



Human Rights Violations in Kurdistan of Iran



KMMK-G Interim Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran for the period:

1st January to 5 November, 2024

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* For information regarding the collected data, please contact KMMK-G.

Introduction

This report provides up-to-date data and analysis on the situations of human rights in the Iranian Kurdistan-majority provinces of Iran from January 1 until November 5, 2024.

Similar to previous Islamic Republic administrations, the current presidency of Pezeshkian continues its security approach toward Iranian Kurdistan and other ethnic and religious minorities. The persecution, execution, imprisonment, arbitrary detention, and arbitrary disappearances of Kurdish civil, cultural, environmental, and political rights activists and protestors as well as the extra-judicial executions of *Kolbaran* (border couriers or tradespersons) remain alarmingly high. This report specifically addresses the executions, political prisoners, indiscriminate killings of *Kolbaran* (border couriers) and landmine incidents affecting Kurdish civilians from January 1 until November 5, 2024.

Every year, KMMK-G provides the details of data collected in each aforementioned category in Kurdish and Persian attached to its annual report of human rights violations in Kurdistan.

Methodology

The Iranian authorities refuse to provide accurate data on executions, detentions, landmines, indiscriminate killings of *Kolbaran* (border couriers) and other issues affecting the members of Iran's national, ethnic and religious minorities, in particular. For instance, 86% of the recent executions are undeclared by the state. To get the most credible data, KMMK-G collects and verifies up-to-date information in the following ways: (a) conducts interviews with the families of the victims, (b) conducts interviews with the lawyers of the victims, (c) contacts and receives information from various institutions, on-the-ground local networks, as well as informants within authorities and governmental entities, (d) monitors the Islamic Republic's official statements, state media and publications, (e) receives information from informal news agencies and obtains on the ground information. The KMMK-G obtained consents from the families of the victims mentioned in this report.

The KMMK-G provides the list of the victims upon demand. It is worth noting that most Kurdish cities have double names, a Persian-official name and a Kurdish one. The names put in the parenthesis are the official Persian imposed names.

Executions in 2024

The share of executions of Kurdish and Balochi citizens remains and dramatically high as past years. According to the data collected by KMMK-G, from January 1 until November 5, 2024, over seven hundred-eighteen (718) prisoners including 20 women were executed in Iran. At least, one hundred sixty-five (165) including a woman were Kurds and eighty-seven (87) including a woman were Baluchis.

Fifty-six (56) were foreign nationals: twenty-four (24) were executed for drug related offenses, twenty-six (26) for murder and five (5) for rape and one (1) for the crime of “corruption on earth”. Virtually, all the foreigners were Afghans nationals including two Iraqis and one Germano-Iranian citizen.

On 5th November 2024, three Kurdish prisoners Mr. Edris Ilahi, Azad Shuja’ani and Mr. Rasul Ahmed (from Sulamaniye Iraqi Kurdistan) detained in Urumyeh Central Prison for almost one year were sentenced to death under the fabricated charges of spying for Israel. Actually, twenty-nine (29) other Kurdish political prisoners are at risk of imminent executions.

The fate of four Ahwaz-Arabs’ political prisoners on death row Ali Mujaddam, Mohamadreza Moghaddam, Moe’en Khanfari and Adnan Ghabishawi are unknown and the families weren’t informed about their whereabouts after reports of their imminent executions.

Despite the international urgent calls, Iranian authorities executed Reza Rasaei, a Kurdish protestor who was arbitrarily detained and sentenced during the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement on 6th August 2024 and five Kurdish political prisoners on 29th January 2024. Over 65% of Iran’s political executions are Kurds, 25% Baluchis and 10% Ahwaz-Arabs.

KMMK-G believes that whenever the regime is facing a power crisis internally or internationally, the number of executions increases in particular against ethnic minorities. Iran’s policy of execution is not about the administration of justice, it’s a policy of the control of populations, dissents and in particular against the Iranian national, ethnic & religious minorities.

Crimes and charges against Kurdish prisoners

Fifteen (15) Kurdish prisoners were executed for political and opinion related charges (4 accused of the fabricated crimes of spying for Israel, four others for the killings of members of IRGC and five others for opinion and belief) and Mr. Reza Rasaei for participation in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Sixty (60) prisoners were

executed for murder and another eighty-three (83) for drug-related offences. Six (6) others were executed for robbery. Two (2) prisoners died or killed in suspicious manner in prison.

Three hundred ninety-five (395) other prisoners including eighteen (18) women (10 for murder and 8 for drug related offenses) were executed from other provinces of Iran. KMMK-G hasn't been able to identify their ethnicities. Five for political related offenses: one (1) for participation in the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement and the other for threatening national security. Three (3) others were accused of murder of States' agents. One hundred eighty-one (181) for drug related offenses, and one hundred eighty-four (184) others for murder including eleven (11) women. Five (5) prisoners were executed for robbery. Ten (10) others for rape. Four (4) for distribution for alcohol. Four (4) prisoners died in suspicious circumstances while in detention.

Crimes and charges against Balochi prisoners

Sixty-five (65) for drug-related offenses. Sixteen (16) for murder. A protestor lost his life under torture in jail, for participation in the protests, and Sephar Shirani a young Balochi social media activist was arbitrarily detained and inhumanely killed under torture. Another Balochi prisoner was executed or the murder of an IRGC member.

Over 30% of the total executions of the Iranian prisoners in 2024 are Kurdish and Baluchi citizens while the Kurds and the Baluchis make up only 20% of Iran's 82 million population.

The state-sponsored violence and the application of death sentences against Iranian ethnic groups, in particular the Kurds and Balochis are increasing dramatically and disproportionately. While the Kurdish population constitutes only 15% of the total 82 million population, the number of Kurdish executions for political and security-related charges is over 60%.

Iran has one of the highest execution rates globally. Kurdish prisoners and other members of ethnic minorities face unfair trials and are often convicted in proceedings marked by a pattern of abuses including the use of confessions made under torture and the denial of access to a lawyer. The authorities use the death penalty to control the minorities and the population. We recall the following recommendations for third party states during the upcoming UPR to urge Iran to:

- *Immediately impose a moratorium on the use of the death penalty*
- *Publish (or at least communicate to OHCHR) data on the use of the death penalty, including but not limited to, the number of people sentenced to death, the number of people on death row, the nature of the offences and the reasons why they were*

convicted, the courts that convicted them, the number of executions carried out, as well as information on planned executions, disaggregated by age, gender, disability, ethnicity and religion of those convicted and executed

- *Release all political prisoners, including imprisoned human rights defenders, lawyers and anti-death penalty activists and cease the criminalisation of human rights advocacy, including on the issue of the death penalty*
- *End the practice of forced confessions and torture*
- *Put a permanent end to public executions*
- *Ensure the right of anyone sentenced to death to seek pardon or commutation, in line with Iran's ICCPR obligations*
- *Pending legal reform, immediately halt the executions of all child offenders and ensure that all child offenders on death row are automatically granted fair retrials in line with principles of juvenile justice and without possible sentencing to death*
- *Remove the mandatory sentencing regimes so that judges may individualize sentencing and courts may properly consider mitigation evidence for every person charged with a capital offense, including evidence of trauma, domestic and gender-based violence, as well as psycho-social and intellectual disabilities.*

Political Prisoners/Detentions

Similar to previous years, the share of Kurdish political imprisonment remains dramatically high in 2024 (from 1st January 2024 until November 5, 2024).

According to KMMK-G's collected data, from January 1 until November 5, 2024, at least, six hundred (600) including thirty-five (35) women were arbitrarily detained. The absolute majority of Kurdish citizens were detained for membership of Kurdish political parties mainly Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), Kurdish rights related activities and the Newroz, the Kurdish 2724 New Year celebrations.

The Kurdish community along with Baluchis remain two of the most suppressed groups in the country, with individuals being persecuted, arrested and in many cases sentenced to death due to their alleged activism. Similar to previous years, the Kurdish political prisoners represent half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran.

Ten (10) Kurdish religious figures known as Mamosta were also arbitrarily detained for their support to the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement.

On 3rd January 2024, Kurdish religious figures Mr. Hassan Amini and Mr. Hashem Hossain Panahi, members of Association of Qur'an were prevented to travel to Qatar to attend the annual meeting of World Islamic Union of Religious figures.

Since the beginning of Woman, Life, Freedom Movement in Iranian Kurdistan on mid-September 2022, at least, 350 Kurdish women have been arbitrarily detained and many under torture, unfair trials, have been sentenced to lengthy and harsh imprisonment in Iran. In 2024, thirty-five Kurdish women were detained.

- 1) **Jina Modares Gorji** is a prominent Iranian-Kurdish journalist and women's rights activist from Sine (Sanandaj), Iranian Kurdistan. On 23rd May 2024, the

Sanandej Islamic Revolutionary Court, Branch 1, under the presidency of Judge Karami has imposed a 21-year prison sentence and exile to Hamedan Central Prison to Jina. The verdict includes 10 years for "forming an illegal group with the intent to overthrow the government," another 10 years for "collaborating with hostile groups and governments," and a year for "propaganda against the government."

Later, on 7 October 2024, the Sanandej Court of Appeal reduced her prison sentence to twenty-eight months. The Court of Appeal dropped the charge of "collaborating with hostile groups and states" and reduced the sentence to one year for "propaganda against the state" and 16th months for "forming an illegal group with the aim of overthrowing the state". Jina was imprisoned on 2nd November 2024 to serve her sentence.



- 2) **Ms. Pakhshan Azizi** is a social worker and women's rights activist who has spent nearly seven years providing assistance and aid to women affected by ISIS in Syria and Iraq. On August 3, 2024, she was sentenced to death by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari (who is under human rights sanctions by the European Union and the United States). The charges against Ms. Pakhshan Azizi included "*baghy*" or "armed rebellion against the Islamic system."

Pakhshan is facing new charges in Evin prison for "causing troubles" during the day of Iran's presidential election.



3) **Ms. Serwe Pourmohammadi** was arrested during the Jina revolution due to her involvement with the Nojin Cultural Association.

On 26 October 2023, she was informed by her lawyers that she had been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment with the consideration of previous detention days by the first Branch of Sanandaj's Revolutionary Court (presided by Judge Bahman Karami).



- 4) **Ms. Soma Pourmohammadi** is a Kurdish language lecturer and a member of the board of directors of the Nojin cultural-social Association in Sine (Sanandaj). She has been sentenced to a total of 11 years in prison and exile to Kermanshah (Kermashan) on two separate charges by Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj, presided over by Chief Judge Karami, and exile to Kermanshah Central Prison on charges of “forming groups against national security.”



- 5) **Ms. Mujgan Kawussy** is a political prisoner and a linguistic and ethnic rights activist from Kalardasht, Mazandaran. Ms. Kawussy has been sentenced by the first branch of the Revolutionary Court of Sari to 39 months in prison on the charge of "assembly and collusion against the security of the country", to 15 months and one day in prison on the charge of "insulting the leadership", to 8 months in prison on charge of "propaganda activity against the regime" and acquitted of the charge of "corruption on earth".



Warishe Morad, a Kurdish political prisoner

Ms. Warishe Moradi, a Kurdish political activist, was violently detained on August 1, 2023, by Ministry of Intelligence agents in Sine (Sanandaj) the capital of Iranian Kurdistan. She spent 13 days at a security detention center in Sanandaj in Kurdistan province, where she was pressured and threatened into making forced confessions. She was then transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, where she spent nearly five months in solitary confinement before being transferred to the women's ward of Evin prison.

On June 16, 2024, Moradi went on trial in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Court in Tehran on the charge of "rebellion," which carries the death penalty. On 9 November 2024, we learned that the Judge Abolqasem Salavati, a notorious hardliner judge nicknamed "the Hanging Judge" has issued the death sentence to Ms. Moradi for charges of *baghi* (armed rebellion).



KMMK-G calls on the United Nations to urge on the Iranian authorities to:

- **Immediately overturn all death sentences against political prisoners, including Ms. Warishe Moradi, Ms. Pakhshan Azizi.**
- **Halt all executions and the issuance of death sentences, given the systemic violations of due process endemic to the Islamic Republic's capital punishment practices.**
- **End the violent repression and unlawful prosecution of women activists, who are being brutally targeted for their activism.**

Persecution of Kurdish Mamosta or religious leaders

Persecution of Kurdish religious figures known as *Mamosta* during the Life, Woman, Freedom movement has increased dramatically. Kurdistan provinces similar to Baluchistan and Turkmen Sahra who are predominantly *Sunni* Muslims are subjected to multilayers of discrimination and persecution.

In Iranian Kurdistan, religion teachings and religion courses are restricted and *Sunni* religious courses are taught by *Shia* religious figures. Nomination of *imams* or *Mamosta* and authorization of building *Sunni* mosques in Iranian Kurdistan are managed by Islamic Grand Center in Kurdistan and its controlled by *Shia* clerics.

As also highlighted by FFMI, Kurdish *Mamosta* with prominent voices were routinely silenced through summons, arrests, detention, restrictions on freedom of movement and religious practices, prosecution. In 2024, at least, ten (10) prominent Kurdish religious figures (mamosta) who supported publicly the Woman, Life, Freedom movement were arbitrarily detained and they are Mamosta Ali Bahrami (Mariwan), Mamosta Hossein Alimoradi (Sine), Mamosta Abdula Barzger (Sardasht), Mamosta Ahmed Ahmedian (Tikab), Mamosta Hamed Abbasi (Sine), Mamosta Hassan Khezri (Sardasht), Mamosta Salamd Mahmudian (Sardasht), Mamosta Saedjamaladdin Waji (Piranshar) and Mamosta Alibahrami (Mariwan). Mamosta Mohammad Khehrnejad a prominent and vocal Kurdish leader, from Wermê (West Azerbaijan) was sentenced to death penalty for the crime of "corruption on earth" for delivering a speech during the funeral of a protester in Wermê, during which he condemned the killing of protesters and criticized the Government. Later, on June 2024, his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment after he reportedly expressed "remorse and pledged good behaviour."

Mamosta Seifollah Hosseini, another prominent Kurdish religious figure from Jauwanrud was also arrested by security forces after he gave a speech at the funeral of

killed protesters in Javanroud. On 25 January 2023, he was sentenced by the Hamedan Special Clergy Court to 17 years imprisonment, 74 lashes, being defrocked and two years of exile to Ardabil.

Extra-Judicial Executions of border couriers and Balochis' fuel porters

KMMK-G has received reports of extra-judicial executions of sixty-two (62) border couriers known as *kolbaran* from January 1 until November 5, 2024, with another two hundred forty-three (243) individuals working as *kolbar* injured at the border due to incidents such as direct shootings of border officials and landmine explosions among other things. This brings the total number of incidents reported regarding shootings and discriminatory killings of *Kolbaran* to three hundred-five (305) during the period under consideration.

Moreover, many *kolbaran* (border couriers) were arrested and their goods were confiscated by the authorities thus far in 2024. In addition, hundreds of horses belonging to Kurdish *Kolbaran* were also shot dead.

For the same period, two hundred and sixteen (216) Balochi sukhtbar or fuel porters were killed by Iranian border officials. Another one hundred twenty-nine (129) were also injured which makes a total of 345 casualties including 9 child fuel porters.

Due to high rates of unemployment and contamination caused by landmines and explosive remnants of the Iran-Iraq war that seriously hamper the daily lives of civilians, particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders, the Kurdish youths from the four Kurdistan provinces of Kermashan (Kermanshah), Sine (Kurdistan), Ilam and Wermê (West Azerbaijan) engage in *kolbari* carrying commodities, such as tea, tobacco and fuel to earn a living.

In this regard, we call on third state parties to echo the recent recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee for Iran to

Ensure that provisions governing the use of force are in line with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, and the Committee's general comment No. 36 (2018), which requires that the use of lethal force by law enforcement be resorted to only when strictly necessary in order to protect life or prevent serious injury from an imminent threat; and provide training based on these principles and guidelines.

Landmine Incidents Affecting Kurdish Civilians

Based on KMMK-G's data, thus far this year (January 1 till November 5, 2024), a total of twenty-nine (29) citizens have fallen victims to landmine explosions in the Iranian Kurdistan. Six (6) civilians were killed and twenty-three (23) were wounded due to landmines explosions and unexploded remnants of the Iran-Iraq war, which ended a long time ago in 1988. Twelve (12) from Kermashan (Kermanshah), two (2) from Ilam, four (4) from Sine (Sanadej) and six (6) from Wermê (western Azerbaijan). Five (5) of the victims were Afghan nationals who were trying to cross the Kurdistan border into Turkey.

It is also important to note that according to Iran's official statistics, during to eight years-long Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), more than 20 million landmines were planted in the Iranian Kurdistan and Khuzestan provinces that seriously hamper the daily lives of civilians, particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders. Essentially, an area of about 4 million and 200 thousand hectares is contaminated by mines and explosive materials.

Iranian Kurdistan is the most affected area by landmines and undetonated ammunitions. The reason for this is the armed conflict of 1980-1993 between state forces and Kurdish combatants. Reportedly, the Iranian Army planted an unknown number of mines around their barracks and compounds in many villages and cities in Kurdistan. Recent reports also indicate that Iran continues to plant landmines in Kurdistan.

Various international bodies and entities such as the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Iran (2010) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (January 2016) have made observations and recommendations, urging the Islamic Republic to clear its territory of landmines and all the remnants of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Nevertheless, despite international and domestic efforts, the Islamic Republic refuses to cooperate with international NGOs and entities and to ratify the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty.

Almost 40 years after the end of the Iraq-Iran war, huge areas are still today contaminated by mines and explosive materials. Since January, we have registered 29 casualties in Iranian Kurdistan four provinces. According to a UN report, **over 40% of landmines victims are children under 13 years old.**

We reiterate the Committee on¹ the Rights of the Child's recommendation from 2016 and call on you to urge Iran to clear its entire territory from landmines and all remnants of the war with the support of international organizations and to Commit to Complete Mine Ban Treaty obligations by ratifying the Ottawa Convention.

Education in Mother Language and Cultural Rights

Despite the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendation and call to Iran in 2011 to ensure that all members of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities can enjoy their

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, 2015: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/795162?v=pdf>

own culture and use their language in media and schools, the Iranian regime continues to ignore and suppress the Kurdish and other linguistic and cultural activists.

Historically, the suppression of minority languages in favor of the Persian language goes back to the beginning of the 20th century and has continued from the Pahlavi dynasty to the Islamic Republic. For nearly a century, assimilatory policies have been enforced, prominently marked by the imposition of Persian as the sole language of instruction in state schools. Additionally, these policies encompass alterations in geographic names, the suppression of minority language publications and cultural associations, and the persistent practice where civil registry officials continue to deny children from ethnic minorities the right to be named in their native languages.

Under Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution, Persian is the only official language in the country. However, the same article stipulates that “the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian.” The phrasing of this article effectively restricts the domains in which languages other than Persian can be used, including in schools where teaching in a minority language is permitted only for literature classes. This provision does not involve guarantees that children belonging to linguistic minorities will have access to education in their mother tongue.

However, in practice, there have been no elementary, middle, or high schools in the public system that teach the foremost minority languages, such as Kurdish, Baluchi or Azeri-Turkish. On the contrary, the Ministry of Education has reportedly circulated reminders to teachers and school administrators that the use of Kurdish and Turkish languages inside public schools is forbidden.

Kurdish, Azerbaijani-Turks and Baloch language activists are facing arbitrary detention for teaching their respective mother tongues. In April 2024, four members of Kurdish Nojin Cultural Association in Kurdistan have been arrested and imprisoned for teaching the Kurdish language.

*In 2021, Zara Mohammadi, a teacher of Kurdish language and literature who offered private lessons to children in Kurdistan Province, was sentenced to 10 years in prison due to her activities. In April 2024, four Kurdish human rights defenders were each sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment in relation to their peaceful efforts to advance socio-cultural rights, highlighting the severe challenges faced by advocates of minority education in Iran.*²

- **ensure the availability of education in the mother tongue of ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups as a language of instruction in public education. and strengthen its efforts to ensure access to education for children belonging to ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups and to tackle school dropout rates among them.** (CERD)

² <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session95/A-HRC-WGAD-2022-82-AEV.pdf>

Jina (Mahsa) Amini: Woman, Life, Freedom's Nationwide Protests and crackdowns in Iranian Kurdistan

This part of the report provides up-to-date data on the recent situation of the unrest in Iranian Kurdistan four majority Kurdish populated provinces of Ilam, Kermashan (Kermanshah), Sine (Kurdistan) and Wermê (Western Azerbaijan)³ for the period of 16 September 2022 until November 2024. It sheds light on the number of Kurdish protestors killed, injured, and detained.

The Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva (KMMK-G) has been able to collect testimonies of the victims by interviewing forty (40) protestors who were released on bail or who were able to flee to Iraqi Kurdistan. The KMMK-G has also been able to collect on-the-ground information through its on-the-ground local networks and contacts in Kurdish provinces.

The recent nationwide protests were triggered by the shocking death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, a 22-year-old woman from Iranian Kurdistan, while in custody. Jina Amini was arrested by Tehran's "morality" police for non-compliance with the country's discriminatory and abusive compulsory veiling laws, and her death occurred on 16 September 2022, just days after her arrest.

The protests started in Sine, city of Saqqez, during the funeral of Jina Amini and then followed by a general strike in all Kurdistan provinces on 19th September 2022. On the same evening, the general strike swiftly transformed into street protests throughout Iranian Kurdistan, marked by the chant "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî" (Woman, Life, Freedom), voiced by young women as they removed their Islamic veils. The protests rapidly spread to other major cities in Iran, and this time the slogan "Zan, Zendegi, Azadi" was chanted in Farsi by Iranian women as they also removed their veils. The demands of the protestors were broadened for fundamental political and social change towards the protection and fulfilment of human rights.

Various UN mechanisms such as CERD and the FFMI concluded in their reports in 2024 that discrimination, marginalisation and violence against ethnic and ethno-religious minorities is systemic and structural in Iran.

A disproportionate number of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, in particular Ahwazi Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmens live below the poverty line. The provinces populated by Turkmen, Arabs and Kurds have the highest rates of unemployment. In some parts of Baluchistan, the unemployment rate is as high as 60 percent. Baluchistan also has the highest recorded illiteracy and infant mortality rates in the country. And the list goes on.

³ West Azerbaijan Province, Kurdistan Province, Kermanshah Province, Ilam Province and parts of Hamadan Province and Lorestan Province either have a majority or sizable population of Kurds and together they are commonly known as "Iranian Kurdistan".

This long-standing marginalization and economic neglect of minorities is echoed by a policy of oppression. The FFMI and the CERD, both reported that ethnic and religious minorities in Iran, in particular Kurd and Baluch minorities, have been disproportionately impacted by the Government's crackdown during the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement since 2022. Both the FFM and the CERD came to the conclusion that the severe deprivation of minority's rights amount to persecution. We call on third state parties to urge Iran to:

- **Amend the Constitution to ensure recognition, equal rights and protection for all ethnic and religious minorities in Iran;**
- **Take effective measures to combat structural discrimination against members of ethnic and ethno-religious minorities and to remove all restrictions that prevent members of these groups from fully enjoying their human rights (**

Backgrounds

Iran

Iran is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a population of over 80 million composed mainly of Persians, Kurds, Baluchis, Azerbaijani-Turks, Turkmens, and Ahwaz-Arabs.

There are no official and reliable statistics on the exact number of the members of ethnic & religious minorities in Iran. However, according to the former Minister of Education, over 70 per cent of Iran's pupils are bilingual, with Persian still not used as the primary language by children even after first grade.

Despite forming large segments of Iran's society, non-Shia Muslims and non-Persians are largely excluded from political life. They suffer from marginalization and economic neglect, and obstacles in access to economic, social and cultural rights.

The UN Fact-Finding Mission on Iran and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also both concluded earlier this year that Iran is severely depriving minorities of their fundamental rights, and that this severe deprivation amount to **persecution** under human rights law.

This persecution of minorities must end immediately, just like the persecution of women and girls in the country must end, and we need states to be vocal about the situation of minorities and women during the Iran's upcoming UPR.

We need data and transparency, we encourage you to echo the recent recommendations from the CERD and the Human Rights Committee for Iran to collect and provide reliable, updated and comprehensive statistics and disaggregated data on the demographic composition of the population, based on the principle of self-identification, including on ethnic and ethno-religious minorities and on their socioeconomic situation of ethnic and ethno-religious minorities

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- **Amend the Constitution to ensure recognition, equal rights and protection for all ethnic and religious minorities in Iran; (FFMI, August 2024)**
- **Take effective measures to combat structural discrimination against members of ethnic and ethno-religious minorities and to remove all restrictions that prevent members of these groups from fully enjoying their human rights (CERD, September 2024)**

Iranian Kurdistan

Iranian Kurdistan reaches a population of about 13 million, or 17.5% of the population of Iran (82 million). Iranian Kurdistan is composed of four main provinces: Sine (Kurdistan), Kermashan (Kermanshah), Ilam and Wermê (Western Azerbaijan)⁴. In addition, around two million Kurds live in Khorasan (1.5 million) and Tehran (0.5 million).⁵ Kurdish cities have often two names, one Persian name imposed by the State and a Kurdish historical name. The names in parenthesis are Persian-imposed names.

Kurdistan encompasses a diverse religious landscape, with a mosaic of followers including Sunnis, Shias, Yarsanis, Chaldo-Assyrians (Chaldean Catholics), Jews, Bahá'ís, Zoroastrians, Gonabadi Dervishes, and members of various religious brotherhoods such as Ghaderi, Naqshbandi, and others.

⁴ Iranian Kurdistan geographically include also Hamadan and Lorestan Provinces. Hamadan have 8.33% Kurdish population and Lorestan 27.92% Lak.

⁵ Institut Kurde de Paris: <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004>

Baluchistan

Baluchis are virtually all Sunni Muslims. They are estimated to be 5-6 million but the Iranian state, Persian media in diaspora as well as Iranian Human Rights Groups estimate their number to be only a little over one million.

Baluchistan geography:

Reza Shah in 1928, in a nationalistic and centralized policy, supported by the British, undertook an assimilation strategy of non-Persians by demographic changes, disintegrating territories, changing names, and annexing parts of one ethnic territory to another in order to divide and govern. Baluchistan known as “British Baluchistan” before its takeover by Iran with the support of the British in 1922, was disintegrated and parts of it were annexed to the neighbouring provinces of South Khorasan, Kerman and Hormozgan.

Today both Iranian official media and diaspora Persian media call Baluchistan: Sistan or Zahedan but not Iranian Baluchistan which covers at least 3 provinces.

The Baluchis are perceived as “*malakh-khur*” (insect eaters) and “*biaban-gard*” (wanderers), dehumanized and treated by the state and its media as people not worth living. Dozens of thousands of Baluchi children are deprived of national ID cards, thus deprived of education, access to health care and public life.

Ahwaz-Arabs

The Ahwazi-Arab people are perceived and framed by the state media as “*Susmar-khur*” (lizard eaters), “*chadur nisheen*” (tribals and uncivilized), “camel riders”, “A’arabs” or “savages” or “Arab zaban” (Arab speakers) and “non-indigenous people of that very rich part of Iran”. The name Ahwaz is not used, they call it Khuzestan (and Ahwaz as a part of Khuzestan), which refers only to a small part of Ahwaz. The State media refers to Ahwaz as the Southwest of Iran. The Ahwazi-Arabs are also living in Bushehr, Mahshahr, Bandar Abbas and Abadan. Their number is estimated to be 5-7 million, but the regime talks about one million and a half. While Ahwaz is one of the richest parts of Iran in terms of oil and gas, it is the most impoverished part of Iran along with Kurdistan and Baluchistan. Over 70% of Ahwazi-Arabs are Shiite.

Turkmens

Turkmens, similar to the Kurds and Baluchis, are mostly Sunnis and their number is estimated to be 4 million. They live in Turkmen Sahra (Desert, Forest, Caspian Sea and Khorasan mountains), Gulestan, North Khorasan (Kurds, Turkmens), Razavi Khorasan, and South Khorasan.

The Iranian Turkmens are perceived as “*rahzan*” (bandits), “*gharatgar*” (looters), “*mohajem*” (invadors), “*mohajer*” (immigrants), and “non-Iranians and non-indigenous people of the region”. Turkmens are also suffering from a high level of discrimination

in access to education and healthcare, high rates of unemployment, and a lack of industry or investment by the state. The main occupations of Turkmens are animal husbandry (*damdari*) and fishing (*sayyadi*).

Turkmen sayyads (Fishermen) in the port of Bandar Turkmen, similar to the Kurdish *kulbars* (border couriers) or Baluchi *sukhtbars* (fuel porters) are victims of extrajudicial killings by IRCG.

Azerbaijani-Turks

Azerbaijani-Turks number is estimated to be between 17-20 million. They are virtually all Shiite. Azerbaijan like Kurdistan, Baluchistan, Ahwaz and Turkmen Sahra have suffered as a consequence of Reza Shah's demographic changes and divisions. Reza Shah divided Azerbaijan to Eastern Azerbaijan and Western Azerbaijan and annexed and mixed Kurdish and Turkish cities. Azerbaijani-Turks mainly live in Ardabil, Zanjan and other cities such as Tehran.

Azerbaijani Turks are depicted in Iranian official media and newspapers as "intellectually challenged", "sub-human members of society" and often referred to as "Turk-i khar" (donkey Turks), "qazanfar" (dim people with low IQ), "cockroaches" and made fun of in state affiliated mass media. As an example, in May 2006, Iran Newspaper, the official daily newspaper of the government of Iran, depicted the Azerbaijanis in a cartoon as "cockroaches" speaking Turkish.

Statistics

There are no official and reliable statistics on the exact number of Kurds in Iran and the Near East states where they live. Despite multiple demands from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2006⁶ and in 2010, Iran refuses to carry out a study/census based on ethnicity and religion.⁷ Current estimates are based on population statistics for each department or governorate in the Kurdish majority settlement area.

In 2009, Hamid Reza Haji Babai, the then Minister of Education, stated that 70 per cent of Iran's pupils are bilingual, with Persian still not used as the primary language by children even after first grade.⁸ He further claimed that students experience academic

⁶ UN CERD Committee :

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2F63%2FCO%2F6&Lang=en

⁷ The Committee urges the State party to carry out a study of members of all such communities:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2F63%2FCO%2F18-19&Lang=en

⁸ UNPO (2021). UNPO: Braanz: Towards a multilingual Iran! [online] unpo.org. Available at: <https://unpo.org/article/22149> . See also: Moinipour, S. (2022). View of The Islamic Republic of Iran and children's right to education: availability & accessibility. [online] Humanrer.org. Available at: <https://humanrer.org/index.php/human/article/view/3929/3984>

difficulties, which arise during the first grade, because of language barriers and they continue with these same issues in the later stages of their education. In reality, over 50 percent of Iran's population neither identifies as Persian nor speaks the language as their first language.

Since the inception of the Islamic Republic and Ayatollah Khomeini's declaration of holy war against the Kurds, they have been framed, stigmatized, and perceived as anti-Islam, anti-revolutionary, ashraf (pagans), violent, 'separatists,' 'rebels,' and agents of Israel or the West.

Discrimination, violence and hate speech against Kurdish people and other minorities in Iran are inherent to the inception of the Islamic Republic. On the 19th of August 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini, in an incendiary rhetoric, declared a holy war against Kurdish people and framed them as anti-Islam and Anti-revolutionary because they were simply for a secular, federal and democratic state and refused the establishment of an Islamic State in Iran. Since then, the Kurds have been stigmatized, marginalized, and excluded from any participation in public life and perceived and treated as a hostile group by the Iranian state and its media.

Conclusion

The Islamic Republic does not seem to even remotely be willing to stop its outrageous human rights violations. Iran's policy of instilling fear and intimidation among members of ethnic nationalities, in particular Kurds and Balochis, remains actively and aggressively in place thus far in 2024. Meanwhile, the emergence of the Kurds as an inevitable part of a viable solution to a stable Middle East, increases the Islamic Republic's paranoia of its Kurdish populations at home, despite Kurds' modest request for equality and federalism.

The Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as the Islamic judiciary and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), fear even the slightest signs of empowered national and ethnic minorities, Kurds in particular. Yet, the Supreme Leader remains the ultimate decision-maker of the country. In short, despite repeated calls from the United Nations to the Iranian authorities regarding human rights violations, the Islamic Republic's policy to suppress Kurdish populations remains as forceful as ever in 2023.

The recent crackdowns on the Kurdish civil activists in Kurdistan, which emerged in September 2022 after the death of Jina Amini, attest to the growing frustration of ordinary Iranian citizens with economic and political hardships in the country. Instead of effectively addressing these grievances, the Islamic Republic responds by detaining peaceful protestors and intensifying existing repressive measures. Recently, the state has submitted two bills to reform the laws on assembly and gathering and the 1373

(1994-1995) law on holding arms, which aims to harden the conditions of gathering and offering “carte blanche” to armed forces to eliminate citizens.⁹

About KMMK-G

The Kurdistan Human Rights Association - Geneva (KMMK-G) aims to promote democracy, respect for human rights and social development in and beyond Kurdistan of Iran.

To that end, the Association commits itself to fight against any form of discrimination towards ethnic and religious minorities within the region, defend political prisoners, fight for the abolition of the death penalty, and promote women’s and children’s rights. In addition, the KMMK-G intends to increase public awareness on the situation of human rights in all Kurdish regions and to promote the rights and integration of the Kurds wherever they live.

Established in Geneva in 2006, the KMMK-G constitutes a bridge between the Kurdish civil society, the United Nations Agencies and NGOs and participates actively in all the sessions of the Human Rights Council, the ESCR, the CPR Committee, the UPR and the UN Forum on minority issues and presents them with reports on the situation of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran (www.kmmk-ge.org), (<http://www.kmmk-ge.org/?p=426&lang=en>). Moreover, the Association frequently gets in touch with various United Nations organs in order to submit reports to them on the situation of human rights in the Kurdistan of Iran.

The KMMK-G is, therefore, a recognized source of information. Its reports are published on the website of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner of Human Rights. The Association also frequently publishes articles in Kurdish and Iranian media.

The KMMK-G is also active within the Geneva and Swiss communities. Swiss political parties regularly consult with the Association about the Kurdish issue and immigrants’ integration. Furthermore, the KMMK-G supports the Kurdish diaspora living in exile by organising conferences, cultural events and language courses.

⁹⁹⁹ Draft of laws reforming holding guns:

<https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010328000180/%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AD%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A8%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%AD-%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF>

<https://www.peace-mark.org/135-13>

Law draft to reform gathering laws:

<https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14020219000552/%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AD%D9%87-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%BE%DB%8C%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7>