to be less than 4,000.<sup>101</sup> It is unknown how many unregistered Faili Kurds reside in Iran, though DFAT noted a 'credible academic estimate' from 2014 that 'up to 8,000' stateless Failis remained in Iran, though this number 'likely incorporates both registered and unregistered' Failis.<sup>102</sup> Unregistered Faili Kurds have difficulty registering marriages<sup>103</sup> and may not legally work, open bank accounts or access health

<sup>95</sup> 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 24, CIS7B83941441; 'National Fabric: Iran's Ethnic Minorities', Small Media (United Kingdom), 6 November 2015, p. 108, CISEC96CF13804. In March 2017, the US Department of State reported that 'authorities prohibited most schools from teaching [the Kurdish language] with the exception of the Kurdish language program at the University of Kurdistan'. 'Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran's human rights defenders under attack', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 2 August 2014, p. 47, NG2A465F576

<sup>96</sup> 'Iran: how to kill a language', Open Democracy, 06 August 2020, 20200807134105

<sup>97</sup> '36 Human Rights Groups Appeal for Release of Kurdish Detainees and Other Minorities in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 04 February 2021, 20210215132509; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (11 January 2021)', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, 20210216093019; 'Civilians Get Killed by Security forces' Indiscriminate Shootings in Iran', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 October 2020, 20201102114514; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN General Assembly, 18 July 2019, p.21, 20190819104518

<sup>98</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.28, 20200414083132

<sup>99</sup> 'Existence Gaps in Effective Protection of Refugees in Iran—With an overview on Iran's domestic laws and its international responsibilities', International Journal of Current Research, 31 January 2017, p. 45261, CISED50AD363; 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 1, CISEC96CF13392. The designation 'Persian' was due to the registration of civilians in Ottoman times; civilians chose between being 'Persian' or 'Ottoman' (Persians were not conscripted into the Ottoman army). Upon independence, Iraq retained this designation of 'national original', which was marked in the identity cards of successive generations. 'Iran in Iraq: How much influence?', International Crisis Group, Middle East Report Number 38, 21 March 2005, p. 4, CIS14345. For a more detailed history, see 'The Situation of Kurds in Iraq and Turkey: Current trends and prospects', Morad, M in *The Kurds: A contemporary overview*, edited by PG Kreyenbroek and S Sperl, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 128–133, CIS3C899D2850

<sup>100</sup> 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 2, CISEC96CF13392; 'World Refugee Survey Iran 2009', 17 June 2009, CX241042

<sup>101</sup> 'DFAT Thematic Report: Faili Kurds in Iraq and Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 3 December 2014, CIS2F827D91722; 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, CISEC96CF13392. This figure has been falling over time. In 2008, the UNHCR estimated there were 7000 registered Failis in Iran. In 2011, it revised this figure to 5719. 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 4, CISEC96CF13392

<sup>102</sup> 'DFAT Thematic Report: Faili Kurds in Iraq and Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 3 December 2014, CIS2F827D91722.

<sup>103</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.28, 20200414083132; 'Response to IRN 11487: Iran—Faili Kurds', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 27 April 2011, CX263445

insurance.<sup>104</sup> Faili Kurds that can prove (paternal) Iranian ancestry may obtain Iranian citizenship.<sup>105</sup> Iraq allows those people whose citizenship had been stripped to have it reinstated.<sup>106</sup> Around 20,000 families have had their Iraqi nationality reinstated since 2003.<sup>107</sup> The Iraqi Embassy does not issue Iraqi passports to formerly Iraqi stateless Failis, but does issue laissez-passer for one return trip to Iraq.<sup>108</sup> For more information, see the Iraq Common Claims document entry on Faili Kurds.<sup>109</sup>

**It would be extremely difficult or impossible for a stateless Faili Kurd to depart Iran through any of the country's airports.**<sup>110</sup> Due to sophisticated security features, computerised cross-checking and multiple layers of physical security and document checking, numerous sources report that it would be difficult or impossible to pass through Imam Khomeini International Airport with a fraudulent passport.<sup>111</sup> In 2013, it was estimated that both approximately USD 10,000 and 'the right connections' would be required to bribe one's way through the airport.<sup>112</sup> While information regarding the average salary of stateless Faili Kurds could not be located, in March 2017, the Iranian Ministry of Labour's mandated minimum wage was IRR 9,299,310 per month, which is (in October 2018) approximately USD 220.<sup>113</sup> In April 2012, the then-Department of Immigration and Citizenship noted that according to an official at the Dubai International Airport 'the capabilities of Iranian immigration to detect fraudulent Iranian passports at their own ports was high'.<sup>114</sup> DFAT assessed in April 2020, that

<sup>104</sup> "DFAT Country Information Report – Iran", Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.28, 20200414083132; Faili Kurds', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 18 March 2010, CX241170

<sup>105</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.28, 20200414083132; 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 7, CISEC96CF13392

<sup>106</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.28, 20200414083132; 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 3, CISEC96CF13392; 'The Constitution of Iraq', 13 January 2005, Articles 18 (2) and 18 (3a), CIS9BE2467714; 'Iraqi Nationality Law (Iraq)', 7 March 2006, Articles 3(a) and 18(1), CIS18097; Faili Kurds', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 18 March 2010, CX241170

<sup>107</sup> 'Country Position Paper: Statelessness in Iran', European Network on Statelessness, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, November 2019, p.12, 20191216165430

<sup>108</sup> 'Faili Kurds', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 18 March 2010, CX241170

<sup>109</sup> Please see CISNET for the most recent version of the Iraq Common Claims paper.

<sup>110</sup> 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 4, CISEC96CF13392

<sup>111</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.73, 20200414083132; 'Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.', Danish Immigration Service, April 2009, p. 37, CIS17329; 'Iran: The passport; its features and procedures for application including whether an applicant who was refused a passport would be notified and have recourse; the use and prevalence of fraudulent or counterfeit passports to exit Iran; ease of illegal entry into and exit from Pakistan, Turkey, and Azerbaijan overland, and Oman and the United Arab Emirates by sea; whether authorities seize passports from certain individuals to prevent their departure from the country (2004 - February 2006)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 3 April 2006, OGF10222E67; 'Entry procedures and passport control at Dubai International Airport', DIBP, 13 April 2012, CX286895; 'DFAT Country Information Report—Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 7 June 2018, Section 5.32, CIS7B839411226; 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo (Norway) and Danish Immigration Service, February 2013, p. 67, CIS25114. Fraudulently obtaining a genuine passport that would pass undetected in the airport would likewise likely be impossible, mainly due to the centrality of the national identity number in all major documents, and the sophisticated national identity database Iran maintains that links individuals to their relatives using their national identity numbers. For more information, see 'Iran: CI170731113710822 – Passport details and application – Shenaname details and application – National identity card details and application – possession of passport for children with non-national father', COISS, 15 September 2017, CR8DFDCEA313

<sup>112</sup> 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo (Norway) and Danish Immigration Service, February 2013, p. 67, CIS25114. In September 2017, a 'Western Embassy' told the Danish Immigration Service that 'influence is more important than money', though the context was corruption during court cases. 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941638

<sup>113</sup> 'Iran: 2017 Minimum Wage Less Than One Third of Poverty Line', National Council of Resistance of Iran, 17 March 2017, CX286895

<sup>114</sup> 'Entry procedures and passport control at Dubai International Airport', Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 13 April 2012, CX286895

'leaving Iran through irregular means is more likely to be achievable overland (particularly in rugged mountain areas) than via air or sea, including for registered and unregistered refugees'.<sup>115</sup>

**Being Faili does not necessarily mean one's parents were expelled from Iraq; Failis have been in Iran for centuries.** Most Failis expelled from Iraq settled in the provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam, Loristan and Khuzestan, as well as the major cities of Tehran, Yazd and Qom.<sup>116</sup> Failis have lived in these provinces for centuries.<sup>117</sup> In the 17th and 18th centuries, all the tribes in Loristan were known as Faili.<sup>118</sup> Due to administrative changes in the early 19th century, only the tribes in the western part of Loristan (*'post-e kuh'*, *pron.* 'puscht-e kuh', 'behind the mountain') retained the name Faili.<sup>119</sup> Failis had already moved to other areas of Iran as early as the 18th century<sup>120</sup> (i.e. before the administrative changes described above), as well as to Ottoman-controlled Iraq.<sup>121</sup> In modern Iran, the laws on citizenship were established in 1934. All inhabitants of Iran (in 1934, Persia) who were not foreign citizens became citizens at that time.<sup>122</sup> Unlike most other Kurds, Faili Kurds are predominantly Shia.<sup>123</sup>

## Religion

**The recognised minority religions in Iran are tolerated, but adherents face discrimination.** Islam is the official religion in Iran, though Christians and Jews (as 'People of the Book'), as well as Zoroastrians are recognised as 'protected' communities.<sup>124</sup> Members of these communities face significant restrictions, including a prohibition on serving in the judiciary, security services (other than the normal military) or in high-ranking roles in the public service or military.<sup>125</sup> The public service enforces the *'gozinesh'* criteria, where applicants are judged according to their perceived allegiance to the Islamic Revolution—this imposes a 'glass ceiling' on religious minorities.<sup>126</sup> Members of these communities also face discrimination in criminal and family law matters and education.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>115</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.69, 20200414083132

<sup>116</sup> 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 4, CISEC96CF13392; 'Exploring Statelessness in Iran', Tucker, JE, SSRN, 27 May 2014, p. 11, CISEFCB23F7488

<sup>117</sup> For instance, a Faili Kurd established a small state-like dynasty with its capital in what is today Kermanshah province in the second half of the 18th century. 'Arkawāzī and His Baweyā: A Feyli Elegiac Verse from Pištiku', Dehqan, M, Iranian Studies, vol. 42, no. 3, 2009, p. 409, CISE1310071943

<sup>118</sup> 'FEYLĪ', Encyclopaedia Iranica, 15 December 1999, CX3BA41AE1962

<sup>119</sup> 'FEYLĪ', Encyclopaedia Iranica, 15 December 1999, CX3BA41AE1962. The mountain in question is the western-most major ridge of the Zagros mountains, before the range peters out into the Euphrates valley. *'Post-e kuh'* is an insult in modern Iran, used to indicate someone is backward.

<sup>120</sup> 'FEYLĪ', Encyclopaedia Iranica, 15 December 1999, CX3BA41AE1962

<sup>121</sup> 'Uncertain Refuge, Dangerous Return: Iraq's uprooted minorities', Minority Rights Group International, 24 September 2009, p. 6, CISE1310071927. The Ottomans controlled Iraq between 1533 and 1918, with an interruption of Mamluk rule between 1704 and 1831.

<sup>122</sup> 'CITIZENSHIP', Encyclopaedia Iranica, 21 October 2011, CXCB3E63421395

<sup>123</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.27, 20200414083132; 'DFAT Thematic Information Report—Faili Kurds in Iraq and Iran', 3 December 2014, Section 2.1, CIS2F827D91722; 'Feili Kurds in Iran seek way out of identity impasse', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 28 May 2008, CX201047; 'Feyli Kurds—obtaining identity travel documents', DIBP Tehran, 17 September 2015, p. 1, CISEC96CF13392; '400 Faili Kurds to move from Iran to Iraq to fight ISIL', World Bulletin, 24 February 2015, CXBD6A0DE1870; '35 Faili Kurd families return to Iraq', AK News, 14 January 2012, CX284853

<sup>124</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.1, 20210513092814; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.51, 20190508143726; 'Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran', Article 13, CIS22595

<sup>125</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, pp.9-10, 20210513092814; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348

<sup>126</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.9, 20210513092814; 'The Persecution of Christians in Iran', The Christians in Parliament All Party Parliamentary Group and the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (United Kingdom), March 2015, p. 13, CISEC96CF1343

<sup>127</sup> 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 2, CISEC96CF14127

**Amendments made to the Penal Code in January 2021 further restrict freedom of religion and belief in Iran.** Under the changes, 'insulting legally-recognised religions and Iranian ethnicities' is a criminal offence.<sup>128</sup> This vague provision applies to 'anyone who insults Iranian ethnicities or divine religions or Islamic schools of thought recognised under the constitution', with prison sentences and fines varying depending on whether the outlawed conduct leads to 'violence or tensions.'<sup>129</sup> The second amendment to the Penal Code creates significant punishments for those who commit any 'deviant educational or proselytising activity that contradicts or interferes with the sacred law of Islam', with sentences ranging from between two and five years and/or a fine.<sup>130</sup> It is unclear how these new provisions are currently being applied in practice.

## Baha'is

**Baha'i civil and political rights are severely restricted.** Baha'i representatives claim that their civil rights situation has deteriorated under President Rouhani.<sup>131</sup> There is estimated to be 300,000 Baha'is in Iran, making them the largest non-Muslim religious group in Iran.<sup>132</sup> The Baha'i faith is not a recognised religion in Iran,<sup>133</sup> and members of this community are completely barred from political and social participation in the state.<sup>134</sup> Baha'is are unable to practice their faith openly.<sup>135</sup> The Iranian authorities publically promote hatred against Baha'is through traditional and social media channels and blame them for issues such as the recent widespread popular protests.<sup>136</sup> Baha'is are denied basic rights, such as the right to a proper burial.<sup>137</sup> Baha'i students and teachers are forbidden from attending or teaching at regular universities in Iran.<sup>138</sup> They are also banned from government

<sup>128</sup> 'Iran: Parliament passes law to further choke freedoms and target minorities', Article 19, 19 February 2021, 20210223103019

<sup>129</sup> 'Iran: Parliament passes law to further choke freedoms and target minorities', Article 19, 19 February 2021, 20210223103019

<sup>130</sup> 'Iran: Parliament passes law to further choke freedoms and target minorities', Article 19, 19 February 2021, 20210223103019

<sup>131</sup> 'Baha'i Persecution Worsens Under Rouhani Government', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 23 May 2017, CXC9040667999

<sup>132</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.4, 20210513092814 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.53, 20190508143726; 'Situation of Baha'is in Iran', Baha'i International Community, 1 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA28996

<sup>133</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132

<sup>134</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.53, 20190508143726; 'Knowledge as Resistance: The Baha'i Institute for Higher Education', Small Media (United Kingdom), February 2013, p. 11, CIS28781

<sup>135</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.34-35, 20200414083132

<sup>136</sup> 'No country for minorities: the inequality of state repression in Iran', Open Democracy, 02 June 2020, 20200602095134; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2020 Annual Report', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 28 April 2020, p.24, 20200429103634

<sup>137</sup> 'Iranian Police Relocate Buried Corpse of Baha'i Woman Without Family's Permission', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 19 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA38877; 'Baha'i family in Iran forced to give up body of a loved one for unlawful burial', Baha'i World News Service, 17 July 2015, CXBD6A0DE10314

<sup>138</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.8, 20210513092814; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.32, 20210331113214; 'Baha'is Barred from Entering University for the Fortieth Year in a Row', Iran Wire, 2 November 2020, 20201102085819; 'More Baha'is Begin Serving Prison Sentences in Iran Simply for Their Beliefs', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 21 October 2020, 20201022090601; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report – July 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 3 August 2020, 20200804071054; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132 '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.15, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; '22 Iranian Baha'is Were Denied Higher Education in September', Human Rights Activists New Agency, 22 September 2019, 20190923112425

employment and from all leadership positions in the military.<sup>139</sup> Private companies have been pressured to not hire or dismiss Baha'i employees.<sup>140</sup> Baha'is cannot receive compensation for crimes committed against them and cannot inherit property.<sup>141</sup> Their marriage and divorces are not recognised, but the government does allow a civil attestation of marriage to serve as a marriage certificate.<sup>142</sup> Baha'i cemeteries have been closed and destroyed by security forces.<sup>143</sup> Authorities place restrictions on Baha'i businesses and many have been shut down.<sup>144</sup> Baha'is who close their businesses to honour Baha'i holy days risk having them shut down by the authorities.<sup>145</sup> Bahai's have had their property confiscated by the authorities.<sup>146</sup> In February 2020, the government changed the process to obtain new identity cards, now requiring applicants to select from one of the four recognised religions in Iran. The option for 'other religions' (previously used by Bahai's) was removed.<sup>147</sup> Under the new rules, Baha'is wishing to obtain a new national identity card must

<sup>139</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.10, 20210513092814; 'Iran's religious minority representatives: surrender to survive', Fred Petrossian, Article 18, 21 August 2020, 20200824112336; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; 'UN Rights Monitor Highlights Political Repression, Abuse, Executions In Iran', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (Czech Republic), 13 March 2017, CXC9040663740; 'Iran's Persecution of Baha'is Has Become More Covert', Baha'i International Community, 15 March 2017, CXC9040664074; 'Contradictory Statements by the Attorney General of Mazandaran Province Regarding the Forced Closure of Baha'i Businesses', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 3 March 2017, CXC9040662985; '129 Baha'is Banned from Education', Iran Wire, 7 February 2017, CXC9040661338; 'Studying at the Bahai secret university', BBC News (United Kingdom), 18 January 2017, CXC904066523

<sup>140</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.2, 20210513092814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132

<sup>141</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, 10, 20210513092814

<sup>142</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.10, 20210513092814

<sup>143</sup> 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.53, 20190508143726; 'Security Forces Destroy Bahai Cemetery in Qorveh, Arresting 1 Bahai', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 19 July 2016, CX6A26A6E6658; 'No Rest for the Dead: Iran's Campaign Against Baha'i Cemeteries', Elliott Brown, R, IranWire, 15 January 2016, CX6A26A6E267

<sup>144</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.25, 20210513092814; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2021', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.342, 20210114072851; 'More Baha'is Begin Serving Prison Sentences in Iran Simply for Their Beliefs', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 21 October 2020, 20201022090601; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 21 July 2020, p.23, 20200917082634; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.15, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>145</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.25, 20210513092814; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 18, CISED50AD522; 'Ten-Year Shutdown of Baha'i-Owned Business; Human Rights Commission Petition Denied by Court of Administrative Justice', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 6 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA30996; 'The Continued Closure of the Baha'i Businesses; 90 Locations in Kerman, Sistan, and Baluchistan and East Azerbaijan', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 2 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA130; 'Forced Closure of At Least Nine Baha'i-Owned Business in Tabriz', Human Rights in Iran, 17 December 2017, CXC90406619654; 'Interview with Baha'i Shopkeeper About Forced Closure of Her Store', Manoto TV, 13 February 2017, CXC9040661700; 'Baha'i Businesses Shuttered Across Iran in Ongoing Persecution Campaign', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 15 November 2016, CX6A26A6E13205; 'Reports of Persecuted Baha'is October 24 - November 11', Humans Rights Activist News Agency, 14 November 2018, CIS7B8394110184

<sup>146</sup> ['International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.17, 20210513092814; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348; 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.25, 20200219090219

<sup>147</sup> 'Iran locks members of minority Baha'i faith out of identity documents', Steve Jacobs, Sydney Morning Herald, The, 09 February 2020, 20200221102145; 'Iran: New ID card rule highlights plight of Baha'i', Deutsche Welle, 25 January 2020, 20200128120940; 'Iran Imposes Discriminatory Forms For New National ID Cards', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 27 January 2020, 20200128120714

renounce their religion, an act forbidden by their faith.<sup>148</sup> A national identity card is required to access basic government services, to obtain passports and drivers licences and to make bank transactions.<sup>149</sup>

**Baha'is have been charged and imprisoned for their membership in this religious group, or their activities on behalf of it.** DFAT assesses Baha'is who are open about their faith or who advocate for their community face a 'high risk of arrest and imprisonment.'<sup>150</sup> Baha'is are regularly arrested and convicted on vague national security charges.<sup>151</sup> In the 10 years to 2018, more than 1,000 Baha'is were arbitrarily arrested on the basis of their faith.<sup>152</sup> In April 2021, seven Baha'is were detained in Shiraz.<sup>153</sup> In March 2021, six Baha'is were arrested and sentenced in Bandar Abbas on national security charges.<sup>154</sup> In November 2020, security forces raided the homes of between 30 to 50 Baha'is across the country.<sup>155</sup> In October 2020, IHRM reported that 35 Baha'is had been arrested, tried and prosecuted solely for practicing their faith.<sup>156</sup> During 2019, at least 59 Baha'is were arrested because of their beliefs<sup>157</sup> and 20 were sentenced to prison for a range of offences including (but not limited to) 'membership in Baha'i community', 'membership in illegal groups acting against national security' and 'acting against the national security through propagation and organized activities.'<sup>158</sup> Similar figures for 2020 are not yet available. At least 11 Baha'is were arrested during the November 2019 protests (see '[November 2019 protests](#)').<sup>159</sup> Between March and October 2019, at least 69 Baha'is stood trial on charges including 'insulting religious sanctities', 'corruption on earth' and 'actions against national security.'<sup>160</sup> As of October 2020, 38 Baha'is were in prison, 26 of whom were imprisoned during 2020.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>148</sup> 'Iran: New ID card rule highlights plight of Baha'i', Deutsche Welle, 25 January 2020, 20200128120940; 'Iran Imposes Discriminatory Forms For New National ID Cards', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 27 January 2020, 20200128120714

<sup>149</sup> 'Iran Imposes Discriminatory Forms For New National ID Cards', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 27 January 2020, 20200128120714; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.71, 20200414083132

<sup>150</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.35, 20200414083132

<sup>151</sup> '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.19, 20210513092814; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2021', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.342, 20210114072851; 'New wave of persecution against Baha'i citizens in Iran', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 9 April 2021, 20210412102704; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2020 Annual Report', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 28 April 2020, p. 24, 20200429103634; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.15, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.12, 20200228105335. For recent examples of arrests, please see: '[Six Baha'is Arrested in Bandar Abbas](#)', Iran Wire, 12 March 2021, 20210318093307; '[New wave of persecution against Baha'i citizens in Iran](#)', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 09 April 2021, 20210412102704

<sup>152</sup> 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.53, 20190508143726

<sup>153</sup> 'Seven Iranian Bahais detained in Shiraz, southwestern Iran', Iran News Wire, 8 April 2021, 20210412114030

<sup>154</sup> '[Six Baha'is Arrested in Bandar Abbas](#)', Iran Wire, 12 March 2021, 20210318093307

<sup>155</sup> '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.17, 20210513092814; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – November 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 29 November 2020, 20201130143547. For a more recent example, please see: '[New wave of persecution against Baha'i citizens in Iran](#)', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 09 April 2021, 20210412102704

<sup>156</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – September 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 October 2020, 20201014140250

<sup>157</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 21 July 2020, p.23, 20200917082634

<sup>158</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.15, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401. The 2021 version of this report does not provide similar information for the 2020 year, please see: 20210202143721

<sup>159</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2019 – Iran', Freedom House, 4 March 2020, 20200306093523

<sup>160</sup> '2019 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran', United States Department of State, 10 June 2020, p.15, 20200615122952

<sup>161</sup> '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.19, 20210513092814

**Baha'is have received lengthy prison sentences after unfair trials.** Between March and May 2020, 30 Baha'is were sentenced by the revolutionary court to a total of over 148 years in prison.<sup>162</sup> During one court case in Shiraz, the judge spoke of 'eradicating' Baha'is from the city.<sup>163</sup> In March 2021, four Baha'is were sentenced to a total of 12 years in prison for belonging to an 'illegal organisation'.<sup>164</sup> In February 2021, a Baha'i woman was sentenced to five years on propaganda charges.<sup>165</sup> In September 2020, an appeals court sentenced eight Baha'is to a total of 11 years' in prison.<sup>166</sup> In May 2020, seven Baha'is were sentenced to a total of 33 years in prison on national security related charges including 'membership of anti-regime groups'.<sup>167</sup> In April 2020, nine Baha'is in Birjand were sentenced to a total of 51 years in prison on national security charges and for 'propaganda in favour of the Baha'i community'.<sup>168</sup>

## Christians, including Christian converts

Please see COISS's Issues Paper on the Treatment of Christian Converts in Iran for further detailed information on this subject.<sup>169</sup>

**Although they face considerable restrictions, if Christians from the recognised churches do not engage in activities such as proselytisation that the regime perceives as undermining the Islamic Revolution, it is unlikely they will be subject to adverse attention.** DFAT assesses that except for their exclusion from senior public sector and military positions, recognised Christians who do not engage in proselytization face a low risk of official discrimination.<sup>170</sup> Officially, recognised Christians reportedly do not face barriers in practicing and teaching their faith.<sup>171</sup> There are 130,000 registered Christians in Iran.<sup>172</sup> All Christians and churches must be registered.<sup>173</sup> The total number of Christians in Iran (when unrecognised Christians are accounted for) is estimated to be 300,000 people.<sup>174</sup> Iran has not granted a license to establish new Christian organisations or build church buildings since 1979.<sup>175</sup> There are approximately 20 officially recognised churches in Iran.<sup>176</sup> In general, recognised Christians are tolerated and permitted to practice their faith, unless they engage

<sup>162</sup> 'Lengthy Prison Sentences for 30 Iranian Baha'is', Iran Wire, 24 June 2020, 20200624122457

<sup>163</sup> 'Lengthy Prison Sentences for 30 Iranian Baha'is', Iran Wire, 24 June 2020, 20200624122457

<sup>164</sup> 'Iran revolutionary court sentences four Baha'is to 12 years prison', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 12 March 2021, 20210322093607

<sup>165</sup> 'Baha'i Woman Sentenced to Five Years in Jail', Iran Wire, 23 February 2021, 20210225153402

<sup>166</sup> 'Appeals Court sentences eight Iranian Baha'is to 11 years of prison', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 9 September 2020, 20201102114815

<sup>167</sup> 'Iran Courts Sentence Baha'is to Heavy Prison Terms', Human Rights in Iran, 18 May 2020, 20200525093257; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report, May 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 01 June 2020, 20200602081119

<sup>168</sup> 'Nine Baha'i Faith Members Sentenced to 51 years imprisonment', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 24 April 2020, 20200428074246

<sup>169</sup> A copy of this paper is available on CISNET under the reference 20210727142007.

<sup>170</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30, 20200414083132

<sup>171</sup> 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>172</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30, 20200414083132

<sup>173</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.6, 20210513092814; 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 27, CIS7B83941873

<sup>174</sup> 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.54, 20190508143726

<sup>175</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30, 20200414083132; 'The Persecution of Christians in Iran', The Christians in Parliament All Party Parliamentary Group and the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (United Kingdom), March 2015, p. 6, CISEC96CF1343

<sup>176</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30, 20200414083132; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 3, CISED50AD4620

in activities perceived to undermine the Islamic Republic<sup>177</sup> such as hosting converts from Islam or holding services in Persian.<sup>178</sup> Reports indicate that the regime has increased surveillance and monitoring of authorised churches in recent years, as part of an expansion associated with the surveillance on unauthorised house churches.<sup>179</sup> For instance, most registered churches are monitored with government security cameras.<sup>180</sup> Security officials have also monitored congregations to perform identity checks on attendees to ensure that they are not converts.<sup>181</sup> Many churches that, before 1979, conducted services in Persian have been closed, others have come under pressure.<sup>182</sup> In 2020 and 2019, security agents shut down several Christian churches.<sup>183</sup> Promoting the Christian faith is prohibited.<sup>184</sup>

**Christian converts cannot usually live openly as Christians and may be prosecuted by the state because of their religion; many of the restrictions placed on recognised Christians in Iran are designed to prevent conversions.**<sup>185</sup> DFAT assesses that Christian converts face arrest and

<sup>177</sup> 'What it's like to be a Christian in Iran', Deutsche Welle (German), 25 January 2016, CX6A26A6E532; 'The pope is coming to the Middle East. But Christians are heading for the exits', Los Angeles Times (United States), 27 April 2017, CISED50AD3984

<sup>178</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30, 20200414083132; 'Intelligence Agents Closed Down an Assyrian Church and Removed the Cross', IranWire, 26 May 2019, 20190528084731

<sup>179</sup> 'Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 12 August 2021, 20210813101155; 'Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.8, 20210203085117; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30 & p.32, 20200414083132; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.54, 20190508143726; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (2) - arrests and prosecutions', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, p.3, 29 November 2017, CISED50AD8641; 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 15, CIS7B83941873;

<sup>180</sup> 'The Persecution of Christians in Iran', The Christians in Parliament All Party Parliamentary Group and the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, 1 March 2015, p.6, CISEC96CF1343

<sup>181</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.26, 20210513092814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.30, 20200414083132

<sup>182</sup> 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, pp. 3, 5, CISEC96CF14127; 'Protestant Church Property Confiscated in Iran by Khamenei-Supervised Organization', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 19 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15772

<sup>183</sup> For example see: 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.26, 20210513092814; 'Iran - Church Closed And Cross Torn Down', Open Doors, 11 June 2019, 20200422081019; 'Intelligence Agents Closed Down an Assyrian Church and Removed the Cross', IranWire, 26 May 2019, 20190528084731; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348

<sup>184</sup> 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>185</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2020 Annual Report', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 28 April 2020, p.24, 20200429103634; 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, 27 February 2020, p.8, 20200228081848; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.54, 20190508143726; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (2) - arrests and prosecutions', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 29 November 2017, pp.13-20, CISED50AD8641; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 9, CISED50AD4620

detention if their conversion is revealed.<sup>186</sup> Iranian law prohibits conversion from Islam.<sup>187</sup> There are no reliable figures on how many converts live in Iran;<sup>188</sup> however, reports estimate there may be between 300,000-350,000.<sup>189</sup> Most converts are Protestants (Pentecostals, Presbyterians and Anglicans); other conversions are rare.<sup>190</sup> A high percentage of unrecognised Christians in Iran are converts from Islam or the children of converts.<sup>191</sup> Since 2012, the government has banned converts from attending services in registered churches.<sup>192</sup> As a result, converts must practice in private homes ('house churches') or via the Internet and social media.<sup>193</sup> While it is unlikely that converts will be prosecuted for apostasy or blasphemy,<sup>194</sup> they have been arrested for a range of other offences, particularly national security offences and for organising and running unregistered churches.<sup>195</sup> COISS notes that

<sup>186</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132. Also see: '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, pp.5-6, 20210513092814; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2020 Annual Report', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 28 April 2020, p.24, 20200429103634

<sup>187</sup> '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.5, 20210513092814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.22, CISED50AD8640; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 4, CISEC96CF14127

<sup>188</sup> 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.13, CISED50AD8640

<sup>189</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.54, 20190508143726

<sup>190</sup> 'Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 12 August 2021, 20210813101155; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.7, CISED50AD8640

<sup>191</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132

<sup>192</sup> '[Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran](#)', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.8, 20210203085117; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 8, CISED50AD4620;

<sup>193</sup> 'Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 12 August 2021, 20210813101155; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.7, CISED50AD8640;

<sup>194</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.33, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.23, CISED50AD8640; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (2) - arrests and prosecutions', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 29 November 2017, p.10, CISED50AD8641

<sup>195</sup> '[Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran](#)', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 12 August 2021, 20210813101155; '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.15, 20210513092814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; '2019 Annual Report Violations Against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 January 2020, p.6, 20200121155535; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.54, 20190508143726; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (2) - arrests and prosecutions', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 29 November 2017, p.10 & pp.13-20, CISED50AD8641; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, pp.22-23, CISED50AD8640; 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 9, CIS7B83941873; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 8, CISED50AD4620. Examples: 'Convert gets two more years in prison

in practice, there is very little distinction and significant overlap between terms like apostate, convert, atheist and blasphemy. People who fall within these categories often face vague religiously based charges, such as 'insulting Islam' and national security charges.<sup>196</sup> The only known official execution of a Christian on apostasy charges occurred in 1990.<sup>197</sup> Iranian authorities consider Christian missionary work and the 'house church' movement to be driven by foreign hostile forces, and therefore treat them like political opponents and enemies of the state rather than religious groups.<sup>198</sup> Converts face a high risk of societal discrimination if their conversion is revealed, which may involve family ostracism and employment discrimination.<sup>199</sup>

**Treatment of Christian converts varies; those with roles in their churches are more likely to be prosecuted.** Although 'ordinary' converts have been prosecuted, authorities are more likely to prosecute pastors or those with roles in their house churches, or those engaged in proselytising activity.<sup>200</sup> Christian Advocacy group, Open Doors reports that although Christian convert leaders are especially likely to be arrested and sentenced, since 2014 an increasing number of ordinary converts

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for 'Evangelical Zionist Christianity', Article 18, 05 March 2020, 20200306095621; '2019 Annual Report Violations Against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 January 2020, pp.7-11, 20200121155535; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.15, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'Converts begin six-month jail sentences', Article 18, 27 December 2019, 20200102085009; 'Crackdown On Christians In Iran Continues With Eight More Arrests', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 21 February 2019, 20190222084320; 'Two Christians sentenced to 8-year prison in Iran', Middle East Concern (United Kingdom), 9 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA309; 'Iran: Christian Convert Detained To Serve 10-Year Prison Term', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 13 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21965; 'Christian convert to be jailed five years for 'disrupting national security,' Iran court confirms', Christian Daily (United States), 6 April 2017, CXC9040665579; 'Three cases against Christians in Iran invite attention of International forums', Middle East Concern, 1 April 2017, CXC9040665250

<sup>196</sup> 'Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 12 August 2021, 20210813101155; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.36- 37, 20200414083132

<sup>197</sup> 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>198</sup> 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142; 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2019', United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), 29 April 2019, p.54, 20190508143726 ; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (2) - arrests and prosecutions', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 29 November 2017, p.10, CISED50AD8641;

<sup>199</sup> 'International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.35, 20210513092814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>200</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.33, 20200414083132; 'Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 12 August 2021, 20210813101155; 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142; 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, 27 February 2020, p.7, 20200228081848; 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941873; 'Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, March 2018, paras. 4.5.7, 5.1.10, 5.2.2, 5.2.7 OG9EF767914. An example: in October 2017, authorities arrested four Christian converts belonging to the same house church in Dezful (Khuzestan province). Two were released within days. The other two were released on bail, after being charged, in late November. The two who were charged both had an official role in the church, whereas those released were merely churchgoers. 'Iran Human Rights Monitor - Monthly Report, December 2018', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 7 January 2019, 20190110092854; 'A Group of Christian Converts Arrested in South-Western Iran', Mohabat News, 21 October 2017, CXC90406616018; 'Another Christian Convert Arrested in South-Western Iran', Mohabat News, 23 October 2017, CXC90406616168; 'Iran: Christian convert arrested in Dezful', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 24 October 2017, CXC90406616372; 'Another Christian Prisoner Temporarily Released on Bail in South-Western Iran', Mohabat News, 30 November 2017, CXC90406618801; 'Christian Prisoner Mohammad Ali Torabi Temporarily Released on Bail', Mohabat News, 27 November 2017, CXC90406618800. See also 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, pp. 6, 11, CISEC96CF14127. See also 'Iranian Christian woman pleads with UN to help family overturn 'false and unjust' spy charges', Sight (Australia), 28 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30440

have faced national security charges as well.<sup>201</sup> Declaring evidence of conversion on social media (either in Iran or whilst abroad) will not usually in and of itself lead to prosecution, though will often lead to monitoring; authorities will determine if the individual's ongoing actions constitute a threat to be prosecuted.<sup>202</sup> DFAT states that Iranians who convert to Christianity whilst abroad 'are unlikely to face adverse official attention upon their return, provided they have not previously come to the attention of the authorities for political activities, maintain a low profile and do not engage in proselytisation activities.'<sup>203</sup> According to DFAT, this includes people who publicise their conversion online while abroad.<sup>204</sup>

**Upon detention, converts are sometimes interrogated and released within days, sometimes charged (occasionally requiring a large bail amount to be released), or else held (sometimes without charge) for months.**<sup>205</sup> There are also reports of beatings and torture of converts in detention, as well as psychological pressure being placed on them.<sup>206</sup> If released without charge after a raid, an ordinary convert will likely continue to be monitored<sup>207</sup> and might be detained for periodic interrogation in order to intimidate.<sup>208</sup> Upon arrest, converts may be forced to recant their faith and sign declarations that they will not meet with other Christians or engage in Christian activities.<sup>209</sup> In 2020, at least 115 Christians were arrested (only 52 were publically reported).<sup>210</sup> Open Doors reports that the number of Christians arrested in 2020 decreased compared to their previous reporting period.<sup>211</sup> There were no waves of widespread arrests during 2020.<sup>212</sup> Similar figures are not available

<sup>201</sup> ['IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities \(2017-February 2021\)](#)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>202</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.33-34, 20200414083132; 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941873

<sup>203</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.33, 20200414083132. A similar assessment is provided by the UK Home Office, please see: 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, 27 February 2020, p.8, 20200228081848 and in 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941873

<sup>204</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.33, 20200414083132

<sup>205</sup> 'Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.2, 20210203085117; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 11, CISEC96CF14127. Recent examples: 'Iran Human Rights Monitor - Monthly Report, December 2018', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 7 January 2019, 20190110092854; 'Two Christians sentenced to 8-year prison in Iran', Middle East Concern (United Kingdom), 9 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA309; 'Iran: Christian converts arrested in Dezful', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 16 October 2017, CXC90406615721; 'Recently Arrested Christian Convert Couple still Held in Uncertainty', Mohabat News, 4 October 2017, CXC90406614881; 'Iranian Christian Prisoners to Go on Hunger Strike', Mohabat News, 7 February 2017, CXC9040661530; 'Imprisoned Iranian convert 'seriously ill' after hunger strike', World Watch Monitor, 14 February 2017, CXC9040661793

<sup>206</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, 27 February 2020, p.7, 20200228081848; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 9, CISEC96CF14127; 'Saeed Abedini Recounts Torture in Iranian Hospital: 'They Beat Me in Front of My Mom'', Gospel Herald (United States), 18 April 2017, CXC9040666164; 'Iran's hidden Christians are becoming visible in the migrant camps of Europe', World Watch Monitor, 15 March 2017, CXC9040663846

<sup>207</sup> 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941873; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 8, CISED50AD4620; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 11, CISEC96CF14127

<sup>208</sup> 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941873

<sup>209</sup> 'Iranian Christians ordered not to meet – in person or online', Article 18, 03 February 2021, 20210204091925; '2019 Annual Report Violations Against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 January 2020, p.6 & p.1, 20200121155535

<sup>210</sup> 'Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.12, 20210203085117

<sup>211</sup> ['Iran –World Watch List 2020 Country Dossier – 2021'](#), Open Doors, 01 November 2020, p.37, 20210709154516

<sup>212</sup> ['Iran –World Watch List 2020 Country Dossier – 2021'](#), Open Doors, 01 November 2020, p.37, 20210709154516

for 2019.<sup>213</sup> In 2018, at least 158 Christians were arrested.<sup>214</sup> During 2020, internal exile became a notable feature of judicial punishments issued against Christian converts.<sup>215</sup> During 2020, 38 Christians were detained.<sup>216</sup> At the end of 2020, at least 15 Iranian Christians remained in detention, serving sentences ranging from three months to 10 years.<sup>217</sup> The actual number is likely to be higher due to underreporting.<sup>218</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran has indicated that the number of converts imprisoned at any time in recent years has varied from between a few dozen to around 100.<sup>219</sup> Christians are often forced to pay significant bail amounts.<sup>220</sup> Please see COISS's Christian Converts Issues Paper for a list of examples of interrogations, arrests and sentencing of Christians.<sup>221</sup>

**Although few Christian converts are arrested relative to their total number,<sup>222</sup> it is likely that the regime knows the names of and monitors substantial numbers of converts.<sup>223</sup>** The regime learns about converts through informers, intelligence gleaned from monitoring other Christians, raids and infiltration of house churches.<sup>224</sup> Government surveillance and control of converts is highest in urban areas, although the anonymity of larger cities allows Christians more freedom to organise meetings than in rural areas.<sup>225</sup> Once a convert's religious identity is known by others, he or she might be rejected by family members or have trouble finding employment.<sup>226</sup> A Christian convert that returns to Iran will likely face the same level of threat as that of other Christian converts who never left; their profile, role in the church and actions will be the main determinant.<sup>227</sup> Christian converts have faced

<sup>213</sup> The 'United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2020' does not contain updated figures for 2019.

<sup>214</sup> '[Violations of the Rights of Christians in Iran - 2018 Annual Report](#)', Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 18 January 2019, pp.2-4, 20190503142459

<sup>215</sup> '[Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran](#)', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.14, 20210203085117

<sup>216</sup> '[Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran](#)', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.12, 20210203085117

<sup>217</sup> '[Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran](#)', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, pp.11-12 & p.26, 20210203085117

<sup>218</sup> '2019 Annual Report Violations Against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 January 2020, p.6, 20200121155535

<sup>219</sup> 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (2) - arrests and prosecutions', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 29 November 2017, p.13, CISED50AD8641

<sup>220</sup> '[Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran](#)', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.2, 20210203085117; 'Iran: Excessive bail demanded for Christians', Middle East Concern, 24 July 2020, 20200727085216

<sup>221</sup> A copy of this paper is available on CISNET under the reference 20210727142007.

<sup>222</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, 27 February 2020, p.7, 20200228081848

<sup>223</sup> '[Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran](#)', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, pp.8-9, 20210203085117; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 12, CISED50AD4620

<sup>224</sup> 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, pp. 5-6, CIS7B83941873; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 11, CISEC96CF14127; 'Christian Converts Arrested After Their Calls Intercepted By Iran Intelligence', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 23 November 2018, CXBB8A1DA39517

<sup>225</sup> '[IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities \(2017-February 2021\)](#)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>226</sup> '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.35, 20210513092814; '[IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities \(2017-February 2021\)](#)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142; 'DFAT Country Information Report - Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.34, 20200414083132; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, pp. 4, 11, CISEC96CF14127; 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran', Danish Immigration Service, June 2014, pp. 11-12, CIS28931; 'The Cost of Faith: Persecution of Christian Protestants and Converts in Iran', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 2013, p. 64, CIS25475

<sup>227</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report - Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.33-34, 20200414083132; 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, 27 February 2020, p.8, 20200228081848; 'Iran: House churches and converts', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941873

adverse attention since 1979, though there was a short period in the 2000s during which there was less pressure.<sup>228</sup> The election of Ahmadinejad as president in 2005 saw the situation deteriorate (and become worse after his 2009 re-election).<sup>229</sup> Treatment of Christians has not improved since the election of Hassan Rouhani in 2013.<sup>230</sup>

**Because the official churches do not accept converts, Christian converts often meet in unofficial, illegal 'house churches'.**<sup>231</sup> The house church movement began around 2002<sup>232</sup>, and their level of organisation, and financial and literary resources vary. Major cities including Tehran, Rasht, Shiraz and Isfahan have large numbers of house churches.<sup>233</sup> Some house churches are part of a network, some are not.<sup>234</sup> There are varying reports about typical sizes of house churches; they often consist of no more than about a dozen people.<sup>235</sup> Homes of converts and house churches are sometimes raided, with physical and digital records, religious paraphilia and identity cards confiscated.<sup>236</sup> House churches are promptly shut down by the authorities, and shutdowns are often followed by arrests.<sup>237</sup> During 2020, there were regular reports of raids on house churches.<sup>238</sup> House

<sup>228</sup> 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 8, CISEC96CF14127

<sup>229</sup> 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 5, CISEC96CF14127; 'Iranian Refugees Find Community in a Jakarta Church', Voice of America (United States), 9 February 2017, CXC9040661550

<sup>230</sup> 'Persecution of Christian Converts Continues under Rouhani', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 4 January 2016, CX6A26A6E40; 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, pp. 6, 8–9, CISEC96CF14127. See also endnotes 6, 97 & 98.

<sup>231</sup> 'Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.16, 20210203085117; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.3, CISED50AD8640

<sup>232</sup> 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, p. 35, CIS28931

<sup>233</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, p. 21, CIS28931

<sup>234</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.11, CISED50AD8640; 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, p. 22, CIS28931; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 4, CISED50AD4620; 'Iranian government seeks to shut down house churches', Mission News Network (United States), 14 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA23976

<sup>235</sup> 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 6, CISEC96CF14127; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 4, CISED50AD4620; 'Over 450,000 Join Iranian House Church Movement, 'Great Number of Muslims Turning to Christ'', Christian Post (United States), 3 March 2016, CX6A26A6E1858; 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, p. 22, CIS28931

<sup>236</sup> [International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.20, 20210513092814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; '2019 Annual Report Violations Against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 20 January 2020, p.4, 20200121155535; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.16, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.24, CISED50AD8640

<sup>237</sup> 'IRN200458.E - Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2021, 20210330090142

<sup>238</sup> 'Annual Report 2020 - Rights violations against Christians in Iran', Open Doors, Article 18, Middle East Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 02 February 2021, p.16, 20210203085117; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348

churches will frequently change locations to avoid detection.<sup>239</sup> Access to Bibles and pastors, and resultant knowledge of biblical content or theological principles, varies widely.<sup>240</sup> Potential new house church members are typically surveilled by the house church for months.<sup>241</sup> Iranians primarily convert due to friends and family, satellite television or the Internet.<sup>242</sup>

## Non-practicing Muslims and atheists

**Non-practising Muslims are unlikely to come to the attention of authorities unless they make a public statement attesting to their lack of or rejection of faith.** DFAT assesses that non-practicing Muslims face a low risk of official and societal discrimination, especially in major cities.<sup>243</sup> Mosque attendance in Iran is not usually monitored, and a large proportion of Iranians do not regularly attend mosques.<sup>244</sup> An August 2020 survey conducted by the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN)<sup>245</sup> of Iranians' attitudes towards religion, found that 60 per cent of respondents reported that they did not pray at all (by comparison, 27 per cent of respondents stated they prayed five times a day).<sup>246</sup> Iran has seen a growing trend of nationalism (i.e. an attachment to pre-Islamic Persian myths and traditions) and secularism, as the children born since the 1979 revolution have come of age.<sup>247</sup> Secularism is particularly widespread in major cities among younger and wealthier Iranians.<sup>248</sup> The number of atheists, agnostics and nonbelievers in Iran is reportedly increasing.<sup>249</sup> According to the 2011 census, the number of Iranians who are areligious increased by 20 per cent

<sup>239</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.32, 20200414083132; 'Over 450,000 Join Iranian House Church Movement, 'Great Number of Muslims Turning to Christ'', Christian Post (United States), 3 March 2016, CX6A26A6E1858; 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, p. 21, CIS28931

<sup>240</sup> 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.12 & p.20, CISED50AD8640; 'Iran: House Churches; Situation of Practising Christians; Treatment by Authorities of Christian Converts' Family Members', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin Information and Asylum Research and Documentation, 14 June 2017, p. 5, CISED50AD4620

<sup>241</sup> 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, p. 24, CIS28931

<sup>242</sup> 'Iran: Christian converts and house churches (1) - prevalence and conditions for religious practise', Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo - Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, 27 November 2017, p.12, CISED50AD8640; 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran: Report from the Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey and London, United Kingdom', Danish Immigration Service, 23 June 2014, pp. 22–24, CIS28931

<sup>243</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132

<sup>244</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.1, 20200918134111; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132; 'The Revival of Nationalism and Secularism in Modern Iran', LSE Middle East Centre (United Kingdom), November 2015, p. 11, CISEC96CF14725

<sup>245</sup> The survey was conducted by the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN) between 6 June 2020 and 21 June 2020. Over 50,000 respondents were surveyed, around 90 per cent of whom lived in Iran. GAMAAN is an independent and non-profit research foundation in the Netherlands. For more information about GAMAAN and the survey methodology, please see: 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.1 & p.3, 20200918134111

<sup>246</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.1, 20200918134111

<sup>247</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132; 'The Revival of Nationalism and Secularism in Modern Iran', LSE Middle East Centre (United Kingdom), November 2015, p. 5, CISEC96CF14725; 'Iran: Treatment of atheists by State and non-State actors', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum, 12 June 2017, p. 2, CISED50AD4616; 'Update on the situation for Christian Converts in Iran', Danish Immigration Service, June 2014, CIS28931

<sup>248</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132

<sup>249</sup> [International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.5, 20210513092814

between 2006 and 2011.<sup>250</sup> The most recent survey on religious attitudes in Iran conducted in June 2020, found that 9 per cent of respondents identified as atheist and 6 per cent as agnostic.<sup>251</sup> Approximately 22 per cent did not identify with any particular religious or spiritual group or worldview.<sup>252</sup> According to the survey, 78 per cent of respondents believe in God and 20 per cent do not believe in concepts such as God, life after death, religion, jinns or heaven and hell.<sup>253</sup> 47 per cent of respondents stated that they have transitioned from being religious to non-religious during their lifetimes.<sup>254</sup> The survey's results showed that the transition from being religious to non-religious is more prevalent in urban, educated and younger groups.<sup>255</sup> The majority of agnostics and atheists converted from being religious to non-religious.<sup>256</sup> Older surveys indicate that up to half of Iranians informally view themselves as agnostic or similarly disinterested in Islam.<sup>257</sup> During Ramadan, most restaurants are closed during daylight hours, though many people eat at home.<sup>258</sup> The authorities have closed restaurants who fail to observe Ramadan practices.<sup>259</sup> There are numerous examples of people arrested and prosecuted<sup>260</sup> for eating during Ramadan, though it cannot be determined how widespread eating in public is, or consequent judicial actions are.<sup>261</sup> In recent years, young people in Iran—particularly in Tehran—have incrementally but increasingly pushed the boundaries of accepted behaviour.<sup>262</sup> While the regime largely tolerates many such actions, it will punish those it believes are purposefully attempting to 'insult' Islamic values or undermine the Islamic Revolution.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>250</sup> [International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#), United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.5, 20210513092814

<sup>251</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.1, 20200918134111

<sup>252</sup> According to the report, 22 per cent of survey respondents did not identify as Muslim, atheist, Zoroastrian, spiritual, agnostic or as followers of Christianity, Sufi mysticism, humanism, Bah'ai or Jewish, 'among other worldviews'. Please see: 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.1, 20200918134111

<sup>253</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.5, 20200918134111

<sup>254</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.6, 20200918134111

<sup>255</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.7, 20200918134111

<sup>256</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.7, 20200918134111

<sup>257</sup> 'Iran's Other Religion', Boston Review (United States), 1 June 2003, CX82EDE9415499; 'Iran: Treatment of atheists by State and non-State actors', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, 12 June 2017, p. 2, CISED50AD4616

<sup>258</sup> Restaurants in hotels and on some highways remain open (when travelling, people may be exempt from fasting). 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132; 'Travelling to Iran during Ramadan- a Survival Kit', PersiaPort (France), 25 June 2017, CXC90406620608; '5 Tips for Traveling Iran during Ramadan', Searching for Iran (Iran), 8 June 2016, CX6A26A6E20504

<sup>259</sup> 'Police Shut Down Hundreds Of Restaurants During Ramadan in Iran', Human Rights in Iran, 21 May 2020, 20200525093000

<sup>260</sup> Article 638 of the Penal Code provides up to two months' imprisonment or up to 74 lashes for openly committing a 'haram' (i.e. sinful) act in public. 'Arresting People for Eating in Their Cars During the Ramadan Fasting Month in Iran is Illegal', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 2 June 2017, CXC90406620605

<sup>261</sup> 'The Story Of Treatment Of People Accused Of Eating In Public In Ramadan', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 26 June 2017, CXC90406620606; 'At least 20 Iranians lashed for breaking Ramadan fast', Trend News Agency (Azerbaijan), 11 June 2017, CXC90406620607; 'IRAN: 92 arrested in restaurant during Ramadan', National Council of Resistance of Iran, 27 June 2015, CXBD6A0DE21223

<sup>262</sup> 'Young Iranians affected by the embargo, tired of political Islam', Asia News IT, 1 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE4714

<sup>263</sup> For instance, five women have been sentenced (as of August) to prison terms after being arrested for waving their *hijab* in the air in early 2018, rather than the usual \$25-equivalent fine for 'bad *hijab*'. At least one of the women left Iran before her sentence was announced. 'Detained Human Rights Lawyer Writes Defiant Letter to Tehran Prosecutor', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 12 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31485; 'Woman sentenced to prison for protesting compulsory veil', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 8 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31012; 'Shaparak Shajarizadeh Twice Arrested For Allegedly Removing Her Headscarf in Public in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 12 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27118; 'Third Woman Sentenced to Prison in Iran For Removing Hijab Slapped With More Charges', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 7 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA28968

**There has been no evidence found of individuals recently being prosecuted for atheism.**<sup>264</sup> That said, it is legally possible for Muslims to be sentenced to death in Iran for atheism.<sup>265</sup> While Amnesty International reports that individuals who profess atheism are at 'risk of arbitrary detention, torture and the death penalty for "apostasy"' it does not provide any recent examples.<sup>266</sup> According to DFAT, it is unlikely the regime will become aware of atheists' beliefs unless they seek to publicise their views, and few do so publically (though there are several active groups on social media).<sup>267</sup> Atheists who are open about their non-belief face a moderate level of official and societal discrimination.<sup>268</sup>

## Particular social group

### Human and civil rights defenders

**Human and civil rights defenders and lawyers are subject to adverse attention from the Iranian authorities.** Human and civil rights defenders and lawyers who work in these areas face arbitrary arrest, monitoring, harassment, detention and prosecution.<sup>269</sup> Throughout 2020, the authorities unlawfully closed the businesses and froze the assets of numerous human rights defenders and their families.<sup>270</sup> The authorities have coerced human rights defenders to stop their activism by targeting their relatives.<sup>271</sup> DFAT assesses that civil society activists and lawyers who work in areas connected with the promotion of human rights, certain social trends or policies and environmental issues face a high risk of official discrimination including arrest, monitoring, harassment and travel bans.<sup>272</sup> Those who are perceived to have crossed 'red lines' as defined by the authorities and who are critical of the regime, face a high risk of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment.<sup>273</sup> Human and civil rights defenders and lawyers are frequently sentenced to prison terms on charges such as 'spreading propaganda against the state' and 'acting against national security' for acts such as writing letters critical of the human rights situation in Iran.<sup>274</sup> Some human rights defenders and civil society activists are

<sup>264</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132

<sup>265</sup> It remains legally possible for converts to be charged with apostasy; although the penal code does not explicitly address apostasy, both the penal code and Constitution decree that where there is a gap in the penal code, judges should apply *sharia*. 'Christian Converts in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 21 August 2015, p. 6, CISEC96CF14127. Also see: 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132

<sup>266</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348; 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.25, 20200219090219

<sup>267</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Treatment of atheists by State and non-State actors', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, 12 June 2017, p. 2, CISED50AD4616

<sup>268</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.36, 20200414083132

<sup>269</sup> 'Human Rights and Democracy: 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report', United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 08 July 2021, 20210715104548; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, pp.3-4, 20210216093019; 'New Charges Thrown at Political Prisoners to Keep Them Behind Bars', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 30 September 2020, 20201016140436; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 21 July 2020, p.15, 20200917082634; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.41, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.9, 20200228105335; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.1, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>270</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.191, 20210407093348

<sup>271</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.4, 20210216093019

<sup>272</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132

<sup>273</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132

<sup>274</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.43, 20210331113214; 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021,

prevented from travelling abroad.<sup>275</sup> There is an increasing trend of the family members of human rights defenders, lawyers and activists being harassed and pressured by the Iranian authorities, including with arrest.<sup>276</sup> During 2020, dozens of human rights defenders were sentenced to long sentences.<sup>277</sup> Throughout 2019, at least 80 rights activists and human rights lawyers received flogging sentences.<sup>278</sup> Human rights defenders and civil rights activists were arbitrarily arrested during the November 2019 protests primarily on 'national security charges' (see '[November 2019 protests](#)'). Many received long prison and flogging sentences.<sup>279</sup> Amnesty International reports that at least 240 human rights defenders were arrested in 2019; however, it is unclear if this number includes those arrested in connection with the November protests.<sup>280</sup> On 1 February 2018, several weeks after protests across the country, seven civil rights activists were arrested and later charged with conspiracy.<sup>281</sup>

**Lawyers that represent human rights defenders and activists have been arrested for their work.**<sup>282</sup> DFAT assesses that lawyers involved in the promotion of human rights, certain social trends or policies, and environmental issues face a high risk of official discrimination including arrest, monitoring, harassment and travel bans.<sup>283</sup> The risk of arrest is partially acute for prominent human rights lawyers and lawyers advocating for their clients in sensitive cases.<sup>284</sup> In February 2019, it was reported that six human rights lawyers had either been arbitrarily detained or received prison

20210304155135; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132; '[Human Rights Watch World Report 2021](#)', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.339, 20210114072851; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.6 & p.8, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'At Least 13 Signers of Open Letters Urging Khamenei's Resignation Are Arrested', Center for Human Rights Iran, 29 August 2019, 20190830093320; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 13, CISED50AD522. Examples: 'Press freedom violations recounted in real time (since) January 2017', Reporters without Borders, 5 December 2017, CXC90406618834

<sup>275</sup> '[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.43, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132

<sup>276</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132; '[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.8, 20210624120211; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.10, 20200228105335

<sup>277</sup> '[World Report 2021. Events of 2020](#)', Human Rights Watch (HRW), 13 January 2021, pp.339, 20210114072851

<sup>278</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.4, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>279</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.26-28, 20200903090643; 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.23, 20200219090219; 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854; 'Iran: Bloody Crackdown on Dissent', Human Rights Watch (HRW), 14 January 2020, 20200115100833; 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2019', Iran Human Rights, 01 April 2020, p.7, 20200402073515; 'Amnesty raises to 304 number of Iranians killed in protests', Aya Batrawy, Associated Press (AP), 16 December 2019, 20191218114438; 'Initial Reports Show Thousands Arrested in Iran's Crackdown on November Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 22 November 2019, 20191125081116

<sup>280</sup> 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.23, 20200219090219

<sup>281</sup> 'Iran: Civil Rights Activists Summoned To Court In Tehran', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 25 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26207

<sup>282</sup> '[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.8, 20210624120211; '[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.20 & p.43, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.41-42, 20200414083132; '[Human Rights Watch World Report 2021](#)', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.339, 20210114072851; '[Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran](#)', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135

<sup>283</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132

<sup>284</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.41, 20200414083132

sentences<sup>285</sup> and in June 2019 a defence attorney was sentenced to 30 years in prison after posts he made on social media advocating for civil rights.<sup>286</sup>

**Political activists are subject to mistreatment from the Iranian authorities.** The Iranian authorities routinely suppress free speech and punish public criticism of the regime, particularly in the lead up to significant events.<sup>287</sup> Peaceful protests are routinely met with excessive use of force by the regime.<sup>288</sup> Political activists who are perceived to cross vague and frequently shifting red lines are often charged and sentenced under offences such as ‘propaganda against the State’, ‘insulting Islamic values or the Prophets’, and ‘insulting the Supreme Leader’, which can carry lengthy prison terms.<sup>289</sup> The charge of insulting the Supreme Leader can also ensnare ordinary citizens who are not political activists.<sup>290</sup> Political prisoners are occasionally given suspended sentences on the understanding that renewed political activity could return them to prison.<sup>291</sup> Activists are also controlled through the temporary suspension of court proceedings against them, while leaving open the option of re-arrest at any time.<sup>292</sup> Protestors are subject to the death penalty; in 2020, at least two

<sup>285</sup> ‘Iran - New developments concerning the judicial harassment of human rights lawyers’, World Organisation Against Torture, 13 February 2019, 20190222085950.

<sup>286</sup> ‘Three Rights Lawyers Sentenced to Lengthy Jail Terms in Less Than a Year’, Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 5 June 2019, 20190802150505; ‘Iranian human rights lawyer sentenced to 30 years and 111 lashes’, Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 1 August 2019, 20190802161657

<sup>287</sup> ‘[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)’, United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.2, 20210624120211; ‘[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#)’, United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.24, 20210331113214; ‘Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran’s November 2019 protests’, Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.6, 20200903090643; ‘DFAT Country Information Report – Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.41, 20200414083132; ‘2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report’, Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.8, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; ‘Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.9, 20200228105335; ‘At Least 13 Signers of Open Letters Urging Khamenei’s Resignation Are Arrested’, Center for Human Rights Iran, 29 August 2019, 20190830093320; ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 13, CISED50AD522. Examples: ‘Press freedom violations recounted in real time (since) January 2017’, Reporters without Borders, 5 December 2017, CXC90406618834; ‘From Execution to Medieval Torture: Iran’s Mandela’, Ayatollah Boroujerdi’, Gatestone Institute (United States), 13 March 2017, CXC9040663620; ‘Increasing Concern for Health of Jailed Rights Lawyer, Dissident Cleric in Iran’, Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 5 March 2017, CXC9040663129; ‘Siamak Mirzaei’s Trial Held in Baharestan Revolutionary Court’, Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 12 February 2017, CXC9040661682; ‘Dissident family shattered by justice system in Iran’, Deutsche Welle (Germany), 7 March 2017, CXC9040663300

<sup>288</sup> ‘[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)’, United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.4, 20210624120211

<sup>289</sup> ‘[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#)’, United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, pp.18-19, 20210331113214; ‘Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran’s November 2019 protests’, Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.8, 20200903090643; ‘DFAT Country Information Report – Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.42, 20200414083132; ‘2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report’, Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.8, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; ‘Rouhani’s Intelligence Ministry and Khamenei’s IRGC Widen Crackdown Ahead of Election’, Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 16 March 2017, CXC9040664493; ‘MPs Demand Answers from Rouhani on Increasing Arrests Ahead of Elections’, Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 23 March 2017, CXC9040664488; ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 15, CISED50AD522. Examples: ‘Iran Human Rights Monitor - Monthly Report, December 2018’, Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 7 January 2019, 20190110092854; ‘Ezzatollah Jafari Began Serving His Term in Kerman Prison’, Human Rights Activists News Agency, 22 November 2017, CXC90406618424; ‘Heshmatullah Tabarzadi Sentenced to 6 Years Imprisonment’, Human Rights Activists News Agency, 4 November 2017, CXC90406618415

<sup>290</sup> ‘Restrictions on Freedom of Expression in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), March 2016, p. 45, CIS38A8012530

<sup>291</sup> ‘Nasrin Sotoudeh: “Hardliners are trying to open a new case against me”’, International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 22 August 2016, CX6A26A6E8222

<sup>292</sup> ‘Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran’s human rights defenders under attack’, Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 2 August 2014, pp. 36–37, NG2A465F576

were executed and eight were on death row.<sup>293</sup> Solidarity confinement, long pretrial detention and forced transfers of political prisoners and human rights defenders to psychiatric hospitals occur.<sup>294</sup>

## LGBTI

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in Iran face official punishment and societal discrimination.** DFAT assesses that LGBTI people who openly express their sexual orientation face a high risk of official and societal discrimination, including arrest, prosecution, and restricted participation in the community and workforce.<sup>295</sup> High profile or highly visible LGBTI people face a high risk of violence, including from their family members, members of the public and the authorities.<sup>296</sup> LGBTI people are often ostracised and physically harmed by family members and the public.<sup>297</sup> A September 2020 survey by Six Colours<sup>298</sup> found that 62 per cent of LGBTQ respondents had been abused at least once by a first-degree relative, and 42 per cent said they had been sexually harassed or raped in a public place.<sup>299</sup>

**It is not possible for an LGBTI person to seek state protection, as doing so would be an act of self-incrimination that would leave them open to arrest and prosecution.**<sup>300</sup> Harassment and discrimination against LGBTI people is under-reported often due to the victim's fear of persecution.<sup>301</sup> Homosexuality is not illegal in Iran, but homosexual activity is,<sup>302</sup> with punishments under the Penal Code including 100 lashes or the death penalty, depending on the nature of the sexual activity.<sup>303</sup> Punishments for same-sex sexual conduct between men is more severe than between women.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>293</sup> ['Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)'](#), United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.3, 20210624120211

<sup>294</sup> ['Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)'](#), United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.6, 20210624120211

<sup>295</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.55, 20200414083132

<sup>296</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.55, 20200414083132

<sup>297</sup> 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', IranWire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521

<sup>298</sup> Six Colours is an Iranian transgender information portal. 230 members of Iran's LGBTQ community from 39 cities across the country were surveyed. More than 90 per cent of respondents were still living inside Iran. Please see: 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', IranWire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521

<sup>299</sup> 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', IranWire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521

<sup>300</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.54, 20200414083132

<sup>301</sup> ['Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran'](#), United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.10, 20210216093019; ['Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran'](#), Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', IranWire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.54, 20200414083132; 'Being Lesbian in Iran', OutRight Action International, 28 July 2016, p. 13, CIS38A80123572

<sup>302</sup> 'Being Lesbian in Iran', OutRight Action International, 28 July 2016, p. 5, CIS38A80123572; 'Shots Fired as Iran Arrests over 30 Gay Men in Violent Raid', Jerusalem Post (Israel), 20 April 2017, CXC9040666096; 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 – Iran', US Department of State, 13 March 2019, Section 6, 20190315162620

<sup>303</sup> ['Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.56, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.52-53, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Types of criminalisation', Human Dignity Trust, undated, accessed 26 March 2020, 20200423114654; 'IHRDC Translation of the New Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Books One and Two', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 8 April 2014, pp. 46–47, CIS27755; 'Smart Traveller—Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 8 June 2017, CXC9040669030; 'State-Sponsored Homophobia 2017: A World Survey of Sexual Orientation Laws: Criminalisation, Protection and Recognition', International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, May 2017, CISED50AD4462; 'Hassan Afshar, A Teenager Executed on Rape Charges', IranWire, 12 August 2016, CX6A26A6E7667

<sup>304</sup> ['Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.57, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and

LGBTI individuals (including transgender people) are arrested by all security services, though particularly the *basij*.<sup>305</sup> Security forces harass, arrest and detain individuals suspected of being LGBTI.<sup>306</sup> Some individuals have been arrested based only on a perception of their sexual orientation.<sup>307</sup> They are sometimes subject to beatings or other abuse (sometimes including sexual abuse) whilst in detention.<sup>308</sup> People accused of sodomy often face summary trials where evidentiary standards are not always met.<sup>309</sup> Lesbians face significant economic and social discrimination – the discrimination they experience as women is exacerbated by their sexual orientation.<sup>310</sup> Honour killings against LGBTI people occur.<sup>311</sup>

**Courts reportedly generally refrain from issuing the death penalty to offenders in same-sex relation cases, ordering floggings instead, although LGBTI people may be executed for other crimes.**<sup>312</sup> It is not clear how many LGBTI individuals were executed in 2019, 2020 or 2021. During 2019, at least one alleged criminal was executed for sodomy-related charges.<sup>313</sup> LGBTI activists report that LGBTI individuals are executed on the pretext of more severe criminal charges such as rape.<sup>314</sup>

Trade, 14 April 2020, p.52 & p.54, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Types of criminalisation', Human Dignity Trust, undated, accessed 26 March 2020, 20200423114654

<sup>305</sup> 'Monthly Report—An Overview of the Human Rights Situation in Iran in May-June 2017', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 30 August 2017, CXC90406613045; Translated from Dutch in 'Iran: Women, children, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, "moral crimes": COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, December 2015, p. 67, CISEC96CF14191; 'Shots Fired as Iran Arrests over 30 Gay Men in Violent Raid', Jerusalem Post (Israel), 20 April 2017, CXC9040666096; 'Pathologizing Identities, Paralyzing Bodes: Human rights violations against gay, lesbian and transgender people in Iran', Justice for Iran and Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network, June 2014, pp. 35–42, CISEFCB23F7432

<sup>306</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.56, 20210331113214; DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.54-55, 20200414083132

<sup>307</sup> 'Pathologizing Identities, Paralyzing Bodes: Human rights violations against gay, lesbian and transgender people in Iran', Justice for Iran and Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network, June 2014, p. 35, CISEFCB23F7432; 'Fleeing Violence, Gay Iranian Refugees Find Safety in Toronto', Torontoist (Canada), 16 June 2017, CXC90406610769

<sup>308</sup> 'A Dark History: Honor Killings of Iran's LGBTQ Citizens', Iran Wire, 02 August 2020, 20200803083906; 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', Iran Wire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 28 January 2020, p.16, 20200228105335; 'Iran defends execution of gay people', Deutsche Welle, 12 June 2019, 20200423114857; 'Shots Fired as Iran Arrests over 30 Gay Men in Violent Raid', Jerusalem Post (Israel), 20 April 2017, CXC9040666096; 'A Transsexual Civilian Arrested in Golestan Province', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 19 August 2016, CX6A26A6E8155; Translated from Dutch in 'Iran: Women, children, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, "moral crimes": COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, December 2015, p. 67, CISEC96CF14191; 'Living as a Lesbian in Iran, Where Being Gay Is Illegal', Vice, 23 February 2017, CXC90406610776

<sup>309</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, pp.56-57, 20210331113214

<sup>310</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.54, 20200414083132

<sup>311</sup> '[Gay Iranian Man Murdered by Family on Being 'Outed' by Military Service Card](#)', Iran Wire, 09 May 2021, 20210514105423; 'A Dark History: Honor Killings of Iran's LGBTQ Citizens', Iran Wire, 02 August 2020, 20200803083906; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.55, 20200414083132

<sup>312</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.56, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.53, 20200414083132; 'Iran Publicly Executes Man On Sodomy Charges', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 12 January 2019, 20190115155221

<sup>313</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, pp.49-50, 20200312093514

<sup>314</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.56, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.53, 20200414083132; 'Iran Publicly Executes Man On Sodomy Charges', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 12 January 2019, 20190115155221

**Advocating for LGBTI rights can also result in official pressure, including imprisonment.**<sup>315</sup> In December 2019, a gender-equality activist was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of colluding against national security by 'seeking to normalize homosexual relations' – the first time an activist has faced such an accusation in Iran.<sup>316</sup> No update is available on his case.<sup>317</sup> Despite the above, there are reportedly areas of Tehran, including two public parks, where gay men socialise and face little police harassment.<sup>318</sup> Gay men also reportedly have an active presence on social media platforms, especially Grindr.<sup>319</sup> If willing to be classified as mentally ill, gay men and transgender women can reportedly avoid conscription.<sup>320</sup> Societal discrimination is widespread but nuanced, and occurs at a greater level in smaller cities and rural areas.<sup>321</sup> There is no law prohibiting discrimination against LGBTI individuals.<sup>322</sup> Iran legally recognises transgender identity only after official diagnosis of gender identity disorder followed by medical procedures; transgender individuals continue to face societal and official discrimination.<sup>323</sup> NGOs report that authorities pressure LGBTI people to undergo gender reassignment surgery.<sup>324</sup>

<sup>315</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.50, 20200312093514; 'Iran: Honors for Persecuted Writers', Human Rights Watch (United States), 24 November 2014, CX1B9ECAB7950; 'Iranian translator of Blue Is the Warmest Colour 'declared persona non grata'', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 13 February 2015, CXBD6A0DE1449; 'Iranian actor apologises after tweeting support for US gay marriage ruling', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 3 July 2015, CXBD6A0DE9305; 'Gay Muslim cleric who secretly married same-sex couples flees Iran', Gay Star News (United States), 10 June 2016, CX6A26A6E16838; 'Fleeing Violence, Gay Iranian Refugees Find Safety in Toronto', Torontoist (Canada), 16 June 2017, CXC90406610769

<sup>316</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.50, 20200312093514

<sup>317</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.57, 20210331113214

<sup>318</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.54, 20200414083132; 'Intimate spaces: Coming out in Iran', Guardian (United Kingdom), 11 June 2015, CXBD6A0DE7995. The Dutch Foreign Minister claims that authorities know of and 'condone' these public meetings places. Translated from Dutch in 'Iran: Women, children, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, "moral crimes": COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, December 2015, p. 67, CISEC96CF14191

<sup>319</sup> 'Iranian and Queer: Online identities in constant negotiation between Iran and the United States, observed through the lens of Grindr', Hautefeuille, D, University of Southern California, CISED50AD8287

<sup>320</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.57, 20210331113214; 'Intimate spaces: Coming out in Iran', Guardian (United Kingdom), 11 June 2015, CXBD6A0DE7995. Example: 'This Gay Couple Left Iran For A Better Life. Now They Wonder If It Can Last In America.', Huffington Post (United States), 16 November 2017, CXC90406617785; 'Gay Iranian Man Murdered by Family on Being 'Outed' by Military Service Card', Iran Wire, 9 May 2021, 20210514105423

<sup>321</sup> 'Iranian translator of Blue Is the Warmest Colour 'declared persona non grata'', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 13 February 2015, CXBD6A0DE1449; 'Military Service: A Nightmare for Minority Recruits', IranWire, 13 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE4480; 'Fleeing Violence, Gay Iranian Refugees Find Safety in Toronto', Torontoist (Canada), 16 June 2017, CXC90406610769

<sup>322</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.56, 20210331113214; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2021', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.342, 20210114072851; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.53, 20200414083132; 'Pathologizing Identities, Paralyzing Bodes: Human rights violations against gay, lesbian and transgender people in Iran', Justice for Iran and Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network, June 2014, p. 45, CISEFCB23F7432

<sup>323</sup> 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', IranWire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.54 & p.55, 20200414083132; 'Being Transgender in Iran', OutRight Action International, 28 July 2016, CIS38A80123573; 'Sex Changes: Cheap, But Not Cheerful', IranWire, 3 April 2016, CX6A26A6E2697

<sup>324</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.57, 20210331113214; 'New Report Reveals the Torment of Iran's LGBTQ Community', IranWire, 17 September 2020, 20200918131521; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.55, 20200414083132

## Women

**Women face societal and legislative discrimination and the threat of gender-based violence in Iran.**<sup>325</sup> Although the Constitution provides for equal rights for women, a number of legal provisions (such as those that deal with property, family law, and rules of evidence) discriminate against them.<sup>326</sup> In 2021, the World Economic Forum ranked Iran as 150th out of 156 countries in terms of gender equality,<sup>327</sup> down from 148th in 2020.<sup>328</sup> Women, unlike men, may not transmit citizenship to their non-citizen spouse.<sup>329</sup> In June 2020, amendments to the civil code were implemented that grant Iranian citizenship to the children of Iranian women married to foreign men.<sup>330</sup> Under this law, women must apply for nationality for their children. Children can apply for themselves when they turn 18.<sup>331</sup> This application is subject to a security clearance from the Intelligence Ministry and the Intelligence Organization of the IRGC.<sup>332</sup> Women in unregistered marriages need to register their marriages with the authorities before their application will be considered.<sup>333</sup> In November 2020, the first national identity card under this amendment was issued.<sup>334</sup> As at December 2020, the authorities had accepted 10,000 applications and some eligible individuals had received their shenasnamehs.<sup>335</sup> Prohibitions on women appearing in public (e.g. as musicians<sup>336</sup>) or working in mixed-gender offices vary across

<sup>325</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

<sup>326</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.47, 20210331113214; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2021', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.340, 20210114072851; 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.47-48, 20200414083132; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, pp. 5, 14, CIS25511; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 17, CISED50AD522; 'Iranian women are second-class citizens', Deutsche Welle (Germany), 27 May 2013, CXC28129415607; 'After Burn Victims Denied Compensation Because They're Girls, Lawyer Says Law Must Change', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 13 December 2017, CXC90406619344

<sup>327</sup> 'Iran Backsteps on Gender Equality', Iran Focus, 20 December 2017, CXC90406619790;

<sup>328</sup> 'Global Gender Gap Report 2021', World Economic Forum, 20210407134212

<sup>329</sup> 'Iranian authorities move to block release of female rights activists', The Guardian, 20 June 2020, 20201106132908; 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 - Iran', US Department of State, 13 March 2019, Section 6, 20190315162620; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General', United Nations General Assembly, 6 September 2016, p. 11, CIS38A80122219; 'Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness', UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 8 March 2017, p. 3, CISED50AD379; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2019', Human Rights Watch, 17 January 2019, p. 291, 20190118091502

<sup>330</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.38, 20210331113214; 'Iranian citizenship law for children of foreign fathers approved', InfoMigrants, 4 June 2020, 20200715143621; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>331</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.38, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>332</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2020', Human Rights Watch, 14 January 2020, 20200115082903

<sup>333</sup> 'Iranian citizenship law for children of foreign fathers approved', InfoMigrants, 4 June 2020, 20200715143621

<sup>334</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.14, 20210216093019

<sup>335</sup> '75,000 children in Iran to gain nationality under new law', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 01 December 2020, 20201203085316;

'Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2021', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 05 March 2021, p.6, 20210308081204

<sup>336</sup> 'She Studied Singing in College But is Banned From Performing on Stage in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 24 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20861; 'Iranian female singers get boost from music idol', Al Monitor (United States), 7 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21798; 'Iran struggles to mold 'revolutionary youth'', Al Monitor, 25 July 2019, 20190730084312; 'Iranian Female Singer Prosecuted For Singing In Public', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 22 May 2019, 20190524095917

provinces and municipalities.<sup>337</sup> Iranian law prohibits discrimination against women in the workplace, but not in the hiring process.<sup>338</sup> Legislation, longstanding traditional values and gender roles restrict women's participation in the workforce and community.<sup>339</sup> DFAT assesses women's rights activists face a high risk of official discrimination.<sup>340</sup> In practice, this includes arrest, interrogation, prosecution, imprisonment, monitoring, harassment, smear campaigns and travel bans.<sup>341</sup>

**Whether marriages are legally recognised by the authorities depends on the religion and nationality of the parties involved.** The marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man is unlawful and a marriage between an Iranian woman and a non-Iranian man requires government permission.<sup>342</sup> Further, if an Iranian man marries a non-Muslim woman, the woman is required to convert to Islam prior to registering their marriage with the authorities; if recognised by the authorities, she would be entitled to Iranian citizenship.<sup>343</sup> It is unclear if this last provision applies only to foreign women.

**Laws restrict women's rights to choose their clothing.** Women are punished with a fine or up to two months' imprisonment for appearing in public (including inside their own cars<sup>344</sup>) without an appropriate headscarf (*hijab*).<sup>345</sup> Women who appear in public without a proper *hijab* can also be

<sup>337</sup> 'In Iran, Gender Segregation Threatens to Reshape Public Life', IranWire, 9 September 2014, CX1B9ECAB10452. For example, In July 2014, Tehran municipality introduced a series of regulations that limited the types of jobs in which women could be employed, including cafes (except for the kitchens) and sought to separate female and male civil servants. See *ibid.* 'Iran: Women musicians banned from going on stage in Isfahan', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 17 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20532

<sup>338</sup> "'It's a Men's Club': Discrimination Against Women in Iran's Job Market', Human Rights Watch (United States), 25 May 2017, p. 3, CISED50AD4291. That said, in September 2018, all women from an Iranian news agency were fired without warning. 'All female journalists of ANA news agency dismissed', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 22 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35766

<sup>339</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

<sup>340</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

<sup>341</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2021', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, p.341 20210114072851; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.10, 20200228105335; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General', United Nations General Assembly, 6 September 2016, p. 13, CIS38A80122219; 'Iran: Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and the Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941872; 'Women Activists Arrested for Trying to Raise Awareness of Women's Rights in Marriage and Divorce', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 5 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA34965; 'Women's rights activist summoned to Zanjan court', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 9 August 2017, CXC90406611874; 'Iran's Supreme Leader Takes Fresh Shot At Gender Equality', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (Czech Republic), 25 March 2017, CXC9040665084; 'Women's Rights Activist Arrested After Attending Workshop in Georgia', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 29 November 2016, CX6A26A6E14273; 'Inside the Women's Ward: Mistreatment of Women Political Prisoners at Iran's Evin Prison', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), June 2016, pp. 6, 10, 27, CIS38A80121123; 'Iranian Women's Rights Activist to Serve Three Years in Prison For Attending Seminar', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 17 August 2017, CXC90406612257

<sup>342</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.14, 20210216093019

<sup>343</sup> 'Registration of marriage', Ministry of Interior (Iran), 01 January 2017, CXC9040669632; 'Registration of marriage', Iran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 01 November 2010, CX253586; 'The responsibilities and activities of the Consular section', Iran: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Jakarta, 01 October 2009, CX235163;

<sup>344</sup> 'Iran: Shahroud SSF Commander says SSF will deal with unveiling in cars', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 22 August 2017, CXC90406612563; 'Iran's latest culture battle: Should women in cars keep their heads covered?', Los Angeles Times (United States), 19 July 2017, CXC90406610609

<sup>345</sup> 'Iran: Mazandaran Prosecutor vows to suppress Iranian women for not wearing obligatory veil', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 29 August 2017, CXC90406612997; 'Iran Guidance Patrol harasses women in public places', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 24 August 2017, CXC90406612683; 'More than 2,400 people in Semnan charged with harassing men and women', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 10 October 2017, CXC90406615418

punished with 74 lashes.<sup>346</sup> According to DFAT, in practice these penalties are 'rare'.<sup>347</sup> Generally, women deemed to have 'bad hijab' (where the headscarf is worn loosely and some hair is showing) are ordered by morality police to adjust their headscarves and warned against future indiscretions.<sup>348</sup> In some instances, women may be taken to a police station where they are asked to sign a declaration that they will not wear 'bad hijab' again, and are released without sanction. Repeat offenders incur a fine and may obtain a criminal record.<sup>349</sup> Removing a headscarf in cyberspace (including by posting pictures online without the hijab) is considered a crime in Iran and women have been prosecuted for doing so.<sup>350</sup>

**The wearing and enforcement of dress codes for women varies greatly depending on location and socioeconomic status.** Police reportedly stop millions of women yearly for 'improper hijab' and fine tens of thousands.<sup>351</sup> Women are more likely to wear loose *hijabs* in affluent areas of Tehran than in conservative and poorer areas of Tehran and cities such as Mashhad and Qom.<sup>352</sup> While the Islamic dress code is not strictly enforced, especially in major cities, enforcement has increased since the January 2018 anti-*hijab* protest movement.<sup>353</sup> In 2019, the State Security Force (SSF) implemented a new two stage plan to increase pressure on women for improper *hijab*. In April 2019, the 'Nazer 1 Plan' was introduced to monitor women who remove their *hijabs* within cars through a system of police cameras, spies and police patrols. The 'Nazer 2 Plan' in August 2019, aims to monitor women's *hijab* wearing in all public spaces. The SSF recruited at least 10,000 new members to its moral security patrols to enact these plans.<sup>354</sup> Iran's morality police conduct mobile patrols and operate 'checkpoints' to enforce dress codes.<sup>355</sup> If a woman is caught wearing their *hijabs* inappropriately in cars, the driver of the vehicle will be summonsed to a police station to sign a declaration not to wear or tolerate bad *hijab* again.<sup>356</sup> Several violent encounters between women and members of morality patrols occurred in 2019.<sup>357</sup> Checks on *hijab* violations increase during holy periods (e.g. Moharram and Ramadan).<sup>358</sup> Shops that display 'immoral clothing', such as underwear, ripped jeans or 'vulgar images' in their windows are sometimes punished, usually with the confiscation of the offending clothes.<sup>359</sup> Tehran and other cities have a number of women-only parks, where women may take off their *hijab* and/or wear their choice of clothing.<sup>360</sup>

<sup>346</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>347</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>348</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>349</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>350</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'Women's removal of veil in social media images draws harsh reaction', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 21 May 2020, 20200525092633

<sup>351</sup> 'Women's Rights in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 6 January 2021, 20210412161119

<sup>352</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>353</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132. Also see: '[International Religious Freedom Report for 2020 - Iran](#)', United States Department of State, 12 May 2021, p.26, 20210513092814

<sup>354</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.13, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>355</sup> 'IRN200129.E - Iran: Dress codes, including enforcement (2016-February 2020)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 21 February 2020, 20200316121334

<sup>356</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.49, 20200414083132

<sup>357</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.13, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>358</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.49, 20200414083132; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 16, CIS25511

<sup>359</sup> '[Five Arrested at Iranian Fabric Store Over Unveiled Models](#)', Iran Wire, 13 July 2021, 20210713094800; 'Security agents remove women's clothing from store windows', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 10 October 2017, CXC90406615428

<sup>360</sup> 'We hate the headscarf': Can women find freedom in Tehran's female-only parks?', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 9 August 2017, CXC90406612014

**Iranian authorities have little tolerance for anti-hijab protestors or those who support them.**

DFAT assesses that women perceived by the authorities to be pushing Iran's moral boundaries face a high risk of arrest and severe punishment.<sup>361</sup> Between January 2018 and August 2019, at least 10 women and two men received prison sentences for 'morality' and 'nationality security' charges for peacefully protesting against the *hijab*.<sup>362</sup> In December 2017 (separate to the economic protests that spread through the country), a woman in Tehran waved her *hijab* on a stick as a protest against the mandatory *hijab* law.<sup>363</sup> She was arrested, and released several weeks later. In the few weeks after that, at least 28 other women were arrested for copying her. In 2018, at least five women were subsequently sentenced to prison.<sup>364</sup> Not all women who conducted similar protests were arrested.<sup>365</sup> In March 2018, a number of reformist politicians who criticised the state for arresting the women were themselves arrested.<sup>366</sup> Reports of arrests of women protesting the forced *hijab* have continued in 2020<sup>367</sup> and 2019,<sup>368</sup> with some women being detained in violent circumstances.<sup>369</sup> In June 2019, the Iranian regime deployed security forces in Gilan province to issue warnings to improperly veiled women.<sup>370</sup> Women posting videos of themselves without headscarves on social media have also been arrested.<sup>371</sup> In July 2019, three women were given a combined sentence of 55 years for promoting de-veiling.<sup>372</sup>

**Women face legal and societal discrimination in personal status matters relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody.** Whereas Iranian Muslim men are permitted to marry Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian or Muslim women, Muslim Iranian women may only marry Muslim men.<sup>373</sup> The legal age for marriage for females is 13 (and as young as nine, with the guardian's and a

<sup>361</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

<sup>362</sup> 'Arrests, Prison Sentences Fail to Stem Growing Public Opposition to Iran's Mandatory Hijab Law', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 19 August 2019, 20190820091334

<sup>363</sup> 'IRN106257.E - Iran: The White Wednesdays campaign, including its creation, objectives and founding member(s); treatment of supporters by Iranian authorities (2016-February 2019)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 01 March 2019, 20200402122730

<sup>364</sup> At least one of the women left Iran before her sentence was announced. 'Detained Human Rights Lawyer Writes Defiant Letter to Tehran Prosecutor', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 12 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31485; 'Woman sentenced to prison for protesting compulsory veil', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 8 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA31012; 'Shaparak Shajarizadeh Twice Arrested For Allegedly Removing Her Headscarf in Public in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 12 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27118; 'Third Woman Sentenced to Prison in Iran For Removing Hijab Slapped With More Charges', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 7 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA28968

<sup>365</sup> 'Interview with an Enghelab Street Woman Protesting Compulsory Hijab', Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 16 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA22689; 'Iranian women risk arrest: Daughters of the revolution', The Conversation (Australia), 7 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA23435

<sup>366</sup> 'A Former Governor Arrested in Iran', Iran Human Rights (Norway), 17 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA24234; 'Rouhani Campaigner Among Activists Arrested in Southern Iran For Alleged Opposition to Compulsory Hijab', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 20 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA24310

<sup>367</sup> 'Iranian woman arrested for "cycling without hijab"', Agence France Presse (AFP) - France, 21 October 2020, 20201027144046; 'Iran Moving Women Political Prisoners to Jails with "Common Criminals"', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 23 October 2020, 20201026095256; 'Women Arrested for Removing Hijab in Photos Posted on Social Media', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 16 June 2020, 20200623162556; 'Women's removal of veil in social media images draws harsh reaction', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 21 May 2020, 20200525092633

<sup>368</sup> 'Some Iranian women take off hijabs as hard-liners push back', Associated Press (AP), 15 July 2019, 20190815111440; 'Icon of Iran's Hijab Protest Movement Vida Movahedi Released From Prison', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 May 2019, 20190530085453

<sup>369</sup> 'Video of violent arrest of young girl causes outcry in Iran', Rudaw (Iraq), 25 June 2019, 20190628155119; 'Pro-government vigilantes attack women for standing up against forced hijab laws', Amnesty International, 12 March 2019, 20190328112201

<sup>370</sup> 'Iran Ramps Up Pressure On Women, Vows To Continue Crackdown', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 04 July 2019, 20190705102430; 'Iran Deploys 2,000 New Morality Police Units To Counter "Improper Hijab"', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 9 June 2019, 20190612094932

<sup>371</sup> ['Five Arrested at Iranian Fabric Store Over Unveiled Models'](#), Iran Wire, 13 July 2021, 20210713094800; 'Some Iranian women take off hijabs as hard-liners push back', Associated Press (AP), 15 July 2019, 20190815111440

<sup>372</sup> 'Three women rights activists were sentenced to 55 years imprisonment', Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 02 August 2019, 20190802162112

<sup>373</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 24, CIS25511

court's approval).<sup>374</sup> December 2018, the parliament rejected a bill to ban marriage for girls under the age of 13.<sup>375</sup> Between 2019 and 2020, over 28,000 marriages involving girls under 15 years of age were officially registered with the government.<sup>376</sup> While the overall rate of marriage has declined in Iran, the share and rate of child marriage has increased.<sup>377</sup> Iranian officials report that in 2020, the marriage rate of girls aged 10-14 increased by 10.5 per cent compared to 2019.<sup>378</sup> The permission of male guardians is required to get married.<sup>379</sup>

**Whereas men may divorce a woman at any time, for any reason,<sup>380</sup> women may only obtain a divorce with their husband's permission, or by court order.<sup>381</sup>** A court may order a divorce if it finds the wife suffers from 'intolerable difficulty and hardship' arising from a number of possible factors, including: the husband being insane; drug-dependent; impotent; unable to provide for his family; or 'wife battery or any kind of mistreatment of the wife that is intolerable in the wife's condition'.<sup>382</sup> Prospective husbands in Iran promise a dowry (*mehrieh*); women sometimes waive the right to retain the dowry as a tactic to encourage their husbands to grant a divorce.<sup>383</sup> Husbands still have rights over separated wives (such as banning them from leaving the country<sup>384</sup>) until a divorce is registered in the wife's *shenasname*.<sup>385</sup> Divorce has grown significantly over the last decade<sup>386</sup> and is

<sup>374</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.47, 20200414083132; 'Child marriage in Iran forces girls into a life of oppression', Deutsche Welle (Germany), 11 September 2017, CXC90406613899

<sup>375</sup> 'Abuse of 11-Year-Old Child Bride in Iran Sees Some Lawmakers Calling for Reforms', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 21 February 2019, 20190222083952

<sup>376</sup> 'Figures Reveal the Unexpected Provinces with Highest Child Marriage Rates in Iran', Iran Wire, 05 February 2021, 20210216095142; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.14, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>377</sup> 'Figures Reveal the Unexpected Provinces with Highest Child Marriage Rates in Iran', Iran Wire, 05 February 2021, 20210216095142

<sup>378</sup> 'Iran reports increase in child marriages', Radio Farda, 20 August 2021, 20210824111241

<sup>379</sup> If the woman is a virgin. 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941639; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 23, CIS25511

<sup>380</sup> 'The Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1928 (as amended) (unofficial translation)', Article 1133, CIS17938

<sup>381</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.47, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.47, 20200414083132; 'Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Iran', Freedom House, 3 March 2010, CX240569

<sup>382</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.47, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.47, 20200414083132; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 40, CIS25511

<sup>383</sup> 'Kinky 'Fifty shades' sex and porn linked to divorce in Iran', Reuters (United Kingdom), 18 September 2017, CXC90406614298. The dowry can be either paid or promised (to be paid upon the wife's demand or in case of divorce). Most marriages in Iran involve a deferred dowry. 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 30, CIS25511. It is of this deferred dowry that some women seeking divorce waive payment. 'Rise in divorce in Iran linked to shift in status of women', Reuters (United Kingdom), 22 October 2014, CX1B9ECAB12811. That said, women may legally demand payment of a deferred dowry at any time—and may go to court to sue for payment. Men unable or unwilling to pay the dowry (as stipulated in their mandatory marriage contract) may be imprisoned. Because of 20,000 men imprisoned in an 18-month period from April 2010, a law was passed aimed at limiting the enforcement of deferred dowry payment to amounts within a man's financial means. 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 32, CIS25511

<sup>384</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 35, CIS25511

<sup>385</sup> 'Iran: Exit procedures for married women', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, 12 June 2017, p. 2, CISED50AD4618

<sup>386</sup> 'Marriages Decrease, Divorces Increase At Alarming Rate In Iran', Radio Farda, 6 November 2019, 20200414160510; 'Kinky 'Fifty shades' sex and porn linked to divorce in Iran', Reuters (United Kingdom), 18 September 2017, CXC90406614298; 'Perception of Identity Threat as the Main Disturbance of Iranian Divorced Women: A qualitative study', Zare, S, Aguilar-Vafaei, ME, Ahmadi, F, Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, vol., 58, no. 1, 11 January 2017, p. 1, CISED50AD5992

more common in major cities.<sup>387</sup> In 2019, one in three marriages in Iran ended in divorce, up from one in eight marriages in 2008.<sup>388</sup> Female divorcees frequently face societal discrimination, including having their moral integrity called into question.<sup>389</sup> Single women (including divorcees) may live alone, but often face difficulties due to societal suspicion.<sup>390</sup> It is easier to live alone as a single woman in wealthier, less conservative areas such as north Tehran.<sup>391</sup> Many landlords will refuse to rent an apartment to a single or divorced woman.<sup>392</sup> Iranian women have amongst the lowest rates of participation in the formal economy of any country in the world, at 17 per cent.<sup>393</sup> A divorced woman does not need the permission of her male guardian to remarry<sup>394</sup> or travel abroad.<sup>395</sup> After divorce, custody of children is usually granted to the mother until they reach the age of seven, after which the father will have custody.<sup>396</sup> If the mother remarries she will lose custody of her children.<sup>397</sup> Even during the mother's custody, the father is the child's guardian, providing him with the authority to determine, among other issues, whether they can apply for passports.<sup>398</sup>

**Women face legal and structural discrimination in regards to domestic, honour-related and sexual violence.** Rape is not a separate crime under Iranian law, instead it is classified as a sub-category of adultery (*zina*).<sup>399</sup> The definition of rape is very limited and excludes a wide range of non-consensual sexual acts that should be classified as such.<sup>400</sup> Punishment for rape includes the death penalty (and convicted rapists are often executed).<sup>401</sup> However, successful prosecution requires four Muslim male witnesses (or the equivalent of two female witnesses per male witness).<sup>402</sup> Rape is

<sup>387</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.47, 20200414083132

<sup>388</sup> 'Marriages Decrease, Divorces Increase At Alarming Rate In Iran', Radio Farda, 6 November 2019, 20200414160510

<sup>389</sup> 'Perception of Identity Threat as the Main Disturbance of Iranian Divorced Women: A qualitative study', Zare, S, Aguilar-Vafaie, ME, Ahmadi, F, Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, vol., 58, no. 1, 11 January 2017, pp. 4–8, 10 CISED50AD5992; 'More women in Iran are forgoing marriage. One reason? The men aren't good enough', Los Angeles Times (United States), 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E17124

<sup>390</sup> 'More women in Iran are forgoing marriage. One reason? The men aren't good enough', Los Angeles Times (United States), 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E17124; 'Women Living Alone: A Threat to Society', IranWire, 15 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE6450; 'Single Women Gaining Limited Acceptance in Iran', New York Times (United States), 12 June 2012, CX288970; 'Iran: Whether a divorced woman is considered to be single' in the same way as a woman who has never married; whether a single or divorced woman can work outside her home', Immigration and Refugee Board Canada, 1 June 1998, CXC78F5931935

<sup>391</sup> 'Women Living Alone: A Threat to Society', IranWire, 15 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE6450

<sup>392</sup> 'Perception of Identity Threat as the Main Disturbance of Iranian Divorced Women: A qualitative study', Zare, S, Aguilar-Vafaie, ME, Ahmadi, F, Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, vol., 58, no. 1, 11 January 2017, p. 7, CISED50AD5992

<sup>393</sup> 'Women's Rights in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 6 January 2021, 20210412161119

<sup>394</sup> 'Iran: Whether a divorced woman is considered to be single' in the same way as a woman who has never married; whether a single or divorced woman can work outside her home', Immigration and Refugee Board Canada, 1 June 1998, CXC78F5931935

<sup>395</sup> All unmarried women over 18 (including divorcees) may travel abroad without permission. However, all married women require permission from their husband. 'Iranian single women might need father's permission to go abroad', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 16 January 2013, CX311534; 'More women in Iran are forgoing marriage. One reason? The men aren't good enough', Los Angeles Times (United States), 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E17124

<sup>396</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.48, 20210331113214; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 43, CIS25511

<sup>397</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 43, CIS25511

<sup>398</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.48, 20210331113214; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 45, CIS25511

<sup>399</sup> 'Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, February 2020, 20200303113708

<sup>400</sup> 'Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, February 2020, 20200303113708

<sup>401</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48 & p.60, 20200414083132

<sup>402</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 5, CIS25511

underreported due to fears of ostracism or even legal repercussions such as charges of indecency, immodest behaviour or adultery (adultery carries the death penalty).<sup>403</sup> The authorities do not adequately investigate reports of rape and sexual assault.<sup>404</sup> Spousal rape is not a crime.<sup>405</sup> A wife is legislatively required to submit to her husband; failure to do so may result in her losing her right to maintenance in case of divorce.<sup>406</sup> Criminalisation of sexual relations outside marriage prevents women from reporting sexual assaults.<sup>407</sup> Women in detention have been subject to forced virginity tests.<sup>408</sup>

**Domestic violence is not specifically prohibited by Iranian law.**<sup>409</sup> The applicable law requires two male witnesses for successful prosecution.<sup>410</sup> Successful prosecutions usually result in only fines for the abuser.<sup>411</sup> Studies show a relatively consistent rate of two-thirds of Iranian women being subject to either or both physical or psychological domestic violence.<sup>412</sup> Government statistics similarly show that two-thirds of women have experienced domestic violence from a male relative.<sup>413</sup> Victims of domestic violence seeking divorce are at risk of losing their rights to maintenance due to a failure to submit to their husbands.<sup>414</sup> (For instance, if she leaves the house without permission, she is not submitting to her husband.<sup>415</sup>) There are some temporary protection shelters for abused women, but these do not provide long-term solutions, such as employment or housing.<sup>416</sup> These shelters focus on reconciling

<sup>403</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.44, 20210331113214

<sup>404</sup> 'Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, February 2020, 20200303113708

<sup>405</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.44, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132; 'Access to Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence in Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, February 2020, 20200303113708

<sup>406</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.47, 20200414083132; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, pp. 28, 33, CIS25511

<sup>407</sup> 'Women's Rights in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 6 January 2021, 20210412161119

<sup>408</sup> 'Female Activists Imprisoned for Attending Protests, Refusing "Virginity Test"', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 February 2021, 20210215114343;

'Atena Farghadani Forced to Take "Virginity Test" in Prison', IranWire, 12 October 2015, CXBD6A0DE15011

<sup>409</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.45, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 18, CISEDB50AD522

<sup>410</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note—Iran: Women fearing domestic violence', UK Home Office, 25 July 2017, p. 5, OG6E7028840

<sup>411</sup> 'Iran: Gender Discrimination at Its Worst', Women Living under Muslim Laws, March 2014, p. 8, CISEFCB23F7440

<sup>412</sup> A survey of all statistical research on the incidence of domestic violence, showed an average of 66 per cent over time. Statistical research as far back as 2001 revealed similar levels. 'Domestic Violence Among Iranian Women: A systemic review and meta-analysis', Hajnasiri, H, Gheshlagh, RG, Sayehmiri, K, Moafi, F & Farajzadeh, M, Iranian Red Crescent Medical Journal, vol. 18, no. 6, June 2016, p. 3, CIS38A80124978. See also '27% of women in Tehran have been victims of violence', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 3 November 2017, CXC90406616982; 'The Prevalence of Violence Against Iranian Women and Its Related Factors', Nasrabadi, AN, Abbasi, NH & Mehrdad, N, Global Journal of Health Science, vol. 7, no. 3, 2015, p. 39, CIS956B8881710; 'Risk Factors of Domestic Violence in Iran', Rasoulia, M, Jalali, AH, Habib, S, Nojomi, MM, Jolfaei, AG & Bolhari, J, Journal of Environmental and Public Health, 2014, pp. 1–6, CISA447F084812; 'You shall procreate: Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 11 March 2015, pp. 31–32, CISEC96CF1328; 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 26 June 2015, pp. 5–6, CISEC96CF13114. See also 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General', UN General Assembly, 6 September 2016, p. 16, CIS38A80122219

<sup>413</sup> 'Iran Criminalizes Child Abuse After Outrage Over Killing of Teenage Girl', New York Times, The, 08 June 2020, 20200611105030

<sup>414</sup> 'You shall procreate: Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 11 March 2015, p. 31, CISEC96CF1328

<sup>415</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 29, CIS25511

<sup>416</sup> 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 26 June 2015, p. 21, CISEC96CF13114

women with their abusive husbands.<sup>417</sup> Shelters are rare outside big cities;<sup>418</sup> as of January 2021, shelters were absent in two-thirds of the country.<sup>419</sup> Internal relocation for women fleeing domestic violence is possible but difficult; anonymity in big cities would offer some protection, however if the woman was from an ethnic or religious minority she would likely not have access to a support network and it remains possible that her family would eventually locate her.<sup>420</sup> In October 2018, a victim of sustained domestic violence, who subsequently killed her husband, was executed.<sup>421</sup> In August 2017, a senior official from the Judiciary (which is typically conservative) criticised proposed legislation aimed at reducing domestic violence.<sup>422</sup>

### **Honour killing is much more common in the tribal (i.e. non-Persian) communities of Iran.<sup>423</sup>**

There are few precise and recent statistics of the number of honour killings in Iran, however experts state the number of cases has risen in recent years.<sup>424</sup> In the 12 months from March 2011, 340 women were murdered in such killings in Iran, according to police statistics. The majority of these murders took place in Kurdistan and Khuzestan (40 per cent of all murders in Khuzestan are believed to be honour-related.)<sup>425</sup> In July 2021, a 16 year old girl was killed by her father after returning home late in Kermanshah Province.<sup>426</sup> Between May and June 2020, five women and girls were murdered by male relatives in separate honour killing incidents, sparking widespread public outrage.<sup>427</sup> In June 2020, a 22 year old woman in Kerman Province was killed by her father after she arrived home late one evening.<sup>428</sup> In the same month, a woman in Abadan was killed by her husband (who was also her cousin) after she tried to leave her abusive marriage.<sup>429</sup> On 13 May 2020, a Baluchi woman in Gasht was killed by her husband in a so-called honour killing.<sup>430</sup> Around the same time, another woman was set alight by her husband.<sup>431</sup> Also in May 2020, a 14 year old girl in Talesh was beheaded

<sup>417</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132

<sup>418</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.48, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 10, CIS7B83941639

<sup>419</sup> 'Women's Rights in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 6 January 2021, 20210412161119

<sup>420</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, pp. 10–11, CIS7B83941639

<sup>421</sup> 'Young Woman Put to Death in Iran for Crime Committed as Juvenile', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 2 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36290. 'Iran hangs Kurdish child bride Zeinab Sekaanvand convicted after unfair trial', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 2 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36346

<sup>422</sup> 'Judiciary Official Opposes New Proposal Against Domestic Violence', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 August 2017, CXC90406612923

<sup>423</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 9, CIS7B83941639; 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 26 June 2015, p. 19, CISEC96CF13114; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 12, CIS25511

<sup>424</sup> '[Iran: 16-year-old Shakiba Bakhtiar Murdered by Father in Honour Killing](#)', Iran Human Rights, 05 July 2021, 20210706091431; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132; 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 26 June 2015, p. 17, CISEC96CF13114; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 12, CIS25511

<sup>425</sup> 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', Finnish Immigration Service, 26 June 2015, p. 17, CISEC96CF13114

<sup>426</sup> '[Iran: 16-year-old Shakiba Bakhtiar Murdered by Father in Honour Killing](#)', Iran Human Rights, 05 July 2021, 20210706091431

<sup>427</sup> 'Another Young Woman Murdered as Families of Honor Killing Victims are Silenced', Iran Wire, 23 June 2020, 20200623093016

<sup>428</sup> 'Honor Killings Sanctioned by Law Take New Toll on Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 16 June 2020, 20200617134019; 'Parliament alone cannot stop honor killings in Iran', AI Monitor, 22 June 2020, 20200630092049

<sup>429</sup> 'Iran is Repulsed by Another Honor Killing', Iran Wire, 17 June 2020, 20200617133015; 'Honor Killings Sanctioned by Law Take New Toll on Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 16 June 2020, 20200617134019

<sup>430</sup> 'The Murder of a 13-Year-Old Girl by Her Father Has Shaken Iran', Iran Wire, 27 May 2020, 20200527132238

<sup>431</sup> 'The Murder of a 13-Year-Old Girl by Her Father Has Shaken Iran', Iran Wire, 27 May 2020, 20200527132238

by her father after she ran away with her older boyfriend.<sup>432</sup> The girl's father was charged and faces up to ten years' imprisonment. The victim's boyfriend was charged with 'inciting' the honour killing and with kidnapping.<sup>433</sup> The killing caused widespread public outrage and prompted calls from President Rouhani and Supreme Leader Khamenei for tougher punishments for violence against women.<sup>434</sup> In response, in June 2020 (after 11 years of delays) the parliament passed the Law to Protect Children and Juveniles, outlawing the emotional and physical abuse and abandonment of children.<sup>435</sup> A copy of the law is not yet available, however it reportedly lacks severe punishments for fathers who kill or harm their children.<sup>436</sup> A separate bill to criminalise sexual, emotional and physical abuse against women and create harsher prison sentences for honour killings (the Bill to Protect Women) remains in limbo; in January 2021, it was approved by cabinet but it still needs to be passed by parliament.<sup>437</sup> Three women and a 17-year-old girl were reportedly killed by their brothers in honour killings in a month-long period in June and July 2017.<sup>438</sup> While it could not be determined what the victims' ethnicity was, all killings took place in provinces where the majority population is non-Persian. One woman was murdered in honour killings in each of the previous two months (in Persian-majority cities).<sup>439</sup> The Penal Code does not criminalise honour crimes, and in accordance with *sharia* law, stipulates reduced sentences for those who commit these crimes.<sup>440</sup> A father (or male guardian) who kills his daughter is not subject to the death penalty; a judge may use his discretion to sentence the killer to between three and ten years' imprisonment.<sup>441</sup> Other honour killers may only be subject to the death penalty if the victim's family demands it, which they frequently do not (frequently, the killer is from the victim's family).<sup>442</sup> As a result, most perpetrators of honour killings serve short prison sentences or avoid punishment completely.<sup>443</sup>

## Moral crimes

**Mixed-gender gatherings are forbidden and attendance can attract a fine or flogging.**<sup>444</sup> Women may not mix openly with unmarried or unrelated men, and are sometimes sentenced to up to 99

<sup>432</sup> 'Police In Iran Arrest Father Of 13-Year-Old Girl For 'Honor Killing'', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 26 May 2020, 20200527131545

<sup>433</sup> 'Man Who Ran Away With 14-Year-Old Girl In Iran Arrested After Father Killed Her', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 29 May 2020, 20200601083706; 'Gruesome Death Of Iranian Teenager Shows Shame Of 'Honor' Killings', Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 04 June 2020, 20200616105235

<sup>434</sup> 'Romina Ashrafi: outcry in Iran over so-called 'honour killing' of 14-year-old girl', The Guardian, 28 May 2020, 20200601132208; 'Khamenei Twitter Demands "Tough Punishment" For Violence Against Women', Radio Farda, 29 May 2020, 20200601083341

<sup>435</sup> 'Iran Criminalizes Child Abuse After Outrage Over Killing of Teenage Girl', New York Times, The, 08 June 2020, 20200611105030; 'Iran Finally Adopts A Child-Protection Law, Held Back By Conservatives For Nine Years', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 08 June 2020, 20200611102127

<sup>436</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348; 'Iran Criminalizes Child Abuse After Outrage Over Killing of Teenage Girl', New York Times, The, 08 June 2020, 20200611105030

<sup>437</sup> 'Iran Moves to Outlaw Sexual Violence and Harassment of Women', New York Times, The, 12 January 2021, 20210112093125; 'Iran Criminalizes Child Abuse After Outrage Over Killing of Teenage Girl', New York Times, The, 08 June 2020, 20200611105030; 'Parliament alone cannot stop honor killings in Iran', Al Monitor, 22 June 2020, 20200630092049

<sup>438</sup> 'Monthly Report—An Overview of the Human Rights Situation in Iran for Tir 1396 Iranian Calendar (22 June 2017–22 July 20)', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 18 October 2017, CXC90406614839

<sup>439</sup> 'Monthly Report—An Overview of the Human Rights Situation in Iran in May–June 2017', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 30 August 2017, CXC90406613045; 'Monthly Report—An Overview of the Human Rights Situation in Iran in April–May 2017', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 12 August 2017, CXC90406612201

<sup>440</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

<sup>441</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 10, CIS25511

<sup>442</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 13, CIS25511

<sup>443</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

<sup>444</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

lashes for doing so.<sup>445</sup> Especially in big cities, authorities have begun to take a less combative approach to unmarried couples being together in public (though pressure increases in the lead up to sensitive events).<sup>446</sup> Private-mixed gender parties are common, particularly in major cities and among wealthier Iranians; such parties invariably involve alcohol.<sup>447</sup> An August 2020 survey by GAMAAN<sup>448</sup> found that approximately 35 per cent of respondents drink alcohol occasionally or regularly.<sup>449</sup> DFAT assesses raids of mixed-gender parties are not common.<sup>450</sup> There are frequent news reports about dozens of people being arrested at mixed-gender parties (often with the additional presence of alcohol)<sup>451</sup>, but it is unknown how many such arrests are unreported, and how many parties pass without arrest. In April 2021, 31 men and women were arrested at a private party in a coffee shop in Mahshahr and 13 people were arrested for drinking alcohol at a café in Tehran.<sup>452</sup> In March 2021, leaders of a tour group were arrested for mixing genders, improper appearance and dancing.<sup>453</sup> In April 2020, Iranian authorities arrested 150 men and women at three mixed-gender parties in Sirjan, West Tehran and Shahriar.<sup>454</sup> Hundreds of people were detained for attending such parties in 2019 and 2020.<sup>455</sup> In February 2020, 60 people were arrested at a mix-gender party in northern Iran.<sup>456</sup> Reports suggests punishments for being caught at such gatherings range from having to bribe the attending police officer, having one's parents pick one up from a police station, signing a document declaring such behaviour will not be repeated, to lashing.<sup>457</sup> Reports indicate that a recent trend is to

<sup>445</sup> 'Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran—Book Five', (translated by) Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), July 2013, Article 637, CIS25936; 'My Stealthy Freedom', Facebook, 13 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16629; 'Iranian Students Lashed 99 Times Over Coed Party', New York Times (United States), 27 May 2016, CX6A26A6E4650

<sup>446</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941639. See also 'Iran Arrests 40 Young Partygoers for Drinking, Dancing', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 16 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33733

<sup>447</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

<sup>448</sup> For further information about the survey, please see: 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, p.1 & p.3, 20200918134111

<sup>449</sup> 'Iranians' Attitudes Towards Religion: A 2020 Survey Report', The Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran, August 2020, 20200918134111

<sup>450</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.52, 20200414083132

<sup>451</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'Iran arrests people in private mixed-gender parties', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 7 April 2020, 20200409075435; 'Iran arrests 60 young partygoers in mixed gender party in north city', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 February 2020, 20200423115137; 'Young Partygoers Arrested In Iran For Resembling "Devil Worshipers"', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 13 December 2019, 20191216101839; 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.2, 20200219090219; 'Iran's Morality Police Storm Private Party To Arrest 15 People', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 28 May 2019, 20190530091005; 'Iran Arrests 40 Young Partygoers for Drinking, Dancing', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 16 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33733; 'Iran: 20 Girls and Boys Arrested in a Party', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 21 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27711; 'Iran: 40 men and women arrested in mixed party in Amol', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 20 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA22577; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report—January 2018', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 4 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21349; 'Hundreds Arrested in Tehran During Yalda Winter Solstice Celebration', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 22 December 2017, CXC90406619870; 'Iran: Arrests 17 people at mixed-gender party', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 31 October 2017, CXC90406616795; 'Iranian directors see little respite despite support for Rouhani', AI Monitor (United States), 19 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20707

<sup>452</sup> '31 women and men arrested at mixed-gender party in southwest Iran', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 10 April 2021, 20210412102617; '13 young men and women arrested for "having fun" in a Tehran café', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 2 April 2021, 20210412110341

<sup>453</sup> '31 women and men arrested at mixed-gender party in southwest Iran', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 10 April 2021, 20210412102617

<sup>454</sup> 'Iran arrests people in private mixed-gender parties', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 7 April 2020, 20200409075435

<sup>455</sup> 'Iran arrests people in private mixed-gender parties', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 7 April 2020, 20200409075435

<sup>456</sup> 'Iran arrests 60 young partygoers in mixed gender party in north city', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 February 2020, 20200423115137

<sup>457</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.52, 20200414083132; 'Up to 150 men and women detained at party in Iran', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 27 July

fine those caught, rather than flog them, although flogging does sometimes occur.<sup>458</sup> It is common practice for police to accept a bribe prior to these parties behind held and to turn a blind eye.<sup>459</sup> Repeat offenders may receive a suspended prison sentence and made to pay a good behaviour bond.<sup>460</sup>

**Executions for consuming alcohol have occurred but are rare.** In July 2020, a man was executed following repeated convictions for consuming alcohol.<sup>461</sup> It was the first documented execution for alcohol consumption in 30 years in Iran.<sup>462</sup> Under Iran's Penal Code, consumption of alcohol is punishable by 80 lashes and if a perpetrator is convicted and sentenced three times, the punishment on the fourth occasion is death.<sup>463</sup> It was the man's sixth alcohol-related conviction.<sup>464</sup> In February 2021, a 73 year old man was sentenced to death after being arrested for the fourth time for alcohol consumption.<sup>465</sup> He was later acquitted by the same court.<sup>466</sup> In April 2020, DFAT advised that 'prosecutions for alcohol consumption are not common' and where 'enforced, the punishment for alcohol consumption is normally a fine.'<sup>467</sup> In July 2021, a man received 80 lashes for consuming alcohol (he was arrested in 2018).<sup>468</sup> In October 2020, a Christian convert received 80 lashes for drinking wine as part of a church service.<sup>469</sup> He previously received 80 lashes in 2013 for the same reason.<sup>470</sup> It is unclear whether his status as a Christian convert played any role in his sentence.

**Extra-marital sex is illegal.** *Zina* (extra-marital sex) is a crime, punishable by either 100 lashes or the death penalty, depending on the legal status of the accused.<sup>471</sup> DFAT is not aware of the death penalty being applied for adultery in recent times.<sup>472</sup> Authorities do not usually pursue people for *zina*

2016, CX6A26A6E6911; 'They drank booze, took drugs and even the police were hospitable': British woman who cycled through Iran reveals how its people are hugely welcoming... and love to party', Daily Mail (United Kingdom), 17 February 2017, CXC9040662130; 'Young Iranians explain just how easy it is to get banned alcohol', France 24 Observer, 5 July 2016, CX6A26A6E6180; 'How I Survived 40 Lashes', Marie Claire (United States), 6 April 2010, CX744258517271; 'My Stealthy Freedom', Facebook, 13 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16629

<sup>458</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.52, 20200414083132; 'Iran Arrests 40 Young Partygoers for Drinking, Dancing', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 16 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33733

<sup>459</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.52, 20200414083132

<sup>460</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.52, 20200414083132

<sup>461</sup> 'Iran: Man executed for drinking alcohol', Amnesty International, 10 July 2020, 20200713083248

<sup>462</sup> 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020', Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.54,

20210331091914

<sup>463</sup> 'Iran: Man executed for drinking alcohol', Amnesty International, 10 July 2020, 20200713083248

<sup>464</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report – July 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 3 August 2020, 20200804071054

<sup>465</sup> '73-year-old Retired Pilot Facing Death Penalty Acquitted of Alcohol Consumption', Iran Human Rights, 25 February 2021, 20210226090805; 'Iran: 73-year-old Retired Pilot Sentenced to Death for Alcohol Consumption', Iran Human Rights, 21 February 2021, 20210222090517

<sup>466</sup> '73-year-old Retired Pilot Facing Death Penalty Acquitted of Alcohol Consumption', Iran Human Rights, 25 February 2021, 20210226090805

<sup>467</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.17, 20200414083132

<sup>468</sup> 'Political prisoner lashed 80 times in Evin prison before going on leave', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 11 July 2021, 20210713095342

<sup>469</sup> 'Iranian Christian convert lashed 80 times for drinking Communion wine', Article 18, 14 October 2020, 20201015090459; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – October 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 November 2020, 20201102090918

<sup>470</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – October 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 November 2020, 20201102090918

<sup>471</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Adulterers', UK Home Office, October 2019, p.6,

20191009102136; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 10, CIS25511; 'IHRDC Translation of the New Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Books One and Two', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 8 April 2014, Article 230, CIS27755. Articles 224–226 describe those cases of *zina* that result in the death penalty.

<sup>472</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

unless there is a private complainant.<sup>473</sup> Women are more likely to be accused and convicted of adultery than men due to social attitudes, discriminatory laws, unfair trials and social acceptance of 'honour' crimes.<sup>474</sup> Four eyewitnesses (or a confession) are required to prove *zina*.<sup>475</sup> When accused of *zina*, married men often claim to have been in a temporary marriage, thereby making legal the relationship. Married women, who may have only one spouse, cannot use this defence.<sup>476</sup> The sentence for married men and women<sup>477</sup> who commit *zina* is death by stoning.<sup>478</sup> Though legally possible, this punishment is not often used.<sup>479</sup> 1998 was considered a year with 'high recorded rates of this punishment; seven people were executed in this way (five were women).<sup>480</sup> Approximately 150 people have been stoned to death in Iran since 1980.<sup>481</sup> The last known case was in 2009.<sup>482</sup> Where the case of *zina* does not amount to a death penalty punishment, the punishment is 100 lashes.<sup>483</sup> However, a 2018 Danish Immigration Service report cited an unnamed source suggesting punishments for pre-marital sex have reduced in severity; the death penalty is no longer used—often six to 12 months imprisonment is enforced instead.<sup>484</sup> It could not be determined how many people are lashed in Iran on charges of *zina*. In October 2017, a man and a woman were found guilty of *zina* and each sentenced to 99 lashes. The woman was also sentenced to one year of labour in a home for mentally ill patients.<sup>485</sup> In September 2017 the same court in Tehran sentenced an 18-year-old man to 100 lashes and two years of prison-in-exile for adultery, after he established a relationship with a woman he met on Instagram.<sup>486</sup> In May 2017, a woman was sentenced to 74 lashes for illicit relations with a man.<sup>487</sup> In December 2018, two Kurdish women were sentenced to death on adultery

<sup>473</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, pp. 5, 7, CIS7B83941639

<sup>474</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Adulterers', UK Home Office, October 2019, p.6, 20191009102136

<sup>475</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132; 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 10, CIS25511. That is, four male eyewitnesses. Three male and two female eyewitnesses is also adequate evidence. 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 15, CIS25511

<sup>476</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 11, CIS25511

<sup>477</sup> Who have consummated their marriage

<sup>478</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 10, CIS25511. The act of stoning also discriminates against women; women are buried up to their chests; men up to their waists. This is significant, because in those cases where the individuals confessed, escape during the stoning results in pardon. 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 12, CIS25511

<sup>479</sup> In its 2016/17 report, Amnesty International stated that one woman 'remained under a sentence of death by stoning'. 'Amnesty International Report 2016–2017', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 23 February 2017, p. 196, NG2A465F54. Her lawyer was arrested after he spoke with foreign journalists about the case. 'Caught in a Web of Repression: Iran's human rights defenders under attack', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 2 August 2017, p. 42, NG2A465F576. In early February 2017, a couple of weeks before the Amnesty International Report was issued, a couple were sentenced to death by stoning for adultery. 'Iran Regime's Inhumane Punishment of Death by Stoning Continues', National Council of Resistance of Iran, 4 February 2017, CXC90406615831. The 2017/2018 Amnesty International report only mentioned the legal possibility of death by stoning, without citing any cases. 'Amnesty International Report 2017–2018', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 22 February 2017, p. 202, NGED867A612

<sup>480</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 11, CIS25511

<sup>481</sup> 'Iran amends law on stoning for adultery', Agence France Presse (France), 30 May 2013, CX308264

<sup>482</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Adulterers', UK Home Office, 2 November 2016, p.6, 20191009102136

<sup>483</sup> 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (United States), 8 March 2013, p. 10, CIS25511.

<sup>484</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 6, CIS7B83941639

<sup>485</sup> 'Iran: Man and woman sentenced to flogging for having secret relationship', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 11 October 2017, CXC90406615414

<sup>486</sup> '18-year-old architect student sentenced to 100 lashes for adultery', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 7 September 2017, CXC90406613651

<sup>487</sup> 'NCRI Women's Committee Monthly Report—May 2017', National Council of Resistance of Iran, 5 June 2017, CXC9040669727

charges.<sup>488</sup> Sexual activities short of intercourse are also prosecuted, though mostly in rural areas.<sup>489</sup> Punishments are often less than that proscribed in the penal code, ranging from lashes to fines.<sup>490</sup>

**It is illegal for unmarried couples to live together, but it does happen (mostly in Tehran<sup>491</sup>) and is becoming more popular in other big cities<sup>492</sup>, in what are dubbed 'white marriages'.<sup>493</sup>**

Because of their illegality, women in 'white marriages' have no legal protections.<sup>494</sup> Generally, the police do not arrest people for being in white marriages.<sup>495</sup> If arrested, unmarried couples are taken to their local police station and made to sign a declaration; a fine is occasionally imposed.<sup>496</sup> Authorities generally tolerate unmarried couples who appear together in public, especially in major cities.<sup>497</sup> Social and family acceptance of such arrangements vary depending on the location and people involved; unmarried couples appearing together in public and 'white marriages' are common in Tehran and are not likely to meet societal resistance, however, these arrangements are less prevalent in rural areas where conservative attitudes prevail.<sup>498</sup> While some landlords refuse to rent properties to couples in white marriages, others do not care.<sup>499</sup>

## Tattoos and Westernised appearance

**Tattoos and Westernised appearances are relatively popular in bigger cities and usually do not attract adverse attention.** Tattoos are reportedly popular in Iran, though most tattoo wearers are circumspect about displaying their tattoos.<sup>500</sup> According to DFAT, people of 'Western' appearance including those with visible tattoos, face a low risk of official and societal discrimination.<sup>501</sup> DFAT reports it is common to see men with visible tattoos or 'Western-style' hairstyles or clothing styles, or visible hair removal (such as plucked or waxed eyebrows) on Iranian streets, particularly in larger cities such as Tehran.<sup>502</sup> Further, DFAT assesses 'that where there have been incidents of harassment of men for violating the dress code...these were most likely the result of either over-

<sup>488</sup> 'Iran to execute two Kurdish women on adultery charges', Kurdistan24, 5 November 2018, 20190815151139

<sup>489</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941639

<sup>490</sup> 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941639

<sup>491</sup> 'Officials Seek to Confront Iran's Increasingly Popular "White Marriages"', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 6 June 2016, CX6A26A6E4922; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

<sup>492</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Adulterers', UK Home Office, 2 November 2016, p.7, 20191009102136; 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 5, CIS7B83941639

<sup>493</sup> 'White marriage' a growing trend for young couples in Iran', Los Angeles Times (United States), 29 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE7414; 'Can Iran 'control' its cohabiting couples?', British Broadcasting Corporation (United Kingdom), 10 December 2014, CX1B9ECAB8281

<sup>494</sup> 'Officials Seek to Confront Iran's Increasingly Popular "White Marriages"', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 6 June 2016, CX6A26A6E4922

<sup>495</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.5, CIS7B83941639

<sup>496</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

<sup>497</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.5, CIS7B83941639

<sup>498</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Relations outside of marriage and marriages without the accept of the family', Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, pp.5-6, CIS7B83941639

<sup>499</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

<sup>500</sup> 'Iran bans spiky haircuts, tattoos and use of sunbeds because they are signs of 'devil-worship'', The Independent (United Kingdom), 5 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE21262; 'Tattoo lands Iranian actress in feminism controversy', Agence France Presse, 1 June 2016, CX6A26A6E4895; 'A silent act of resistance': the hidden tattoo studios of Tehran', The Guardian, 8 February 2019, 20190208102919

<sup>501</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.51, 20200414083132

<sup>502</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

zealous enforcement by individual security authorities in particular locations (particularly outside of major cities) or because the individual had come to the attention of the authorities for other activities, particularly political activism'.<sup>503</sup> A 2017 report cited a Farsi-language newspaper noting that wearers of visible 'obscene or nasty images on the face or the visible parts of the body such as hands and arms' will be charged with hurting public chastity.<sup>504</sup> There are a number of reported examples of individuals being subject to adverse attention by the authorities due to their tattoos.<sup>505</sup> Moreover, tattoo artists have been arrested in Iran and sentenced to fines, lashes or imprisonment.<sup>506</sup>

## Political opinion

### Green Movement

**It is unlikely that people arrested for participating in (but not organising) the Green Movement protest continue to be subject to adverse attention from the Iranian authorities.**<sup>507</sup> The Green Movement refers to demonstrators who protested against official claims that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the 2009 presidential election.<sup>508</sup> High-profile Green Movement members continue to face monitoring and harassment.<sup>509</sup> Punishments for those arrested in the past in connection to the protests included prison sentences and corporal punishment,<sup>510</sup> as well as the death penalty.<sup>511</sup> Persons who fled Iran following the 2009 elections have been subject to trials in absentia, and persons who fled but later returned have been subject to mistreatment, including arrest and prosecution.<sup>512</sup> Most lower-profile activists arrested during the 2009 and 2010 protests and subsequently released are unlikely to face serious on-going harassment, and should normally be able to go about their daily lives unmolested.<sup>513</sup> However, higher-profile activists including those who

<sup>503</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.50, 20200414083132

<sup>504</sup> 'Is Tattooing a Crime in Iran?', Iran Front Page (Iran), 20 February 2017, CXC90406620781

<sup>505</sup> 'Iranian Rapper Detained in Turkey Faces Deportation', The New York Times, 30 January 2020, 20200423120609; "'I left Iran so my daughter could choose her own destiny'", Iran Wire, 1 August 2019, 20190802160106; 'Young Partygoers Arrested In Iran For Resembling 'Devil Worshipers'', Radio Farda, 13 December 2019, 20200423120808; 'This app will help you avoid Iran's morality police', The Verge, 12 February 2016, CX6A26A6E1197; 'Iranian Morality Police Arrest Popular Underground Musician Amir Tataloo', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 3 December 2013, CX316374; 'Working underground: the life of an Iranian tattoo artist', France 24 Observers, 15 July 2013, CIS26056; 'A silent act of resistance': the hidden tattoo studios of Tehran', The Guardian, 8 February 2019, 20190208102919; 'The dangerous task of tattooing in Iran', CE NoticiasFinancieras, 4 February 2019, 20190208155409

<sup>506</sup> 'A silent act of resistance': the hidden tattoo studios of Tehran', The Guardian, 8 February 2019, 20190208102919

<sup>507</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>508</sup> 'IRN104338.E - Iran: The Green Movement, including its mandate, structure, leadership, activities and treatment of members by authorities; The Green Party (2009-March 2013)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 21 March 2013, CIS27383; 'The Green Movement', Milani, A, United States Institute of Peace Iran Primer, n.d., CX303910

<sup>509</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132; 'Mehdi Karroubi's Son Sentenced to Six Months in Prison', IranWire, 16 March 2017, CXC9040663952; 'Iran's supreme leader rejects calls to release leaders of the 2009 Green Movement protests', Los Angeles Times (United States), 21 February 2017, CXC9040662518

<sup>510</sup> 'Former Iranian prosecutor sentenced to 135 lashes for corruption', The Guardian (United Kingdom), 3 November 2016, CX6A26A6E15953

<sup>511</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2010 – Iran', Freedom House (United States), 28 May 2010, CX247778; 'Annual Report 2012 – Iran', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 24 May 2012, CX287712

<sup>512</sup> 'Protesters from 2009 election sentenced in absentia', Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 15 July 2014, CX323256; 'Rude Homecoming For Iranian Dissidents', Esfandiari, G, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 29 April 2014, CX320500; 'Former Reformist Member of Parliament Arrested Upon Return to Iran', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 27 July 2015, CXBD6A0DE10786

<sup>513</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

played an organisational role, released from detention, are more likely to be subject to ongoing surveillance and varying levels of mistreatment, depending on their activities.<sup>514</sup>

## 2017–2018 protests

**It is unlikely that those who participated in the 2017-2018 protests continue to be subject to adverse attention from Iranian authorities.**<sup>515</sup> The protests began in December 2017 in Mashad and quickly spread to over a hundred locations. While they initially focused on economic issues, they quickly turned political.<sup>516</sup> The authorities maintain an ongoing interest in those identified as having played a leading role during the protests. Such persons are likely to face official discrimination including arrest, monitoring and harassment.<sup>517</sup> 25 people were killed during the protests and according to official sources, over 4,500 arrested<sup>518</sup> (other sources claim 8,000 arrests).<sup>519</sup> Those arrested in connection with the protests were charged with serious offences,<sup>520</sup> and many received lengthy prison sentences.<sup>521</sup> At least nine protesters died in custody.<sup>522</sup> During 2020, two men arrested in connection with the 2017-2018 protests were executed.<sup>523</sup>

**Further information about the 2017-2018 protests is available in previous versions of the Iran Common Claims paper.**<sup>524</sup>

## November 2019 protests

**Iran experienced national protests in November 2019.** Between 15 and 21 November 2019, widespread protests occurred after the government reduced fuel subsidies, leading to a 200 per cent

<sup>514</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>515</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.39, 20200414083132

<sup>516</sup> 'Protests in Iran stretch into third day despite government warnings', Washington Post (United States), 30 December 2017, CXC90406620061; 'Protests in Iran Took Many By Surprise—But Not Iranian Labor Activists', The Intercept, 6 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA145; 'Iranians Are Mad as Hell About Their Foreign Policy', Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), 2 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA42; 'Protests in Iran: Social Challenges vs. Foreign Policy Ambitions', Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (Israel), 3 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA129; 'Iranian protest 'Military adventurism' at the core of citizens outcry', Defense News (United States), 6 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA213

<sup>517</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.39, 20200414083132

<sup>518</sup> 'Parliamentary Delegation Visiting Evin Prison Told 4,534 Were Arrested in Iranian Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 1 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21525. This official figure, compared with the official figure of those that took part, means that more than one in ten protesters were arrested. 'Silencing the Streets, Deaths in Prison: The December 2017 crackdown in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 19 February 2018, p. 10, CIS7B83941278

<sup>519</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report—January 2018', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 4 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21349

<sup>520</sup> 'Iran: Recently detained protesters face heavy charges', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 22 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20742; 'Detainees Arrested in Iranian Protests Facing Charges That Carry Death Penalty', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 26 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20853

<sup>521</sup> 'Tehran Prosecutor Says 150 Protesters Indicted', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 5 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21412; 'Parliamentary Delegation Visiting Evin Prison Told 4,534 Were Arrested in Iranian Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 1 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21525; 'Some University Students Still Detained a Month After Iran's Protests Despite Officials' Claims', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 13 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA22089; 'Tehran Prosecutor Says 150 Protesters Indicted', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 5 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21412; 'Parliamentary Delegation Visiting Evin Prison Told 4,534 Were Arrested in Iranian Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 1 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA21525; 'Some University Students Still Detained a Month After Iran's Protests Despite Officials' Claims', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 13 February 2018, CXBB8A1DA22089

<sup>522</sup> 'Report on the human rights situation covering 2018 – Iran', Amnesty International, 26 February 2019, p.2, 20190308090902

<sup>523</sup> 'Local Hit Squads, a Last Resort Solution to Crush Widespread Iran Protests', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 21 September 2020, 20200929115650; 'Iran Executes Tortured Protester Mostafa Salehi in Isfahan', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 5 August 2020, 20201106132705; 'Iran: Secret execution of wrestler Navid Afkari a 'travesty of justice'', Amnesty International, 12 September 2020, 20200914084900

<sup>524</sup> For example, please see the April 2021 version, available on CISNET under the reference 20210420115452.

increase in fuel prices.<sup>525</sup> As with previous protests, what began as economic grievances quickly took on a political element, with protestors chanting anti-regime slogans in some locations.<sup>526</sup> Demonstrations spread across 100 cities and towns in 29 of the country's 31 provinces.<sup>527</sup> Protests and rioting were most intense in Khuzestan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and Tehran provinces.<sup>528</sup> An estimated 200,000 people took part in the protests.<sup>529</sup> The majority of those who took part in the protests were poor and low-income people.<sup>530</sup> The protests were not centrally organised.<sup>531</sup> Protests devolved into violence in some instances, with protestors burning banks, gas stations and other government sites.<sup>532</sup> The government dismissed the protestors as 'hooligans' and 'rioters' backed by its foreign enemies, including the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MeK).<sup>533</sup>

**The government imposed a national weeklong internet blackout during the protests, making it difficult to verify reports.**<sup>534</sup> Authorities implemented a near-total shut down of the internet for a week, the longest of its kind in Iran, to suppress information about the protests and the state's response.<sup>535</sup> While images from protestors' mobile phones have emerged since the internet blackout was lifted, they are often of poor quality. As a result, most reporting about the protests relies on Iranian government estimates, which are likely to be deliberately low.<sup>536</sup>

**Iranian authorities responded with force, killing hundreds of people and arresting thousands more in the deadliest period of unrest since the revolution in 1979.** Video footage shows security forces firing at unarmed protestors and demonstrators fleeing the scene of protests.<sup>537</sup> Credible reports<sup>538</sup> state at least 300 people were killed and thousands more injured by security forces during

<sup>525</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.6, 20200903090643; 'Iran Strengthens Response to Protests', The New York Times, 3 December 2019, 20200423121101

<sup>526</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708; 'Iran protests: A quest for reform turns into widespread discontent', Giorgia Perletta, Atlantic Council, 18 November 2019, 20191119085023

<sup>527</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 4 March 2020, 20200306093523; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.3 20200228105335

<sup>528</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>529</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.3 20200228105335

<sup>530</sup> 'Iran: November 2019 Protests', Danish Immigration Service, 6 July 2020, pp.6-7, 20200707085236; 'Where Were the Hotbeds of Protest in Iran?', Ali Ranjipour, IranWire, 23 November 2019, 20191125115321

<sup>531</sup> 'Iran protests: A quest for reform turns into widespread discontent', Giorgia Perletta, Atlantic Council, 18 November 2019, 20191119085023

<sup>532</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708; 'Iran protests: A quest for reform turns into widespread discontent', Giorgia Perletta, Atlantic Council, 18 November 2019, 20191119085023

<sup>533</sup> 'Iranians fear a permanent internet blackout is in the making', Maziar Motamedi, Atlantic Council, 12 December 2019, 20191213093208; 'Iran protests: A quest for reform turns into widespread discontent', Giorgia Perletta, Atlantic Council, 18 November 2019, 20191119085023; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>534</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708

<sup>535</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.16, 20200601125122

<sup>536</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708; 'Iran: Deliberate Coverup of Brutal Crackdown', Human Rights Watch, 27 November 2019, 20191128082952

<sup>537</sup> 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.3, 20200228105335; 'Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown', Human Rights Watch, 25 February 2020, 20200226112021

<sup>538</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur describes the Amnesty International report that these figures come from as 'credible'. Please see: 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.3, 20200228105335

the protests.<sup>539</sup> However, Reuters reports 1,500 people were killed during the protests, citing figures provided by three Iranian interior ministry officials, including 17 teenagers, 400 women and members of the police and security forces.<sup>540</sup> 23 children were killed by Iranian security forces.<sup>541</sup> In May 2020, the Interior Minister stated 200 people were killed during the protests, claiming 80 per cent of casualties were caused by government forces and the remaining 20 per cent by fellow protestors.<sup>542</sup> Security forces also killed several bystanders not participating in the protests.<sup>543</sup> Estimates of the number of people injured by the security forces range from 2,000 to 4,800.<sup>544</sup> No official investigations have been held into the deaths of protestors.<sup>545</sup> The authorities have reportedly pressured the family members of protestors who were killed during the demonstrations against filing investigations, including by offering them financial payments.<sup>546</sup>

**Large numbers of people were arrested in connection with the protests.** While no official figures have been released,<sup>547</sup> according to a government official, 7,000 people were arrested during the protests; however, local sources estimate the actual number is closer to 12,000.<sup>548</sup> Iran Human Rights estimates the number to be 10,000.<sup>549</sup> There are no official figures on how many people remain in detention although the head of the State Prisons Organization has stated that a 'significant portion' have been released.<sup>550</sup> In November 2020, 157 'security detainees' who were arrested during protests over the last three years (including in November 2019) were granted pardons by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Thousands remain in prison.<sup>551</sup> Iranian authorities inspected hospitals for injured protestors, arresting those they found.<sup>552</sup> Large numbers of people were also arrested at universities.<sup>553</sup> Many individuals have been charged with 'criminal activity against nationality security' after undertaking peaceful activities including participating in the protests, filming or sharing content of the protests including on social media, attending memorial services for those killed during the

<sup>539</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.6, 20200903090643; 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854

<sup>540</sup> 'Iran Protests: 1500 Killed In Protests- IHR Calls For UN Urgent Action', Iran Human Rights, 23 December 2019, 20191224093708

<sup>541</sup> 'They shot our children': Killings of minors in Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 4 March 2020, p.4, 20200304114356

<sup>542</sup> 'Iran Minister Downplays November Protest Death Toll In First Official Acknowledgement', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 31 May 2020, 20200601084132

<sup>543</sup> 'Reports of Bystanders Killed by Security Forces Firing Indiscriminately at Protestors Grow', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 3 December 2019, 20191204114523

<sup>544</sup> 'Iran: November 2019 Protests', Danish Immigration Service, 6 July 2020, p.8, 20200707085236

<sup>545</sup> 'Families of victims killed in Iran protests pressured to settle for money', 18 May 2020, Iran Human Rights Monitor, 18 May 2020, 20200525093058

<sup>546</sup> 'Mockery of Justice: State's Policies and Laws Regarding the Victims of Iran's 2019 November Protests', Justice for Iran, May 2020, pp.5-7, 20200630101104

<sup>547</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.13, 20200601125122

<sup>548</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.6, 20200903090643; 'Thousands arrested in Iran; officials threaten protesters with execution', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 22 November 2019, 20191125120939; DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.6, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>549</sup> 'Iran Protests: 1500 Killed In Protests- IHR Calls For UN Urgent Action', Iran Human Rights, 23 December 2019, 20191224093708

<sup>550</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.13, 20200601125122

<sup>551</sup> 'Iran frees 157, thousands remain jailed on protest anniversary', Al Monitor, 11 November 2020, 20201112112140; 'Iran frees 157 detained during protests as more U.S. sanctions loom', Reuters, 11 November 2020, 20201111092557; 'Iran pardons 157 prisoners with security charges', Tehran Times, 10 November 2020, 20201112115853

<sup>552</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.7, 20200903090643; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, pp.6-7, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>553</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.33, 20200601125122

protests, and writing or sharing social media posts sympathetic to the protests or those who were killed.<sup>554</sup>

**The profile of those arrested in connection to the protests has varied.** An attorney in Tehran states there are three groups of people who have been detained: those arrested on the streets during the protests, those arrested during or after the protests by security agents who identified them from CCTV footage, and those accused by the authorities of being leaders of the unrest.<sup>555</sup> An Iranian journalist interviewed by the Danish Immigration Service<sup>556</sup> reports that many of the leading figures were killed during the protests, meaning that many of the arrestees are lower profile protestors.<sup>557</sup>

**There is limited information about trials and convictions for those arrested during the protests.**<sup>558</sup> The Iranian judiciary is currently hearing cases and a number of protestors have received heavy prison sentences and flogging sentences.<sup>559</sup> In January 2021, three protestors were sentenced to 40 years in prison for participating in the protests.<sup>560</sup> At least four individuals are believed to be facing the death penalty in connection with the protests.<sup>561</sup> However, the exact number is unknown, as there are no official statistics.<sup>562</sup> In July 2020, the Supreme Court suspended the executions of three of the protestors, accepting their application for a retrial. The decision came after the Supreme Court upheld the executions, prompting one of Iran's largest online campaigns condemning the death sentences.<sup>563</sup> Several protestors have been sentenced in absentia to floggings and long jail sentences.<sup>564</sup> Few convictions have been reported in the media.<sup>565</sup> The majority of protestors appear to have been released on bail.<sup>566</sup> There have been no attempts to investigate and hold the authorities accountable for any wrong doings committed during the protests.<sup>567</sup>

**Journalists, students and human rights defenders, including minority rights and labour rights activists, and people from ethnicity minority groups have been targeted for arbitrary arrest and detention in connection to the protests.**<sup>568</sup> Family members of people killed by security forces have been threatened by authorities warning them against speaking out.<sup>569</sup> The government used excessive

<sup>554</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.25, 20200903090643

<sup>555</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.35, 20200601125122

<sup>556</sup> Ehsan Mehrabi is an Iranian journalist currently based in Germany working freelance for Persian language media outside Iran, including BBC Persian, Iran International, and Radio Farda. Please see: 'Iran: November 2019 Protests', Danish Immigration Service, 6 July 2020, p.40, 20200707085236

<sup>557</sup> 'Iran: November 2019 Protests', Danish Immigration Service, 6 July 2020, p.24, 20200707085236

<sup>558</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.39, 20200601125122

<sup>559</sup> 'Iran sentences protesters to prison terms, hundreds of lashes', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 03 March 2021, 20210304142859; 'Iran Courts Sentence Five November Protesters To Total Thirty Years Prison', Radio Farda, 25 February 2020, 20200226131211

<sup>560</sup> 'Iran sentences three protesters to 40 years in prison', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 10 January 2021, 20210111111014

<sup>561</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.73, 20200903090643

<sup>562</sup> 'Iran: November 2019 Protests', Danish Immigration Service, 6 July 2020, p.26, 20200707085236

<sup>563</sup> 'Iranians take social media by storm to halt executions', Aljazeera, 16 July 2020, 20200720122102; 'Iran stays execution of anti-government protesters on death row', The Guardian, 19 July 2020, 20201102115139

<sup>564</sup> 'Iran sentences protesters to prison terms, hundreds of lashes', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 03 March 2021, 20210304142859

<sup>565</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.39, 20200601125122

<sup>566</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.39, 20200601125122

<sup>567</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.5, 20210216093019; 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, pp.40-41, 20200601125122

<sup>568</sup> 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854; 'Iran: World must strongly condemn use of lethal force against protesters as death toll rises to 143', Amnesty International, 25 November 2019, 20191128083838

<sup>569</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.13, 20200601125122; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28

force in provinces where the majority of the population belong to an ethnic minority. Some of these provinces experienced the highest number of deaths in connection to the protests, including Khuzestan and Kermanshah Provinces. Dozens of Kurdish and Azerbaijani-Turks activists were arrested following the protests.<sup>570</sup>

**Whether someone who participated in the 2019 protests would receive adverse attention from the authorities depends on the role they played during the demonstrations.** DFAT assesses that it is unlikely that authorities would target 'ordinary participants whose motivation to demonstrate was to protest economic difficulties, although a lack of due process could mean ordinary participants are wrongly charged.'<sup>571</sup> According to DFAT, the Iranian authorities maintain an 'ongoing interest in those identified as having played a leading role in the 2019 protests.' Individuals who meet this profile are 'likely to face official discrimination, including arrest, monitoring and continuing harassment.'<sup>572</sup>

**People detained in connection to the protests have been subject to torture, enforced disappearance and other forms of ill-treatment.**<sup>573</sup> There are reported cases where detainees have been held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance and in incommunicado detention.<sup>574</sup> Several detainees have reportedly died in custody after being tortured by the authorities.<sup>575</sup> Detainees, including juveniles, have been subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment to extract confessions.<sup>576</sup> Some detainees are being denied medical treatment, including for injuries caused by security forces.<sup>577</sup> During the protests, authorities raided hospitals and medical centres across the country, arresting injured protestors, placing them in detention centres and denying them medical care.<sup>578</sup>

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January 2020, p.2 20200228105335; 'Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown', Human Rights Watch, 25 February 2020, 20200226112021

<sup>570</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.3-4, 20200228105335; 'Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown', Human Rights Watch, 25 February 2020, 20200226112021

<sup>571</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>572</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>573</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.9-10, 20200903090643; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.2, 20200228105335; 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854

<sup>574</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.8-9, 20200903090643; 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.2, 20200228105335;

<sup>575</sup> 2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.5, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>576</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.9, 20200903090643; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.2 20200228105335; 'Detained Protestors in Iran: Beaten, Tortured, Forced to "Confess"', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 10 February 2020, 20200211123555; 'Torture and Coercion: Fresh Information Surfaces on the Nightmarish Trial of Three Young Protesters', Iran Wire, 25 June 2020, 20200630085946

<sup>577</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.10 20200903090643; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.2, 20200228105335; 'Medical care denied to wounded prisoners arrested in November 2019', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 17 February 2020, 20200218154535

<sup>578</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.17-18, 20200903090643; 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854

**In the lead up to the one-year anniversary of the protests, the police harassed family members of the victims and summoned large numbers of people for questioning.** The authorities pressured the families of some of those killed during the protests to remain silent and warned them not to hold public memorials.<sup>579</sup> In an effort to suppress dissent, the authorities also summonsed large numbers of people for questioning for alleged national security offences, including relatives of those killed in the November 2019 protests.<sup>580</sup> Additional security forces were also deployed across Iran.<sup>581</sup> The government has still not conducted an independent and transparent investigation into the use of excessive and lethal force during the protests.<sup>582</sup> Throughout 2021, family members who protest the killing of their relatives during the November 2019 protests continue to experience harassment and some have been arrested.<sup>583</sup>

## January 2020 protests

**Low-level protests occurred over several days in January 2020.** On 3 January 2020, US forces assassinated Qasem Soleimani, the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' Quds Force in Baghdad. This sparked anti-US protests in Iran and millions of people attended Soleimani's funeral procession.<sup>584</sup> On 8 January 2020, Iranian armed forces shot down a Ukrainian commercial passenger flight shortly after its departure from Tehran, killing all 176 people on board.<sup>585</sup> The Iranian government denied any involvement for several days, before admitting amongst mounting pressure that it was responsible for accidentally targeting the airplane.<sup>586</sup> The government's refusal to accept responsibility shifted public sentiment enormously, triggering protests in multiple cities across Iran.<sup>587</sup> Unlike the November 2019 protests which involved the poor and working class, these protests were concentrated largely (but not exclusively) in several universities and were primarily undertaken by students and middle-class Iranians.<sup>588</sup> Many of the protests and vigils occurred at universities where students gathered to remember graduates who died aboard the Ukrainian flight.<sup>589</sup> As occurred during the November 2019 protests, anti-regime slogans spread rapidly as protests took on an overtly political tone.<sup>590</sup>

**Police cracked down on the protests.** The government's response does not appear to have been as violent as occurred during the November 2019 protests. There does not appear to have been any

<sup>579</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'One Year After Iran's Deadly Crackdown, Victims' Families Face Harassment', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 22 November 2020, 20201123132727; 'Families of Slain November 2019 Protesters Commemorate Them Despite State Threats', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 17 November 2020, 20201120132357; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – November 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 29 November 2020, 20201130143547

<sup>580</sup> 'Iran Suppresses Dissent Ahead of November 2019 Protests Anniversary', Voice of America (VOA), 11 November 2020, 20201123132223

<sup>581</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – November 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 29 November 2020, 20201130143547

<sup>582</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.5, 20210216093019

<sup>583</sup> 'Families of Victims of November Protests in Iran Arrested', Iran International, 8 April 2021, 20210820114833;

'Mothers of slain protestors detained in Tehran in protests', Iran News Wire, 31 July 2021, 20210820115249

<sup>584</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.3, 20200204090708

<sup>585</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708

<sup>586</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708

<sup>587</sup> 'Fresh Wave of Protests Starting From Universities Spread To Several Cities In Iran', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 12 January 2020, 20200113083423

<sup>588</sup> 'A Public Relations Disaster Overtakes Iran', Foreign Policy, 12 January 2020, 20200423121634; 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.43, 20200601125122

<sup>589</sup> 'Fresh Wave of Protests Starting From Universities Spread To Several Cities In Iran', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 12 January 2020, 20200113083423; 'Iran Protests Rage Over Downed Jet, as Lawmakers Demand Accountability', The New York Times, 13 January 2020, 20200423121951

<sup>590</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.5, 20200204090708

deaths caused; however, the internet blackout and lack of official information mean this cannot be confirmed.<sup>591</sup> Nevertheless, security forces used excessive force and fired pellets, rubber bullets, tear gas and pepper spray to disperse peaceful protestors.<sup>592</sup> A woman was reportedly shot in the leg by security forces.<sup>593</sup> Other protestors were beaten by the security forces, including by members of the *basij* and plain clothed policemen.<sup>594</sup> Students protesting at universities across the country were assaulted by members of the *basij*.<sup>595</sup> Some medical clinics and hospitals in Tehran refused to treat injured protestors, telling them that if security and intelligence forces found them at the hospital they will be arrested.<sup>596</sup> Several high-profile Iranian figures, including some hard-line conservatives, publically condemned the crackdown.<sup>597</sup> A group of 30 artists, filmmakers and actors issued a joint statement condemning the downing of the Ukrainian flight and the crackdown on protestors.<sup>598</sup>

**Protestors were arbitrarily arrested.** There are no reliable statistics available on the number of people arrested.<sup>599</sup> The judiciary reports 30 people were arrested, some of whom were reportedly released.<sup>600</sup> The Center for Human Rights in Iran reports that this is a 'gross underestimate' with unconfirmed reports indicating at least 500 people were arrested.<sup>601</sup> Protestors, including university students and student activists, were arbitrarily arrested in connection with the demonstrations across Iran.<sup>602</sup> Students were assaulted and arrested at universities in Tehran and other Iranian cities.<sup>603</sup> In Tehran, plain clothed members of the *basij* reportedly started conversations with locals about the Ukrainian flight, and arrested people who started speaking to them about it.<sup>604</sup> There is little public information about prosecutions or convictions arising from the arrests.<sup>605</sup> Most of those detained have likely been released.<sup>606</sup> At least 20 people have been prosecuted.<sup>607</sup> Several protestors have received lengthy prison sentences and lashes on charges including 'propaganda against the state' and

<sup>591</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.44, 20200601125122

<sup>592</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.44, 20200601125122; 'Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests', Amnesty International, 15 January 2020, 20200117095726; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>593</sup> 'Students Assaulted, Arrested in State Crackdown on University Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 15 January 2020, 20200423122148

<sup>594</sup> 'Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests', Amnesty International, 15 January 2020, 20200117095726; 'Students Assaulted, Arrested in State Crackdown on University Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 15 January 2020, 20200423122148

<sup>595</sup> 'Students Assaulted, Arrested in State Crackdown on University Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 15 January 2020, 20200423122148

<sup>596</sup> 'Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests', Amnesty International, 15 January 2020, 20200117095726

<sup>597</sup> 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.5, 20200204090708

<sup>598</sup> 'Iran Protests Rage Over Downed Jet, as Lawmakers Demand Accountability', The New York Times, 13 January 2020, 20200423121951

<sup>599</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report – January 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 4 February 2020, 20200205131850; 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.45, 20200601125122

<sup>600</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.40, 20200414083132

<sup>601</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.45, 20200601125122

<sup>602</sup> 'Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests', Amnesty International, 15 January 2020, 20200117095726; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report – January 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 4 February 2020, 20200205131850

<sup>603</sup> 'Students Assaulted, Arrested in State Crackdown on University Protests', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 15 January 2020, 20200423122148

<sup>604</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report – January 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 4 February 2020, 20200205131850

<sup>605</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.51, 20200601125122

<sup>606</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.51, 20200601125122

<sup>607</sup> 'World Report 2021. Events of 2020', Human Rights Watch (HRW), 13 January 2021, p.337, 20210114072851

'disturbing the order.'<sup>608</sup> Some family members of student protestors were threatened by the authorities.<sup>609</sup>

## February 2020 Parliamentary elections

**Parliamentary (*Majlis*) elections in February 2020 were marked by historically low voter participation; however, no major security incidents or protests occurred.** Voter turnout was the lowest since the 1979 revolution, at 42 per cent (26 per cent in Tehran).<sup>610</sup> Only candidates qualified by the Guardian Council<sup>611</sup> can run. In the lead up to the election, the Guardian Council disqualified large numbers of candidates, primarily reformists and moderates including sitting MPs. As a result, there were no serious reformist or moderate contenders and most candidates were conservatives.<sup>612</sup> Widespread discontent with the Iranian political system, the lack of non-conservative candidate options and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic were behind the low turnout.<sup>613</sup> The principlists, (which includes hard-line and moderate conservatives) were the clear winners of the election, securing at least 225 of the 290 available parliamentary seats.<sup>614</sup> Rival reformist candidates won fewer than 20 seats.<sup>615</sup> Iranian authorities harassed, intimidated and arrested journalists prior to the election.<sup>616</sup>

## June 2021 Presidential Elections

Presidential elections were held on 18 June 2021 and were won by Ebrahim Raisi, the incumbent chief justice.<sup>617</sup> Voter turnout was at a record low, at 48.8 per cent reportedly due to widespread discontent at the highly restricted choice of candidates and concerns around the deteriorating economy and crackdowns on anti-establishment protests.<sup>618</sup> The number of invalid ballots also tripled from 1.2 million in 2017 to 3.7 million in 2021, likely indicating a large protest vote.<sup>619</sup> The election was not marked by widespread protests. As has occurred in previous elections, popular moderates and

<sup>608</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report, May 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 June 2020, 20200602081119; 'Prison, Flogging for Protesters Who Gathered to Commemorate Victims of Plane Crash', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 21 May 2020, 20200525093345; 'Eight Years in Prison for Commemorating Ukrainian Airlines Passengers', Iran Wire, 26 June 2020, 20200630085845

<sup>609</sup> 'Gunning them down: State violence against protesters in Iran', Center for Human Rights in Iran, 27 May 2020, p.46, 20200601125122

<sup>610</sup> 'Parliamentary Elections in Iran, Lowest Turnout since the 1979 Revolution', Mahtab Divsalar, Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 25 February 2020, 20200226122337; 'Factbox: The outcome of Iran's 2020 parliamentary elections', Arash Azizi, Atlantic Council, 26 February 2020, 20200227085215

<sup>611</sup> The Guardian Council is a body of six clerics who are directly appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists appointed indirectly by him. See: 'Factbox: The outcome of Iran's 2020 parliamentary elections', Arash Azizi, Atlantic Council, 26 February 2020, 20200227085215; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.19, 20200414083132

<sup>612</sup> 'Factbox: The outcome of Iran's 2020 parliamentary elections', Arash Azizi, Atlantic Council, 26 February 2020, 20200227085215; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.20, 20200414083132

<sup>613</sup> 'Parliamentary Elections in Iran, Lowest Turnout since the 1979 Revolution', Mahtab Divsalar, Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 25 February 2020, 20200226122337; 'Factbox: The outcome of Iran's 2020 parliamentary elections', Arash Azizi, Atlantic Council, 26 February 2020, 20200227085215; 'Iran's Parliamentary Elections: Winners And Losers', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 23 February 2020, 20200224091450; 'Iran election results indicate continuing hardline approach to negotiations with the US, no domestic policy change', Jane's Intelligence Review, 25 February 2020, 20200227164618

<sup>614</sup> 'Iran election results indicate continuing hardline approach to negotiations with the US, no domestic policy change', Jane's Intelligence Review, 25 February 2020, 20200227164618

<sup>615</sup> 'Iran election results indicate continuing hardline approach to negotiations with the US, no domestic policy change', Jane's Intelligence Review, 25 February 2020, 20200227164618

<sup>616</sup> 'Iran harasses, intimidates journalists ahead of parliamentary elections', Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), New York, 20 February 2020, 20200221110134

<sup>617</sup> '[Engaging Iran Remains Vital after Presidential Election](#)', International Crisis Group (ICG), 21 June 2021, 20210622101950

<sup>618</sup> '[Voters Send A Message To Iran's Leaders After Dismal Turnout For Presidential Election](#)', Radio Free Europe, 22 June 2021, 20210907100737

<sup>619</sup> '[Khamenei protege wins Iran election amid low turnout](#)', Parisa Hafezi, Reuters, 20 June 2021, 20210621131910; '[Engaging Iran Remains Vital after Presidential Election](#)', International Crisis Group (ICG), 21 June 2021, 20210622101950

conservatives were barred by the Guardian Council from standing.<sup>620</sup> Of the 592 candidates who nominated for the election, the Guardian Council approved seven.<sup>621</sup> President Raisi is a protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and has a poor human rights record. His role as a prosecutor in the mass executions of political dissidents in 1988 and his crackdown on protestors over the last few years whilst serving as chief justice, saw him placed on the US sanctions list in 2019.<sup>622</sup> All but one of the most senior officials in Iran's new regime are subject to US and international sanctions.<sup>623</sup> President Raisi served as deputy chief justice during the Green Movement in 2009 and played a key role in the crackdown against the movement, championing for the arrest, torture and execution of protestors.<sup>624</sup> Hardline conservatives now control all branches of government and are expected to pursue a harder line in foreign and domestic policies.<sup>625</sup> President Raisi has stated his government's policies will be fully in line with the Supreme Leader's guidelines.<sup>626</sup>

## Expression of dissent via social media

**Iran censors and monitors the Internet.** Iran's constitution and legal framework do not protect freedom of expression and press freedom online.<sup>627</sup> Iran improved and widened its cyber intelligence capabilities after the 2009 Green Movement protests.<sup>628</sup> As such, significant restrictions on content have been in place since 2009.<sup>629</sup> The *basij*, the IRGC and the police all have cyber intelligence wings.<sup>630</sup> Iran increases its monitoring in the lead up to significant events.<sup>631</sup> Although Iran does not have the technical ability to monitor all Iranian online activities at all times (and does not arrest all or most transgressors), authorities have used highly-publicised arrests and occasional statements to exaggerate its capabilities.<sup>632</sup> This has caused many Iranians to take extra precautions when using the Internet, and has perpetuated suspicion over the government's intentions and abilities.<sup>633</sup> Iran

<sup>620</sup> ['Khamenei protege wins Iran election amid low turnout'](#), Parisa Hafezi, Reuters, 20 June 2021, 20210621131910

<sup>621</sup> ['Engaging Iran Remains Vital after Presidential Election'](#), International Crisis Group (ICG), 21 June 2021, 20210622101950

<sup>622</sup> ['Engaging Iran Remains Vital after Presidential Election'](#), International Crisis Group (ICG), 21 June 2021, 20210622101950

<sup>623</sup> ['All But One of Iran's Top Leaders are Under Sanctions'](#), Iran Wire, 06 July 2021, 20210709093852

<sup>624</sup> ['Raisi: Record on Crackdown & Human Rights'](#), United States Institute of Peace, 20 July 2021, 20210907095619; ['Who is Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's Next President?'](#), Al Jazeera, 19 June 2021, 20210907100211

<sup>625</sup> ['A New President Takes Office in Iran, Solidifying Hard-Line Control'](#), The New York Times, 5 August 2021, 20210820120722

<sup>626</sup> ['Iran's new hardline president defiant in face of sanctions and security concerns'](#), Financial Times, 3 August 2021, 20210820120307

<sup>627</sup> ['Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran'](#), Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>628</sup> ['Iran and the Soft War for Internet Dominance'](#), Black Hat (United States), August 2016, CIS38A80123377; ['How Internet censorship protects Iranian businesses'](#), Al Monitor (United States), 8 November 2015, CXBD6A0DE15508; ['Revolution Decoded: Iran's Digital Landscape'](#), Small Media (United Kingdom), 23 January 2015, p. 27, CISEC96CF1234; ['Tightening the Net, Part 2: The soft war and cyber tactics in Iran'](#), Article 19 (United Kingdom), 3 February 2017, pp. 6, 13, 16, CISED50AD446

<sup>629</sup> ['Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran'](#), Freedom House, 14 October 2020, p.10, 20201016084814

<sup>630</sup> ['Security Agencies and the Prosecution of Online Activists'](#), International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 November 2014, CX1B9ECAB9307; ['An Iranian Cyber Army'](#) (thought to be an IRGC group) has targeted private companies, foreign governments, domestic opposition and international critics. ['Iran and the Soft War for Internet Dominance'](#), Black Hat (United States), 1 August 2016, p. 1, CIS38A80123377

<sup>631</sup> ['Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran'](#), Freedom House, 14 October 2020, p.2 & pp.6-7, 20201016084814; ['Iran and the Soft War for Internet Dominance'](#), Black Hat (United States), 1 August 2016, p. 4, CIS38A80123377; ['MPs Demand Answers from Rouhani on Increasing Arrests Ahead of Elections'](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 23 March 2017, CXC9040664488; ['Iran: Arrests and Intimidation of Telegram Administrators and Journalists Ahead of the Elections'](#), Article 19 (United Kingdom), 17 March 2017, CXC9040664870

<sup>632</sup> ['The State of Surveillance in Iran's Cyberspace'](#), Article 19 (United States), 14 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE6390; ['Country Policy and Information Note—Iran: Journalists and Internet-based media'](#), UK Home Office, 25 October 2016, p. 8, OGD7C848D83; ['Senior Security Official Threatens Social Media Users'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 25 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA34220; ['Fictitious Profiles and WebRTC's privacy leaks used to identify Iranian activists'](#), Iran Threats, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16849

<sup>633</sup> ['Fictitious Profiles and WebRTC's privacy leaks used to identify Iranian activists'](#), Iran Threats, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16849; ['The State of Surveillance in Iran's Cyberspace'](#), Article 19 (United Kingdom), 14 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE6390

employs a range of monitoring techniques, both passive<sup>634</sup> and intrusive.<sup>635</sup> Information (such as names of site administrators) is also discovered through interrogation of suspects<sup>636</sup> or through sending 'phishing' emails from the accounts of arrested individuals.<sup>637</sup> By law, all Iranian internet service providers must provide their customers' information and online activities to authorities.<sup>638</sup> Likewise, internet cafes log personal information and browsing activity.<sup>639</sup> In August 2017, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace released its new policy on social media regulation, which critics argue is designed to consolidate data generated by social media platforms, thereby aiding Iran's intelligence efforts.<sup>640</sup> As at August 2021, a bill designed to give the IRGC near total control of the internet, impose jail terms for those who use virtual private networks (VPNs) and further restrict access to global providers such as Google, remains under review by an internal parliamentary committee.<sup>641</sup> Critics fear the new law will further restrict internet freedoms in Iran.<sup>642</sup>

**The use of VPNs, to sidestep censorship and monitoring activities, is widespread but not foolproof.**<sup>643</sup> Although selling or promoting the use of VPNs in Iran is illegal, it appears that using them currently is not (see above for proposed legislative changes).<sup>644</sup> In April 2020, Iran announced

<sup>634</sup> These include infiltrating social media groups and finding publicly available data. 'Tightening the Net, Part 2: The soft war and cyber tactics in Iran', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 3 February 2017, pp. 22, 25, CISED50AD446; 'Computer Crimes in Iran: Risky Online Behaviour', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 2 July 2015, p. 22, CISEC96CF12755; 'Iranian Internet Infrastructure and Policy Report—September–October 2013', Small Media (United Kingdom), 22 November 2013, p. 3, CIS36DE0BB1782

<sup>635</sup> These include data mining techniques to find potential troublemakers, malware campaigns, and hacking emails, other online communications and phones. 'Internet Cut-Off During Recent Unrest in Iran Reveals Tehran's New Cyber Capabilities', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 10 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA339; 'Tightening the Net, Part 2: The soft war and cyber tactics in Iran', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 3 February 2017, pp. 22–26, 36, CISED50AD446; 'Iran and the Soft War for Internet Dominance', Black Hat (United States), August 2016, CIS38A80123377; 'IRN104730.E: Iran: Treatment of anti-government activists by authorities, including those returning to Iran from abroad; overseas monitoring capabilities of the government (2012-2013)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 20 January 2014, CIS27648; 'How Internet censorship protects Iranian businesses', Al Monitor (United States), 8 November 2015, CXBD6A0DE15508; 'Revolution Decoded: Iran's Digital Landscape', Small Media (United Kingdom), 23 January 2015, p. 27, CISEC96CF1234. Recent example: 'Iranian Hackers are Hard at Work', IranWire, 25 July 2019, 20190802160827; 'Iranian State Hackers Launched Attacks on Same Day Supreme Leader Issued Fatwa Forbidding Privacy Violations', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 13 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA25515

<sup>636</sup> 'Tightening the Net, Part 2: The soft war and cyber tactics in Iran', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 3 February 2017, p. 22, CISED50AD446

<sup>637</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2017 – Iran', Freedom House (United States), 14 November 2017, p. 13, NG2A465F5221; 'Hackers With Ties to Security Agencies Launch Phishing Attacks on Well Known Iranians and Dual Nationals', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 4 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA26593

<sup>638</sup> 'Iranians Looking Abroad to Escape State-Controlled Internet', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 14 March 2016, CX6A26A6E2152

<sup>639</sup> 'Iranians Looking Abroad to Escape State-Controlled Internet', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 14 March 2016, CX6A26A6E2152; 'Country Policy and Information Note—Iran: Journalists and Internet-based media', UK Home Office, 25 October 2016, p. 8, OGD7C848D83

<sup>640</sup> 'Tightening the Net: A new cabinet and new attempts at control', Article 19 (United Kingdom), September 2017, pp. 8–9, CISED50AD5707

<sup>641</sup> ['Total Control Over Internet Use in Iran Sought by Security Agencies with New Legislation'](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 30 July 2021, 20210802115008

<sup>642</sup> ['Total Control Over Internet Use in Iran Sought by Security Agencies with New Legislation'](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 30 July 2021, 20210802115008;

['Iranians Fear Turning Into Another 'North Korea' If Draconian Internet Censorship Bill Passes'](#), Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 01 August 2021, 20210803101116

<sup>643</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, p.8, 20201016084814; 'Fictitious Profiles and WebRTC's privacy leaks used to identify Iranian activists', Iran Threats, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16849; 'Iran: Capacity and Methods of Authorities to Monitor Online Activities and Religious Activities of Iranians Living Abroad', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, 12 June 2017, p. 9, CISED50AD4644; 'How Millions of Iranians Are Evading the Internet Censors', Wall Street Journal (United States), 9 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA291. For details on the machinations of filtering Telegram (and, by extension), other social media apps. 'Iran's ban on the widely used Telegram messaging app has revealed a new state tactic for blocking access to or "filtering"', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 12 May 2018, CXBB8A1DA27119

<sup>644</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'The Minister is Wrong: Using Circumvention Tools to Access Censored Websites in Iran is Legal', Center for Human Rights in

plans to create a national VPN, which would allow the government to vet and approve who can use VPNs.<sup>645</sup> Iran also blocks objectionable content from outside the country<sup>646</sup> and purposefully slows down Internet speeds ahead of politically-sensitive events.<sup>647</sup> The government shut down the internet for a week during the November 2019 protests, the longest internet outage in Iran's history (see 'November 2019 protests').<sup>648</sup>

**Efforts to ban the use of social media platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook have failed.**<sup>649</sup> On May 2018, Iran banned Telegram because it refused to host the information of its Iranian users in servers in Iran (as this would allow authorities to access the information).<sup>650</sup> Despite the ban, large numbers of Iranians continue to use Telegram, and other blocked social media platforms, by using a VPN.<sup>651</sup> There are no data protection laws in Iran.<sup>652</sup> In April 2020, data from 42 million Iranian Telegram accounts was leaked online. Some of the data related to unofficial Telegram apps with possible connections to the government.<sup>653</sup> The use of Instagram is widespread and growing.<sup>654</sup> Instagram and Telegram are popular communication tools for activists.<sup>655</sup> Despite the risks, many Iranians express dissent on social media.<sup>656</sup>

**Social media is monitored in Iran, although the authorities do not comprehensively monitor Iranians' online activities; whether a person receives adverse attention from the authorities**

Iran (United States), 20 September 2017, CXC90406614398; 'Freedom on the Net 2017 – Iran', Freedom House (United States), 14 November 2017, p. 14, NG2A465F5221

<sup>645</sup> 'By Nationalizing VPNs Iran Takes Another Step Toward the North Korean Model', Iran Wire, 16 April 2020, 20200416110611

<sup>646</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, p.10, 20201016084814; 'Iran Proposes Bill For Tighter Online Censorship, 'Military Control' Of Internet', Radio Free Europe, 29 August 2020, 20201102115338; 'Internet Cut-Off During Recent Unrest in Iran Reveals Tehran's New Cyber Capabilities', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 10 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA339; 'Iran's Rouhani Government Has Filtered Seven Million Websites in First Term', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 9 June 2017, CXC9040669095. Iran has reportedly blocked or filtered almost a quarter of all websites worldwide. 'Tightening the Net, Part 2: The soft war and cyber tactics in Iran', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 3 February 2017, pp. 16, 19, CISED50AD446.

<sup>647</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708; 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'Tightening the Net, Part 2: The soft war and cyber tactics in Iran', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 3 February 2017, p. 16, CISED50AD446; 'Country Policy and Information Note—Iran: Journalists and Internet-based media', UK Home Office, 25 October 2016, p. 12, OGD7C848D83. 'Iran's Severely Disrupted Internet During Protests: "Websites Hardly Open"', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 2 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA67. Before the 2017–2018 protests, such throttling of Internet speeds reportedly last took place in 2013. 'Freedom on the Net 2017 – Iran', Freedom House (United States), 14 November 2017, p. 5, NG2A465F5221; 'Why Did Internet Access Speeds Slow to a Crawl in Iran?', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 10 July 2019, 20190718092344

<sup>648</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.44, 20200414083132; 'Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement', Newlee, D et al, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2020, p.2, 20200204090708

<sup>649</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.44, 20200414083132; 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>650</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'Freedom on the Net 2019 - Iran', Freedom House, 05 November 2019, 20191106110755; 'In a Desperate Move to Squash Internet Freedom, Iran Blocks Telegram', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 30 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26388; 'Iran's judiciary banned the Popular Telegram Messaging App', Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 30 April 2018, CXBB8A1DA26438

<sup>651</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.44, 20200414083132

<sup>652</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>653</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>654</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.44, 20200414083132

<sup>655</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>656</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'Freedom in the World 2019 – Iran', Freedom House, 4 March 2020, 20200306093523; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.38, 20200414083132

**depends on their profile and role on the internet.**<sup>657</sup> While this monitoring may extend to the social media activities of Iranians abroad, DFAT assesses that the authorities have 'little interest' in prosecuting failed asylum seekers for anti-government social media comments made whilst overseas.<sup>658</sup> Censorship decisions are often arbitrary, lack transparency and highly politicised.<sup>659</sup> Individuals who post content openly critical of the regime, its institutions or policies or who are deemed to be pushing moral boundaries may attract adverse attention from the authorities, including individuals based abroad.<sup>660</sup> Between June 2020 and January 2021, more than 57 people were arrested and detained for online activities and postings on Instagram, Telegram and other social media platforms for 'insulting the Prophet', 'connection with opposition groups' and 'insulting the police.'<sup>661</sup> Individuals with a public profile who are politically active, advocate for human rights issues, have connections to foreigners and are otherwise perceived as threats to the regime are more likely to have their social media monitored, and therefore face a higher risk of arrest and harassment, than other Iranians.<sup>662</sup> Iranian authorities have arrested Telegram group administrators to force them to remove content or delete their channels from the app.<sup>663</sup> Instagram users with large followings have been intimidated and detained, and have their accounts taken over by the authorities.<sup>664</sup> This includes women who post content breaching Iran's Islamic dress code.<sup>665</sup> In October 2018, Iranian authorities announced nearly 75,000 people had been arrested for online activities, including criticism of the government.<sup>666</sup> It appears Iran originally focused on targeting political opposition and human rights activists, but later expanded this to 'immoral' internet users, artists, and activists from minority groups.<sup>667</sup> Journalists and citizens have been arrested for their social media posts about the COVID-19 pandemic for 'spreading false rumours'.<sup>668</sup> Treatment of those arrested in recent years has reportedly included torture<sup>669</sup>, flogging<sup>670</sup>, multiple years in prison<sup>671</sup>, prosecution for publishing

<sup>657</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.44-56, 20200414083132

<sup>658</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>659</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>660</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.44, 20200414083132

<sup>661</sup> '[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.12, 20210624120211

<sup>662</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.45, 20200414083132

<sup>663</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>664</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.45, 20200414083132

<sup>665</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.45, 20200414083132; 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>666</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>667</sup> 'Fictitious Profiles and WebRTC's privacy leaks used to identify Iranian activists', Iran Threats, 11 November 2016, CX6A26A6E16849; 'Iran struggles to mold 'revolutionary youth'', Al Monitor, 25 July 2019, 20190730084312

<sup>668</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814

<sup>669</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2017 – Iran', Freedom House (United States), 14 November 2017, p. 13, NG2A465F5221; 'Country Policy and Information Note—Iran: Journalists and Internet-based media', UK Home Office, 25 October 2016, p. 4, OGD7C848D83

<sup>670</sup> '[Iran's Punishment for Journalists: Flogging](#)', Iran Wire, 27 May 2021, 20210527101400;

'Press freedom violations recounted in real time (January-December 2016)', Reporters sans Frontieres (France), 6 January 2017, CXC904066693

<sup>671</sup> 'Iran: Telegram admins sentenced to prison', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 22 August 2017, CXC90406612560; 'Iran Tightens Its Grasp on Telegram Use', Huffington Post (United States), 6 June 2017, CXC9040669094; 'Three Young Iranian Men to Serve 12 Years in Prison For 'Insulting' Social Media Posts', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 April 2017, CXC9040666693; 'Press freedom violations recounted in real time (January-December 2016)', Reporters sans Frontieres (France), 6 January 2017, CXC904066693; 'Security Agencies and the Prosecution of Online Activists', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 November 2014, CX1B9ECAB9307

propaganda<sup>672</sup>, threatening national security<sup>673</sup> and blasphemy<sup>674</sup>, being disappeared<sup>675</sup>, or merely summoned for questioning and released without charge.<sup>676</sup> In October 2018, a blogger was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment.<sup>677</sup> There has been one case (in November 2012) of the death in custody (allegedly as a result of torture) of a blogger<sup>678</sup> and, in January 2017, a 21-year-old was sentenced to death for 'insulting the prophet' on Facebook.<sup>679</sup> Another man, sentenced to death for the same reason in August 2014 had his sentence reduced in October 2017.<sup>680</sup> In July 2018, a man accused of selling subscriptions to an online television provider (which includes pornographic channels) was sentenced to death.<sup>681</sup> Iranians have been subject to adverse treatment, including arrests and imprisonment, following their return to Iran for their online activities whilst abroad, particularly those involving the expression of anti-regime sentiment.<sup>682</sup>

## Evading military service

**The consequences of evading military service is usually an extension of that service upon return to Iran.** Iran maintains mandatory conscription for all males aged between 18 and 49.<sup>683</sup> Men must report to the military within one month of the start of the Iranian new year (i.e. the spring

<sup>672</sup> 'Freedom on the Net 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 14 October 2020, 20201016084814; 'Press freedom violations recounted in real time (January-December 2016)', Reporters sans Frontieres (France), 6 January 2017, CXC90406693; 'Security Agencies and the Prosecution of Online Activists', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 November 2014, CX1B9ECAB9307

<sup>673</sup> 'Situation of human rights in Iran Report of the Secretary-General', United Nations General Assembly, 17 January 2020, p.8, 20200228105335; 'Iran Tightens Its Grasp on Telegram Use', Huffington Post (United States), 6 June 2017, CXC9040669094; 'Three Young Iranian Men to Serve 12 Years in Prison For 'Insulting' Social Media Posts', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 April 2017, CXC9040666693; 'Press freedom violations recounted in real time (January-December 2016)', Reporters sans Frontieres (France), 6 January 2017, CXC90406693; 'Security Agencies and the Prosecution of Online Activists', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 November 2014, CX1B9ECAB9307

<sup>674</sup> 'Iran: Cyber Police arrests man for blasphemy', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 26 July 2017, CXC90406611072; 'Iran Tightens Its Grasp on Telegram Use', Huffington Post (United States), 6 June 2017, CXC9040669094; 'Three Young Iranian Men to Serve 12 Years in Prison For 'Insulting' Social Media Posts', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 April 2017, CXC9040666693

<sup>675</sup> 'Security Agencies and the Prosecution of Online Activists', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 November 2014, CX1B9ECAB9307

<sup>676</sup> 'Tightening the Net: Online freedoms in Iran following Rouhani's reelection', Article 19 (United Kingdom), 17 July 2017, p. 10, CISED50AD4882; 'Iran rounds up 450 social media users for "immoral activities"', Agence France Presse (France), 23 August 2016, CX6A26A6E8281

<sup>677</sup> 'Political prisoner Hamidreza Amini Issued Long Prison Sentence', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 3 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36344

<sup>678</sup> 'Restrictions on Freedom of Expression in the Islamic Republic of Iran', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, March 2016, p. 34, CIS38A8012530; 'Iran: Politics, Human Rights, and U.S. Policy', Katzman, K, United States Congressional Research Service 25 October 2016, p. 17, CIS38A80122744; 'Iran Policeman Gets 3 Years Over Death of Blogger', Dareini, A, Associated Press, (United States), 7 August 2014, CX324201

'Press freedom violations recounted in real time (January-December 2016)', Reporters sans Frontieres (France), 6 January 2017, CXC90406693

<sup>679</sup> 'Young Man Facing Death for Insulting Islam Online Tricked into Signing Confession', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 24 March 2017, CXC90406613982

<sup>680</sup> 'Iran drops death sentence in Prophet Mohammed insult case', Agence France Presse (France), 18 October 2017, CXC90406615866

<sup>681</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor – Monthly Report, July 2018', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 7 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33119; 'Man Sentenced to Death in Iran For "Corruption" After Selling Access Cards for Satellite TV', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 16 July 2018, CXBB8A1DA33273

<sup>682</sup> 'The State of Surveillance in Iran's Cyberspace', Shams, A, Article 19 (United Kingdom), 14 May 2015, CXBD6A0DE6390; 'Freedom on the Net 2014 – Iran', Freedom House (United States), 2 December 2014, p. 12, CIS2F827D91709; 'Iran is world's leading jailer of female journalists and netizens', Reporters Without Borders (France), 28 July 2014, CX323916. Recent example: 'Journalists Imprisoned in 2017 - Saeed Pourheydar', Committee to Protect Journalists (United States), 31 December 2017, CXC90406620237. For more information, see 'Failed asylum seekers and returnees', below.

<sup>683</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Military service', UK Home Office, 6 April 2020, p.7, 20200407123556; 'Shorter Conscription for PhD Holders', Financial Tribune (Iran), 31 December 2015, CXBD6A0DE21288

equinox, usually 21 or 22 March) in which they turn 18.<sup>684</sup> Active duty can last up to 24 months.<sup>685</sup> There is no alternative to military service and conscientious objection is not recognised.<sup>686</sup> Exemptions and/or deferrals are permitted for some physical or mental health reasons, as well as some other reasons (some *but not all* examples: outstanding scholastic abilities; being the only male under 65 in the family; being at university).<sup>687</sup> Those exempted from duty are given exemption cards by the General Conscription Department of the Police Force.<sup>688</sup> In the past, it was possible to legally purchase an exemption by paying an absence fine; however, this policy was scrapped in 2019.<sup>689</sup>

Although punishments are somewhat arbitrary, evasion or desertion of duty by leaving the country usually results in extra time having to be served upon return if the individual is under 40, and a fine (and sometimes imprisonment) if he is over 40.<sup>690</sup> For those over the age of 40, a fine is the most common punishment.<sup>691</sup> Draft evaders may lose social benefits and civil rights including access to drivers licences, passports, the right to start a business, higher education and they may be prohibited from leaving the country without special permission.<sup>692</sup>

## State protection

### Police and security forces

**Corruption and impunity are ongoing problems in Iranian security forces.** The Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran (LEF, *nirou-ye entezami-ye jomhuri-ye eslami-ye iran*, NAJA) is comprised of several branches, such as the Security Police, Border Police and Anti-Terror Police.<sup>693</sup>

<sup>684</sup> 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 210, CISEC96CF12768

<sup>685</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Military service', UK Home Office, 6 April 2020, p.7, 20200407123556

<sup>686</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Military service', UK Home Office, 6 April 2020, p.7, 20200407123556

<sup>687</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Military service', UK Home Office, 6 April 2020, pp.15-17, 20200407123556; 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, 1 July 2015, pp. 211–212, CISEC96CF12768; 'Denied identity : human rights abuses against Iran's LGBT community', Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, November 2013, p. 34, CIS26583; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.56, 20200414083132

<sup>688</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Military service', UK Home Office, 6 April 2020, p.18, 20200407123556; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.56, 20200414083132

<sup>689</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.56, 20200414083132

<sup>690</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.56, 20200414083132; 'Country Policy and Information Note: Iran: Military service', UK Home Office, 6 April 2020, p.10, 20200407123556

<sup>691</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.56, 20200414083132

<sup>692</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.56, 20200414083132

<sup>693</sup> 'Iran's Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire', Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), 5 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA143; 'A Country Study: Iran', US Library of Congress, 2008, p. 278, 21068; 'The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps', RAND Corporation, 8 January 2009, p.10, 16959; 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, pp. 74–84, CISEC96CF12768

The LEF also has a morality control department, which is responsible for enforcing Islamic rules and standards, a role it shares with the *basij*.<sup>694</sup> Corruption and impunity are ongoing problems.<sup>695</sup>

**Improper behaviour by a law enforcement officer rarely results in prosecution.** The attorney-general is responsible for monitoring the proper enforcement of law, but is mostly ineffective in this regard.<sup>696</sup> Impunity is a problem across all sections of the security forces, who frequently commit numerous human rights abuses.<sup>697</sup> It is unlikely that a complaint from a member of the public against a member of the security forces would result in a prosecution.<sup>698</sup>

**The *basij* works in concert with the LEF to suppress opposition and civil rights movements using violence and intimidation.** The *basij* ('Organisation for the Mobilisation of the Oppressed'; 'sazeman-e *basij-e mostazafan*') is a volunteer militia that operates across the country with branches in every Iranian city and town<sup>699</sup> and is especially well organised in Tehran.<sup>700</sup> It is under the authority of the Revolutionary Guards, though the commander of the *basij* answers to the Supreme Leader.<sup>701</sup> Not all *basij* are uniformed, often making their presence on the streets covert.<sup>702</sup> The *basij* uses violence and arrests to intimidate people who are in opposition to the Supreme Leader<sup>703</sup> or who the *basij* perceives to be in opposition to the revolution.<sup>704</sup> The LEF has primary responsibility to quell protests, but *basij* members will assist where necessary.<sup>705</sup> The *basij* were deployed during the

<sup>694</sup> "Morality Police to Educate Women with Bad Hejab", IranWire, 8 December 2014, CX1B9ECAB10513; 'Police in Iran not obliged to enforce Islamic Rules?', Karimov, F and Niayesh, U, Trend News Agency (Azerbaijan), 25 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE5286; 'When Duty Calls, Do Iranian Police Enforce Islam?', Esfandiari, G, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Czech Republic), 29 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE5406

<sup>695</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.14, 20200414083132; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.11 & p.41, 20210331113214; 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Actors of protection', UK Home Office, November 2019, pp.5-6, 20200110110533; 'Iran Corruption Report', GAN, April 2017, CISED50AD6073; 'A Small Group In Iran Owes Banks Billion Of Dollars In Bad Debts', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 2 December 2017, CXC90406618839

<sup>696</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.64, 20200414083132

<sup>697</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331113214;

<sup>698</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.64, 20200414083132

<sup>699</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.1, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 98, CISEC96CF12768

<sup>700</sup> 'Murmurs of a Second Cultural Revolution', Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), 18 August 2017, CXC90406612320

<sup>701</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 100, CISEC96CF12768; 'Human Rights in Iran after the Nuclear Deal Business as Usual or Time for Change?', European Parliament Directorate-General for External Policies, 13 March 2017, p. 9, CISED50AD3647; 'The Battle Against Models and 'Cultural Infiltration'', IranWire, 10 March 2017, CXC9040663956

<sup>702</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132

<sup>703</sup> 'Iran's New Basij Militia Commander More Militaristic Than His Predecessor', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 16 December 2016, CX6A26A6E15775; 'Award-winning Kurdish musician in Iran persists with career despite hurdles and harassment', Rudaw (Iraq), 29 August 2015, CXBD6A0DE18131

<sup>704</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132; 'Iran's Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire', Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), 5 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA143; 'Until We Are Free: The Shirin Ebadi story', Front Page Magazine (United States), 13 March 2017, CXC9040663621; 'Being Lesbian in Iran', OutRight Action International, 28 July 2016, p. 14, CIS38A80123572; 'Mullahs' Nightmare: Huge Demonstration Breaks Out In Tehran', American Thinker (United States), 5 March 2017, CXC9040663005

<sup>705</sup> 'Iran's Coercive Apparatus: Capacity and Desire', Washington Institute for Near East Policy (United States), 5 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA143

crackdown on the November 2019 protests,<sup>706</sup> and were responsible for shooting at unarmed protesters and bystanders.<sup>707</sup> The *basij* were also deployed during the January 2020 protests.<sup>708</sup> There are no official records,<sup>709</sup> however, there are estimated to be approximately 600,000 volunteers in the *basij*.<sup>710</sup> The *basij* has wings in a variety of sectors, including academia, law and medicine.<sup>711</sup> The *basij* also enforces moral standards.<sup>712</sup> 'Guidance patrols' (*gasht-e ershad*)—staffed by *basij* and LEF members—ensure women are wearing appropriate clothes (including head covering) and prevent mixed gender gatherings.<sup>713</sup> The names of the morality enforcement units (e.g. 'guidance patrols') have changed over time.<sup>714</sup> The level of pressure and attention applied by the guidance patrols fluctuates,<sup>715</sup> however, pressure was reportedly stepped up in mid-2019 in response to women refusing to wear the veil.<sup>716</sup> *Basij* members often act independently (without formal guidance or supervision) when repressing political opposition elements and enforcing moral standards.<sup>717</sup>

**In September 2020, new Basij neighbourhood patrol teams were deployed in Tehran and Khuzestan Province.**<sup>718</sup> The patrols, known as Razaviyoun, will provide a 24-hour security presence and are ostensibly a response to petty crime and 'American elements' in Iran.<sup>719</sup> In practice, the patrols will reportedly aim to deter public displays of dissent to prevent the development of anti-regime protests at the neighbourhood level to avoid a repeat of the widespread November 2019 protests.<sup>720</sup>

<sup>706</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132; 'A Report from the Streets of Iran: Protesting People or Criminals?', Hushyar Dehghani, Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 01 December 2019, 20191202142052

'Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests', Amnesty International, 15 January 2020, 20200117095726

<sup>707</sup> 'They shot our children': Killings of minors in Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 04 March 2020, p.9, p.13 & p.17, 20200304114356; 'UN rights chief 'extremely concerned' over deadly crackdown on protesters in Iran', UN News, 06 December 2019, 20191217100749

<sup>708</sup> 'Iran: Scores injured as security forces use unlawful force to crush protests', Amnesty International, 15 January 2020, 20200117095726;

<sup>709</sup> 'Guards Fear Internal Turmoil as Much as US Attack', Iran Wire, 17 November 2019, 20200416105553

<sup>710</sup> 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 102, CISEC96CF12768

<sup>711</sup> 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 105, CISEC96CF12768; 'IRN105716.E: Iran: Student protests, including treatment of protesters by authorities (2013-January 2017)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 16 January 2017, OG020B8163

<sup>712</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132; 'IRGC to expand Basij special forces', Long War Journal (United States), 24 October 2016, CX6A26A6E16682

<sup>713</sup> 'Who are Islamic 'morality police'?', British Broadcasting Corporation (United Kingdom), 22 April 2016, CX6A26A6E3329; 'Fashion police', The Economist (United Kingdom), 5 May 2013, CX307325; 'Basij Plainclothes Attack Tehran University Students Protesting Compulsory Hijab', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 13 May 2019, 20190514094151; 'Iran Deploys 2,000 New Morality Police Units To Counter "Improper Hijab"', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 09 June 2019, 20190612094932

<sup>714</sup> 'Politics of Piety: The Basij and Moral Control of Iranian Society', Golkar, S, The Journal of the Middle East and Africa, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 207–219, 2011, CIS27440; 'Iran Deploys 2,000 New Morality Police Units To Counter "Improper Hijab"', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 09 June 2019, 20190612094932

<sup>715</sup> 'Who are Islamic 'morality police'?', British Broadcasting Corporation (United Kingdom), 22 April 2016, CX6A26A6E3329; 'Fashion police', The Economist (United Kingdom), 5 May 2013, CX307325

<sup>716</sup> 'Iran Intensifying Its Crackdown On Civil Liberties', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 20 July 2019, 20190725094020; 'Iran Deploys 2,000 New Morality Police Units To Counter "Improper Hijab"', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 09 June 2019, 20190612094932

<sup>717</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.65, 20200414083132

<sup>718</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – September 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 October 2020, 20201014140250; 'Local Hit Squads, a Last Resort Solution to Crush Widespread Iran Protests', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 21 September 2020, 20200929115650; 'Paramilitary Groups Mobilized in Tehran to "Fight Neighborhood Crime"', Iran Wire, 16 September 2020, 20200921133714

<sup>719</sup> 'Iran's security forces beef up local presence to deter dissent', Critical Threats, 1 October 2020, 20201014140439

<sup>720</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – September 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 October 2020, 20201014140250; 'Local Hit Squads, a Last Resort Solution to Crush Widespread Iran Protests', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 21 September 2020, 20200929115650; 'Iran's security forces beef up local presence to deter

The patrols form part of an increasing local security force presence and will increase the authorities' surveillance capabilities.<sup>721</sup> Security officials have described the patrols as 'hit squads' who will use Basij bases to conduct their patrols.<sup>722</sup> Some of these patrols are conducted by Basij members who are trained in anti-riot response.<sup>723</sup>

## Judiciary

**The Iranian judiciary frequently does not provide fair trials, particularly in relation to political opponents of the regime.** The Iranian Constitution<sup>724</sup> and the Criminal Procedure Code provide for the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence until convicted, for the accused to have access to a lawyer of their choice, and to appeal convictions in most cases that have major penalties. However, these rights are not respected.<sup>725</sup> The article in the Code of Criminal Procedures guaranteeing the right to legal counsel contains a caveat that, during the investigation stage, those accused of security crimes must select an attorney from a pre-approved judiciary list.<sup>726</sup> Moreover, in May 2019, lawmakers proposed an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure which would allow judicial authorities to deny detainees facing national security crimes access to a lawyer during the investigation stage.<sup>727</sup> There is an absence of procedural safeguards in criminal trials, and courts admit as evidence confessions obtained under duress or torture.<sup>728</sup> Judges routinely dismiss defendants' allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in detention without ordering investigations.<sup>729</sup> Many trials (particularly of political prisoners) are unfair,<sup>730</sup> and the judicial system is used as a tool to silence opposition to the regime.<sup>731</sup> Bribery of judges to influence cases occurs and there is endemic

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dissent', Critical Threats, 1 October 2020, 20201014140439; 'Paramilitary Groups Mobilized in Tehran to "Fight Neighborhood Crime"', Iran Wire, 16 September 2020, 20200921133714

<sup>721</sup> 'Iran's security forces beef up local presence to deter dissent', Critical Threats, 1 October 2020, 20201014140439

<sup>722</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – September 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 October 2020, 20201014140250

<sup>723</sup> 'Iran's security forces beef up local presence to deter dissent', Critical Threats, 1 October 2020, 20201014140439

<sup>724</sup> 'Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (unofficial translation)', CIS22595

<sup>725</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.17, 20210331113214; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.8, 20200228105335; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 10, CISED50AD522. Recent example: 'Families Cite Seven Law Violations in Cases of Detained Wildlife Conservationists', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 2 July 2019, 20190816153712; 'Three Activists Sentenced to Prison in Trial "Directed" by Iran's Intelligence Ministry', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 4 December 2017, CXC90406618677

<sup>726</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.67, 20200414083132; 'Iranian Lawyers: Judiciary's Mandatory List of Approved Counsel Sets "Dangerous Precedent"', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 14 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA23934; 'New Developments in the Iranian Code of Criminal Procedure of 2014', Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft, vol. 127, no. 2, 2015, p. 141, CISEC96CF15590

<sup>727</sup> 'Regressive Amendment Would Deal Crushing Blow to Right to Assistance of a Lawyer During Investigation Phase', Amnesty International, 16 May 2019, 20190524102051

<sup>728</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348; 'Death sentences and executions 2019', Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, p.12 20200422083142; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.8, 20200228105335; 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Actors of protection', UK Home Office, November 2019, p.5, 20200110110533

<sup>729</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, pp.193-195, 20210407093348

<sup>730</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348

<sup>731</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'Freedom in the World 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 4 March 2020, 20200306093523

corruption in the judicial system.<sup>732</sup> However, influence in these cases is more important than money, and bribery in political cases, which are heard in Revolutionary Courts, is more difficult.<sup>733</sup> Bribery to obtain legal documents in a court is harder, as courts are under electronic surveillance.<sup>734</sup> Authorities attempt to prevent judicial bribery; judges are prosecuted for and/or removed because of corruption.<sup>735</sup> Prisoners that protest their conditions are sometimes charged with new charges.<sup>736</sup> The law allows the process of *qassameh* ('sworn oath'), where, in the absence of hard evidence, a judge will allow sworn oaths (including by people who were not witnesses) to justify a guilty verdict.<sup>737</sup> In 2017, two people were executed after being found guilty through this process.<sup>738</sup>

## Failed asylum seekers and returnees

**The treatment of failed asylum seekers returning to Iran is generally determined by their profile (acquired before leaving Iran or whilst abroad) and their actions on return.** Iran will not normally accept the involuntary return of failed asylum seekers from Australia who arrived before March 2018.<sup>739</sup> The treatment of failed asylum seekers and returnees depends on their profile before leaving Iran and their actions upon return.<sup>740</sup> DFAT assesses that those with 'an existing high profile may face a higher risk of coming to official attention on return to Iran, particularly political activists.'<sup>741</sup> According to DFAT, the authorities 'pay little attention to failed asylum seekers on their return to Iran.'<sup>742</sup> Those who did not face adverse official attention prior to departing Iran, are unlikely to attract attention from the authorities and face a low risk of monitoring, mistreatment or other forms of official discrimination.<sup>743</sup> DFAT assesses that the authorities have 'little interest in prosecuting failed asylum seekers for activities conducted outside Iran, including in relation to protection claims.'<sup>744</sup> This

<sup>732</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.67, 20200414083132; 'Country Policy and Information Note - Iran: Actors of protection', UK Home Office, November 2019, p.5, 20200110110533; 'They drank booze, took drugs and even the police were hospitable': British woman who cycled through Iran reveals how its people are hugely welcoming... and love to party', Daily Mail (United Kingdom), 17 February 2017, CXC9040662130; 'Young Iranians explain just how easy it is to get banned alcohol', France 24 Observer, 5 July 2016, CX6A26A6E6180

<sup>733</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.67, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941638

<sup>734</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941638

<sup>735</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.67, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p. 7, CIS7B83941638

<sup>736</sup> See, for example: 'Iran: Political prisoner Abolghasem Fuladvand targeted fresh fabricated charges', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 18 December 2017, CXC90406619589; 'Political Prisoners in Rajaei Shahr Prison Slapped With New Charges for Engaging in Peaceful Protest', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 November 2017, CXC90406618442

<sup>737</sup> 'Qassameh, 'an Oath to Kill' a defendant in Iran', Iran Human Rights (Norway), 26 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20874

<sup>738</sup> 'Qassameh: "an Oath to Kill"', Iran Human Rights (Norway), 15 March 2018, CXBB8A1DA24232

<sup>739</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132; 'DFAT Country Information Report—Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 7 June 2018, Section 5.23, CIS7B839411226. There is evidence that Iran does accept involuntary returnees from other countries, however COISS has been unable to determine Iran's policy, or whether these are the subject of bilateral agreements between Iran and the relevant countries. For examples, see 'Woman Asylum Seeker Lashed 80 Times After Being Deported to Iran From Norway', Iran Human Rights (Norway), 20 September 2017, CXC90406614387;

<sup>740</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132. Also see: 'IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733

<sup>741</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>742</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>743</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>744</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

includes social media comments against the government, converting to Christianity, engaging in LGBTI activities or protesting outside an Iranian diplomatic mission.<sup>745</sup> DFAT states 'in such cases, the risk profile for the individual will be the same as for any other person in Iran within that category.'<sup>746</sup> Authorities do not routinely check the social media accounts of returnees.<sup>747</sup> Academics consulted by the IRBC in February 2021, similarly state that treatment upon return depends on the profile of the activist and their actions whilst abroad. One stated that 'those who have been very active or are known cannot go back', and noted that there is a 'higher risk' for individuals who are politically active and that 'ordinary Iranians might be fine...it really depends on the case...in general, if someone is known, they will face risks.'<sup>748</sup> Another academic is quoted as stating that 'people who attended protests then went abroad and were not politically active whilst abroad will not face consequences when they return unless there are open files and charges or sentences.'<sup>749</sup> If there are open charges or sentences, 'the person will be arrested.'<sup>750</sup> The same source notes that if a person who was politically active abroad stayed anonymous they could return, however, 'there is no way' for a person who was politically active under their real name to return.<sup>751</sup> Sources note that whether a person is imprisoned upon return depends on if the Iranian authorities judge their activities to be a 'potential threat' to the regime and how 'harmful' they are to the regime's reputation.<sup>752</sup> A range of sources indicate that if an individual was critical of the Iranian government whilst abroad, the possible repercussions upon return would depend on the content and scope of those activities, and, especially, the level of activism upon return.<sup>753</sup> However, in 2014, the Danish Immigration Service cited an unnamed source from Elam Ministries (a Persian-language Christian missionary service) that noted those who spent extended periods out of Iran are more likely to be suspected of spying upon return.<sup>754</sup> Further, in February 2021 a representative of HRANA stated there have been multiple reports of dissidents being arrested upon their return and 'even lured into return[ing] to Iran' to then be arrested.<sup>755</sup>

<sup>745</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>746</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>747</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>748</sup> 'IRN200457.E - Iran: Treatment by the authorities of anti-government activists, including those returning from abroad; overseas monitoring capabilities of the government (2019-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 22 February 2021, 20210315091836

<sup>749</sup> 'IRN200457.E - Iran: Treatment by the authorities of anti-government activists, including those returning from abroad; overseas monitoring capabilities of the government (2019-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 22 February 2021, 20210315091836

<sup>750</sup> 'IRN200457.E - Iran: Treatment by the authorities of anti-government activists, including those returning from abroad; overseas monitoring capabilities of the government (2019-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 22 February 2021, 20210315091836

<sup>751</sup> 'IRN200457.E - Iran: Treatment by the authorities of anti-government activists, including those returning from abroad; overseas monitoring capabilities of the government (2019-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 22 February 2021, 20210315091836

<sup>752</sup> 'IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733

<sup>753</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132; 'IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733; 'Issues concerning persons of ethnic minorities, Kurds and Ahwazi Arabs', Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 6, CIS7B83941872; 'Iran: House Churches and Converts', Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council, February 2018, p. 8, CIS7B83941873; 'Iran: Christians and Christian converts', UK Home Office, March 2018, pp. 5, 29–32, OG9EF767914

<sup>754</sup> 'Update on the Situation for Christian Converts in Iran', Danish Immigration Service, June 2014, p. 15, CIS28931

<sup>755</sup> 'IRN200457.E - Iran: Treatment by the authorities of anti-government activists, including those returning from abroad; overseas monitoring capabilities of the government (2019-February 2021)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 22 February 2021, 20210315091836

**DFAT has provided consistent advice that the fact of claiming asylum whilst abroad is unlikely, in and of itself, to be a trigger for maltreatment upon return.**<sup>756</sup> Commentary about the treatment of failed asylum seekers upon arrival is contradictory, ranging from conclusions that there is essentially no danger to warnings of interrogation and prosecution.<sup>757</sup> DFAT advises returnees travelling on a *laissez-passer* are questioned upon at the airport upon return (usually for between 30 minutes – 1 hour) and ‘arrest and mistreatment are not common during this process.’<sup>758</sup> There are some examples of failed asylum seekers being prosecuted and/or punished for political or other activities upon return; these appear to have obtained a profile whilst abroad or else had a criminal record in Iran before leaving.<sup>759</sup> DFAT is not aware of voluntary returnees being prosecuted upon

<sup>756</sup> ‘DFAT Country Information Report – Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132; ‘DFAT Country Information Report—Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 7 June 2018, Sections 5.24–5.25, CIS7B839411226; ‘DFAT Country Information Report—Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 21 April 2016, ss. 5.33–5.34, CIS38A8012677; ‘DFAT Country Information Report—Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 29 November 2013, ss. 5.23–5.24, CIS26780; ‘Response to IRN 11738: Iran - Article on returned asylum seekers and people exiting Iran with false documents’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 19 April 2011, CX263145; ‘Response to CIS Request No. IRN11072: Return of failed asylum seekers’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 22 December 2010, CX255525; ‘CIS Request No. IRN9025: Iran: Return of failed asylum seekers’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 June 2007, CX179204. See also ‘Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures’, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, February 2013, p. 69, CIS25114: ‘Mr. Hossein Abdy, Head of Passport and Visa Department, stressed that the Iranian constitution allows for Iranians to live where they wish. It is not a criminal offense in Iran for any Iranian to ask for asylum in another country. He further stated that approximately 60% of Iranians who have asylum in other countries, travel back and forth between Iran and other countries.’

<sup>757</sup> A recent search report by the IRBC provides contradictory information on this topic: ‘IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)’, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733 In February 2013, the International Organisation for Migration told a joint fact-finding mission in Iran that ‘Iranians who have left the country on their passports and are returned on a Laissez-passer will be questioned by the Immigration Police at the airport’ for a few hours, though no one has been arrested for arriving in this manner. ‘Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures’, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, February 2013, p.69, CIS25114. The IOM further stated that it had assisted approximately 100 voluntary returnees under its Assisted Voluntary Return programme. In March 2011, the spokesperson for Iran Human Rights said, ‘Iranian authorities have recently signaled [*sic*] that Iranians who have sought asylum abroad should be charged for “dissemination of false propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran” and punished for that.’ ‘An Iranian-Kurdish asylum seeker extradited from Norway to Iran is in danger of torture, ill-treatment or death at Tehran’s Evin prison’, Iran Human Rights (Norway), 23 March 2011, CX261259. In February 2012, Amnesty International quoted an unnamed Iranian judge stating ‘Asylum seekers are interrogated on return, whether or not they have been political activists in Iran or abroad. If they have tried to conduct propaganda against Iran, then they are culpable and are detained until a judge decides the sentence. In recent years many people have tried to destroy the reputation of Iran and this must be stopped. Such people help the opposition groups and their culpability is plain. Returnees will therefore be held for a few days until it is clear to the police, that they have not been involved in political activity. If the police can prove that the person was not active and has not done or said anything that could damage the reputation of the Islamic Republic, then they are released. If the person was either politically active in Iran before leaving, or has been active abroad, they must be tried and receive a punishment appropriate to their activities.’ ‘We are ordered to crush you’: Expanding Repression of Dissent in Iran’, Amnesty International, 28 February, 2012, p. 56, CIS22610. The Guardian reported that two Iranian failed asylum seekers returned from Manus Island, were interrogated, and had their passports confiscated, but provided no other information. ‘Papua New Guinea’s supreme court halts asylum seeker deportations’, The Guardian (United Kingdom), 25 August 2015, CXBD6A0DE12568

<sup>758</sup> ‘DFAT Country Information Report – Iran’, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>759</sup> For example: ‘IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)’, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733; ‘Reformist Political Activist Turned Refugee Briefly Arrested Upon Return to Iran’, Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 18 October 2017, CXC90406615858; ‘Woman Asylum Seeker Lashed 80 Times After Being Deported to Iran From Norway’, Iran Human Rights (Norway), 20 September 2017, CXC90406614387; ‘AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - URGENT ACTION: UA 125/11: Student activists held in Iran’, Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 6 May 2011, CX264288; ‘Teenager imprisoned after being deported to Iran’, Ny Tid (Norway), 23 March 2011, CX261493; ‘The Kurdish asylum seeker Rahim Rostami, charged with “actions against the nation’s security”, released on bail’, Iran Human Rights (Norway), 19 June 2011, CX274950. In March 2017, a returned asylum seeker was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment. However, it is unclear whether his asylum request in the Netherlands was

return for criticising the government, converting to Christianity or proselytising while abroad.<sup>760</sup> In the past, DFAT has reported that a voluntary returnee (complete with IOM bags) does not attract much interest from authorities and that they will generally only be questioned if they had done something to attract the specific attention of authorities.<sup>761</sup> According to the IOM, 1,510 Iranians voluntarily returned to Iran in 2018, and 2,144 in 2017.<sup>762</sup> DFAT is unaware of any social or legislative barriers for failed asylum seekers finding work or shelter in Iran.<sup>763</sup> According to DFAT, the 'greatest challenge facing failed asylum seekers on return is reintegrating economically and finding meaningful employment.'<sup>764</sup>

**Media frequently blur the distinction between the treatment of failed asylum seekers returning to Iran and Iranian nationals that have lived abroad without claiming asylum, and who have been arrested upon return.** A discussion of returnees (as opposed to failed asylum seekers) specific to cohorts such as Christian converts and political dissidents are in the relevant sections.<sup>765</sup>

Statements by Iranian officials regarding returning Iranians (whether failed asylum seekers or otherwise) are consistent in that returnees have nothing to fear if they have not committed crimes, but those that have committed crimes will be prosecuted upon return.<sup>766</sup> However, Iran interprets some political or religious acts as threats to the Islamic Revolution and, therefore, crimes to be punished.<sup>767</sup>

**There is conflicting information about the treatment of the family members of Iranians who have claimed refugee status abroad.** An academic at York University<sup>768</sup> stated in January 2020 that the relatives of Iranian refugees overseas are 'not normally persecuted or harassed' by the authorities, except in high-profile cases. Conversely, a representative of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Iraq states that relatives of Iranians seeking asylum overseas may receive intimidating and 'threatening' phone calls from the authorities or be summoned to their local Intelligence Office where they are given false information about their relatives abroad. Some families report regular phone calls from the authorities to convince their child to return to Iran with job offers and assurances they will not

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rejected or still ongoing. Further, the individual had been arrested in Iran, released on bail and then fled the country; his imprisonment upon return appears to have been the sentence from the initial charges (i.e. from before he fled Iran). 'An Arab Asylum Seeker Sentenced to Jail after Returning to Iran', Human Rights Activists News Agency (United States), 30 May 2017, CXC9040668619; '6 Years of Imprisonment for a Refugee, After Returning to Iran From the Netherlands', National Council of Resistance of Iran, 4 March 2017, CXC9040668613  
<sup>760</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>761</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report—Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 7 June 2018, Section 5.24, CIS7B839411226

<sup>762</sup> '2018 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights', International Organization for Migration, 2019, p.19, 20200420131649

<sup>763</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>764</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.70, 20200414083132

<sup>765</sup> Amnesty International's comments on returnees in 2010 remain relevant, though Amnesty International did not stress the role of obtaining a profile abroad in calculating risks for return: 'Amnesty International believes that the events over the past year means that some Iranians who left Iran to study or work or for other non-political reasons, but who have publicly expressed dissatisfaction with events in Iran, may face increased risks should they return to Iran. Some may have become refugees *sur place* and would qualify for refugee or subsidiary protection status if they seek asylum.' 'From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election', Amnesty International (United Kingdom), 9 June 2010, p. 61, CIS18830

<sup>766</sup> 'Intelligence Ministry Reviews Cases of Iranian Expats for Return', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 29 January 2014, CX317521; 'Official says Iranians living abroad welcome to return', Radio Zamaneh (Netherlands), 31 January 2014, CX317627; 'Trial in Absentia of Iranians Abroad', Rooz Online, 16 April 2014, CX320099

<sup>767</sup> The Islamic Republic's Constitution explicitly denies the equal rights to those members of religious minorities and political groups that seek to undermine the Islamic Revolution. 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 13, CIS7B83941441

<sup>768</sup> The academic is identified as a 'Professor of Sociology at York University'. See: 'IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733

be arrest upon return to Iran.<sup>769</sup> In July 2021, it was reported that the family members of Iranian Kurdish civil and human rights activists living in Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan had been summoned and intimidated by security agencies and told to help bring their children back to Iran.<sup>770</sup>

## Social infrastructure

**Welfare and social services are available in Iran.** Iran has a large social protection system, including 28 social insurance, social assistance, and disaster relief programs. These benefit large segments of the population. Social coverage is provided by government social safety net programs, charity institutions and non-profit organisations.<sup>771</sup> A number of para-governmental organisations (*bonyads*) provide social services to 'low-income groups'.<sup>772</sup> Only employees of private companies are insured against unemployment.<sup>773</sup>

**Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Iran's healthcare system was considered regionally to be of a good standard despite major challenges such as doctor, medication and equipment shortages.**<sup>774</sup> Health care is provided through public, private and non-profit NGOs.<sup>775</sup> Iran has a well-structured healthcare system, with basic healthcare available to the entire population,<sup>776</sup> however the reimposition of sanctions in 2018 has led to shortages of medicine and medical equipment, which has significantly worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>777</sup> In January 2020 (prior to the onset of COVID-19 in Iran), the UN reported numerous obstacles to health care including significant increases in the price of medicine, depletion of available stocks, corruption and smuggling. Prior to COVID-19, hospitals had a shortage of medicines, medical equipment and consumer goods.<sup>778</sup> Healthcare and public health services are provided through a nationwide network.<sup>779</sup> This consists of a referral system, starting at primary care centres in the periphery going through secondary-level hospitals in the provincial capital and tertiary hospitals in major cities.<sup>780</sup> The healthcare provided by the Iranian government generally only covers low-cost, basic healthcare services. An extensive network of public

<sup>769</sup> 'IRN200133.E - Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of failed refugee claimants and family members of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status (2017-February 2020)', Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 09 March 2020, 20200402123733

<sup>770</sup> '[Exiled Iranian Kurds' Families Told: Bring Back Your Loved Ones, or We'll Kill Them](#)', Iran Wire, 20 July 2021, 20210720155616

<sup>771</sup> 'Iran Country Brief', World Bank Group, September 2010, CX259854; 'Iran's New Breed Of Charities On Poverty Frontline', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 15 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36775

<sup>772</sup> 'Iranian Para-governmental Organizations (bonyads)', Saeidi, A, Middle East Institute (United States), 29 January 2009, p. 101, CIS17095; 'Rafsanjani's death empowers hardline conservatives in selecting Iran's next Supreme Leader, increasing risk to state stability', Jane's Intelligence Weekly (United Kingdom), 16 January 2017, CXC904066377

<sup>773</sup> 'Iran: The Iranian Welfare System', Landinfo, 12 August 2020, p.29, 20200820080352

<sup>774</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.15, 20200414083132

<sup>775</sup> 'Iran: The Iranian Welfare System', Landinfo, 12 August 2020, p.10, 20200820080352

<sup>776</sup> 'Iran: The Iranian Welfare System', Landinfo, 12 August 2020, p.11-12, 20200820080352; 'Healthcare in the Islamic Republic of Iran', Tahsili, Z and Brand, L, Lex Arabiae, January 2010, CX316432; 'Iranian health houses open the door to primary care', Bulletin of the World Health Organization, vol. 86, no. 8, August 2008, CXAB8B92D24347

<sup>777</sup> '[Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran \(14 May 2021\)](#)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.14, 20210624120211; 'Economic Sanctions and Iran's capacity to respond to COVID-19', Murphey, A et al, Lancet Public Health, 6 April 2020, p.1, 20200409121247; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.5-6, 20200228105335; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - January 2019', United Nations Human Rights Council, 30 January 2019, pp. 7 - 8, 20190305091503; 'Chronically ill Iranians struggle to access medicine under US sanctions', Rudaw (Iraq), 11 July 2019, 20190725095605; 'Iran sanctions - What impact are they having on medicines', BBC News, 08 August 2019, 20190813112410

<sup>778</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.5-6, 20200228105335

<sup>779</sup> 'Iran: The Iranian Welfare System', Landinfo, 12 August 2020, p.11, 20200820080352

<sup>780</sup> DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.15, 20200414083132

clinics offers basic care at low cost, and general and specialty hospitals operated by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education provide higher levels of care.<sup>781</sup>

**COVID-19 has completely overwhelmed the Iranian health care system.** As of 7 September, Iran had the highest number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and deaths in the Middle East with over 5 million cases and over 110,000 deaths.<sup>782</sup> However, the actual (unreported) figures are likely significantly higher.<sup>783</sup> In August 2021, Iran faced its fifth wave of COVID-19.<sup>784</sup> Economic sanctions reintroduced in 2018 have hampered Iran's ability to import medicine and equipment to address the pandemic.<sup>785</sup> Those who have published information that questions the authorities' official statements and figures on COVID-19 have faced prosecution.<sup>786</sup> Lawyers and civil rights activists who have attempted to file complaints against government officials over their mishandling of the pandemic have been arrested and arbitrarily detained.<sup>787</sup> Vaccine rollout has been slow and vaccines from countries such as the US, UK and France are banned.<sup>788</sup>

**Primary education is free and compulsory for all Iranians.** Children attend primary school from the ages of 6 to 12, and high school from the ages of 12 to 18.<sup>789</sup> School attendance is generally high in Iran, with 99.7 per cent enrolment for primary schooling and 86 per cent for secondary school.<sup>790</sup> Despite primary education being free and compulsory, there is lower enrolment in rural areas, especially for girls.<sup>791</sup>

## Complementary protection

### Violence, safety and life

#### Levels of general violence

**Levels of violence are generally low in Iran, although they are higher in border areas, especially Sistan-Baluchistan province.** Iran is relatively peaceful and safe.<sup>792</sup> The police and security forces exert security control over almost the entire country<sup>793</sup>, though border areas with Afghanistan and Pakistan—particularly Sistan-Baluchistan Province—are more unstable and have

<sup>781</sup> 'Healthcare in the Islamic Republic of Iran', Tahsili, Z and Brand, L, Lex Arabiae, January 2010, CX316432

<sup>782</sup> These figures were taken from the John Hopkins COVID Resource Centre website on 7 September 2021. As this database is continually updated, please visit the website for the latest figures at: <<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>>

<sup>783</sup> 'Iran Braces for New Wave of Covid-19 Infections as "Fakhra" Vaccine Unveiled', Iran Wire, 20 March 2021, 20210322095253; 'COVID-19 Death Toll in Iran up to Three Times More than Official Figures', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 26 October 2020, 20201027141138; 'The Untold Story of How Iran Botched the Coronavirus Pandemic', Foreign Policy, 24 March 2020, 20200424130532

<sup>784</sup> 'Iran will impose 6-day 'general lockdown' over coronavirus', Associated Press (AP), 14 August 2021, 20210816111147

<sup>785</sup> 'Economic Sanctions and Iran's capacity to respond to COVID-19', Murphey, A et al, Lancet Public Health, 6 April 2020, p.1, 20200409121247; 'US: Ease Sanctions on Iran in COVID-19 Crisis', Human Rights Watch, 6 April 2020, 20200407111103

<sup>786</sup> 'Doctors Punished for Contradicting Iran's Official Line on COVID-19', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 15 April 2020, 20200416110801

<sup>787</sup> 'Lawyers, Activists Arrested as they Attempt to Sue State for Failed COVID Response', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 17 August 2021, 20210818113401; 'IHR Strongly Condemns Arrest of 7 Lawyers and Civil Activists', Iran Human Rights, 15 August 2021, 20210816122506

<sup>788</sup> 'Iran Should Lift Deadly Ban on Foreign COVID Vaccines', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 11 August 2021, 20210812105241

<sup>789</sup> 'What does school education look like in Iran?', Hazari, S, British Council, 21 April 2015, CXBD6A0DE19090

<sup>790</sup> 'Iran: The Iranian Welfare System', Landinfo, 12 August 2020, p.9, 20200820080352

<sup>791</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.50, 20210331113214

<sup>792</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.21, 20200414083132

<sup>793</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.21, 20200414083132

higher rates of violent crime.<sup>794</sup> Terrorist attacks are rare. However, in past years there have been some attacks by members of the Sunni minority in border areas targeting Shia mosques and local security officials.<sup>795</sup> The largescale June 2017 attack in Tehran and September 2018 attack in Ahvaz were notable for their rarity.<sup>796</sup> The most recent attack occurred in February 2019, when a suicide bomber said to be linked to a Sunni extremist organisation killed 27 people affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards in an attack in Sistan- Baluchistan province.<sup>797</sup>

## Torture

### **Torture is used as a tool to extract confessions in Iran, particularly from political prisoners.**

Torture is widespread, systemic and committed with impunity.<sup>798</sup> A range of different types of torture are reportedly used in Iran, including sexual torture, stress positions, use of water, sharp and blunt force trauma, electric shock, prolonged solitary confinement, asphyxiation, chemical torture and threatening to kill family members.<sup>799</sup> Those suspected or found guilty of national security related offences (i.e. political prisoners) are particularly vulnerable to torture.<sup>800</sup> Torture is used to obtain forced confessions, particularly in national security related cases.<sup>801</sup> Confessions extracted through torture are used in court, and judges will frequently reject allegations of torture.<sup>802</sup> Torture is used to

<sup>794</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.21, 20200414083132

<sup>795</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.21, 20200414083132. For examples of attacks on security officials in Sistan-Baluchistan during 2016, see 'Blast injures 2 IRGC members in southeastern Iran', Karimov, F, Trend News Agency, 11 December 2016, CX6A26A6E14878; 'Gunmen kill policemen in southeastern Iran', Karimov, F, Trend News Agency, 27 April 2016, CX6A26A6E3425; 'Four Iranian police officers dead in armed clashes in one day', Ilgar, E, Trend News Agency, 1 April 2016, CX6A26A6E2699

<sup>796</sup> 'Terror in Tehran: The Islamic State goes to war with the Islamic Republic', Zambelis, C, CTC Sentinel (United States), 27 June 2017, pp. 16–21, CISED50AD4828; 'Arab Group Takes Responsibility For Attack On Military Parade In Iran - 25 killed', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 22 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35761

<sup>797</sup> 'Iran suicide bomber kills 27 in attack on border guards' bus', The Guardian, 14 February 2019, 20190214090602; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.21, 20200414083132

<sup>798</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.8, 20210202143721; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, pp.193-195, 20210407093348

<sup>799</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.9, 20210331113214; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.8, 20210202143721; 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.34-45, 20200903090643; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, pp.61-62, 20200414083132;

'Iran – Failing on all Fronts', Amnesty International, 30 June 2019, p. 7, 20190704101420; 'Turning a blind eye: Why the international community must no longer ignore torture in Iran', Freedom from Torture (United Kingdom), December 2017, p. 15, CISED50AD8023; 'The Iranian Judiciary: A Complex and Dysfunctional System', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 22 September 2016, pp. 50–52, CIS38A80122404; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Secretary-General', UN General Assembly, 6 September 2016, p. 12, CIS38A80122219; 'Recent suicides highlight ongoing Iranian human rights abuses', The Hill (United States), 5 March 2017, CXC9040663124

<sup>800</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132; 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.34-45, 20200903090643; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.10, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>801</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.193, 20210407093348; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.8, 20210202143721; 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, p.34, 20200903090643; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.5, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132

<sup>802</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.18, 20210331113214; 'Human Rights Watch World Report 2021', Human Rights Watch, 13 January 2021, pp.339-340, 20210114072851; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.2, 20200228105335; 'Turning a blind eye: Why the international community must

both elicit confessions and obtain information about third parties.<sup>803</sup> In numerous cases over the last year, forced confessions have led to death sentences, which were carried out in several instances.<sup>804</sup> Some protestors detained in connection to the November 2019 protests have been subjected to torture and pressured into making forced confessions.<sup>805</sup>

## Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

**Judicially-sanctioned punishments such as lashes and amputations occur in Iran.** Lashes and amputations are prescribed punishments for a range of crimes under the Penal Code.<sup>806</sup> During 2020, the authorities increasingly issued flogging sentences to protestors.<sup>807</sup> At least 148 crimes are punishable by flogging and 20 carry a penalty of amputation.<sup>808</sup> During 2020, at least 19 flogging verdicts were carried out and at least 160 people were sentenced to flogging.<sup>809</sup> During 2019, at least 270 people were sentenced to floggings.<sup>810</sup> Amputations (generally the hand or fingers on charges for theft) are carried out, although they are not common.<sup>811</sup> Between January 2000 and September 2020, Iranian authorities have sentenced at least 237 people to amputation and carried out these sentences in at least 129 cases.<sup>812</sup> In September 2020, Iran's Supreme Court upheld the sentencing of four men to have their fingers amputated after they were convicted of robbery; it is unclear if the punishment

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no longer ignore torture in Iran', Freedom from Torture (United Kingdom), December 2017, p. 32, CISED50AD8023

<sup>803</sup> 'Orwellian State: Islamic Republic of Iran's State Media as a Weapon of Mass Suppression', International Federation for Human Rights & Justice for Iran, June 2020, p.11, 20200703083700; 'Turning a blind eye: Why the international community must no longer ignore torture in Iran', Freedom from Torture (United Kingdom), December 2017, p. 33, CISED50AD8023

<sup>804</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.8, 20210202143721

<sup>805</sup> 'Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's November 2019 protests', Amnesty International, 2 September 2020, pp.34-45, 20200903090643; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.3, 20200228105335; 'Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Review of 2019', Amnesty International, 18 February 2020, p.24, 20200219090219; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.47, 20200312093514; 'November Protests; the details of the case of three prisoners who were sentenced to death', Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 05 March 2020, 20200306143508; 'Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown', Amnesty International, 16 December 2019, 20191217113854

<sup>806</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.10, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132; 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 6 March 2017, p. 7, CISED50AD555; 'IHRDC Translation of the New Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Books One and Two', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 8 April 2014, Articles 15–19, CIS27755; 'Regulatory Code on Sentences of Qisas, Stoning, Crucifixion, Execution, and Flogging (19 September 1999)', Translated by Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), n.d., Articles 27–34, CIS29781

<sup>807</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.7, 20210202143721

<sup>808</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.10, 20210331113214

<sup>809</sup> 'Annual Report 2020 – Amputation and flogging sentences widely practiced in Iran', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 07 January 2021, 20210111111126; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.4, 20210202143721; 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.192, 20210407093348

<sup>810</sup> This included 80 rights activists and human rights lawyers, 90 peaceful protestors and 100 people charged with robbery, relations outside of marriage, child abuse, kidnapping and not observing *hijab*. Please see:

'2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.4, January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>811</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132; 'Annual Report 2020 – Amputation and flogging sentences widely practiced in Iran', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 07 January 2021, 20210111111126; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.4, January 2020, 20200420081401; 'Three Iranian Prisoners Amputated as Barbaric Punishment', IranWire, Iran Wire, 20 September 2020, 20200921133602

<sup>812</sup> 'Iran: Horrifying plan to amputate fingers of four men convicted of robbery must be stopped', Amnesty International, 24 September 2020, 20200925103200

has been carried out.<sup>813</sup> In October 2019, a hand's man was amputated for alleged theft.<sup>814</sup> A hand-amputation sentence was upheld on appeal in October 2018<sup>815</sup> and another was carried out in January 2018 for theft.<sup>816</sup> There have also been reports of persons sentenced to having their eyes gouged out as punishment for blinding others.<sup>817</sup> (The Iranian penal code includes retribution-in-kind punishments for purposeful (*qesas*) or accidental (*diya*) bodily injury.<sup>818</sup>)

## Imprisonment

### Prison conditions

**Prison conditions in Iran are extremely poor, and medical treatment is often denied to prisoners.** Iran breaches its international obligations on the right to life and the health of prisoners.<sup>819</sup> Prisons in Iran are overcrowded and can lack reasonable facilities.<sup>820</sup> Prison conditions are often harsh, with prisoners being provided with inadequate food and exposed to extreme temperature and unsanitary conditions.<sup>821</sup> Key issues include torture, overcrowding, poor hygiene, lack of food and water, denial of access to medical care, solitary confinement and medical treatment as a condition

<sup>813</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – October 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 November 2020, 20201102090918; 'Iran: Horrifying plan to amputate fingers of four men convicted of robbery must be stopped', Amnesty International, 24 September 2020, 20200925103200; 'Three Iranian Prisoners Amputated as Barbaric Punishment', IranWire, Iran Wire, 20 September 2020, 20200921133602

<sup>814</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132; Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report – October 2019', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 31 October 2019, 20191107141918

<sup>815</sup> 'Hand amputation sentence was upheld for Convicted man', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 11 October 2018, CXBB8A1DA36724

<sup>816</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019', US Department of State, 11 March 2020, p.8, 20200312093514

<sup>817</sup> 'Justice Is Blind: Why 'An Eye for an Eye' Never Dies In Iran', Daily Beast (United States), 12 February 2017, CXC90406612756; 'Iran to gouge out man's eye under literal interpretation of Sharia law', The Independent (United Kingdom), 29 March 2016, CX6A26A6E2617; 'Iran: Acid attacker's eye gouged out under sharia law', International Business Times (United States), 5 March 2015, CXBD6A0DE2378

<sup>818</sup> For a description of these categories of crimes in the context of Iranian penal law, see 'A Comparative Critique of Regulating the Personal and the Passive Personality Principles in the Iranian Penal System', Poorbafrani, H & Zamani, M, Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, vol. 3, 2015, pp. 119–121, CISEC96CF15567. See also 'Iran: Iranian teenager faces imminent execution: Alireza Pour Olfat', Amnesty International, 12 April 2016, CIS38A8012632. See also 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 153, CISEC96CF12768

<sup>819</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.10, 20210202143721

<sup>820</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.192, 20210407093348; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331113214; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.14, 20210202143721; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.68, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.12-18, 20200228105335

<sup>821</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.192, 20210407093348; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.68, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.12-18, 20200228105335

upon confession.<sup>822</sup> Iranian prisons can only provide basic medical facilities.<sup>823</sup> Prison infirmaries have outdated and inadequate supplies of medicine and prison medical staff lack sufficient training or are unhelpful to prisoners, particularly political prisoners.<sup>824</sup> Iran's prisoners are ill equipped to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and many prisons have experienced outbreaks.<sup>825</sup> Prisoners lack adequate access to testing kits, medications, disinfecting substances and hygiene products such as alcohol, gloves and masks.<sup>826</sup> Prisoners report that due to overcrowding, quarantine and social distancing requirements cannot be practiced.<sup>827</sup> Prison authorities often refuse to provide medical treatment for pre-existing conditions, injuries caused by prison authorities or illnesses caused by unsanitary conditions in prisons.<sup>828</sup> Denial of medical treatment, particularly to political prisoners, is used as a form of punishment and an intimidation tool against prisoners who file complaints.<sup>829</sup> In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 100,000 prisoners were released on temporary furlough to help stop the spread of the virus in the prison system.<sup>830</sup> In practice, furlough was not provided to eligible political prisoners, prisoners of conscious or 'security prisoners' who tend to be dual nationals.<sup>831</sup> There are reports of prisoners contracting and dying from COVID-19, although the exact number is unknown as official statistics are not available.<sup>832</sup>

<sup>822</sup> [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, pp.11-13, 20210331113214; [Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.11, 20210202143721; [DFAT Country Information Report – Iran](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.68, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, pp.12-18, 20200228105335

<sup>823</sup> [DFAT Country Information Report – Iran](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.68, 20200414083132; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.18, 20200228105335

<sup>824</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 28 January 2020, p.18, 20200228105335

<sup>825</sup> [Rising COVID Infections, Unhygienic Conditions Raise Fears of More Deaths in Iranian Prisons](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 22 July 2021, 20210723092859

<sup>826</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020 – Covid-19 Outbreak in Prisons', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 6 January 2021, 20210111111502; [Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.14, 20210202143721; 'Coronavirus outbreak in Iranian prisons', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 4 March 2020, 20200306143029; 'Grave Concerns for Prisoners in Iran Amid Coronavirus Outbreak', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 February 2020, 20200303165619; 'Iran releases 85,000 prisoners to curb coronavirus spread, but Australian academic remains behind bars', ABC News, 20 March 2020, 20200401120206

<sup>827</sup> 'Coronavirus Crisis in Iranian Prisons', Shaheh Alavi, IranWire, 28 February 2020, 20200228121059

<sup>828</sup> [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.12, 20210331113214

<sup>829</sup> [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.12, 20210331113214; [Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.11 & p.14, 20210202143721

<sup>830</sup> 'Iran extends prison furloughs as coronavirus death toll rises', Reuters, 29 March 2020, 20200401120955; 'Iran releases 85,000 prisoners to curb coronavirus spread, but Australian academic remains behind bars', ABC News, 20 March 2020, 20200401120206

<sup>831</sup> 'Statement by Javaid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the 75th session of the General Assembly - Item 72(c)', United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 26 October 2020, 20201102120512; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 21 July 2020, p.19, 20200917082634; 'Coronavirus outbreak in Iranian prisons', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 4 March 2020, 20200306143029; '54 inmates on the run after Iran prison break', Al Monitor, 30 March 2020, 20200401120033

<sup>832</sup> [Rising COVID Infections, Unhygienic Conditions Raise Fears of More Deaths in Iranian Prisons](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 22 July 2021, 20210723092859; [Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020 – Covid-19 Outbreak in Prisons](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 06 January 2021, 20210111111502; [Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.14, 20210202143721; 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report, March 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 05 April 2020, 20200406083023

## Detention and detainee treatment

**Ethnic, political and religious activists are at particular risk of arbitrary detention and adverse treatment whilst in detention.** Although the Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, these occur frequently.<sup>833</sup> Authorities commonly use arbitrary arrests to impede alleged anti-regime activities,<sup>834</sup> in particular by ethnic, religious or political activists.<sup>835</sup> Political activists are routinely arrested without warrants.<sup>836</sup> They are held in detention facilities for extended periods without charges or trials, and are denied access to legal counsel and any contact with the outside world.<sup>837</sup> Many are later convicted on vague security charges in trials that sometimes last only a few minutes.<sup>838</sup> The names of drug addicts are reportedly entered into a register on their first day of detention, and methadone is distributed to those who need it.<sup>839</sup> Iranian prisoners have access to furlough—temporary leave granted for medical reasons or special family events.<sup>840</sup> Authorities frequently deny furlough to specific prisoners as a means to further punish them.<sup>841</sup> Political prisoners, prisoners of conscience and ‘security prisoners’ (often dual nationals) were largely excluded from an executive order issued in March 2020 to release 100,000 prisoners on temporary furlough to contain the spread of COVID-19 in prisons.<sup>842</sup>

## Deaths in custody

**Deaths in custody sometimes occur in Iran.** Iran does not release official statistics on these deaths.<sup>843</sup> There are occasional media and NGO reports of deaths in custody, including for denial of access to appropriate medical care.<sup>844</sup> Prisoner-on-prisoner violence also occurs and the authorities

<sup>833</sup> 'Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights', Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.191, 20210407093348; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.14, 20210331113214 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132

<sup>834</sup> 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran (14 May 2021)', United Nations General Assembly, 14 May 2021, p.4, 20210624120211; 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.15, 20210331113214

<sup>835</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132

<sup>836</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135

<sup>837</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.62, 20200414083132.

Example: 'No news of detained student, Yashar Tohidi', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 24 June 2018, CXBB8A1DA30124; 'In Letter From Evin Prison, Narges Mohammadi Demands Judiciary Stop Violating Due Process Rights', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 18 December 2017, CXC90406619594

<sup>838</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2021 - Iran', Freedom House, 03 March 2021, 20210304155135; 'Freedom in the World 2020 - Iran', Freedom House, 4 March 2020, 20200306093523

<sup>839</sup> 'Iran: Report on political detainees during Iran protests', Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 23 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA20725

<sup>840</sup> Example: '82-Year-Old Iranian-American On Medical Furlough', Radio Farda (Czech Republic), 28 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA34376; 'Lawyer Calls on President Rouhani to Work For Human Rights Attorney Abdolfattah Soltani's Release', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 7 August 2018, CXBB8A1DA33135

<sup>841</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.11, 6 January 2020, 20200420081401; 'Let My Daughter See Her Sick Father, Pleads Narges Mohammadi's Mother', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 12 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35260; 'Urmia Prisoner Enters 11th Day of Hunger Strike', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 10 September 2018, CXBB8A1DA35127; 'Inside the Women's Ward: Mistreatment of Women Political Prisoners at Iran's Evin Prison', International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 20 June 2016, pp. 33–34, CIS38A80121123; 'Imprisoned Baha'i Teacher Told to Repent in Exchange for Furlough', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 5 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA147; 'Osman Mostafapour Deprived of Furlough and Parole after Serving 27 Years', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 27 September 2017, CXC90406614953; 'Changiz Ghadam Khairi Deprived of Medical Furlough', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 31 August 2017, CXC90406613102

<sup>842</sup> '54 inmates on the run after Iran prison break', Al Monitor, 30 March 2020, 20200401120033; 'Coronavirus outbreak in Iranian prisons', Human Rights Activists News Agency, 4 March 2020, 20200306143029

<sup>843</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.60, 20200414083132

<sup>844</sup> 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran', United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.2, p.12 & p.14, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.60, 20200414083132

sometimes fail to control this violence.<sup>845</sup> Deaths in custody are not usually investigated by the authorities.<sup>846</sup> During 2020, at least four prisoners were killed in custody due to torture or other ill-treatment.<sup>847</sup> During 2019, at least 15 people died in custody.<sup>848</sup> Human Rights Watch reported at least five deaths in custody between December 2017 and March 2018.<sup>849</sup> Political prisoners are particularly vulnerable; between 2003 and 2018, at least 29 political prisoners died in custody due to torture, denial of medical care or gross negligence by the authorities. This number does not include deaths in the general prison population or executions.<sup>850</sup> Several people detained during the November 2019 protests died in custody, reportedly after being tortured.<sup>851</sup>

## Death penalty

**The death penalty is a prescribed punishment and is frequently carried out.** Executions have been conducted after trials that violate the right to a fair trial.<sup>852</sup> Iran has the second highest rate of executions in the world (after China)<sup>853</sup> and has the highest rate of executions per capita.<sup>854</sup> During 2019, Iran was responsible for 38 per cent of all executions globally.<sup>855</sup> Over 80 offences carry the death penalty, from rape and murder, to drug smuggling, adultery, 'enmity against God' and 'corruption on earth'.<sup>856</sup> Very few executions for adultery, apostasy and blasphemy have occurred in recent years.<sup>857</sup> In August 2018, special courts were established to try 'economic crimes' which carry the death penalty.<sup>858</sup>

<sup>845</sup> ['Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.12, 20210331113214

<sup>846</sup> ['Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.14, 20210331113214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.60, 2020041408313

<sup>847</sup> ['Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 28 January 2021, p.9, 20210202143721

<sup>848</sup> '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.5, January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>849</sup> 'Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 - Iran, US Department of State, 13 March 2019, Section 1, 20190315162620

<sup>850</sup> 'Grave Concerns for Prisoners in Iran Amid Coronavirus Outbreak', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 28 February 2020, 20200303165619

<sup>851</sup> 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', UN Human Rights Council, 28 January 2020, p.19, 20200228105335; '23 Rights Organizations Urge UN to Take "Urgent Action" on Iran Protest Deaths', Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 16 December 2019, 20191217151636; '2019 Iran Human Rights Annual Report', Iran Human Rights Monitor, p.5, January 2020, 20200420081401

<sup>852</sup> ['Human Rights and Democracy: 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report'](#), United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 08 July 2021, 20210715104548; 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', United Nations General Assembly, 21 July 2020, p.14, 20200917082634

<sup>853</sup> 'Death sentences and executions 2019', Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, pp.8-9, 20200422083142

<sup>854</sup> 'Iran Human Rights Monitor Monthly Report, April 2020', Iran Human Rights Monitor, 3 May 2020, 20200504141214; 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.60, 20200414083132

<sup>855</sup> 'Death sentences and executions 2019', Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, p.9, 20200422083142

<sup>856</sup> 'Death sentences and executions 2019', Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, p.37, 20200422083142; 'Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran', Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 19, CIS7B83941441

<sup>857</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.60, 20200414083132

<sup>858</sup> 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - January 2019', United Nations Human Rights Council, 30 January 2019, p.3, 20190305091503; 'Report on the human rights situation covering 2018 – Iran', Amnesty International, 26 February 2019, p. 5, 20190308090902

**Iran does not publish statistics on executions, making accurate figures difficult to obtain.<sup>859</sup>**

Between January and July 2021, an estimated 192 people were executed.<sup>860</sup> Reports estimate that in 2020, between 255 and 267 people were executed (see [Figure 1](#) for historical execution trends in Iran between 2008-2020).<sup>861</sup> During 2020 and 2019, the majority of executions were for murder charges (approximately 80 per cent).<sup>862</sup> In 2019, 280 people were executed,<sup>863</sup> compared to 273 in 2018.<sup>864</sup> In September 2020, a man who had been on death row on murder charges for 29 years was executed.<sup>865</sup> During 2020 and 2021, several political prisoners have been executed including two men arrested in connection to the December 2017-January 2018 protests.<sup>866</sup> The death penalty is increasingly being used as a weapon of political repression against protestors, dissidents and members of minority groups.<sup>867</sup> In January 2018, Iran suspended the death sentences of an estimated 4,000 prisoners on death row after legislation was passed that retroactively limited drug-related death sentences to serious offences, such as armed drug trafficking.<sup>868</sup> Ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented among those executed, including Kurds and Baluchis.<sup>869</sup> There are 85 child offenders on death row<sup>870</sup> and during 2020, at least six child offenders were executed.<sup>871</sup>

<sup>859</sup> ['Human Rights and Democracy: 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report'](#), United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 08 July 2021, 20210715104548; ['DFAT Country Information Report – Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.60, 20200414083132; ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020'](#), Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331091914;

<sup>860</sup> ['Iran increases executions in July 2021'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 08 August 2021, 20210817131423

<sup>861</sup> ['Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020 – Death Penalty in Iran'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 03 January 2021, 20210104123643; ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020'](#), Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331091914

<sup>862</sup> ['Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020 – Death Penalty in Iran'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 03 January 2021, 20210104123643; ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020'](#), Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.11, 20210331091914; ['Annual Report on Execution in Iran 2019-2020'](#), Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), 09 October 2020, p.2, 20201012111111; ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2019'](#), Iran Human Rights, 1 April 2020, p.4, 20200402073515. Amnesty International provides similar information, estimating 78 per cent of executions in 2019 were for murder offences. See: ['Death sentences and executions 2019'](#), Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, p.37, 20200422083142

<sup>863</sup> Amnesty International provides slightly different (and somewhat vaguer) figures. They report that in 2019, there were 'at least' 251 recorded executions, a slight decline from the 'at least' 253 recorded in 2018. Please see: ['Death sentences and executions 2019'](#), Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, p.9, 20200422083142

<sup>864</sup> ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2019'](#), Iran Human Rights, 1 April 2020, p.4, 20200402073515

<sup>865</sup> ['Iran Human Rights Monitor, Monthly Report – September 2020'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 1 October 2020, 20201014140250

<sup>866</sup> ['Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020 – Death Penalty in Iran'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 03 January 2021, 20210104123643; ['Local Hit Squads, a Last Resort Solution to Crush Widespread Iran Protests'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor, 21 September 2020, 20200929115650; ['Iran hangs 27 people in January amid incessant use of death penalty'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 02 February 2021, 20210215131829

<sup>867</sup> ['Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights'](#), Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.194, 20210407093348

<sup>868</sup> ['Iran Suspends Thousands of Drug-Related Death Sentences After Years of Domestic and International Campaigning'](#), Center for Human Rights in Iran (United States), 10 January 2018, CXBB8A1DA344

<sup>869</sup> ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020'](#), Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, pp.85-86, 20210331091914; ['Amnesty International Report 2020/21: The State of the World's Human Rights'](#), Amnesty International, 06 April 2021, p.195, 20210407093348; ['Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020 - Iran'](#), United States Department of State, 30 March 2021, p.54, 20210331113214; ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2019'](#), Iran Human Rights, 1 April 2020, p.52, 20200402073515; ['Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - January 2019'](#), United Nations Human Rights Council, 30 January 2019, p.3, 20190305091503; ['Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran'](#), Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (United Kingdom), Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (United Kingdom), Minority Rights Group International (United Kingdom), 13 March 2018, p. 19, CIS7B83941441

<sup>870</sup> ['Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran'](#), United Nations General Assembly, 11 January 2021, p.3, 20210216093019

<sup>871</sup> ['Iran Human Rights Monitor Annual Report 2020 – Death Penalty in Iran'](#), Iran Human Rights Monitor (United States), 03 January 2021, 20210104123643; ['Death sentences and executions 2019'](#), Amnesty International, 21 April 2020, p.12, 20200422083142; ['Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2019'](#), Iran Human Rights, 1 April 2020, p.4, 20200402073515

## EXECUTION TRENDS IN THE LAST 13 YEARS

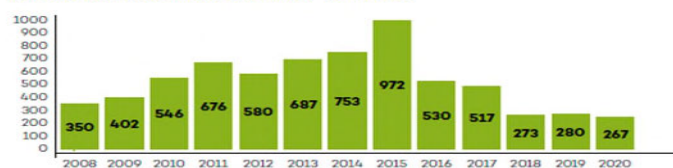


Figure 1: Total number of annual executions in Iran between 2008 and 2020<sup>872</sup>

## Double jeopardy

**Double prosecution is possible in Iran in limited circumstances.** Article 7(a) of the Penal Code stipulates that a crime committed by an Iranian national outside Iran must be 'deemed an offense under the law of the Islamic Republic of Iran.' Article 7(b) requires that, 'if the crime committed [abroad] is punishable by *ta'zir*<sup>873</sup>, the Iranian national must not have been already 'tried and acquitted in the place of the commission of the crime, or in the case of conviction the punishment is not, wholly or partly, carried out against him.'<sup>874</sup> There have been differing interpretations of this provision, with some commentators believing that a person could still be prosecuted and punished in Iran for a crime committed abroad, whether the accused has been convicted abroad or not.<sup>875</sup> For such a double proceeding to occur, a complaint would need to be made by a private party in Iran adversely impacted by the crime in question. It must also be a *qesas* or *hadd* crime.<sup>876</sup> There have been no recent reports of this provision having been applied in practice.<sup>877</sup> A person may have been executed in November 2015 for the murder of another Iranian national in California, but the details of this case are unclear.<sup>878</sup>

## Exiting Iran

### Exiting Iran illegally, including by bribing officials

The majority of reports indicate that while it may be possible to exit the country illegally through Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport by bribing officials, it would be an

<sup>872</sup> 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran 2020', Iran Human Rights, 30 March 2021, p.17, 20210331091914

<sup>873</sup> *Ta'zir* is an Islamic legal term that refers to crimes for which specific punishments have not been mandated by the Quran, and where punishments are left to the discretion of a judge. See "'Like the Dead in Their Coffins': Torture, Detention, and the Crushing of Dissent in Iran", Human Rights Watch (United States), June 2004, p. 51 n. 125, CIS17623; 'Tazir', Oxford Islamic Studies Online (United Kingdom), n.d., CX1B9ECAB7915; 'Mind-altering drugs given to death row prisoner Vahid Asghari, political prisoner Hossein Asghari, and other inmates in Evin prison', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 8 February 2012, CX281229; 'Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010: Iran', Freedom House, 3 March 2010, CX240569; 'The last executioner of children', Amnesty International USA, 27 June 2007, CX180047

<sup>874</sup> 'IHRDC Translation of the New Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Books One and Two', Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (United States), 8 April 2014, p. 6, CIS27755

<sup>875</sup> 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, p. 153, CISEC96CF12768

<sup>876</sup> 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, pp. 153–154, CISEC96CF12768. *Qesas* refers to 'retribution-in-kind connected with a criminal act', while *hadd* refers to 'offences against God carrying inalterable punishments prescribed by Shari'a law': 'Iran: Iranian teenager faces imminent execution: Alireza Pour Olfat', Amnesty International, 12 April 2016, CIS38A8012632

<sup>877</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report – Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.67, 20200414083132; 'Iran: Political Opposition Groups, Security Forces, Selected Human Rights Issues, Rule of Law: COI Compilation', Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, July 2015, pp. 174–175, CISEC96CF12768

<sup>878</sup> 'Iranian-American Hanged in Iran', Iran Human Rights (Norway), 1 December 2015, CXBD6A0DE16593; 'Iranian-American man hanged in Iran for alleged crime in California', Dehghan, S K, The Guardian, 3 December 2015, CXBD6A0DE16597

**expensive and very difficult task.** In 2013, a source at a western embassy in Iran would not rule out the possibility of a person being able to bribe his way out of the airport, however, 'the price would probably be as high as 8,000 – 10,000 Euros' and the 'right connections' would be important.<sup>879</sup> However, the same report notes the possibility of bribing one's way through the airport was rejected by a well-educated Iranian woman with links to international communities, referring to the very strict security protocols.<sup>880</sup> In February 2020, an academic specialising in Iranian state intelligence stated that 'bribery at the point of entry or exit is difficult.'<sup>881</sup> Although discussing the illicit drug trade, the academic notes that 'bribery exists but it is happening further up the pipeline that the official entry and exit points in the country (of which there are nearly a hundred).'<sup>882</sup> A 2009 fact-finding report by the Danish Immigration Service also quoted a western embassy source in Iran as stating that departing illegally through an airport would be 'very difficult due to the thorough security checks.'<sup>883</sup> However, the same source stated it might be possible to bribe airport personnel to leave illegally, although this would include bribing 'a lot of airport staff members' due to the number of security checks.<sup>884</sup> In 2018, an anonymous analyst noted that border security is very strict and 'it would be very costly to arrange an illegal departure, as it would require a high degree of complicity.'<sup>885</sup> The official in charge of passport control at Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) advised in 2009 that where a person does manage to leave Iran illegally, it is not due to computer errors but 'rather a human error – i.e. a person has been bribed.'<sup>886</sup> In 2005, DFAT stated that 'bribery is common in Iran and it is possible bribes may be paid to avoid arrest at the airport.'<sup>887</sup> DFAT clarifies, 'it is unlikely that a bribe could convince an airport official to allow a person on a blacklist or without a valid passport to board an international flight.'<sup>888</sup> In 2009, DFAT confirmed this advice remained valid.<sup>889</sup> In 2020, DFAT reported that leaving Iran illegally through 'irregular means' is 'more likely to be achievable overland...than via air or sea'.<sup>890</sup>

**Imam Khomeini International Airport (IKIA) has extensive, robust security procedures and it is not likely an Iranian could exit on a fraudulent passport.**<sup>891</sup> IKIA appears to have four security

<sup>879</sup> 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, p.67, CIS25114

<sup>880</sup> 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, p.67, CIS25114

<sup>881</sup> ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242

<sup>882</sup> ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242

<sup>883</sup> 'Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.', Danish Immigration Service, 01 April 2009, p.37, CIS17329

<sup>884</sup> 'Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.', Danish Immigration Service, Danish Immigration Service, 01 April 2009, p.37, CIS17329

<sup>885</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.9, CIS7B83941638

<sup>886</sup> 'Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.', Danish Immigration Service, Danish Immigration Service, 01 April 2009, p.37, CIS17329

<sup>887</sup> 'Exit procedures from Iranian airports', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 24 May 2005, CX124083

<sup>888</sup> 'Exit procedures from Iranian airports', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 24 May 2005, CX124083

<sup>889</sup> 'CIS Request No. IRN 9702: Iranian air force lieutenant involved in activities against Islam', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 18 May 2009, CX226385

<sup>890</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.69, 20200414083132

<sup>891</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.73, 20200414083132

checkpoints for departures<sup>892</sup> and airport authorities and the airlines conduct separate document checks.<sup>893</sup> While the airport is technically under the control of the Iran Airports Company, in practice, it is run by the IRGC.<sup>894</sup> The IRGC Intelligence Protection Organization also has an Aviation Protection Unit available for the airport.<sup>895</sup> DFAT notes that 'security procedures' at IKIA are 'robust' and include 'computerised cross-checking and multiple layers of physical security and document checking.'<sup>896</sup> According to DFAT, 'immigration officials are considered highly competent' and 'it is next to impossible to bypass security procedures at Imam Khomeini International Airport.'<sup>897</sup> In February 2020, an academic specialising in Iranian state intelligence advised that travellers are checked against electronic travel ban watch lists and 'old-style spotters', who memorize the facial features of wanted persons, are used.<sup>898</sup> DFAT assesses that the 'likelihood' of an individual exiting IKIA on a fraudulent passport is 'extremely low.'<sup>899</sup> In 2013, a source at a Western Embassy in Iran similarly stated that it was not possible to exit IKIA with a forged passport.<sup>900</sup> DFAT notes that it is easier to depart Iran on a fraudulent passport at land border crossings, where the higher volume of people stretch the capacity of immigration authorities.<sup>901</sup> Iran's extensive land borders are porous and more susceptible to bribery and corruption.<sup>902</sup> In particular, many Iranian asylum seekers have illegally crossed the border into Turkey.<sup>903</sup>

<sup>892</sup> ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242

<sup>893</sup> [Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures'](#), Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, pp.67-68, CIS25114

<sup>894</sup> ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242

<sup>895</sup> ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242

<sup>896</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.73, 20200414083132

<sup>897</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.73, 20200414083132

<sup>898</sup> ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242

<sup>899</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.73, 20200414083132

<sup>900</sup> [Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures'](#), Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, pp.67-68, CIS25114

<sup>901</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.73, 20200414083132

<sup>902</sup> ['DFAT Country Information Report - Iran'](#), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.16, p.17, p.21, 20200414083132; ['IRN200128.E - Iran: Exit and entry procedures at airports and land borders, particularly at the Imam Khomeini International Airport; whether authorities alert border officials of individuals they are looking for; incidence of bribery of Iranian border off'](#), Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 10 March 2020, 20200402124242; [Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures'](#), Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, pp.75-77, CIS25114; ['Trafficking in Persons Report 2020'](#), United States Department of State, 25 June 2020, p.268, 20200703092615

<sup>903</sup> ['Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.'](#), Danish Immigration Service, Danish Immigration Service, 01 April 2009, pp.12-15, CIS17329; [Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures'](#), Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, pp.74-75, CIS25114

## Travel bans

**Individuals subject to travel bans cannot legally leave the country.** Whether a travel ban is issued to those on bail depends on the nature of the crime and the stage of the court procedure.<sup>904</sup> Reasons for which a travel ban may be issued include in cases involving security concerns, financial debts, outstanding taxes and outstanding sentences awaiting enforcement.<sup>905</sup> However, one source states that in practice, since 2009 the authorities have appeared to lift these restrictions, allowing those with criminal cases pending to depart the country.<sup>906</sup> In serious cases where a judgement is made in absentia, a travel ban is automatically issued.<sup>907</sup> A person who is summoned to court can leave the country unless a travel ban has been issued.<sup>908</sup> Individuals subject to travel bans are registered on a list of people who cannot leave the country, which appears in the computer system used by airport personnel.<sup>909</sup> How quickly travel bans are issued depends on the case; while some may take up to three months, others are issued urgently.<sup>910</sup> DFAT notes that civil and political activists may be subjected to travel bans.<sup>911</sup> Iranians under travel bans are not aware of this until they attempt to pass through passport control at the airport at which point they are alerted and turned back.<sup>912</sup> The security organisations present in Iran's airports determine whether an Iranian citizen is allowed to leave the country.<sup>913</sup> According to an anonymous analyst, exiting the country when a travel ban has been issued is 'next to impossible.'<sup>914</sup>

## Exiting while on bail

**Conflicting information is available regarding whether an individual on bail can leave the country.**<sup>915</sup> Bail does not automatically lead to a travel ban.<sup>916</sup> Except in special cases, travel bans cannot last more than two years.<sup>917</sup> One source states that if a person is on bail, they cannot leave the country legally.<sup>918</sup> Another source states that whether a person can exit Iran whilst on bail depends on

<sup>904</sup> 'Iran - Release on temporary bail, court documents, exit from Iran - EASO COI Query Response', European Asylum Support Office (EASO), 21 April 2020, p.3, 20200423095708

<sup>905</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report - Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.69, 20200414083132; 'Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.', Danish Immigration Service, Danish Immigration Service, 01 April 2009, p.35, CIS17329

<sup>906</sup> 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, p.67, CIS25114

<sup>907</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.8, CIS7B83941638

<sup>908</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.8, CIS7B83941638

<sup>909</sup> 'Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc.', Danish Immigration Service, Danish Immigration Service, 01 April 2009, p.35, CIS17329; 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.8, CIS7B83941638

<sup>910</sup> 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, p.70, CIS25114

<sup>911</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report - Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.69 20200414083132

<sup>912</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report - Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.69 20200414083132

<sup>913</sup> 'DFAT Country Information Report - Iran', Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 14 April 2020, p.69 20200414083132

<sup>914</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.9, CIS7B83941638

<sup>915</sup> 'Iran - Release on temporary bail, court documents, exit from Iran - EASO COI Query Response', European Asylum Support Office (EASO), 21 April 2020, p.3, 20200423095708

<sup>916</sup> 'Iran - Release on temporary bail, court documents, exit from Iran - EASO COI Query Response', European Asylum Support Office (EASO), 21 April 2020, p.3, 20200423095708

<sup>917</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.18 CIS7B83941638

<sup>918</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.9, CIS7B83941638

the terms of the bail conditions and whether a travel ban has been issued.<sup>919</sup> A third source states that if a person out on bail leaves the country, the person who paid their bond will lose the surety they provided, indicating that people on bail have left the country.<sup>920</sup> In theory, when a person has served their penalty, they are free to leave the country. However, this principle is not always upheld in practice, particularly in cases involving political offences.<sup>921</sup>

### Status of outstanding charges

**If a sentence has been issued to an individual who has left the country, the case remains on the person's penal record until the sentence has been implemented; there is no statute of limitations or time bar.**<sup>922</sup> If the trial had not yet begun before the person left Iran, the case will generally not proceed or resume if the accused returns to Iran; however, this depends on the nature of the case.<sup>923</sup> There is a high degree of arbitrariness in the Iranian judicial system. If it is a serious case, the accused may be sentenced in absentia.<sup>924</sup>

<sup>919</sup> 'Iran: On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures', Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, Danish Refugee Council, Landinfo and Danish Immigration Service, 01 February 2013, p.69, CIS25114

<sup>920</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.9, CIS7B83941638

<sup>921</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.18, CIS7B83941638

<sup>922</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.9, CIS7B83941638

<sup>923</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.12, CIS7B83941638

<sup>924</sup> 'Iran: Judicial issues', Danish Refugee Council and Danish Immigration Service, February 2018, p.12, CIS7B83941638