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Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Iran – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

01 July 2024

Early presidential election: Run-off required after first vote

The election of the President of the Islamic Republic took place on 28.06.24. According to media reports, the electoral authority stated that turnout was historically low at around 40% (approx. 24 million votes cast by an electorate of around 61 million). As a result, the candidate Massud Pezeshkian, who is regarded as moderate to reform-oriented, received around 42.5% of the vote and Saeed Jalili, who is categorised as loyal to the party and strictly conservative, received around 38.7%, thus no absolute majority has been achieved. According to Iranian law, a run-off election is required, which is to take place on 05.07.24, preceded by a short campaign phase.

The early presidential election became necessary following the fatal helicopter crash of incumbent President Ebrahim Raisi on 19.05.24. On election day, there also was a choice of five more of the six candidates pre-approved by the so-called Guardian Council (cf. BN of 10.06.24). Activists at home and abroad had called for an election boycott via social media.¹

Prison sentence for a participant in 2019 protests

According to media reports from 26.06.24, a participant in the 2019 protests was sentenced to two years and seven months in prison by a criminal court. Referring to a Kurdish human rights organisation, it was reported that charges against the man from Bukan (Kordestan province) included endangering national security by incitement and provocation as well as propaganda against the Islamic Republic. The convicted man had been detained in Bukan Central Prison from January to the end of February 2024 and was subsequently released on bail until the judgement was handed down. He had first been arrested by security forces in 2019.²

Convictions after fire in Tehran's Evin prison in 2022

According to media reports of 24.06.24, forty prison inmates were sentenced to several years in prison and fines, in some cases to lashes and additional sentences, in connection with an arson incidence in Tehran's Evin Prison in 2022. Two of those involved will also be deported from Iran, the reports said. With reference to a human rights organisation, it was reported that the convicts had been accused of, among other things, damaging property, disruption of prison rules and disobedience to prison officers, but in some cases also intentional homicide.

On 15.10.22, fire had broken out in Tehran's Evin prison following a conflict between inmates and prison staff. According to media reports, several people died and others were injured (cf. BN of 17.10.22).³

08 July 2024

Presidential election: Pezeshkian becomes new president

The run-off election between the two presidential candidates Massud Pezeshkian and Saeed Jalili took place on 05.07.24. Pezeshkian emerged victorious with around 53.7 % of the vote, making him the new president.

According to the Iranian electoral authority, voter turnout for the run-off election was around 49.8%. In the first round of voting, voter turnout had been around 40% (cf. BN of 01.07.24).

The 69-year-old Pezeshkian, who hails from the province of West Azerbaijan, is considered moderate to reformist in orientation. However, following his admission as a candidate, he also spoke out clearly in favour of the current balance of power with revolutionary leader Ali Khamenei as the head of state. Pezeshkian's announcements during the election campaign included the improvement of relations to the West, the lifting of sanctions and an economic upturn as well as the curbing of state corruption. He also criticised internet censorship and the treatment of women with regard to the Muslim dress code (hijab obligation) and campaigned for a new relationship of trust between the people and the government.

According to the press and observers, it remains unclear to what extent an actual change of course can be expected with the new president. This will largely depend on the revolutionary leader and the influence of the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), an elite state-run armed organisation with extensive economic power.

According to media reports, the new president will be sworn in at the beginning of August 2024 and will then have 15 days to form a cabinet which is to be confirmed by the conservative-majority parliament on 22.08.24. Following the election results, Supreme Leader Khamenei called for moderation between the rival political camps.⁴

Imprisoned trade union activist receives death sentence

According to media reports from 04.07.24, a labour activist detained in the city of Rasht (Gilan province) was sentenced to death in the first instance. The sentence was imposed on charges of armed rebellion against the government (Persian baghi). The woman was accused of being a member of an independent association supporting the founding of labour organisations. This is a legal organisation to which she had not belonged for ten years. The convicted woman is also accused of being a member of a banned Kurdish opposition party (Komala). Members of the woman's family have denied the latter accusation. The convicted activist has been imprisoned since her arrest on 05.12.23 and has spent several months in solitary confinement.⁵

Prison sentences for a student activist and an activist

According to a report by a Persian-language foreign broadcaster on 03.07.24, two politically active students were each sentenced to one-year prison terms. Both convicts, a music student and a social sciences student from Tehran, were accused of organising a sit-in protest against the death sentence of the well-known anti-government rapper Tomaj Salehi (cf. BN of 29.04.24). The death sentence imposed on the rapper in April 2024 was overturned at the end of June 2024 following a decision by the Supreme Court and criminal proceedings were resumed.⁶

15 July 2024

Summons and arrest of convicted activists for execution of judgement

According to media reports, two women's rights activists were arrested in the city of Rasht (Gilan province) on 10.07.24. The two sisters were taken to Lakan prison in Rasht to serve their prison sentences. They had been sentenced to several years in prison on 28.05.24 after unsuccessful appeal proceedings. In August 2023, the women were arrested in the run-up to the first anniversary of Jina Mahsa Amini's death and subsequently sentenced in the first instance (cf. BN of 21.08.23 and 03.06.24). Both activists were accused of membership in and formation of illegal groups as well as of endangering national security. Their prison sentences are said to be for around six years and three months and nine years and six months respectively.

Furthermore, there are reports that nine other previously sentenced activists from Gilan province had been summoned in this context. They were told to report to Lakan Prison by 13.07.24. These activists had also been arrested in 2023 and sentenced to prison terms of between one and more than six years.⁷

Suspected fight against an armed group in western Azerbaijan

According to a state television report from 09.07.24, Revolutionary Guards Forces (IRGC) fought and destroyed an armed group in the province of West Azerbaijan. The unspecified group had attempted to infiltrate Iran in the north-western border region, it was said. The exact location of the alleged operation was not reported.

The Iranian province of West Azerbaijan borders Türkiye and Iraq. In the past, there have been occasional clashes between Iranian armed forces and Kurdish separatist groups as well as militant groups with links to IS.⁸

Announcement of criminal proceedings for calling for an election boycott

According to media reports from 10.07.24, the Iranian judiciary has announced that it will take action against people who allegedly called for an election boycott in the run-up to the early presidential election. Around 100 people were summoned and charges were brought against the operators of two Telegram channels. In addition, 500 Instagram accounts were identified which allegedly negatively influenced or prevented voter turnout, the reports said. No names or details of individuals were disclosed. Short-term arrests are said to have been made in connection with this. The majority of those affected were released again after signing cease-and-desist declarations or paying bail.

In the run-up to the presidential election in June 2024, the press regulator announced guidelines for the reporting and publication of media content on the election and corresponding penalties for violations (cf. BN of 10.06.24).⁹

22 July 2024

Press freedom: Sentencing a journalist to 40 lashes

According to reports by human rights organisations on 16.06. and 17.07.24, a journalist from Markazi Province was sentenced to 40 lashes after he made critical comments about the Director General of the Sports and Youth Authority of Markazi Province in one of his articles.

Among other things, the reporter was accused of insulting an official. The man was acquitted of other charges, including personal insult, defamation and spreading falsehoods.¹⁰

Killing of a Kolbar (load carrier) on the border with Iraq

According to media reports, Iranian security forces killed at least one Kolbar and injured three others on the border with the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan Iraq (KRI) on 16.07.24.

Kolbar are load carriers who transport untaxed goods between Iraq and Iran, sometimes also Türkiye. According to reports from Kurdish human rights organisations, forces of the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) fired on a group of Kolbar in the Kandil Mountains region. A 19-year-old porter from Sardasht (West Azerbaijan province) was killed. Iranian border guards have repeatedly attacked Kolbar in the border region.

The work of the Kolbar is illegal. Due to poor economic conditions and a lack of alternative employment opportunities, men opt for this quite dangerous activity to earn a living.¹¹

29 July 2024

Imprisoned social worker and activist sentenced to death

According to media reports of 24.07.24, the social worker Pahayan Azizi, who was known and imprisoned for her anti-government activities, was sentenced to death in the first instance.

Human rights organisations reported that the activist, who is of Kurdish origin, had been convicted on several charges including armed rebellion against the Iranian government and membership of opposition groups. Security forces allegedly used violence to pressure the woman to confess. The information cannot be independently verified. According to her lawyer, the convicted woman had worked as a social worker abroad for several years, including in northern Iraq and Syria. She had not taken part in any armed activities.

After returning to Iran in 2023, she was arrested by security forces. The activist had already been arrested in 2008 during a student protest rally against the execution of political prisoners at Tehran University and was released on bail after four months in prison. Azizi's lawyers announced an appeal against the death sentence, according to media reports of 25.07.24.¹²

Execution of a Kurdish prisoner on charges of murder and Salafism

According to media reports from 25.07.24, the death sentence against a Kurdish-Sunni prisoner was executed in Orumiye (West Azerbaijan province) after he had spent 15 years in prison.

The man was accused of being involved in the murder of a cleric in the city of Mahabad (West Azerbaijan province) in 2008. He was also accused of being a member of a Salafist group.

Death sentences have already been executed against six people in connection with the alleged murder. All of the suspects allegedly involved had denied the allegations until their respective executions.

In 2022, the human rights organisation Amnesty International pointed out that all seven defendants had been sentenced to death under unfair trial conditions. In addition, the prisoners had made allegations of torture during their detention, presumably to force confessions.

Death sentences were first imposed on the seven defendants in 2015, following an appeal these were overturned by the Supreme Court in 2016. In 2017 the accused were sentenced to death again.¹³

05 August 2024

Arrests after killing of Hamas leader Haniyeh

According to media reports, Iranian security forces arrested more than two dozen people on 03.08.24, among them high-ranking military and intelligence officials as well as employees of a guest house run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), after Ismail Haniyeh, the chairman of Hamas' politburo, was killed in the same guest house in Tehran on 31.07.24. The suspected assassination happened despite increased security precautions occasioned by President Massoud Pezeshkian's inauguration on 30.07.24. According to press reports, the authorities are investigating the suspicion of potential leaks within their own structures. Research by an international daily newspaper indicates that the Israeli foreign intelligence service Mossad allegedly hired members of the IRGC. In addition, a special IRGC unit is leading the investigation and has the task of identifying those responsible. Iranian security forces and Hamas accuse Israel of carrying out the killing, however, Israel has not yet commented on the allegations and has neither confirmed nor denied its involvement.¹⁴

Arrest of artist

According to press reports, security forces arrested Zara Esmaeili on 25.07.24. Esmaeili is an artist living in Tehran whose videos went viral. They show her singing and dancing in public without a hijab, violating several regulations. Since her arrest, there has been no information about Esmaeili's whereabouts or her condition.¹⁵

12 August 2024

36 people executed within two days

According to media reports, a total of 36 people were executed on 06.08. and 07.08.24, this includes a group execution of 26 people in Ghezel Hesar prison in the city of Karaj.

According to an NGO based abroad that campaigns for human rights in Iran, the men executed in Karaj were convicted of murder, drug trafficking and rape. In addition to the 26 men executed at the same time, three others were executed in Karaj city prison, one man in Sabzewar, one man in Kermanshah, three in Shiraz and three in Bandar Abbas.

Among the executed prisoners was Reza Rasaei, a Kurdish activist who had taken part in the protests that began in September 2022 following the death of Jina Mahsa Amini. He was executed in the central prison of the city of Kermanshah. Rasaei had been sentenced to death in October 2023 in a trial in which, human rights organisations said, he was denied legal representation and other basic rights. According to Amnesty International (AI), his confession was also forced under torture. Rasaei was sentenced in connection with the death of an officer of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) during unrest in the Kurdish city of Sahneh. AI reported that Rasaei was executed without his family or lawyer being informed beforehand. His family was then forced to bury his body in a remote area far from his home.

According to the above-mentioned NGO and the UN, at least 345 people have been executed so far in 2024. According to AI, 853 people were executed in Iran throughout the year 2023.¹⁶

Appointment of the Cabinet by President Pezeshkian

According to press reports, President Massud Pezeshkian presented his 19-member cabinet on 11.08.24. Abbas Araghchi was appointed to the post of Foreign Minister. Araghchi was the chief negotiator in the nuclear talks from 2013 to 2021. He also served as ambassador to Japan and Finland and as deputy to the then Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who was instrumental in reaching the so-called Vienna nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2015.

Civil servant Farzaneh Sadegh has been nominated Minister of Roads and Urban Development. If the 48-year-old is confirmed, she would be the second Iranian woman to hold a ministerial office since the founding of the Islamic Republic after Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, who became Minister of Health in 2009.

Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib, who already held this post under President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash, will remain in the new cabinet, the reports say. Amin Hossein Rahimi, who served as Minister of Justice already under Raisi, will also resume this position again.

Parliament will begin vetting the candidates from 12.08.24 and on 17.08.24 they will be presented to MPs for a vote. The vote of confidence on each minister will be held individually.¹⁷

19 August 2024

Woman suffers gunshot wounds and serious injuries during suspected car seizure by police

According to media reports, a 31-year-old woman sustained serious injuries when the police fired at her car in the city of Noor (Mazandaran province) on 22.07.24.

With reference to human rights organisations, it was reported that seemingly her vehicle was to be confiscated due to violations of the Islamic dress code (hijab obligation). After the woman failed to comply with an impending police check, the police allegedly fired shots at the moving car. It is unclear whether the woman was wearing a headscarf when she was stopped by the police.

According to relatives of the woman, she was first taken to a local hospital and then transferred to the provincial capital of Sari for surgery of the lungs. A week later, she was taken to a police hospital in Tehran, where she is currently under guard but can receive short visits.¹⁸

Summons of well-known human rights lawyer for renewed detention

The human rights organisation Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) reported on 14.08.24 that the well-known lawyer and human rights activist Mohammad Seifzadeh is to be detained again.

The 76-year-old was summoned to Evin Prison in Tehran because he had signed a joint declaration by 45 activists against politically motivated executions addressed to the UN Secretary-General in December 2022. According to CHRI, he was accused of propaganda against the government and publishing lies, among other things. A corresponding conviction was confirmed by an appeals court in July 2023. The lawyer had already been imprisoned several times in the past, including five times during the reign of Shah Mohammad Pahlavi and eight times since the Islamic Republic was founded in 1979.¹⁹

Five activists sentenced to several years in prison

According to media reports from 13.08.24, five female activists campaigning for cultural, environmental and women's rights were sentenced to several years in prison.

The convictions are said to have been based on charges of assembly and conspiracy as well as propaganda against the Iranian government. The women had been arrested along with other activists in the city of Rasht (Gilan province) already in November 2023.²⁰

26 August 2024

Death penalty: execution of at least eight imprisoned criminals

According to reports by the human rights organisation Iran Human Rights (IHR) on 15.08. and 19.08.24, at least eight prisoners were executed on drug-related offences (drug trafficking) or murder charges. These included four prisoners in the city of Yazd (province of the same name), three prisoners in Shiraz (Fars province) and one prisoner in Sanandaj (Kordestan province).

According to IHR, the number of death sentences executed on charges relating to drug offences and murder has risen steadily since 2021. On 20.08.24, HRW pointed to a persistently high number of executed death sentences following the election of the new President Massud Pezeshkian in July 2024.²¹

Parliament confirms proposal of the presidential cabinet

According to media reports, President Massud Pezeshkian's proposal for his future cabinet, consisting of 18 male and one female minister, was confirmed by parliament on 21.08.2014. The nominated candidates were voted on between 17.08. and 21.08.24. The appointment of architect Farzaneh Sadegh as Minister of Road Construction and Urban Planning is the second appointment of an Iranian woman to a ministerial post since the Islamic Republic was founded.

Pezeshkian, who is considered to be a reformist, emphasised that his selection intended to achieve a consensus between the political camps. In line with the balance of power in the conservative-dominated parliament, he had also nominated candidates who are considered strictly conservative, including three ministers from the cabinet of his predecessor Ebrahim Raisi (cf. BN of 12.08.24). The concessions gave rise to growing criticism from the reformist camp.²²

Assassination of local intelligence chief of Sistan and Balochistan province

According to media reports, a senior member of the intelligence branch of the police force in the city of Khash (Sistan and Balochistan province) was fatally wounded by gunfire at his home on 23.08.24. The Sunni Baloch separatist group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) claimed responsibility for the attack on social media. The group had already claimed responsibility in several cases of attacks on law enforcement facilities, such as police stations (cf. BN of 15.01.24).²³

02 September 2024

Man dies in police custody after physical abuse

According to media reports on 30.08.24, a 36-year-old man died in police custody in Lahijan (Gilan province). The man had been involved in a street brawl on 24.08.24 and was subsequently arrested. After his arrest, he allegedly got into verbal and physical altercations with police officers.

An investigation into the events ordered by President Pezeshkian has so far revealed that the man was physically abused by police officers. However, the exact cause of the 36-year-old's death is still under investigation. Five police officers who are alleged to have been involved in the physical abuse of the man have been provisionally arrested and suspended from duty, just as the local police commander.²⁴

Actress and director charged with headscarf offences

According to media reports from 28.08. and 29.08.24, the Tehran public prosecutor's office has brought charges against a film director and an actress for violating Muslim dress codes.

The two prominent women had attended a public film screening without the mandatory headscarf. Photographs of both women without their headscarves were subsequently shared on social media channels, including a cinema portal.²⁵

Father commits alleged honour killing of daughter

According to various media reports, a 17- or 18-year-old woman was shot dead by her father in the province of Ilam on 26.08.24. The Kurdish human rights organisation Hengaw describes the killing as an honour crime. The organisation says that the 56-year-old father refused to tolerate his daughter's relationship with a male teenager due to family differences. The suspect was arrested a few hours after the offence. This information cannot be independently verified.

Citing data from the pro-reform newspaper Shargh News, it was reported that at least 165 women in Iran were killed by male family members in 2023, 41 of these women were living in the capital Tehran. According to the Persian-language edition of BBC News, however, there are no precise statistics on murders committed for honour-related reasons within the family.²⁶

09 September 2024

Arrests in the run-up to annual protest events

According to reports by Kurdish human rights organisations, arrests were made in several Kurdish-dominated provinces between 01.09. and 04.09.24.

At least ten men were arrested by security forces in the city of Bolbanabad (Kordestan province): In the province of West Azerbaijan, four were reportedly arrested in the city of Mahabad, including a 16-year-old. In the same province, another three arrests were made in the city of Oshnavieh and one in Piranshahr. Some of those arrested are said to be relatives of victims of the nationwide protests in 2022. All arrests were made without an arrest warrant. In addition, there is no information about the whereabouts of those arrested or any charges against them. These reports cannot be independently verified.

The arrests are presumably linked to the upcoming second anniversary of the events surrounding the death of Iranian Kurdish woman Jina Mahsa Amini in September 2022, which triggered a nationwide wave of protests that saw a high level of participation, particularly in Kurdish populated provinces.²⁷

Iraq / Iran

Arrest and deportation of a suspected KDPI member to Iran

According to the Iraqi Asayish of 06.09.24, a 35-year-old Iranian national living in Sulaymaniyah (Sulaymaniyah province) was transferred to Iran. According to the Asayish, the man did not have valid residence papers, whereupon he expressed the wish to return to Iran voluntarily.

Hengaw, an Iranian-Kurdish human rights organisation, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) contradict this account. Both organisations claim that the deportee possesses a UNHCR certificate as asylum seeker and is a member of the KDPI. According to Hengaw, he was initially detained and tortured in Iraq before being handed over to the Iranian authorities. He is said to be in the custody of security authorities in Sanandaj (Kordestan province). He is accused of publishing photos of KDPI leaders on social media. He is also said to have a mental disability. The information cannot be independently verified.

An agreement signed between Iran and Iraq in 2023 stipulates that the Iraqi side is obliged to disarm Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups and secure the border regions. Iran had threatened to take military action if the agreement was not honoured (cf. BN of 17.07.23).²⁸

16 September 2024

Protests related to protest anniversaries

The media reported that isolated small peaceful protests were held on 15.09., including at Tehran underground stations, despite increased security measures in the run-up to the second anniversary of Jina Mahsa Amini's death. Elsewhere, in Tehran's Evin Prison, several female prisoners went on hunger strike in protest and took part in chanting and shouting protest slogans. Shopkeepers went on strike in commemoration of the protest events in 2022 in cities in the provinces of Kordestan and West Azerbaijan.

In the city of Saqqez (Kordestan province), checkpoints were set up and access roads to the cemetery and Amini's grave were blocked to prevent gatherings. Family members of Amini, who died when in custody of security forces in 2022, were prevented from holding a memorial service and are said to have been placed under house arrest.²⁹

Armed attack on border guards

According to media reports on 12.09.24, three border guards were killed in an armed attack in the city of Mirjaveh (Sistan and Baluchistan province). An Iranian news agency reports that the border guards' vehicle was shot at from another car at a petrol station. The district prosecutor's office has confirmed the incident and identified those killed. According to Iranian exile media, the Sunni guerrilla group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) has claimed responsibility for the attack. This information cannot be independently verified.

In recent months and in 2023, there have been repeated clashes and attacks on security facilities in the border region with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Jaish al-Adl, which is considered to be separatist, had taken responsibility for a number of these attacks (cf. BN of 08.04.24, 15.04.24, 06.05.24 and 26.08.24).³⁰

Travel ban for well-known filmmakers

According to media reports from 12.09.24, the well-known filmmaker Maryam Moghadam and her husband, director Behtash Saneeha, were prevented from leaving Iran. The couple intended to travel to Sweden for the premiere of their latest film. Their passports were confiscated at Tehran airport, although they had only received them back the previous week. The couple had also been banned from travelling to the Berlin Film Festival in February 2024.

With reference to the spokesperson of the Iranian filmmakers' association House of Cinema, it was reported on 10.09.24 that more than 300 filmmakers are currently affected by reprisals such as professional and travel bans; especially female artists who had shown themselves in public without headscarves in solidarity with the protests of 2022 (cf. BN of 02.09.24).³¹

23 September 2024

Report on executions

According to a report by the Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR), a total of at least 1,425 people have been executed in Iran since Jina Mahsa Amini's death on 16.09.22 triggered a nationwide protest movement. According to the IHR, almost twice as many executions were carried out in the two years following the outbreak of the protests than in the same period before. From 16.09.20 to 15.09.22, executions numbered 815 and from 16.09.22 to 15.09.24 around 1,425. The sharpest increase was in suspected drug offences, the NGO said. For these, the number of executions had risen by 163 %, from 302 by 15.09.22 to 796 cases by 15.09.24. According to a report by Amnesty International, Iran executed the highest number of people worldwide in 2023, second only to the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, Iran has also imposed other punishments such as flogging more frequently since Amini's death. The US-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Iran's Human Rights announced on 16.09.24 that over 100 floggings had been ordered in connection with the protests. At least two of these punishments were imposed on women.³²

30 September 2024

Family members and other acquaintances of Kurdish prisoner sentenced to prison terms

According to press reports, on 22.09.24 the Tehran Court of Appeal confirmed the one-year prison sentence for three family members and a two-year prison sentence for an acquaintance of Pakhshan Azizi and declared the sentences legally binding. Azizi is a Kurdish political prisoner who is facing the death penalty.

Azizi, who comes from Mahabad, is currently on death row in Evin Prison in Tehran. Her father, sister, brother-in-law and another man were convicted on charges related to Azizi's case. In July 2024, the 26th Branch of Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced the father, sister and brother-in-law to one year in prison each. The other person had received a two-year prison sentence. According to media reports, the family members were accused of aiding and abetting Azizi to avoid a trial and conviction. They were also charged with the offence of assembling and colluding to commit a crime against internal security. The fourth person was convicted of conspiring to commit a crime against internal security.

Azizi was sentenced to death on 24.07.24 for alleged membership of groups engaging in an armed uprising and rebellion against the government. According to the Iranian authorities, she was also a member of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), for which she was sentenced to four years in prison. To this day, she denies membership of this party, which campaigns for a certain degree of autonomy for the Kurds in Iran. She was arrested by security forces in Tehran on 04.08.13 and subsequently transferred to Wing 209 of Evin Prison, which is said to be linked to the secret service, on 11.12.13 she was then transferred to the women's wing of Evin Prison. Since 14.08.24, Azizi has been standing trial once more for a prison riot allegedly related to the presidential elections. On 25.09.24, she had been treated in hospital for chronic headaches and back pain, which according to press reports

were allegedly caused by torture in prison. On the same day she was transferred back to Evin Prison. Azizi had already been politically active in the past. She was first arrested on 16.11.09 when the Iranian authorities accused her of taking part in student protests against the execution of Kurdish political prisoners. She was released on bail after four months and subsequently lived in the Kurdish regions of Syria and Iraq for several years, where she supported refugees and campaigned for gender equality.³³

07 October 2024

Increased level of repression against media representatives

According to a report published on 02.10.24 by Defending Free Flow of Information Organization (DeFFI), a human rights organisation which by its own account is committed to combating the suppression of media and journalism in Iran, acts of repression against media representatives and media were up by 30 % in September 2024 compared to August 2023.

In the report, DeFFI documents 31 cases of repression in all. In 28 separate cases, it is alleged that at least 24 media representatives and media houses have been subjected to repressive practices by the judiciary or security forces. In addition, the report claims that at least 25 incidents have occurred in which the rights of media representatives have been violated by security forces or legal proceedings. It is emphasized in the report that these measures took place around the time of the second anniversary of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests and that the freedom of the press is being systematically suppressed by the Iranian authorities. The repressive measures reportedly include blocking media representatives' SIM cards without corresponding court rulings and detaining media representatives.

It is further reported that at least nine new legal actions were brought against media representatives in September 2024. In addition, at least eight media representatives are said to be in custody at present.³⁴

14 October 2024

Freedom of the press: Journalist sentenced to 13 months in prison

According to reports by human rights organisations, a journalist was sentenced to a prison term of around 13 months in Ajab Shir (East Azerbaijan province) on 06.10.24. He was charged with spreading misinformation via his personal account in Instagram. The journalist reportedly runs an online media company and works as a reporter for Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).³⁵

Reports of prison sentences for activists

It has been reported in the media that a number of activists have been sentenced to prison terms independently of one another.

According to a report on 12.10.24, the well-known imprisoned activist Maryam Akbari-Monfared has been sentenced to a further two years in prison. The additional sentence is to run on from her 15-year prison term which ends this year.

According to reports from human rights media on 11.10.24, a civil rights activist and teacher has been sentenced to three months in prison in Bukan (West Azerbaijan province). The woman was reportedly arrested by the security forces in May 2024, after which she was temporarily released on bail. No details of the grounds for her arrest have been reported.

According to reports in the media on 08.10.24, the well-known medical student and internet activist Motahareh Goonehi, who has been banned from the University of Teheran, has been arrested by the security forces. By her lawyer's account, the woman has been handed down a one-year prison sentence after being charged by the judicial authorities with participating in propaganda activities against the Islamic Republic. According to the lawyer, the activist is active in social media and had already received previous convictions relating to insult charges and breaches of national security.

Citing information from a Kurdish human rights network, it was reported on 07.10.24 that a woman in Sanandaj (Kordestan province) had been sentenced following an appeal hearing to a 28-month prison term. The charges included security-related offences, such as propaganda against the Iranian government and forming an illegal

group. The woman was reportedly arrested for the first time in September 2022, after which she was temporarily released on bail. In June 2024 she was sentenced at first instance to 21 years in prison and punished with banishment.

According to a report in the media on 07.10.24, a 22 year-old activist has been sentenced to a one-year prison term in Rasht (Gilan province). The man was reportedly charged, among other things, with having incited other persons to violence, with the aim of jeopardising the country's national security.

The reports cannot be independently verified.³⁶

21 October 2024

Mother of purportedly killed protester arrested

It was reported in the media on 17.10.24 that the mother of a demonstrator who died in protests in 2022 had been arrested. No information has been forthcoming from the security forces regarding the grounds for her arrest. The dead woman's family were reportedly subjected to pressure in September, when security forces prevented a ceremony to commemorate the second anniversary of the daughter's death.

According to a report by the British news channel BBC News, the 16 year-old daughter, Nika Shakarami, was allegedly subjected to physical and sexual abuse by security forces in the course of her arrest and died as a result. Iranian authorities disputed this portrayal, claiming that the girl committed suicide (cf. BN of 06.05.24).

In April 2024 it was reported that repressive measures had also been undertaken against the dead woman's sister for breaching the obligation to wear a head covering (cf. BN of 22.04.24).³⁷

2024 Freedom on the Net report: Iran among the three most repressive countries

On 16.10.24 the human rights organisation Freedom House (FH) published its 2024 report on Freedom on the Net. According to this report, Iran is the third most repressive country after China and Myanmar with regard to internet freedom, among a total of 72 surveyed countries.

Cited factors contributing to the rating include the Iranian authorities' criminalisation in the run-up to the presidential election in June 2024 of all online content calling for protests and a boycott of the elections or expressing criticism of the candidates. According to FH, this was intended to increase turn-out and to legitimise the elections as a whole, despite an arbitrary selection of candidates and the disqualification of most potential candidates ahead of the election (cf. BN of 10.06.24).³⁸

Repression of religious minorities

According to reports by human rights media on 18.10.24, a member of the Bahá'í religious community has been sentenced in Rasht (Gilan province) to two years' imprisonment and additional punishments, including a fine. The charges brought against the man reportedly related to his practice and advocacy of his religion. The Islamic Republic does not recognise the Baha'i faith as a religious minority. Members of the religious community have been subjected to systematic discrimination in Iran for decades.

Citing a Christian-influenced human rights organisation, it was also reported on 18.10.24 that three Iranian nationals who had converted to Christianity had been detained without any contact with the outside world (incommunicado) for more than three weeks since they were arrested by security forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in the city of Nowshahr (Mazandaran province). The authorities are reportedly refusing their families access to legal representation. The three men were allegedly arrested back in December 2023, when a total of 17 people were detained in Nowshahr and the neighbouring city of Chalus. The information cannot be independently verified.³⁹

28 October 2024

Israeli air strikes on Iranian military installations

According to reports in the media, Israel carried out a number of air strikes on Iranian military facilities on the night of 25.10.24. From the Israeli point of view, the attacks were a response to Iran's missile attack on Israel on 01.10.24. According to information from the Israeli armed forces, some 20 military targets were attacked, including missile

production facilities, ground-to-air missile positions and other Iranian air defence systems. Energy and nuclear plants were reportedly avoided.

Iranian media have reported limited damage to military bases, stating that the Iranian air defences had been activated in the capital, Tehran, and in Khuzestan and Ilam provinces. The Iranian side initially reported that two members of the army had been killed in the attack. The reported death toll was subsequently increased to four. According to information from the Iranian military, all those killed were soldiers.⁴⁰

Report on killing of IRGC member by Kurdish opposition group

According to reports in the media on 24.10.24, two days previously clashes had occurred near the city of Kamyaran in Kordestan province between fighters of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Kurdish opposition group Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK). At least one IRGC soldier was reportedly killed and a number of IRGC members injured. According to reports by a Kurdish human rights network, the confrontation occurred when members of PJAK were attacked by IRGC forces.

The PJAK was formed in the Qandil Mountains of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq (KR-I) in 2003 and is considered to be the Iranian wing of the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). According to the PJAK, however, the two parties only share a similar ideology and there is no active cooperation.

The Iranian government regards PJAK, together with other Iranian-Kurdish opposition groups based in KR-I, as terrorist organisations and carries out cross-border air and ground operations in the region at irregular intervals. In 2023 Iran and Iraq signed a treaty to secure the border and to disarm the Iranian-Kurdish opposition groups (cf. BN of 09.09.24). The extent to which this treaty has been implemented to date remains unclear.⁴¹

Attack on police in Sistan and Baluchestan province

It was reported in the media on 26.10.24 that an armed attack had taken place on a police convoy in Gohar Kuh (Sistan and Baluchestan province). According to media close to the government, at least ten police officers were killed.

Citing an account from an online medium which represents the interests of the Baloch ethnic group in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, it has been reported that the attack evidently targeted two vehicles of the security forces and that all those on board the vehicles were killed. According to other reports, the militant Sunni group Jaish al-Adl, which is considered to be a separatist organisation, has claimed responsibility for the attack.⁴²

04 November 2024

Tehran student arrested after removing her clothes in public

It was reported in the media on 02.11.24 that a young woman had been arrested after undressing down to her underwear at the private Azad University in Tehran. An unverified video has circulated in social media, showing the student in her underwear, first sitting on steps with her arms folded and then walking up and down. Further recordings reportedly show the woman being forced into a car, presumably by members of the security forces. No information has emerged as to her whereabouts.

According to unconfirmed reports from a Kurdish human rights organisation, enforcement agents tore the woman's clothing during a confrontation with her on the university campus. The student is then said to have stripped off her clothes in protest at the Islamic dress regulations. Pro-government media rejected this portrayal of events, claiming the woman suffers from mental problems and that the university security service handed the woman over to the police. Investigations into the incident are said to be ongoing.

Human rights organisations have called for the woman to be released immediately.⁴³

Economic and social matters

A report by an Iranian news agency claims that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised its growth forecast for Iran for 2024. According to the report, gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to rise by 3.7 percentage points, as opposed to the 3.3 % increase forecast in July. It is forecast that the annual inflation rate will fall from 40.7 % in 2023 to 31.7 %, while the unemployment rate stands at around 8 %. Iranian media interpret these forecasts as indicating that the Iranian economy has recovered from the effects of the economic sanctions imposed by the USA in 2018, observing that the country's oil exports reached a record level in 2024.

In contrast, analysts outside of Iran expect a continuing negative course of development for Iran's economy, in particular in view of the rate of inflation for food and housing and the supply of water. The IMF's most recent report is seen by such analysts as indicating that economic growth has dropped from 5 % in 2023 to 3.7 % in 2024 and is expected to stand at only 2 % through to 2029. The IMF report also notes that a continuing energy crisis has had a severe impact on exports, and especially on steel, which represents one of the country's largest export commodities, along with oil. Oil exports to China reportedly accounted for a major share of Iran's entire economic output in 2023, but China's falling domestic demand for oil has also had a negative impact on Tehran's exports. The report observes that without this export revenue Iran will suffer even greater economic losses in future and its burden of debt will continue to increase.

According to reports in the media on 24.10.24, the country's poverty rate has remained constant at around 30 % over the past five years, with a slight rise of 0.4 percentage points in 2023 compared to the previous year, up to a rate of 30.1 %. This information is said to have emerged from a study by the Iranian parliament's research data centre. It is estimated that of a total population of 88,386,938 (as per 23.10.24), approx. 26 million are currently living below the poverty line. The continuing high inflation rate, which according to official figures stands at around 35 %, is seen as the prime reason for the constant poverty rate and growing social inequality. The major role played by oil exports as a growth factor is identified as another reason for the constant poverty rate (see above).⁴⁴

11 November 2024

Attack on Revolutionary Guard Corps in Sistan and Balochistan

According to reports in the media, six members of the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) were killed and others were injured when their convoy was attacked in Sistan and Balochistan province on 07.11.24. The convoy was travelling from the city of Sarbaz to the district of Rask when it was attacked near to the city of Firuzabad.

No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack. However, Iranian state media are placing the blame on the militant Sunni group Jaish al-Adl, which is a separatist organisation. Four of the organisation's members are said to have died in the attack. The group most recently attacked security forces, also in Sistan and Balochistan province, on 26.10.24 (cf. BN of 28.10.24).⁴⁵

Followers of Baha'í faith arrested

It has been reported in the press that three followers of the Baha'í religious faith were arrested by members of the security forces in the city of Tiran on 02.11.24 and taken to an unknown location. According to reports in the media, the three Baha'ís had travelled to Tiran to take part in a religious Baha'í festival, where they were arrested together with eight other Baha'ís by members of the security forces. While the eight other participants were subsequently released, the whereabouts of the three Baha'í in question remain unknown.

The Iranian authorities do not recognise the Baha'í faith as a legitimate religion. The annual report of the NGO Human Rights Activists in Iran for 2023 notes that Baha'ís are subjected to violation of their religious rights and that they account for 82 % of all reports relating to actions against religious minorities. According to a report published on 05.11.24 by the NGO Center for Human Rights in Iran, at least 70 Baha'ís are currently in custody or serving prison sentences and a total of 93 Baha'ís have gone on trial or been imprisoned in 2024.⁴⁶

18 November 2024

Imprisoned female activist sentenced to death

It was reported in the media on 11.11.24 that a female activist imprisoned in Tehran who champions women's and environmental rights had been sentenced to death for armed rebellion against the Islamic Republic. Her lawyers have reportedly announced that they will be lodging an appeal based on material defects of the legal proceedings. The 40 year-old Iranian-Kurdish woman is said to have been accused of membership of the separatist opposition group Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK). The Iranian government has classified PJAK as a terrorist organisation. According to unconfirmed information from a Kurdish human rights organisation, the activist was abducted in Kordestan province by members of the secret service in August 2023. She was reportedly physically abused at a remand prison and spent five months in solitary confinement at Evin prison in Tehran before being transferred to

the women's section of the prison. The convicted woman allegedly had no opportunity to speak in court in her own defence.⁴⁷

Six death sentences imposed for men convicted of murdering a member of security services

According to reports in the media, six men were sentenced to death on 13.11.24 for allegedly participating in the killing of a Basij member. The Basij is a volunteer militia whose members are under the control of the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and who are deployed to fight uprisings, among other duties. The Basij member was reportedly attacked and killed in Tehran's western district of Shahrak e Ekbatan during the wave of nationwide protests in 2022.

Citing legal representatives of the six convicted men, it has been reported that the men were sentenced at first instance before a criminal court on the basis of a retaliatory verdict. Four of the convicted men had been in custody since their arrests in 2022, apart from a temporary period during which they were released on bail. Human rights organisations have expressed doubts as to whether the men received a fair trial. In all, 14 people were charged in connection with the case.⁴⁸

25 November 2024

Man with previous conviction receives prison term after participating in ceremony commemorating killed protester

Citing information from a Kurdish human rights organisation, it was reported on 21.11.24 that a 21 year-old man had been sentenced to six months in prison on charges including propaganda activities against the Islamic Republic. The man was reportedly arrested during a ceremony commemorating a demonstrator who had died during the nationwide protests in 2022. It is reported that he had previously received a 13-month prison sentence in a different case, of which he had been required to serve three months.

The information cannot be independently verified.⁴⁹

02 December 2024

Prison sentences for activists

It has been reported in the media that a number of activists have been sentenced to prison terms in separate cases. Citing information from the well-known student activist Leila Hosseinzadeh, it was reported on 25.11.24 that she had been sentenced to a prison term for failing to wear a headscarf when she appeared to defend her thesis. No information has emerged regarding the length of the sentence. The student was previously detained in 2022 and subsequently released on bail after four months. Since 2017, she has been arrested and convicted many times on account of her activities in student groups.

According to a report in the media on 26.11.24, a women's rights activist who is already serving a two-year prison term has been sentenced to an additional prison term of over seven years in the city of Damghan (Semnan province). Her lawyer has stated that the woman was sentenced to a total of seven years and seven months in prison and banned from practising her profession for two years on charges which included forming a group in social media. The activist apparently translated feminist-oriented texts and published these in the online group. According to her lawyer, she has already served time in prison on numerous occasions in the past.

Citing information posted by a man in social media, it was reported on 28.11.24 that the man concerned had been sentenced to a prison term of three years and six months. The sentence was passed at first instance and is appealable. According to his own account, the man had endeavoured to help other demonstrators during protests in Qazvin province in 2022. He alleges that he was hit by a rubber bullet fired by the security forces, and has since been blind in one eye. The information cannot be independently verified.⁵⁰

Man arrested apparently for converting to Christianity

A human rights organisation reported on 28.11.24 that a man who had converted to Christianity was arrested by members of the security forces in Nowshahr (Mazandaran province) on 17.11.24. It is suspected that his arrest is linked to his religious convictions. In addition, his home was searched and his wife and daughter were questioned.

The man is said to be one of twelve Christian converts against whom criminal proceedings are pending before the revolutionary court in Nowshahr. The arrested man's home was reportedly also searched during the Christmas period last year, in the course of which a number of personal items were confiscated. The report cannot be independently verified.⁵¹

09 December 2024

Additional prison term for convicted activist

A human rights organisation based in Norway reported on 05.12.24 that a women's rights activist who was sentenced to a number of years in prison in November 2024 has been handed down an additional two-year prison term (cf. BN of 02.12.24).

According to her lawyer, the latest sentence has been imposed for spreading falsehoods when she was temporarily released from custody for medical treatment. The new custodial sentence has been added to the previously imposed sentences. She has also been banned from online activity for two years.⁵²

Prison term for prominent Kurdish human rights activist

A foreign medium reported on 05.12.24 that a well-known Kurdish civil rights activist was taken to the central prison in Urmia (West-Azerbaijan province) on 03.12.24 to serve a three-month prison term.

The woman was apparently first of all sent a police summons under a pretext in the city of Bukan. She was then arrested by judicial order and taken to the prison. As a prominent activist for the Kurdish minority in Iran, she has reportedly also been a victim of state repression in the past.⁵³

16 December 2024

Prison conditions: HRW report on denial of medical care

The human rights organisation HRW reported on 13.12.24 that a number of current cases confirm that the Iranian authorities are denying people in prison necessary medical care. The practice is reportedly particularly common with regard to inmates who are in custody for politically motivated reasons, in order to exert pressure on them. HRW cites two word-of-mouth sources in this connection who were asked about access to medical care in Tehran's Evin prison.

HRW asserts that various current cases which have also been mentioned in foreign media reports corroborate this assessment. Among those mentioned is the well-known imprisoned activist Varisheh Moradi, who has been sentenced to death (cf. BN of 18.11.24). Despite health problems after a hunger strike, Moradi was refused permission to be transferred to a hospital in November 2024.⁵⁴

Civil rights activist with previous convictions sentenced to two years' imprisonment

According to information released by a Norway-based Kurdish human rights organisation on 11.12.24, a Kurdish-Iranian civil rights activist has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment, including one year on probation. The man was reportedly a board member of a non-governmental organisation, among other areas of activity. He was apparently charged with having established groups and gatherings which were directed against the country's national security.

The convicted man was previously handed down a ten-year prison term in 2023. This sentence was repealed by a court of appeal. In an earlier trial, the man was reportedly sentenced to one year in prison and additional punishments for disturbing public order. He was apparently also temporarily held in custody in 2019 and 2022.⁵⁵

23 December 2024

Energy crisis

In view of the cold weather in many regions, the continuing energy supply crisis in Iran is leading to drastic measures to save energy in some areas. It has been reported in the media that many government institutions, schools, shops and banks remained closed in the week from 16.12. to 22.12.24. Industrial plants were also shut down in many

places. According to information from the energy ministry, a total of 13 major power stations were disconnected from the grid on 18.12.24 due to fuel shortages. Prior to this, there had been appeals from the government for the public to lower room temperatures.⁵⁶

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