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Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Iran: Kurds and Kurdish political groups**

**Version 5.0**

**October 2025**

# Executive summary

Estimates of the number of Kurds in Iran vary from 7 to 15 million (c.8–17% of the total population). They reside mostly in northwestern Iran, along the borders with Turkey and Iraq.

While the Constitution provides for equal rights for ‘all people of Iran whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong’, this is not observed in practice. Kurds face discrimination by the state which affects their access to basic services.

Kurds who are members or sympathisers of Kurdish political parties, or who are involved in Kurdish civil and cultural activities may be surveilled, arrested and detained, and charged with broadly defined security offences, often leading to lengthy prison sentences, and in some cases the death penalty.

Kurds fearing persecution from the Iranian authorities on account of their ethnicity and/or their engagement in activities that are, or are perceived to be, political and against the state of Iran are likely to fall within the Refugee Convention on the grounds of race and/or actual or imputed political opinion.

Kurds are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state based on ethnicity alone. However, Kurdish ethnicity is a risk factor which, when combined with others, increases the risk of persecution/Article 3 ill-treatment.

Kurds found to be engaged in activities that are, or are perceived to be, political and against the state of Iran, which may include promoting Kurdish rights, are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm.

Whether a person of Kurdish ethnicity is likely to be at risk on return to Iran will depend on a nuanced consideration of factors outlined in the relevant Country Guidance cases:

- [BA](#) (demonstrations), including the nature of the sur place activity, the risk that the person has been, or will be, identified, and whether the profile or history of the person is likely to trigger further inquiry or action on return to Iran
- [XX](#) (online), including a person’s position on a “social graph”, whether they are likely to have been the subject of targeted online surveillance, and whether a person has, or is likely to, close their social media account(s) prior to any potential “pinch points”, when basic searches on the person are likely to be carried out.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection nor be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 1 October 2025

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of the person's Kurdish ethnicity and/or their actual or perceived affiliation with a Kurdish political group
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Most Kurdish political parties have at some point launched armed campaigns against Iran. Decision makers must consider whether there are serious

reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## **2. Convention reason(s)**

- 2.1.1 Race and/or actual or imputed political opinion
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **3. Risk**

### **3.1 Kurdish ethnicity**

- 3.1.1 Kurds are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state based on their Kurdish ethnicity alone. However, Kurdish ethnicity is a risk factor which, when combined with other factors, may create a risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment ([HB](#), see paragraphs 3.1.4 to 3.1.5).
- 3.1.2 Estimates of the number of Kurds in Iran vary from 7 to 15 million (c.8–17% of the total population). Approximately half a million Iranian Kurds reside in the capital, Tehran, but they mostly live in northwestern Iran, along the borders with Turkey and Iraq, in an area which the Kurds refer to as Rojhelat (Eastern Kurdistan) (see [Demography](#) and [Maps](#)).
- 3.1.3 The Constitution provides for equal rights for ‘all people of Iran whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong’, however this is not observed in practice. Kurds in Iran face discrimination by the state which affects their access to basic services such as housing, political office, employment and education. Kurdish regions in Iran have some of the highest unemployment rates in Iran and face economic neglect, underdevelopment, and poverty. Use of the Kurdish language is restricted, with some Kurdish literature, and Kurdish instruction in public schools, prohibited despite the Constitution allowing for regional and tribal languages to be used for teaching their literature in schools. While Kurdish can be taught in private settings, recent

arrests of Kurdish language teachers affects the ability of Kurds to exercise their linguistic and cultural rights. In early 2025, the Iranian parliament rejected a proposal to allow non-Persian languages to be taught in schools (see [Discrimination](#), [Education and Employment](#), and [Language](#)).

- 3.1.4 In the country guidance case of [HB \(Kurds\) Iran CG \[2018\] UKUT 430 \(IAC\)](#) (heard 20 to 22 February and 25 May 2018 and promulgated 12 December 2018), the Upper Tribunal (UT) found: ‘Kurds in Iran face discrimination. However, the evidence does not support a contention that such discrimination is, in general, at such a level as to amount to persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment.’ (paragraph 98 (2)).
- 3.1.5 In [HB](#), the UT also found:
- ‘Since 2016 the Iranian authorities have become increasingly suspicious of, and sensitive to, Kurdish political activity. Those of Kurdish ethnicity are thus regarded with even greater suspicion than hitherto and are reasonably likely to be subjected to heightened scrutiny on return to Iran.
- ‘However, the mere fact of being a returnee of Kurdish ethnicity with or without a valid passport, and even if combined with illegal exit, does not create a risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment.
- ‘Kurdish ethnicity is nevertheless a risk factor which, when combined with other factors, may create a real risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment. Being a risk factor it means that Kurdish ethnicity is a factor of particular significance when assessing risk.’ (paragraph 98 (3) to (5)).
- 3.1.6 The country information in this note does not indicate that there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to depart from these findings.
- 3.1.7 See also [Returnees](#) and the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Illegal exit](#).
- 3.1.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3.2 Actual or perceived Kurdish political activities

- 3.2.1 Kurds found to be engaged in activities in Iran that are, or are perceived to be, political and against the state of Iran, which may include promoting Kurdish rights, are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm.
- 3.2.2 Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to show that the activity engaged in is likely to be viewed by the Iranian authorities as Kurdish political activity or support for Kurdish rights.
- 3.2.3 The headquarters of a number of Kurdish opposition parties are based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). They are illegal in Iran, so their presence and level of activity in the country is limited. While Kurdish political parties are often described as separatists and have previously engaged in armed activities against Iran, most no longer pursue a separate Kurdish state and increasingly favour peaceful political activities over continued military action. Members generally meet in secret to discuss politics. Members and supporters (also referred to as sympathisers), are encouraged, often via Kurdish TV and social media, to take part in peaceful propaganda activities such as protests, general strikes, or more symbolic actions such as wearing

traditional Kurdish clothing. Party members and supporters are often organised in small, secret, 'cells' and tend not to disclose their political affiliation to others (see [Iranian Kurdish political groups](#), [Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan \(PDKI\) / Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran \(KDPI / KDP-I\)](#), [Kurdistan Freedom Party \(PAK\)](#), [Komala](#), and [Kurdistan Free Life Party / Free Life Party of Kurdistan \(PJAK\)](#)).

- 3.2.4 Intelligence agencies and security forces operating in Kurdish regions monitor people who partake in activities deemed to oppose the Iranian government. Kurds who are members or sympathisers of Kurdish political parties, or who are engaged in, or associated with, civil and cultural activities asserting their ethnic and religious identity, may be surveilled, arrested and detained. Some are charged with broadly defined security offences which may lead to social restrictions, floggings, lengthy prison sentences, and in some cases the death penalty. One human rights organisation reported that of 630 Kurds it verified as having been arrested/abducted by Iranian security forces in 2024, 153 of them (24%) were sentenced to imprisonment, flogging, or social restrictions for being political, religious, and civil activists. A further 11 Kurds (under 2% of arrested Kurds) were reportedly sentenced to death in 2024 (see [State treatment](#)).
- 3.2.5 Kurds are arrested, convicted, and sentenced in relation to their civic and political activities in disproportionate numbers. According to one human rights organisation, during 2024 and the first half of 2025, between 45% and 51% of all those it verified as having been arrested were Kurds. It also recorded, during the same time period, that approximately 30% of political, religious, and civil activists who were sentenced to prison terms, flogging, and social restrictions, were Kurds. The same human rights organisation reported that approximately 77% (10 of 13) of political or religious activists executed in 2024 were Kurds. An annual death penalty report noted that in 2023, of 39 people executed under the security-related charges, 8 of them (20.5%) were Kurds. A database of verified political prisoners and prisoners of conscience recorded that between 1980 and 2025, at least 29% were Kurds, with that figure likely higher due to the ethnicities of some prisoners being uncertain or unknown. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) also use excessive force against those participating in political demonstrations in Kurdish areas (see [State treatment](#)).
- 3.2.6 According to Danish Immigration Service sources, the likelihood of a Kurd being arrested in connection with their political activities increases with their level of participation, irrespective of their status as either a member or sympathiser of a political party. Prison sentences for Kurds charged depends on the personal views of the Judge towards Kurds, whether any party affiliation can be proven, whether actions of a military nature are involved, whether a confession exists, and whether the charges are intended only to deter the person, or to make an example of them. Harsher penalties are reportedly handed down to Kurds who admit party affiliation during questioning (see [Political activists and protestors](#) and [Arrests, convictions and imprisonment](#)).
- 3.2.7 Confessions extracted through torture are reported by various sources. Approximately 50% (76 of 154) of all political affiliation-related executions between 2010 and 2023 were carried out against Kurds. Additionally, most of the demonstrators who were killed by the Iranian authorities' excessive

use of force during the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ protests, that began in September 2022, were also Kurds (see [Detention and torture](#), [Executions and extra-judicial killings](#) and [Political activists and protestors](#)).

3.2.8 Iranian state forces operate in the KRI, monitoring the activities of Iranian Kurdish political parties, their members and supporters, journalists, and human rights defenders. Iran has also carried out bombings, targeting Kurdish groups in the KRI, despite an Iran-Iraq security agreement. Iran has additionally requested that Iraq extradites party members and leaders for trial in Iran (see [Monitoring in the Kurdish Region of Iraq \(KRI\)](#)).

3.2.9 Family members of people engaged in social or political activities, or affiliated to Kurdish political parties, particularly if that affiliate is abroad, may experience exclusion from employment and education, reporting obligations, travel bans, surveillance (of phones, computers, and movements), threats, interrogation, arrest, detention, torture and in some cases criminal charges. The closer the relationship with the activist, the more likely a family member is to be detained, with the severity of the treatment dependent on the level of activity of the person of interest (see [Targeting of activists’ family members](#)).

3.2.10 In [HB](#) the UT found factors, which when combined with Kurdish ethnicity, may create a real risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment (paragraph 98 (5)). These factors include:

‘A period of residence in the KRI by a Kurdish returnee is reasonably likely to result in additional questioning by the authorities on return. However, this is a factor that will be highly fact-specific and the degree of interest that such residence will excite will depend, non-exhaustively, on matters such as the length of residence in the KRI, what the person concerned was doing there and why they left.

‘Kurds involved in Kurdish political groups or activity are at risk of arrest, prolonged detention and physical abuse by the Iranian authorities. Even Kurds expressing peaceful dissent or who speak out about Kurdish rights also face a real risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment.

‘Activities that can be perceived to be political by the Iranian authorities include social welfare and charitable activities on behalf of Kurds. Indeed, involvement with any organised activity on behalf of or in support of Kurds can be perceived as political and thus involve a risk of adverse attention by the Iranian authorities with the consequent risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment.

‘Even “low-level” political activity, or activity that is perceived to be political, such as, by way of example only, mere possession of leaflets espousing or supporting Kurdish rights, if discovered, involves the same risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment. Each case, however, depends on its own facts and an assessment will need to be made as to the nature of the material possessed and how it would be likely to be viewed by the Iranian authorities in the context of the foregoing guidance.

‘The Iranian authorities demonstrate what could be described as a “hair-trigger” approach to those suspected of or perceived to be involved in Kurdish political activities or support for Kurdish rights. By “hair-trigger” it means that the threshold for suspicion is low and the reaction of the authorities is reasonably likely to be extreme.’ (paragraph 98 (6) to (10)).

- 3.2.11 The country information in this note does not indicate that there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to depart from these findings.
- 3.2.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 3.3 Sur place activities

- 3.3.1 Whether a person of Kurdish ethnicity is likely to be at risk on return to Iran will depend on a nuanced consideration of factors outlined in the relevant Country Guidance cases:
- [BA](#) (demonstrations), including the nature of the sur place activity, the risk that the person has been, or will be, identified, and whether the profile or history of the person is likely to trigger further inquiry or action on return to Iran (see paragraph 3.3.6). Decision makers should keep in mind that where a Kurd returning to Iran is likely to be identified (see paragraphs 3.3.5 and 3.3.8) as having participated sur place in demonstrations, even ‘low-level’ political activity, or activity that is perceived as political, is likely to result in a risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment, as in the case of [HB](#) (see paragraph 3.3.9)
  - [XX](#) (online), including a person’s position on a “social graph”, whether they are likely to have been the subject of targeted online surveillance, and whether a person has, or is likely to, close their social media account(s) prior to any potential “pinch points”, when basic searches on the person are likely to be carried out (see paragraphs 3.3.12 to 3.3.16, with particular regard to the findings made in respect of Kurdish ethnicity in paragraphs 3.3.14 to 3.3.16).
- 3.3.2 Where a Kurd’s sur place political activities are likely to be known to the Iranian authorities on return, whether they are opportunistic is unlikely to make a material difference to the risk level faced by that person on return to Iran ([BA](#) and [XX](#), see paragraphs 3.3.7 and 3.3.16 respectively). However, where it is unlikely that a Kurd’s sur place political activities are known to the Iranian authorities, the motivation behind the person’s sur place activities is of significance, because a person would not be required to volunteer information about non-genuine political beliefs or activities on return to Iran ([S](#), see paragraphs 3.3.17 to 3.3.18).
- 3.3.3 Decision makers should also refer to the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance, and sur place activities](#) when considering a case relating to a person of Kurdish ethnicity who participates ‘sur place’ in demonstrations or online activities that are, or are perceived to be, political and against the state of Iran.
- 3.3.4 Each case must be considered on its facts with the onus on the person to show that they would be at real risk of serious harm or persecution on account of their actual or perceived political opinion or race.
- 3.3.5 In the Country Guidance case of [BA \(Demonstrators in Britain – risk on return\) Iran CG \[2011\] UKUT 36 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 5 and 6 October 2010 and promulgated on 10 February 2011, the UT held that:
- ‘Given the large numbers of those who demonstrate here and the publicity which demonstrators receive, for example on Facebook, combined with the

inability of the Iranian Government to monitor all returnees who have been involved in demonstrations here, regard must be had to the level of involvement of the individual here as well as any political activity which the individual might have been involved in Iran before seeking asylum in Britain.

‘Iranians returning to Iran are screened on arrival. A returnee who meets the profile of an activist may be detained while searches of documentation are made. Students, particularly those who have known political profiles are likely to be questioned as well as those who have exited illegally.

‘There is not a real risk of persecution for those who have exited Iran illegally or are merely returning from Britain. The conclusions of the Tribunal in the country guidance case of [SB \(risk on return -illegal exit\) Iran CG \[2009\] UKAIT 00053](#) are followed and endorsed.

‘There is no evidence of the use of facial recognition technology at the Imam Khomeini International airport, but there are a number of officials who may be able to recognize up to 200 faces at any one time. The procedures used by security at the airport are haphazard. It is therefore possible that those whom the regime might wish to question would not come to the attention of the regime on arrival. If, however, information is known about their activities abroad, they might well be picked up for questioning and/or transferred to a special court near the airport in Tehran after they have returned home.

‘It is important to consider the level of political involvement before considering the likelihood of the individual coming to the attention of the authorities and the priority that the Iranian regime would give to tracing him. It is only after considering those factors that the issue of whether or not there is a real risk of his facing persecution on return can be assessed’ (headnotes 1 to 3).

### 3.3.6 The UT in [BA](#) also held that:

‘The following are relevant factors to be considered when assessing risk on return having regard to sur place activities:

#### ‘(i) Nature of sur place activity

- Theme of demonstrations – what do the demonstrators want (e.g. reform of the regime through to its violent overthrow); how will they be characterised by the regime?
- Role in demonstrations and political profile – can the person be described as a leader; mobiliser (e.g. addressing the crowd), organiser (e.g. leading the chanting); or simply a member of the crowd; if the latter is he active or passive (e.g. does he carry a banner); what is his motive, and is this relevant to the profile he will have in the eyes of the regime?
- Extent of participation – has the person attended one or two demonstrations or is he a regular participant?
- Publicity attracted – has a demonstration attracted media coverage in the United Kingdom or the home country; nature of that publicity (quality of images; outlets where stories appear etc)?

#### ‘(ii) Identification risk

- Surveillance of demonstrators – assuming the regime aims to identify demonstrators against it, how does it do so, through filming them, having

agents who mingle in the crowd, reviewing images/recordings of demonstrations etc?

- Regime's capacity to identify individuals – does the regime have advanced technology (e.g. for facial recognition); does it allocate human resources to fit names to faces in the crowd?

‘(iii) Factors triggering inquiry/action on return

- Profile – is the person known as a committed opponent or someone with a significant political profile; does he fall within a category which the regime regards as especially objectionable?
- Immigration history – how did the person leave the country (illegally; type of visa); where has the person been when abroad; is the timing and method of return more likely to lead to inquiry and/or being detained for more than a short period and ill-treated (overstayer; forced return)?

‘(iv) Consequences of identification

- Is there differentiation between demonstrators depending on the level of their political profile adverse to the regime?

‘(v) Identification risk on return

- Matching identification to person – if a person is identified is that information systematically stored and used; are border posts geared to the task?’ (headnote 4)

3.3.7 The UT in [BA](#) also held that: ‘While it may well be that an appellant’s participation in demonstrations is opportunistic, the evidence suggests that this is not likely to be a major influence on the perception of the regime.’ (paragraph 65).

3.3.8 The UT in [BA](#) additionally held that: ‘... [F]or the infrequent demonstrator who plays no particular role in demonstrations and whose participation is not highlighted in the media there is not a real risk of identification and therefore not a real risk of consequent ill-treatment, on return.’ (paragraph 66).

3.3.9 The factors cited in [BA](#) should be taken into account in view of the findings in [HB](#), in that:

‘Even “low-level” political activity, or activity that is perceived to be political, such as, by way of example only, mere possession of leaflets espousing or supporting Kurdish rights, if discovered, involves the same risk of persecution or Article 3 ill-treatment. Each case however, depends on its own facts and an assessment will need to be made as to the nature of the material possessed and how it would be likely to be viewed by the Iranian authorities in the context of the foregoing guidance’ (paragraph 98 (9)).

3.3.10 In the Court of Appeal (EWCA) case of [S v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2024\] EWCA Civ 1482](#), heard on 27 November 2024 and promulgated on 6 December 2024, the EWCA considered whether it was necessary for the UT to have considered whether the Appellant in [S](#), an Iranian citizen of Kurdish ethnicity, whose political activities in the UK (demonstrations and Facebook posts) were accepted as opportunistic and not based on genuinely held beliefs, would disclose, or would have to disclose, any of his sur place activities given the likelihood of him being interviewed on return to Iran. It was argued on behalf of the Appellant in [S](#)

that the UT ought to have considered the type of issues which Lord Dyson mentioned in the case of [RT \(Zimbabwe\) v SSHD \[2012\] 1AC 152](#), (“RT”) (paragraph 57) before being properly able to reach a view as to the risk to the appellant on his return to Iran. In particular, it was argued on behalf of [S](#) that the UT ought to have considered what the Appellant might be asked by the authorities on his return to Iran and how well he would be able to lie to them. The EWCA held that:

‘... [A]s was pointed out in [XX](#) at (98), the issues which the Supreme Court were considering in [RT](#), arose in a very different context, namely the return of a non-political Zimbabwean to an area in which it was likely that he would have to provide a convincingly false account of his allegiance to the ruling party when stopped and questioned by ill-disciplined militia at roadblocks.

‘In contrast, as was pointed out in [XX](#) at (99) the Iranian authorities do not persecute individuals because of their political neutrality. Moreover, in the present case, and in the light of both the retained findings and those made by [UT] Judge Kebede as to the unlikelihood of the appellant having already come to the attention of the authorities and his lack of genuine political belief in the PJAK, the appellant was not in a position where he would have to prove his political loyalty, rather it would be one in which, as Judge Kebede found, the appellant would not be required to volunteer information about his activities in the UK.

‘... In my judgment ... these finding[s] were ones which the [UT] judge was entitled to find on the basis of the evidence before her, and were reached in accordance with the relevant country guidance.’ (paragraphs 55 to 57).

- 3.3.11 In the country guidance case [XX \(PJAK – sur place activities - Facebook\) Iran CG \[2022\] UKUT 23 \(IAC\)](#), heard 8 to 10 June 2021 and promulgated on 20 January 2022, the UT held that:

‘The cases of [BA \(Demonstrators in Britain – risk on return\) Iran CG \[2011\] UKUT 36 \(IAC\)](#); [SSH and HR \(illegal exit: failed asylum seeker\) Iran CG \[2016\] UKUT 00308 \(IAC\)](#); and [HB \(Kurds\) Iran CG \[2018\] UKUT 00430](#) continue accurately to reflect the situation for returnees to Iran. That guidance is hereby supplemented on the issue of risk on return arising from a person’s social media use (in particular, Facebook) and surveillance of that person by the authorities in Iran’ (paragraph 120).

- 3.3.12 Regarding surveillance by the Iranian authorities, in the country guidance case [XX](#) the UT held that:

- Surveillance

‘There is a disparity between, on the one hand, the Iranian state’s claims as to what it has been, or is, able to do to control or access the electronic data of its citizens who are in Iran or outside it; and on the other, its actual capabilities and extent of its actions. There is a stark gap in the evidence, beyond assertions by the Iranian government that Facebook accounts have been hacked and are being monitored. The evidence fails to show it is reasonably likely that the Iranian authorities are able to monitor, on a large scale, Facebook accounts. More focussed, ad hoc searches will necessarily be more labour-intensive and are therefore confined to individuals who are of significant adverse interest. The risk that an individual is targeted will be a nuanced one. Whose Facebook accounts will be targeted, before they are

deleted, will depend on a person's existing profile and where they fit onto a "social graph;" and the extent to which they or their social network may have their Facebook material accessed.

'The likelihood of Facebook material being available to the Iranian authorities is affected by whether the person is or has been at any material time a person of significant interest, because if so, they are, in general, reasonably likely to have been the subject of targeted Facebook surveillance. In the case of such a person, this would mean that any additional risks that have arisen by creating a Facebook account containing material critical of, or otherwise inimical to, the Iranian authorities would not be mitigated by the closure of that account, as there is a real risk that the person would already have been the subject of targeted on-line surveillance, which is likely to have made the material known.

'Where an Iranian national of any age returns to Iran, the fact of them not having a Facebook account, or having deleted an account, will not as such raise suspicions or concerns on the part of Iranian authorities.

'A returnee from the UK to Iran who requires a laissez-passer or an emergency travel document (ETD) needs to complete an application form and submit it to the Iranian embassy in London. They are required to provide their address and telephone number, but not an email address or details of a social media account. While social media details are not asked for, the point of applying for an ETD is likely to be the first potential "pinch point," referred to in [AB and Others \(internet activity - state of evidence\) Iran \[2015\] UKUT 257 \(IAC\)](#). It is not realistic to assume that internet searches will not be carried out until a person's arrival in Iran. Those applicants for ETDs provide an obvious pool of people, in respect of whom basic searches (such as open internet searches) are likely to be carried out' (paragraphs 121 to 124).

3.3.13 For further information and guidance on Facebook and social media use, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).

3.3.14 The UT in [XX](#) acknowledged that '... the Iranian state targets dissident groups, including religious and ethnic minorities, such as those of Kurdish ethnic origin' (paragraph 85).

3.3.15 In respect of the finding that a person of significant interest is, in general, reasonably likely to have been the subject of targeted Facebook surveillance, the UT in [XX](#) added:

'We refer to the level of political involvement of an individual, as in [BA](#) and [HB](#); and the nature of "real-world" sur place activity, which would prompt such surveillance. By way of summary, relevant factors include: the theme of any demonstrations attended, for example, Kurdish political activism; the person's role in demonstrations and political profile; the extent of their participation (including regularity of attendance); the publicity which a demonstration attracts; the likelihood of surveillance of particular demonstrations; and whether the person is a committed opponent' (paragraph 92).

3.3.16 In [XX](#) the Upper Tribunal also found, 'Discovery of material critical of the Iranian regime on Facebook, even if contrived, may make a material difference to the risk faced by someone returning to Iran. The extent of the

risk they may face will continue to be fact sensitive. For example, an Iranian person of Kurdish ethnic origin may face a higher risk than the wider population' (paragraph 103).

- 3.3.17 Also pointed out in the case of [XX](#), and upheld in the EWCA case of [S](#), the Iranian authorities do not persecute individuals because of their political neutrality. The EWCA found in [S](#) that where a person has carried out sur-place activities for reason(s) other than a genuinely held political belief, and where it is unlikely that the person has already come to the attention of the Iranian authorities, the person would not be required to volunteer information about their activities in the UK on return to Iran (see also paragraph 3.3.10).
- 3.3.18 The EWCA in [S](#) also held, in view of the finding on the non-genuine nature of the appellant's activity, that '... there was no reason why the appellant could not close his Facebook accounts prior to the first pinch-point, when he applied for his emergency travel document, nor why he should disclose the existence of them, which would not have previously been known to the authorities, as like his attendance at demonstrations, their apparent contents did not reflect any genuinely held belief by the appellant ...' (paragraph 49).
- 3.3.19 The country information in this note and in the Country Policy and Information Note on [Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#) does not indicate that there are 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to justify a departure from these findings.
- 3.3.20 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **4. Protection**

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they will not, in general, be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **5. Internal relocation**

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they will not, in general, be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **6. Certification**

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

## About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **18 August 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Kurds - Background

### 7.1 History

- 7.1.1 For a brief history of Kurds and the Kurdish region of Iran, see the undated articles, [‘Kurdish History’](#) and [‘Iran \(Rojhelat or Eastern Kurdistan\)’](#), published by The Kurdish Project, ‘a cultural-education initiative to raise awareness in Western culture of Kurdish people’<sup>1</sup>.

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### 7.2 Demography

- 7.2.1 Estimates of the size of the Kurdish population in Iran vary between sources. The Zagros Human Rights Center (Zagros), a Switzerland-based human rights NGO with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)<sup>2</sup>, submitted a written statement on the situation of Kurds in Iran to the Secretary General prior to the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Dated 12 August 2024, the statement noted: ‘In Iran, the Kurds make up approximately 16 to 17% of the population, roughly 14 to 15 million people.’ They mainly reside in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Lorestan, and Hamadan, with some also living in the Khorasan provinces.’<sup>3</sup>
- 7.2.2 An article published on 27 January 2025 by the American Kurdish Committee (AKC), a non-profit organisation that advocates for US policies ‘that protect Kurdish interests and further American national security’<sup>4</sup>, stated: ‘Second only to Turkey, Iran is believed to have the largest Kurdish population, with estimates ranging from 7 to 10 million ... Although they make up roughly 10 percent of Iran’s total population, demographics within

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<sup>1</sup> The Kurdish Project, [About The Kurdish Project](#), no date

<sup>2</sup> Zagros, [Who are we?](#), no date

<sup>3</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>4</sup> AKC, [Who We Are](#), no date

Iran are particularly difficult to confirm.’<sup>5</sup>

- 7.2.3 An article published on 17 June 2025 by the Kurdish Peace Institute, an independent, nonpartisan, research and policy institute that focuses on Kurds and the Kurdish region of the Middle East<sup>6</sup>, stated: ‘An estimated eight to 10 million Kurds live in Iran, constituting about 10% of the country’s population and about 25% of the 40 million Kurds in the Middle East. They are concentrated in the northwestern regions of the country, including the provinces of Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah and Ilam. Kurds refer to these regions as Rojhelat, or Eastern Kurdistan.’<sup>7</sup>
- 7.2.4 The Kurdish Institute of Paris (Institut Kurde de Paris), described as ‘an independent, non-political, secular organisation, embracing Kurdish intellectuals and artists from different horizons as well as Western specialists on Kurdish Studies’<sup>8</sup>, indicated in an undated article on the Kurdish population that there were around half a million Kurds living in Tehran<sup>9</sup>.
- 7.2.5 Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) a ‘human rights organization working with ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and indigenous peoples worldwide’<sup>10</sup> published a profile on Fails Kurds which described them as an ‘... ethnic group historically inhabiting both sides of the Zagros mountain range along the Iraq-Iran border, and can be considered a cross-border population.’<sup>11</sup>
- 7.2.6 In June 2024, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published a ‘Country Focus’ report on Iran (the EUAA Country Focus report) which cited various sources. Regarding Fails Kurds, the report stated that: ‘In Iran, they reside primarily in the provinces of Kermanshah and Ilam, where they are known as Sawqi, in particular in Ilam province ... [however, they] are not considered as citizens in Iran.’<sup>12</sup>
- 7.2.7 On 24 July 2023, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the Australian Government (DFAT) published its ‘Iran Country Information Report’. It stated: ‘Some [Fails Kurds] are Iranian citizens, however others are registered or unregistered refugees from Iraq. Accurate population estimates for citizens and refugees are not available, however DFAT understands they are not a significant proportion of the population.’<sup>13</sup> The same DFAT report also stated: ‘Fails Kurds who are citizens of Iran enjoy the same rights as other Iranians.’<sup>14</sup>

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## 7.3 Maps

**NOTE: The maps in this section are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views of any boundaries.**

- 7.3.1 The below maps show areas with a majority Kurdish population, highlighted

<sup>5</sup> AKC, [The Ongoing Problem of Kurdish Demographics Across the Middle East](#), 27 January 2025

<sup>6</sup> Kurdish Peace Institute, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>7</sup> Kurdish Peace Institute, [Israel-Iran War: How Will Kurdish Actors Respond?](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>8</sup> Kurdish Institute of Paris, [Who is the Kurdish Institute?](#), no date

<sup>9</sup> Kurdish Institute of Paris, [The Kurdish population](#), no date

<sup>10</sup> MRGI, [About us](#) (Who we are), no date

<sup>11</sup> MRGI, [World Directory of Minorities ... Fails kurds in Iraq](#), updated November 2017

<sup>12</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (Section 4.7.4), June 2024

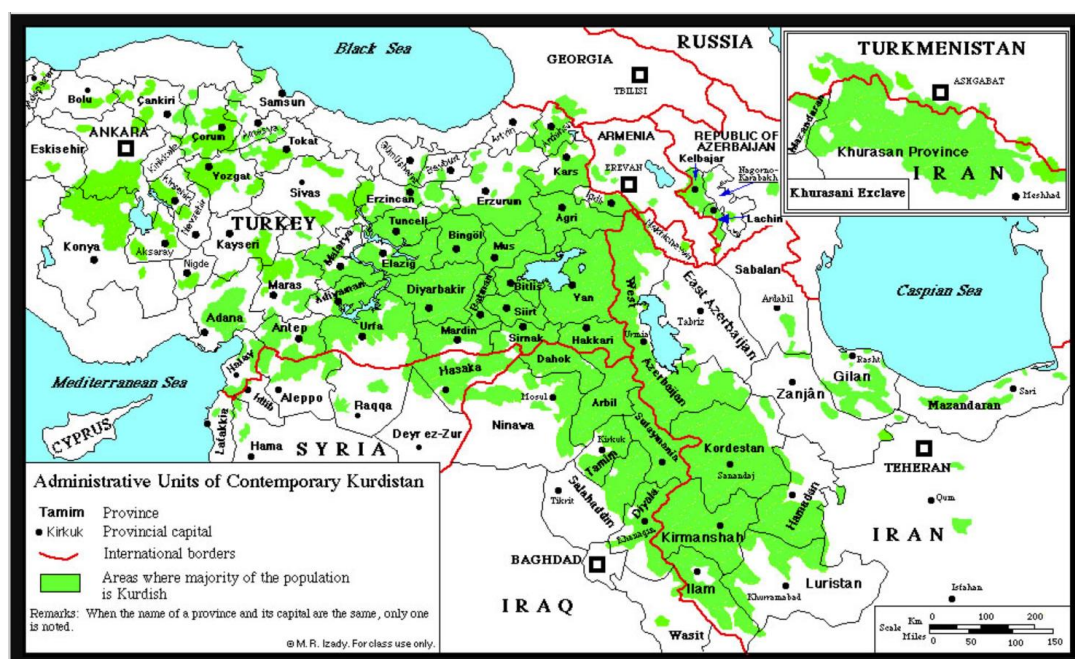
<sup>13</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.59), 24 July 2023

<sup>14</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.60), 24 July 2023

in green:



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## 7.4 Religion and faith

- 7.4.1 An undated webpage published by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), which described itself as ‘an international membership organization dedicated to empowering unrepresented nations and peoples around the world’<sup>17</sup>, noted the religion of the people of ‘Iranian Kurdistan’ to be: ‘Sunni Muslims 66%, Shi’a Muslims 27%, indigenous and Minority

<sup>15</sup> Avery, P.W. and Afary, J., Encyclopaedia Britannica, [People of Iran](#) (Ethnic groups), 21 July 2025

<sup>16</sup> Kurdish Institute of Paris, [Map of Kurdistan](#), no date

<sup>17</sup> UNPO, [Who We Are](#), no date

Religions 6% (Yarsan, Yazidis, Yarsan), Christians and Jews.<sup>18</sup> The same webpage also stated: 'The Iranian Kurdistanh population is made up of Shi'a and Sunni, as well as followers of the pre-Islamic Kurdish religion of Yarsan, however, religion does not form a part of the Iranian Kurdistan identity.'<sup>19</sup>

- 7.4.2 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated: 'Religiously, the majority of Kurds in Iran are Muslims, predominantly Sunni, with a notable presence of Shia, as well as adherents of other beliefs such as Yarsanis (Ahl al-Haq [People of Truth<sup>20</sup>]), Baha'is, and Zoroastrians.'<sup>21</sup>
- 7.4.3 The MRGI Failsi Kurds profile stated: 'Unlike the majority of Kurds, who are generally Sunni Muslims adhering to the Shafi'i school of Islam, Failsi Kurds are Shi'a Muslims.'<sup>22</sup>

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## 7.5 Language

- 7.5.1 An undated entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica states that the Kurdish language is '... a West Iranian language, one of the Indo-Iranian languages, chiefly spoken in Kurdistan. It ranks as the third largest Iranian language, after Persian and Pashto, and has numerous dialects [with 3 main dialects being Kurmanji, Sorani and Palewani<sup>23</sup>]. It is thought to be spoken by some 20 – 40 million people [mainly in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria<sup>24</sup>].'<sup>25</sup>
- 7.5.2 The Iran Data Portal, an online portal which hosts social science data on Iran in English and Persian and is a US-funded project that is run by a collaboration of academics based outside of Iran<sup>26</sup>, published an English translation of the The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It stated: 'Article 15 (Official Language): The Official Language and script of Iran, the lingua franca of its people, is Persian. Official documents, correspondence, and texts, as well as text-books, must be in this language and script. However, 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.'<sup>27</sup>
- 7.5.3 On 23 April 2024, the USSD published its '2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices' (USSD 2023 Country Report) which stated: 'The constitution provided for equal rights to all ethnic minorities, allowing minority languages to be used in media. The law provided for the right of citizens to learn, use, and teach their own languages and dialects.'<sup>28</sup> The same report also stated: 'Authorities did not universally prohibit the use of the Kurdish language'<sup>29</sup>, and 'The government reportedly banned some Kurdish-language newspapers, journals, and books and punished publishers,

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<sup>18</sup> UNPO, [Iranian Kurdistan](#), no date

<sup>19</sup> UNPO, [Iranian Kurdistan](#) (Culture & Identity), no date

<sup>20</sup> Kurdistan Observer, [Yarsanism](#), no date

<sup>21</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>22</sup> MRGI, [World Directory of Minorities ... Failsi kurds in Iraq](#), updated November 2017

<sup>23</sup> WorldData.info, [Spread of the Kurdish language](#), no date

<sup>24</sup> WorldData.info, [Spread of the Kurdish language](#), no date

<sup>25</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Kurdish language](#), no date

<sup>26</sup> Iran Data Portal, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>27</sup> Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (pages 9 to 10), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

<sup>28</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (page 71), 23 April 2024

<sup>29</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (page 73), 23 April 2024

journalists, and writers for criticizing government policies ...<sup>30</sup> The USSD report further stated: 'The government consistently barred use of minority languages in school for instruction.'<sup>31</sup> The USSD published its 2024 Iran Country Report on 12 August 2025 but provided no coverage of racial or ethnic violence and discrimination, nor of the education of children<sup>32</sup>.

- 7.5.4 An undated article entitled 'Kurdish language', published by The Kurdish Project, which cited various sources, stated:

'Kurdish dialects are broken into three main groups: Northern Kurdish, Central Kurdish and Southern Kurdish.

'... Northern Kurdish dialects, the most common of which is called Kurmanji, are spoken ... in the extreme northern strips of Iranian ... Kurdistan [and in Turkey, Syria, the Soviet Union, and Iraqi Kurdistan, where it is known as 'Behdini'<sup>33</sup>].

'... The Central Kurdish dialect, called Sorani, is spoken by Kurds in parts of Iraq and Iran. Sorani is written with the Arabic script, and borrows the spelling of many words from Arabic, although the pronunciation differs.

'... The third group of regional dialects, Southern Kurdish [also called Pehlewani<sup>34</sup>], is spoken primarily in Iran and in parts of Iraq. The Southern Kurdish dialect group encompasses over nine sub-dialects.'<sup>35</sup>

- 7.5.5 Words of Relief, a crisis response translation service run by Translators without Borders, 'a global community of over 100,000 language volunteers offering language services to humanitarian and development organizations worldwide'<sup>36</sup>, published an undated Kurdish 'Language Factsheet' which noted there were between 5 and 6 million Kurdish Sorani speakers in Iran<sup>37</sup>.
- 7.5.6 The undated Encyclopaedia Britannica article went into further detail about the Kurdish Sorani language, stating that '... [it] emerged as the major literary form of Kurdish. It is spoken within a broad region that stretches roughly from Orūmīyeh, Iran, to the lower reaches of traditional Kurdistan in Iraq. It is usually written in a modified Perso-Arabic script, though Latin script is increasingly used.'<sup>38</sup>
- 7.5.7 The MRGI World Directory published a profile on Kurds which stated: 'In southern Iran, Gurani which is a distinct language is spoken, but Kurds around Kirmanshah speak a dialect closer to Persian.'<sup>39</sup>
- 7.5.8 For more information about the the prohibition of Kurdish language instruction in schools in Iran, see [Access to Kurdish education](#).

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<sup>30</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (page 73), 23 April 2024

<sup>31</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (page 74), 23 April 2024

<sup>32</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#), 12 August 2025

<sup>33</sup> The Kurdish Project, [Kurdish Language](#), no date

<sup>34</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Kurdish language](#), no date

<sup>35</sup> The Kurdish Project, [Kurdish Language](#), no date

<sup>36</sup> Translators without Borders, [Crisis Response – Words of Relief](#), no date

<sup>37</sup> Words of Relief, [Language Factsheet: Kurdish](#), no date

<sup>38</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Kurdish language](#), no date

<sup>39</sup> MRGI, [World Directory of Minorities ... Kurds in Iran](#), updated December 2017

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## 8. Education and employment

### 8.1 Access to Kurdish education

- 8.1.1 On 23 February 2024, Hengaw Organization for Human Rights (Hengaw), an organisation that covers human rights violations across Iran<sup>40</sup>, published an article about Kurdish language teachers in Iran which stated:

‘The Kurdish language, alongside other minority languages, has been marginalized in Iran since the establishment of the modern nation-state. The policy of linguistic homogenization and denial has persisted, with the justification of preventing separatism. Under the rule of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this policy has intensified, with security forces exerting full control over educational, cultural, and judicial policies. The authorities have consistently refused to implement Article 15 of Iran’s Constitution, which minimally acknowledges the right to use minority languages in education. Furthermore, Kurdish language activists who voluntarily teach Kurdish people have faced security charges, leading to their arrest and severe prison sentences.’<sup>41</sup>

- 8.1.2 Citing information from Barzoo Eliassi, an associate professor at Linnaeus University in Sweden, with extensive experience on statelessness and Kurdish minorities<sup>42</sup>, the EUAA Country Focus report stated: ‘Kurds do not have the right to education in their mother tongue.’<sup>43</sup>

- 8.1.3 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated:

‘The teaching of the Kurdish language is ... absent from public schools, occurring only in private settings, posing a major obstacle to the preservation of Kurdish language and culture.

‘... The lack of educational infrastructure and the absence of teaching in the Kurdish mother tongue constitute major obstacles to the education of Kurdish children. The prohibition of Kurdish language instruction in public schools deprives young Kurds of the opportunity to be educated in their native language, threatening the transmission of their culture and identity.’<sup>44</sup>

- 8.1.4 On 27 February 2025, Kurdistan 24, a Kurdish multi-media, multi-language news outlet<sup>45</sup>, published an article which stated:

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<sup>40</sup> Hengaw, [About us](#), no date

<sup>41</sup> Hengaw, [International Mother Language Day ...](#), 23 February 2024

<sup>42</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (footnote 752 and Annex 1: Bibliography), June 2024

<sup>43</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.7.2), June 2024

<sup>44</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>45</sup> Kurdistan 24, [About Us](#), no date

'The Iranian Parliament has rejected a proposal that aimed to introduce the teaching of non-Persian languages in schools, despite Iran's diverse ethnic composition.

'The proposal, put forward by the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Research, and Technology, was struck down with 130 votes against, 104 in favor, and five abstentions, out of 246 members present.

'... Critics expressed concerns that implementing multilingual education might threaten national cohesion, particularly in border regions where Iran's ethnic minorities are concentrated.

'The parliament ultimately recommended further consultations to develop a more comprehensive proposal, with plans to revisit the issue in six months.'<sup>46</sup> CPIT was unable to find any further updates regarding the bill in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

- 8.1.5 On 28 April 2025, Amnesty International (AI) published its annual 'The State of the World's Human Rights' report, covering 2024. The report stated: 'Persian remained the sole language of instruction in primary and secondary education, despite repeated calls for linguistic diversity.'<sup>47</sup>

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## 8.2 Employment rates

- 8.2.1 The July 2023 DFAT report stated: 'Kurdish-majority areas tend to be relatively underdeveloped. High levels of unemployment have forced many Kurds to undertake smuggling work between Iran and Iraq.'<sup>48</sup> For more information about Kurds involved in smuggling, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Smugglers](#).
- 8.2.2 The same DFAT report also stated: '... [U]ndocumented Faili Kurds are not legally entitled to work ...'<sup>49</sup>
- 8.2.3 Citing the EUAA's communications with Barzoo Eliassi, the Country Focus report also stated: '... Kurdish regions are sidelined by the Islamic Republic. As there is no work in Kurdish areas, they go to Tehran, Karaj or Tabriz for work. In these cities, authorities often screen Kurds to see to what class or ethnic group they belong to ... The many Kurds in Tehran do not belong to any privileged group - political and economic factors push them to leave their regions.'<sup>50</sup>
- 8.2.4 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated: 'Kurdish regions in Iran exhibit some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, a problem exacerbated by economic marginalization and the lack of public investment in these areas.'<sup>51</sup>
- 8.2.5 On 14 April 2025, Kurd Press, an Iranian Kurdish news agency<sup>52</sup>, published an article which stated: 'According to the latest results published by the Statistical Centre of Iran, Kurdistan Province in winter 2024, with an

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<sup>46</sup> Kurdistan 24, [Iranian Parliament Rejects Proposal to Teach Non-Persian ...](#), 27 February 2025

<sup>47</sup> AI, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2025](#) (page 203), 28 April 2025

<sup>48</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.53), 24 July 2023

<sup>49</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.59), 24 July 2023

<sup>50</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.7.2), June 2024

<sup>51</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>52</sup> BBC Monitoring, [Media Guide: Iran](#) (Other news agencies), 16 January 2025

unemployment rate of 13.7 percent, has been introduced as the second most unemployed province in the country. This rate has been recorded while the average unemployment rate in the country was announced as 7.8 percent; a figure that shows Kurdistan's 5.9 percent difference from the national average.<sup>53</sup>

N.B. the information quoted above was originally published in Farsi. All COI from this source has been translated using a free online translation tool. As such 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

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### 8.3 Military service

8.3.1 Military service is compulsory for up to 24 months for all Iranian men aged between approximately 18 to 19 years and approximately 40 years<sup>54</sup>.

8.3.2 For more information on military conscription see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Military service](#).

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## 9. Iranian Kurdish political groups

### 9.1 Political parties

9.1.1 On 3 January 2024, The Jerusalem Post, an English-language daily newspaper and news website in Israel<sup>55</sup>, published an article which stated: 'Iran has numerous groups that have various causes and reasons to dislike the regime ... There are ... Kurdish groups that want rights for Kurds in northwest Iran.'<sup>56</sup>

9.1.2 In September 2023, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ, Dutch abbreviation), published a 'General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran' (the BZ Iran COI report), covering the period from April 2022, up to and including August 2023<sup>57</sup>. The report, which cited various sources, stated:

'... [D]uring the reporting period a number of the Kurdish political parties engaged in activities had their bases in the Kurdish region of Iraq. All of these parties are illegal in Iran. The authorities consider all Kurdish parties to be terrorist organisations ...

'A number of these Kurdish parties are listed below. This overview is by no means exhaustive.

- 'the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) This party is working for Kurdish autonomy in a federal and democratic Iran.
- 'the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK). PJAK has ideological ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) [a 'militant Kurdish nationalist organization founded by Abdullah ("Apo") Öcalan in the late 1970s'<sup>58</sup>]. This party seeks self-governance for Kurds in Syria, Iraq, Türkiye and Iran.

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<sup>53</sup> Kurd Press, [Kurdistan's unemployment rate ...](#) (translated into English), 14 April 2025

<sup>54</sup> CIA World Factbook, [Iran](#) (Military and Security), updated 21 July 2025

<sup>55</sup> The Jerusalem Post, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>56</sup> The Jerusalem Post, [Were terrorists behind the explosions in Iran?](#), 3 January 2024

<sup>57</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Introduction), September 2023

<sup>58</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Kurdistan Workers' Party](#), updated 23 July 2025

- ‘the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (Komala-PIK). Like the PDKI, this party is working for a federal and democratic Iran.
- ‘the Komala Communist Party of Iran (Komala-CPI). This party consists of a faction led by Ibrahim Alizadeh and a smaller faction led by Salah Mazoji.
- ‘the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK). This party is working for a large, independent Kurdistan.’<sup>59</sup>

9.1.3 On 24 November 2022, the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) published a report about the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), Komala, and other Iranian opposition political parties (The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report), which, citing various sources, stated:

‘In January 2018, six political organisations (PDKI, [Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran] KDP-I, Komala [PIK], [Komala Kurdistan Toilers’ Party] Komala KTP, [Communist Party of Iran] CPI [see sections 11 and 13], and Khabat [The Organization of Iranian Kurdistan Struggle<sup>60</sup>]) founded the Cooperation Centre of Iranian Kurdistan’s Political Parties (CCIKPP). Due to differences, CPI and Khabat left the cooperation centre. Both PDKI and Komala-KTP published news in September and October 2022, respectively, in the name of the CCIKPP using the following logo:



N.B. the information quoted above, and all other COI quoted from this source throughout the rest of this CPIN was originally published in German. All COI from this source has been translated using a free online translation tool. As such 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

9.1.4 On 13 September 2023 the Fikra Forum, ‘an initiative of the Washington Institute [for Near East Policy, TWI] designed to provide on-the-ground perspectives and insight on the most pressing current events facing the Middle East’<sup>62</sup>, published an article by Wladimir van Wilgenburg, a political analyst based in Erbil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) since 2014<sup>63</sup>. The article stated: ‘Most of the Iranian Kurdish parties are located in areas controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) [in the KRI], apart

<sup>59</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (section 3.1.1.2), September 2023

<sup>60</sup> Khabat Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan, [Homepage](#), no date

<sup>61</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 4), 24 November 2022

<sup>62</sup> TWI, [Fikra Forum](#) (About), no date

<sup>63</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (Annex 1: Interviewed sources), June 2024

from fighters of the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) ...<sup>64</sup>

- 9.1.5 An article published on 19 July 2024 by RFE / RL stated: 'Many offices of Kurdish parties [along Iraqi Kurdistan's eastern border with Iran] that oppose Tehran have since [March 2023] been shut down.'<sup>65</sup>
- 9.1.6 The EUAA Country Focus report noted that according to Barzoo Eliassi, between 1 January 2023 and 17 April 2024, Kurdish anti state resistance groups in Iran did not have territorial control<sup>66</sup>.
- 9.1.7 On 30 March 2025, an article posted on IranNews.ge, a news platform run by a self-described 'independent group of activists and specialists'<sup>67</sup> stated: 'In a sense, compared to some other ethnic groups (such as Arabs or Baluchis), Iranian Kurds have more cohesive political parties and organizations, which is the result of decades of efforts by Komala and other groups.'<sup>68</sup>

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## 9.2 Political activities in Iran

- 9.2.1 According to sources consulted by the DIS for a report it published on Iranian Kurds in February 2020, when referring to the activities of members and supporters of Iranian Kurdish parties:

'The level of civil political activities conducted by the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties, specifically [the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran] KDPI [also known as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI)]<sup>69</sup>, see also [Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan \(PDKI\) / Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran \(KDPI / KDP-I\)](#) and Komala [see [Komala](#)] in Iran is generally limited due to the scrutiny they are faced with. When the parties do conduct civil political activities, this is done in secrecy to prevent the authorities clamping down on them. However, the parties support the activities of others, such as organisations that focus on environmental issues as well as social issues.

'The Kurdish political parties are conducting propaganda activities to create awareness regarding the Iranian government's policies, encouraging people to protest by various peaceful and resolution oriented methods, such as demonstrations, general strikes and symbolic means, like wearing Kurdish clothes on special occasions.

'Most activities carried out by the Kurdish parties take place in public spaces, including schools. For instance, when the anniversary of the assassination of KDPI leader Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou occurs or the anniversary of the foundation of Kurdistan Republic in Iran, letters are hung on government buildings to inform people of these anniversaries. The parties usually encourage their members, supporters and the public to undertake actions through social media, TV, and radio channels.'<sup>70</sup>

- 9.2.2 The July 2023 DFAT report stated: 'Some groups that advocate for Kurdish separatism are non-violent. In-country sources told DFAT most Kurds accept

<sup>64</sup> Wilgenburg, Wladimir van, for the Fikra Forum, [Iran's Pressure Campaign ...](#), 13 September 2023

<sup>65</sup> RFE / RL, [Iran Intensifies Pressure On Iraq To Extradite Iranian-Kurdish Leaders](#), 19 July 2024

<sup>66</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 2), June 2024

<sup>67</sup> IranNews.ge, [The Voice of Exile, the Echo of Truth in a World Thirsty for Knowledge](#), no date

<sup>68</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Evaluation of Komala's Strengths ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>69</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, [Military](#), no date

<sup>70</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds](#) (page 16), February 2020

that a separate Kurdish state within Iran is not a realistic goal and that most Kurds are not involved in armed separatism.<sup>71</sup>

- 9.2.3 The EUAA Country Focus report stated: ‘As noted by [expert] Barzoo Eliassi ... Kurdish groups have rather chosen to conduct political activities rather than military confrontation ...’<sup>72</sup>
- 9.2.4 The Kurdish Peace Institute article, published on 17 June 2025, stated:  
‘Today, several significant Kurdish opposition parties exist. These groups have waged on-and-off armed campaigns against the Iranian state and engage in political organizing both clandestinely within Iran and openly in exile.  
‘... All major Iranian Kurdish parties demand the overthrow of the Islamic Republic. PDKI, Komala, and PJAK call for Kurdish national rights within a democratic, secular, federal Iran, while PAK calls for the creation of an independent Kurdish state. The parties have expressed interest in collaborating with other opposition groups in Iran and, in particular, with other ethnic minorities.’<sup>73</sup>
- 9.2.5 CPIT was unable to find any recent information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) on whether or, if so, to what extent, Kurdish political groups in Iran produce, print, and/or distribute written political materials, such as leaflets. For historic information on this topic, see the previous version of this CPIN ([Version 4.0](#)), published in May 2022 and pages 13 to 14 of a [joint report published in September 2013 by the Danish Immigration Service \(DIS\) and the Danish Refugee Council \(DRC\)](#), about a joint fact-finding mission they conducted in Erbil and Sulaimania, Iraq, between May and June 2013<sup>74</sup>.
- 9.2.6 For more information on political activities see the relevant sub-sections for each of the political parties, PDKI/KDPI/KDP-I – [Activities and roles of members and supporters](#), [Komala activities](#) and PJAK – [Membership structure and activities](#).

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### 9.3 Kurdish military activity

- 9.3.1 An article published by ACLED on 6 July 2023, stated: ‘Several Iranian Kurdish armed groups – including PJAK and others – have been engaged in armed struggle against the Iranian government for decades demanding cultural rights, autonomy, and in some cases, outright independence.’<sup>75</sup>
- 9.3.2 The Kurdish Peace Institute article, published on 17 June 2025, stated: ‘All major Iranian Kurdish parties ... have engaged in armed conflict with the Iranian state at various points in their history ... Local and international media reports indicated an uptick in young Kurdish men and women joining armed groups in response to the 2022 “Women, Life, Freedom” uprising. However, no Iranian Kurdish armed force took direct action against the state

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<sup>71</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.54), 24 July 2023

<sup>72</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 2.2), June 2024

<sup>73</sup> Kurdish Peace Institute, [Israel-Iran War: How Will Kurdish Actors Respond?](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>74</sup> DIS and DRC, [Iranian Kurds](#) (page 7), September 2013

<sup>75</sup> ACLED, [Regional Overview - Middle East: June 2023](#), 6 July 2023

this time, likely to avoid inviting further retaliation against protestors.<sup>76</sup>

9.3.3 The July 2023 DFAT report stated:

‘Various groups are involved in armed separatist insurgency. Groups including the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, Kurdistan Free Life Party (KFLP), Komala and Kurdistan Freedom Party. Although all groups fight for a separate Kurdistan, their activities can be diverse. For example, some fight in Iraq or were involved in the fight against Islamic State. Other groups have no such affiliation but may be separately recognised as terrorist groups, including the KFLP which is designated by the United States (but not by Australia [nor by the UK<sup>77</sup>]) as a terrorist group.’<sup>78</sup>

9.3.4 The RFE / RL article, published on 19 July 2024, stated:

‘... Tehran has long accused unspecified Kurdish opposition groups, without providing evidence, of coordinating with Israel, its archfoe, to stage attacks on Iran from Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdish opposition groups deny the allegation ... In a security pact agreed between Tehran and Iraq’s central government in March 2023, Baghdad agreed to secure Iraqi Kurdistan’s lengthy eastern border with Iran, as well as to disarm and relocate Iranian-Kurdish opposition groups based in the region.’<sup>79</sup>

9.3.5 In an article, updated on 4 November 2024, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which describes itself as, ‘an independent, impartial global monitor that collects, analyses, and maps data on conflict and protest’<sup>80</sup>, noted the main armed Kurdish groups represented in the ACLED Middle East Actor File for Iran were:

- ‘KSZK: Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan ...
- ‘HAK-R: Kurdistan Freedom Eagles for East Kurdistan [the armed peshmerga units of the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK)<sup>81</sup>] ...
- ‘PDKI: Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan ...
- ‘PJAK: Kurdistan Free Life Party ...
- ‘YRK: Eastern Kurdistan Units [the armed wing of the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK)<sup>82</sup>] ...’<sup>83</sup>

9.3.6 On 15 September 2023, The New Arab (TNA), a London-based ‘English-language news and current affairs website’ covering the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region<sup>84</sup>, published an article which stated:

‘In a significant development, authorities in the Iraqi Kurdistan region have reportedly taken steps to disarm and relocate factions of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups from their bases in northern Iraq, Kurdish sources revealed to The New Arab on Thursday, 14 September [2023], marking a

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<sup>76</sup> Kurdish Peace Institute, [Israel-Iran War: How Will Kurdish Actors Respond?](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>77</sup> GOV.UK, [Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations](#), updated 11 July 2025

<sup>78</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.54), 24 July 2023

<sup>79</sup> RFE / RL, [Iran Intensifies Pressure On Iraq To Extradite Iranian-Kurdish Leaders](#), 19 July 2024

<sup>80</sup> ACLED, [About ACLED](#), no date

<sup>81</sup> Alchetron, [Kurdistan Freedom Party](#), updated 25 December 2024

<sup>82</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish armed group blames Iran for deadly Sulaimani drone attack](#), 20 July 2025

<sup>83</sup> ACLED, [Kurdish Forces in Iraq, Syria, and Iran](#), 28 February 2023, updated 4 November 2024

<sup>84</sup> TNA, [About Us](#), no date

notable shift in regional dynamics.

‘... According to exclusive information obtained by TNA, Kurdish descendants living in Iran have widely gained access to smuggled weapons from the Iraq-Iran borders, and in case of any rebellion, it would not be easy for Iran to overcome local turmoils.

‘Iran accuses the Iranian Kurdish parties of “affiliating” with Israel; Iran often voices concern over the alleged presence of the Israeli spy agency Mossad in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region. Iran moves heavy weapons along borders with Iraqi Kurdistan.

‘The Islamic regime also accused Kurdish parties of stoking the nationwide protests triggered by the death in custody in September [2022] of Iranian Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini.

‘Kurdish groups, in turn, strongly deny these accusations, saying that their activities are mainly “peaceful”.’<sup>85</sup>

- 9.3.7 The BTI 2024 Iran report stated: ‘Iran’s government accuses Kurdish (and other) armed groups of separatism, terrorism and “relations with foreigners.” These groups in turn accuse the Islamic Republic of violating the rights of Iranian Kurds and claim to defend the rights of the Kurds.’<sup>86</sup>

- 9.3.8 A June 2024 fact-finding mission report published by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), entitled ‘Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq’ (the DIS FFM report), which cited various sources, stated:

‘Sources differed on whether the Iranian Kurdish parties have been disarmed ...[An] Iranian Kurdish scholar did not have actual knowledge on whether the parties have been disarmed, but stated that official statements from Iran, Iraq and KRG prevail. Iran has thanked both Baghdad and the KRG for their assistance in making the Iranian Kurdish parties disarm, implying that both relocation and disarmament have taken place in accordance with the official announcements. A local human rights NGO also stated that disarmament has taken place, but the source was unaware of the fate of the weapons. An International Organisation in Iraq also stated that the Iranian Kurdish parties made the decision to disarm, have confirmed that they have disarmed, and that there is no evidence that contradicts this. The Iranian Kurdish parties, however, want to keep small arms for personal protection.

‘In contrast to the above, according to [political analyst] Wladimir van Wilgenburg, most of the Iranian Kurdish parties have not been disarmed.’<sup>87</sup>

- 9.3.9 The Kurdish Peace Institute article, published on 17 June 2025, stated: ‘It is unclear the degree to which each party has military forces present in Iran now.’<sup>88</sup>

- 9.3.10 An article published by TNA, also on 17 June 2025, stated:

‘In the days after the Israel-Iran war began [on 13 June 2025<sup>89</sup>], all four [of the main Iranian Kurdish] parties [KDPI, Komala, PAK and PJAK] called on the Kurdish people to work for the collapse of the Iranian regime. However,

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<sup>85</sup> TNA, [Iraqi Kurdistan disarms and relocates Iranian Kurds opposition ...](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>86</sup> BTI, [Iran report](#) (page 7), 19 March 2024

<sup>87</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (section 3.1.2.1), June 2024

<sup>88</sup> Kurdish Peace Institute, [Israel-Iran War: How Will Kurdish Actors Respond?](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>89</sup> BBC News, [Israel-Iran: How did latest conflict start and where could it lead?](#), 13 June 2025

some were blunter about whether this should be achieved through immediate armed struggle.

“We call on all forces, parties, and civil society organisations - with Iranian women at the forefront - to launch a new phase of the “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” [Women, Life, Freedom] revolution. We declare our readiness to help initiate it,” PJAK said in a statement on 14 June [2025].

‘Far more militantly, PAK leader Hussein Yazdanpana urged Kurdish youth “to seize IRGC and intel bases” in the Kurdish provinces.’<sup>90</sup>

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## **10. Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) / Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI / KDP-I)**

### **10.1 Background**

- 10.1.1 It should be noted that a number of sources referred, and continue to refer, to the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran / the Kurdistan Democratic Party - Iran (KDPI / KDP-I), and other close iterations of these names, interchangeably to describe the same party<sup>91</sup>. The country information in this note is therefore reflective of this practice.
- 10.1.2 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated: ‘In 2006 ... [a] dispute over the election of their next chairman led to some senior members leaving the party. Under the leadership of Khalid Azizi, they founded the Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP, also KDP-I to distinguish it from the KDP in Iraq). During the split, the party removed the word Iran from its Kurdish and Persian original names ... The KDP-I remained ideologically linked to the [Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan] PDKI.’<sup>92</sup>
- 10.1.3 In 2022, the PDKI and the KDP-I reunited; as Kurdistan 24 reported on 22 August 2022: ‘Two Iranian Kurdish parties on Sunday [21 August 2022] announced that they unified their parties again, after 16 years of being separated. The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran (KDP-I) decided to reunite again after long negotiations. The parties in a joint statement said ... “The people of East Kurdistan (Iranian Kurdistan) never accepted this separation and did not recognize it officially,” ...’<sup>93</sup>
- 10.1.4 A Rudaw article published on 21 August 2022, citing the parties’ joint statement, noted: ‘Going forward, the party’s organizations and bodies will reunite and resume under the name of the KDPI and through the “guidance of a common leadership” and “bilateral agreements” ...’<sup>94</sup>
- 10.1.5 The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) is an Iranian-Kurdish opposition group based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)<sup>95</sup>. It is the oldest and largest of the four main Iranian Kurdish parties<sup>96</sup>, having been

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<sup>90</sup> TNA, [How Kurdish groups in Iran are reacting to Israel's war](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>91</sup> Rudaw, [PDKI-Iran border clashes and the Kurdistan referendum](#), 24 August 2017

<sup>92</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (sections 2.1 and 2.1.1), 24 November 2022

<sup>93</sup> Kurdistan 24, [Iranian Kurdish parties unite after 16 years split](#), 22 August 2022

<sup>94</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish opposition parties of Iran reunite after years of being separated](#), 21 August 2022

<sup>95</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish Iranian groups protest planned wall around Koya camp](#), 23 February 2024

<sup>96</sup> TNA, [How Kurdish groups in Iran are reacting to Israel's war](#), 17 June 2025

established in August 1945 by 'notable Kurdish figure', Qazi Muhammad<sup>97</sup>.

10.1.6 On its own website, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) describes itself as a social democratic party with the stated aim of attaining 'Kurdish national rights within a federal and democratic Iran.'<sup>98</sup>

10.1.7 On 4 December 2023, citing various sources, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre, Landinfo, published a query response which stated that the PDKI 'fought an armed struggle for control over the Kurdish areas in northwestern Iran following the Iranian revolution in 1979, but were driven out of the country by Iranian government forces in the first half of the 1980s. Since then, the parties have operated from exile bases in Iraq and have only had a clandestine existence in Iran.'<sup>99</sup>

N.B. the information quoted above, and all other COI quoted from this source throughout the rest of this CPIN was originally published in Norwegian. All COI from this source has been translated using a free online translation tool. As such 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

10.1.8 A September 2023 article published by Amwaj.media, a UK-based news website that covers Iran, Iraq and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula<sup>100</sup>, noted Mustafa Hijri as the leader of the KDPI, and included the below logo for the party<sup>101</sup>:



10.1.9 For the logo of the formerly-separate KDP-I party, see page 8 of the [ACCORD report, published in November 2022](#). Khalid Azizi, the former leader of the KDP-I became the spokesperson and head of external relations for the newly merged KDPI party<sup>102</sup>.

10.1.10 The same Amwaj.media article stated: '... [S]ome reports have emerged that the KDPI and Komala have left the mountains near the Iranian border district of Piranshahr, destroying their bases in the process. Iraqi officials have also separately confirmed that Kurdish fighters are now being moved away from the border area.'<sup>103</sup>

10.1.11 The DIS FFM report stated '... [S]ources agreed that PDKI is located in Erbil Governorate, but their exact location is disputed. A local Human Rights Organisation claimed PDKI is now based outside Erbil, while Wladimir van

<sup>97</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>98</sup> PDKI, [About](#), no date

<sup>99</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (page 1), 4 December 2023

<sup>100</sup> Amwaj.media, [About](#), no date

<sup>101</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>102</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2), 24 November 2022

<sup>103</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

Wilgenburg stated that PDKI was near Koye and near Baharka in Erbil Governorate. An International Organisation in Iraq informed the delegation that PDKI was relocated to two camps in unspecified locations in Erbil Governorate.<sup>104</sup>

10.1.12 The DIS FFM report also noted that according to Wladimir van Wilgenburg, the PDKI retained its weapons despite the Iran-Iraq Border Security Agreement (see paragraph 9.3.4 and section 3.1.1 of the [DIS report](#) for further information)<sup>105</sup>.

10.1.13 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article stated: 'The Democratic Party, with its longer history [than Komala] and charismatic figures ... has a major share in the political authority of the Kurds.'<sup>106</sup>

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## 10.2 Membership structure and recruitment

10.2.1 CPIT found limited recent information on membership structure and recruitment into the PDKI / KDPI in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)). For historic information on this topic, see the previous version of this CPIN ([Version 4.0](#)), published in May 2022.

10.2.2 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated:

'The PDKI has a network of members and supporters in Iran. According to representatives of the PDKI, members in Iran are organised into secret cell structures. Each city has its own separate organisational structure. Members in the cells are not allowed to know other members outside the cell and only receive the information necessary to perform their tasks. A cell can consist of one, three, or five members (and in the past between three and nine).

'... The organisational structure in Iran is completely separate from the organisational structure in northern Iraq ...'<sup>107</sup>

10.2.3 The DIS report on Iranian Kurds, dated February 2020, cited the Kurdistan Human Rights Association – Geneva (KMMK-G), an independent non-affiliated association, who said in regard to recruiting PDKI members in Iran that training for new members is conducted in Koya and Qandil (on the Iran/Iraq border)<sup>108</sup>.

10.2.4 According to the KMMK-G:

'The training course takes 3 months. It includes the teaching of Kurdish language, Kurdish history, the political party's history takes and geopolitics. Then according to the new comers' educational background, s/he will be sent to different departments. For instance, if the new comer is a journalist, s/he will be sent to KDPIs media department.

'The newcomers come voluntarily due to the fact that the level of repression is very high in Iranian Kurdistan and they have lost hope in reforms within the system; in addition to the repression, they suffer also discrimination because of the "Gozinesh" law [mandatory pre-employment screening that

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<sup>104</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (section 3.1.2), June 2024

<sup>105</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (section 3.1.2.1), June 2024

<sup>106</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Evaluation of Komala's Strengths ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>107</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 2), 24 November 2022

<sup>108</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds](#) (page 51, paragraph 24), February 2020

assesses adherence to Islam and loyalty to the Islamic Republic<sup>109</sup>]. KDPI generally encourage people, especially highly educated volunteers, to stay in Iran to work for KDPI in order to reinforce the party's presence in the villages and towns. It is also costly and requires space to house recruits in the bases in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>110</sup>

- 10.2.5 Sources in a Landinfo report on the PDKI, published in April 2020, indicated that new members in Iran were usually recruited on recommendation, that background checks were made, and they were monitored for a period of time before acceptance into the party:

'Recruitment within Iran usually occurs through acquaintances. Those who wish to become members of the party need recommendations from other members to gain approval. There is no fixed trial period before being accepted as a member. Those being considered for membership are often monitored over a period, and a background check is conducted before they are accepted as members of a secret cell. An Iranian-Kurdish journalist who became a member of a secret PDKI cell while living in Iran explained that he was contacted by acquaintances and asked if he would join the party. He was privately teaching Kurdish language at the time and was well-known among educated Kurds in the area. He also explained that those being considered for membership were typically observed over a period, and a background check was conducted to try to prevent Iranian intelligence from infiltrating the cells.'<sup>111</sup>

N.B. the information quoted above, and all other COI quoted from this source throughout the rest of this CPIN was originally published in Norwegian. All COI from this source has been translated using a free online translation tool. As such 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

- 10.2.6 The same Landinfo report referred to a youth group belonging to the party: 'The party has its own youth organisation, Lawan, for members between the ages of 15 and 35. Lawan has offices in the Azadi camp [northern Iraq] and operates both in the KRI and inside Iran. The youth organisation also has offices in various European countries ...'<sup>112</sup>
- 10.2.7 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report also noted the Democratic Youth Union of Iranian Kurdistan (Lawan) as an organisation affiliated with the party, in addition to the Democratic Women Union of Kurdistan, and the Democratic Students Union of Kurdistan<sup>113</sup>. For the logos of the Democratic Women Union of Kurdistan and the Democratic Students Union of Kurdistan, see page 11 of the [ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report](#).
- 10.2.8 In May 2017, a report about Iranian Kurdish militias was published by the Combating Terrorist Center at West Point (CTC), which researches, trains, and advises on terrorism and counterterrorism-related matters<sup>114</sup>. The report stated: 'Outside of official sources, the numbers on armed Iranian Kurds remain opaque and should be considered best-guess estimates and

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<sup>109</sup> MRGI, [Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities...](#) (page 34), March 2018

<sup>110</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds](#) (page 51, paragraphs 24 and 25), February 2020

<sup>111</sup> Landinfo, [PDKI – Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan](#) (page 19, section 6.1), 2 April 2020

<sup>112</sup> Landinfo, [PDKI – Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan](#) (page 15, section 4.3), 2 April 2020

<sup>113</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 2.3), 24 November 2022

<sup>114</sup> CTC, [About](#), no date

averages. The KDPI may have 1,000-1,500 fighters ...'<sup>115</sup>

- 10.2.9 An article published on 3 February 2021 by The Iran Primer, a project which provides a collection of essays by 50 of the world's top scholars on Iran<sup>116</sup>, stated: 'The PDKI is estimated to have between 1,000 and 2,000 fighters spread across Iran and Iraq. The PDKI's "Peshmerga," or "those who face death," include male and female fighters.'<sup>117</sup>
- 10.2.10 The September 2023 Amwaj.media article stated that: '... the KDPI has not circulated any new footage of graduation ceremonies in the mountains for new recruits since last December [2022].'<sup>118</sup>
- 10.2.11 The article published by TNA on 17 June 2025 noted that the KDPI tends to attract traditionalists as members (rather than those with more progressive attitudes that tend to appeal in other parties, such as Komala)<sup>119</sup>.

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### 10.3 Membership cards and registration

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<sup>115</sup> CTC, [Iranian Kurdish Militias ...](#), May 2017

<sup>116</sup> TWI, [The Iran Primer: Power, Politics, and US Policy](#), 3 June 2013

<sup>117</sup> The Iran Primer, [Iran's Troubled Provinces: Kurdistan](#), 3 February 2021

<sup>118</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>119</sup> TNA, [How Kurdish groups in Iran are reacting to Israel's war](#), 17 June 2025

10.4 Confirmation of membership

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## 10.5 Activities and roles of members and supporters

### 10.5.1 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated:

‘According to a member of the central committee, there are three types of supporters of the party: members, supporters, and so-called friends. Members have responsibilities and maintain a close relationship with the party. Most members are organised in the cells described above [see [Membership structure and recruitment](#)]. Some members carry out their activities alone, while only the party leadership is informed about it. Supporters bear less responsibility. They support the party and accept its policies, but are not bound by any guidelines. According to a member of the Central Committee, supporters have no direct connections to the PDKI. However, the supporters in the Kurdish areas of Iran are reportedly all organised and active in the party cells, according to a member of the party's political bureau. So-called friends of the party have no connections to the party and bear no responsibility either. They may participate in demonstrations, listen to the party's radio station, or support the party in some cases through their own initiatives.

‘... Members in Iran occasionally cross the border into northern Iraq to receive instructions and conduct training, but in many cases it is too risky to cross the border. Usually, it is the armed Peshmerga units of the party that pass on instructions to the clandestine cells in Iran in connection with their cross-border activities. The Peshmerga are trained in the KRI. According to Landinfo, it is unclear whether the PDKI conducts purely defensive or also offensive military actions. Landinfo further reports that since 2015 the armed group Zagros has been operating offensively in Iranian Kurdistan. Landinfo has received information that the Zagros Eagles are a group affiliated with or connected to the PDKI, but the PDKI denies these claims.’<sup>120</sup>

### 10.5.2 The same ACCORD report also stated: ‘Since 2015, the party has resumed limited military activities in Iran. According to Landinfo, however, the party's main focus is on civil society activities, such as supporting civil society in Iranian Kurdistan and calls for protests and strikes. In September 2022, the PDKI publicly supported the demonstrations in Iran that followed the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody [see paragraph 9.3.6].’<sup>121</sup>

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## 11. Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK)

### 11.1 Background

#### 11.1.1 The Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) is an Iranian-Kurdish opposition group

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<sup>120</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 2), 24 November 2022

<sup>121</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 2.1), 24 November 2022

or separatist organisation based in the KRI<sup>122 123</sup> that was founded in 1991<sup>124</sup> and is led by Hussein Yazdanpanah<sup>125 126</sup>. It is engaged in both political and military activities and advocates for an independent Kurdish state comprising territory from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey<sup>127</sup>. The PAK was one of the groups involved in 2016/2017 armed clashes with Iranian security forces on Iranian territory<sup>128</sup>.

11.1.2 The Amwaj.media article published the below flag for PAK<sup>129</sup>:



11.1.3 The September 2023 article published by The New Arab stated:

“The ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) [in the KRI] has recently disarmed the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) based near Erbil from its middle and heavy weapons. They soon would be relocated to a new camp near Makhmour [a district in the Erbil governorate],” a Kurdish source close to the matter told TNA on condition of secrecy.

‘... Since 2014, PAK has fought with the Kurdish Peshmerga forces against the Islamic State (ISIS).

‘... [I]n statements sent to TNA, Khalil Nadiri, PAK’s spokesperson, denied his party or other Iranian Kurdish parties have laid down arms or are willing to relocate into new camps. He said, however, that PAK has considered the KRG’s political stance; it has no bases near the borders with Iran, and it is not launching military operations against Iran from the Iraqi territories. He also noted that other oppositional Iranian Kurd parties have decided to relocate their bases to as far as 100 kilometres from the borders with Iran.’<sup>130</sup>

11.1.4 The Landinfo request response, published in December 2023, however, reported that:

‘At the turn of September/October [2023], reports emerged that PAK had been disarmed and evacuated from its military camp outside Erbil, moving to a camp in Saedekan in the Duhok province of KRI. The KRG is said to have moved its own peshmerga soldiers into the evacuated camp that PAK left behind. According to a representative of an Iranian human rights organisation, PAK had two military camps, both of which were vacated in the autumn of 2023, and the party had been completely disarmed. The members

<sup>122</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish Iranian groups protest planned wall around Koya camp](#), 23 February 2024

<sup>123</sup> The Iran Primer, [Iran’s Troubled Provinces: Kurdistan](#), 3 February 2021

<sup>124</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>125</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>126</sup> MEMRI, [Hussein Yazdanpana – The Kurdish Leader ...](#), 16 June 2025

<sup>127</sup> The Iran Primer, [Iran’s Troubled Provinces: Kurdistan](#), 3 February 2021

<sup>128</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (pages 1 to 2), 4 December 2023

<sup>129</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>130</sup> TNA, [Iraqi Kurdistan disarms and relocates Iranian Kurds opposition ...](#), 15 September 2023

were moved to a civilian camp in an area called GomeSPAN northeast of Erbil.<sup>131</sup>

- 11.1.5 The DIS FFM report noted that despite the Iran-Iraq Border Security Agreement (see paragraph 9.3.4 and section 3.1.1 of the [DIS FFM report](#) for further information), the PAK retained its weapons, according to Wladimir van Wilgenburg in March 2023<sup>132</sup>.

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## 11.2 Membership and recruitment

- 11.2.1 The Iran Primer article, published in February 2021, citing vice president Hussein Yazdanpanah in 2019 stated there were 1000 fighters<sup>133</sup>.
- 11.2.2 The article published by TNA on 17 June 2025 stated that: 'PAK is the smallest of the four [main Iranian Kurdish parties] and has little presence beyond its cadres based in the Kurdistan Region, where it has close ties with the Erbil-based Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).'<sup>134</sup>
- 11.2.3 CPIT was unable to find any further relevant information on membership and recruitment to the PAK in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 12. Komala

### 12.1 Party names

- 12.1.1 Komala (meaning society in Kurdish<sup>135</sup>) party names vary according to sources. There are a number of groups that claim the name Komala due to party splits<sup>136 137 138</sup>.
- 12.1.2 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article noted that from the 2000s Komala was divided into 2 branches, using the names 'Komala Revolutionary Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan' and 'Komala Organization of Kurdistan of the Communist Party of Iran'<sup>139</sup>. A further split in 2007 led to a further independent party, 'Komala Toilers of Kurdistan'<sup>140</sup>.
- 12.1.3 The IranNews.ge article stated:
- 'In November 2022, amidst the widespread protest movement following the killing of Zhina (Mahsa) Amini, the two [splintered] parties announced that after 15 years of separation, they would once again unite and resume their joint activities under the single name of "Kurdistan Komala Party of Iran" and a unified leadership ... However, it was not long before old differences resurfaced ...
- '... [I]n the early 2020s, we are witnessing three currents associated with the name of Komala: the Kurdistan Komala Party of Iran led by Abdollah

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<sup>131</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (page 4), 4 December 2023

<sup>132</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (section 3.1.2.1), June 2024

<sup>133</sup> The Iran Primer, [Iran's Troubled Provinces: Kurdistan](#), 3 February 2021

<sup>134</sup> TNA, [How Kurdish groups in Iran are reacting to Israel's war](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>135</sup> Austria: Federal Ministry of the Interior, [The Kurds ...](#) (page 171), November 2015

<sup>136</sup> Austria: Federal Ministry of the Interior, [The Kurds ...](#) (pages 171 to 172), November 2015

<sup>137</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: COI Compilation](#) (page 47), July 2018

<sup>138</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Ideological Changes ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>139</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Ideological Changes ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>140</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Ideological Changes ...), 30 March 2025

Mohtadi (which considers itself the continuation of the historical Komala and has a social-democratic approach), Komala Toilers of Kurdistan led by Omar Ilkhanizadeh (which withdrew from the 2022 unification), and the Komala Organization of Kurdistan of the Communist Party of Iran led by Ebrahim Alizadeh (which follows the classic Marxist-Leninist approach).<sup>141</sup>

12.1.4 The ACCORD report, published in November 2022, stated that at the time of writing there were 4 parties operating under the name Komala. They were:

- Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (Komala PIK) also known as the Revolutionary Organization of Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan, led by Adollah Mohtadi (Kurdish name, Komalai Shoreshergi Zahmatkeshani Kurdistanani Iran (KŞZK))
- Komala Kurdistan Toilers' Party (Komala KTP) also known as the Organisation of the Toilers of Kurdistan and known internationally as the Komala Party of Kurdistan, led by Omar Ilkhanizadeh (Kurdish name, Komalai Zahmatkeshani Kurdistan (KZK))
- Komalah – Communist Party of Iran (Komalah-CPI) (right wing) also known as Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran or Kurdistan Organization of the Iranian Communist Party – Komalah, led by Ibrahim Alizadeh (Kurdish name, Komalah – Rekkhrawi Kurdistanani Hezbi Komonisti Eran (also known as SKHKI, an abbreviation of its name in Persian))
- Komala – Communist Party of Iran (Komala-CPI) (left wing) also known as Komala – Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran, led by Salah Mazoji (Kurdish name, Komala, Rekkhrawi Kurdistanani Hezbi Komonisti Eran)<sup>142</sup>.

12.1.5 Regarding the two wings of Komala(h)-CPI, ACCORD noted that the final 'h' of 'Komalah-CPI' is sometimes dropped such that 'Komala-CPI' may be used for both parties<sup>143</sup>. The ACCORD report also noted that the two wings separated from each other in 2021, forming two parties with the same name, an issue of contention between them<sup>144</sup>.

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## 12.2 Background

12.2.1 Komala, also Iranian-Kurdish oppositionists based in the KRI<sup>145</sup> with involvement in armed separatist insurgency<sup>146</sup> was founded in 1969<sup>147</sup> <sup>148</sup> as an offshoot of the Iranian Communist Party<sup>149</sup>.

12.2.2 The undated homepage of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan's website stated that the party was founded 'by a group of Kurdish student leaders and

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<sup>141</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Ideological Changes ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>142</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (sections 3.1 to 3.1.4), 24 November 2022

<sup>143</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (footnote 17 on page 19), 24 November 2022

<sup>144</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.3), 24 November 2022

<sup>145</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish Iranian groups protest planned wall around Koya camp](#), 23 February 2024

<sup>146</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.54), 24 July 2023

<sup>147</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>148</sup> Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, [Homepage](#), no date

<sup>149</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

intellectuals who were based in Tehran and major Kurdish cities.’<sup>150</sup>

12.2.3 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated: ‘... Komala focused on class struggle and the workers' movement, having most of its supporters in the south of Iranian Kurdistan, in the regions of Sanandaj and Marivan ... Komala identified as Marxist-Leninist ...’<sup>151</sup>

12.2.4 The same ACCORD report summarised the ideologies and goals of the various parties operating under the Komala name as of November 2022, and included the logos used by the respective parties:

- Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (Komala PIK) – oriented itself towards a more liberal social democratic programme and aspires to a democratic, secular, pluralistic, and federal political structure in Iran. Komala PIK has a youth organisation and a women's organisation affiliated with it. ACCORD published the below Komala PIK logo<sup>152</sup>:



- Komala Kurdistan Toilers' Party (Komala KTP) - ‘... [A]dvocates for the national rights of Kurds, equality, peace, a secular society, democracy, and the empowerment of women. According to Komala KTP, Iran is home to six different nationalities, and the party strives for a democratic federalist state structure through which peace (among the nationalities) should be realised.’<sup>153</sup> The logo of the Komala KTP appears to be identical to the Komala PIK logo:



- Komalah – Communist Party of Iran (Komalah-CPI) (right wing) - ‘... [B]elieves in a communist alternative to the current capitalist reality. The aim is for the workers' sector to take control across Iran, not just in Kurdistan. The organisation is generally less nationalistic than other parties and does not use the Kurdish flag ... The party also has its own women's organisation.’<sup>154</sup> ACCORD published the below logos which it stated were used by, from left to right, Persian Komalah, Kurdish Komalah, and Komalah-CPI, respectively<sup>155</sup>:

<sup>150</sup> Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, [Homepage](#), no date

<sup>151</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1), 24 November 2022

<sup>152</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.1), 24 November 2022

<sup>153</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.2), 24 November 2022

<sup>154</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.3), 24 November 2022

<sup>155</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.3), 24 November 2022



- Komala – Communist Party of Iran (Komala-CPI) (left wing) - an independent organisation but remains part of the CPI. The party focuses on the Kurdish-speaking provinces of Iran, mainly Kurdistan (while the CPI focuses on Iran as a whole), and aims to build a new socialist society. The party aims to end Bourgeois society, abolish private property and establish a workers' government. The party does not have its own youth or women's organisation<sup>156</sup>. ACCORD published the below logos which it stated were used by, from left to right, Komala-CPI and the CPI, respectively<sup>157</sup>:



12.2.5 The same Landinfo response indicated close historical links between Komala and the KDPI<sup>158</sup> (see [Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan \(PDKI\) / Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran \(KDPI / KDP-I\)](#) for further information), though the parties have also gone through periods of intense conflict with one another<sup>159</sup>.

12.2.6 The DIS FFM report stated:

'Regarding Komala, Wladimir van Wilgenburg stated that the party was now based in Sulaimania, while an International Organisation in Iraq stated that Komala relocated to Erbil Governorate. The same source did not rule out that they could have a presence in Sulaimania ... Komala has allegedly been disarmed, however, not as a result of the Iran-Iraq security agreement, but due to Kurdish pressure to end their infighting. An International Organisation in Iraq added that there is an ongoing power-struggle within Komala ...'<sup>160</sup>

12.2.7 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article stated:

'Komala's ... [s]uccessive splits ... have diminished Komala's energy and credibility. These schisms have also confused supporters; for example, an ordinary Kurdish villager may not know the difference between Komala of Mohtadi and Komala of Alizadeh, and this multiplicity distorts Komala's message.

'... The new generation of Iranian Kurds (born after 1981) has had less direct contact with Komala. Although Komala's ideas and name are still attractive or respected to many, geographical and temporal distance has taken its toll. In the past two decades, in some protests in Kurdistan, slogans were

<sup>156</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.4), 24 November 2022

<sup>157</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.4), 24 November 2022

<sup>158</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (page 1), 4 December 2023

<sup>159</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Armed Conflicts of the 1980s ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>160</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.2.1), June 2024

chanted in favor of PJAK (and even PKK) [see [Kurdistan Free Life Party / Free Life Party of Kurdistan \(PJAK\)](#)], while there was no mention of Komala or HDKA. This shows that newer groups are gaining popularity ... Komala of Mohtadi [Komala PIK] has tried to reduce this distance by publicizing itself in the media (television, social networks), but the limited access to the inside remains.

‘... Although Komala and the Democratic Party [PDKI] do not differ much in strategy now (both are pro-federalism and opposed to the armed regime) [see also PDKI - [Background](#)] , in practice they compete with each other to gain a social base in Kurdistan ... As a result, Komala has to make more efforts to maintain and expand its influence. Fortunately, Komala’s leftist and justice-seeking discourse is still attractive to the working class and intellectuals of Kurdistan, and this is considered a trump card for it.’<sup>161</sup>

- 12.2.8 For more information about the background of Komala, including its various splits and unifications, see the [March 2025 IranNews.ge article](#).

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### 12.3 Membership and recruitment

- 12.3.1 In May 2017 and February 2021, the CTC and The Iran Primer, respectively, estimated that Komala had fewer than 1,000 armed fighters<sup>162 163</sup>. The CTC did not state how it arrived at this estimate. The Iran Primer cited a [2003 article by The Christian Science Monitor](#), an international news organisation<sup>164</sup>, as the basis for its estimate. CPIT was unable to find any further, or more recent, information on the number of Komala fighters, members, or supporters, in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 12.3.2 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated, of the Komala-CPI (left-wing) party specifically, that: ‘Membership is granted by the CPI. When activists or Peshmergas work for the Komala organisation, their membership still derives from the party as a whole, namely the CPI.’<sup>165</sup>
- 12.3.3 A BBC News Arabic Investigations synopsis of a documentary it filmed about Komala, dated 19 April 2022, stated: ‘For the first time, BBC News Arabic ... has been given unique access to film with Komala. The film follows a group of young men and women as they undergo three months of rigorous military training before qualifying as peshmerga - Kurdish guerrilla fighters - and become full members of Komala. Komala has several thousand male and female peshmerga fighters in Iraq.’<sup>166</sup>
- 12.3.4 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article stated:
- ‘Komala has ... had progressive views on women’s rights. From the early 1980s, Komala was the first political group in the Middle East to officially bring women into its military apparatus ...
- ‘Regarding religion, Komala is a secular organization. The vast majority of its members and leaders have been Sunni Kurds, but Komala’s discourse is

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<sup>161</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala’s Five Decades ...](#) (Evaluation of Komala’s Strengths ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>162</sup> CTC, [Iranian Kurdish Militias ...](#), May 2017

<sup>163</sup> The Iran Primer, [Iran’s Troubled Provinces: Kurdistan](#), 3 February 2021

<sup>164</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, [About us](#), no date

<sup>165</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.4), 24 November 2022

<sup>166</sup> BBC News Arabic Investigations, [The Komala Party: Escape from Iran](#), 19 April 2022

based on the separation of religion and state and freedom of belief. In recent years, Komala has tried to establish better relations with Alawi (Yarsani) and even Shia Kurds, and diversify its base in terms of religion as well. This is in line with the new strategy of increasing inclusiveness and representation of all segments of Kurdish society.’<sup>167</sup>

- 12.3.5 The article published by TNA on 17 June 2025 noted that Komala ‘... has an appeal based on its more progressive attitudes, particularly towards women.’<sup>168</sup>

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## 12.4 Membership cards and confirmation letters

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<sup>167</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Ideology and Political Views ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>168</sup> TNA, [How Kurdish groups in Iran are reacting to Israel's war](#), 17 June 2025

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## 12.5 Komala activities

- 12.5.1 The BBC News Arab Investigations Komala docufilm synopsis stated: 'They [Komala peshmerga fighters in Iraq] frequently mount illegal cross-border operations to show their presence in neighbouring Iranian Kurdistan, where they maintain a secret network by what they say are non-violent political activities. Komala has told the BBC they've given up their armed struggle against Iran. But the Iranian government says Komala is a terrorist group.'<sup>169</sup>
- 12.5.2 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated: 'Komala PIK has a

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<sup>169</sup> BBC News Arabic Investigations, [The Komala Party: Escape from Iran](#), 19 April 2022

military component linked to the political party ... After three years of party membership, members take on party responsibilities. However, senior members live in the camp in the KRI.<sup>170</sup>

- 12.5.3 The ACCORD report also stated, of Komala KTP, that: 'It has affiliated Peshmerga fighters and is part of the cooperation centre for Kurdish parties in Iran ... In the KRI, the party conducts Peshmerga training, operates a television station and publishes magazines.'<sup>171</sup>
- 12.5.4 Of Komalah-CPI, the same ACCORD report stated: 'Peshmerga fighters are trained in the KRI ...'<sup>172</sup>
- 12.5.5 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article stated:
- 'Mohtadi's Komala [PIK] announced in 2017 that after years of ceasefire, it would reactivate its armed wing and resume the armed struggle against the Iranian regime. In practice, however, this struggle was mostly limited to the presence of Peshmerga near the border and the defense of camps, and no large-scale offensive operations were reported ...
- '... [Komala] now advocate[s] for federalism within the framework of a united Iran and do[es] not pursue separatism (at least at the level of rhetoric) in order to form coalitions with other Iranian forces ...'<sup>173</sup>
- 12.5.6 The same IranNews.ge article stated: 'With the onset of the 2020s, the political atmosphere in Iran became heated following the 2022 protest movement ... Kurdish parties, including Komala, tried to play a more active role. While providing media and political support for the protests, Mohtadi's Komala [PIK] sought to raise the demands of the Kurds in the vision of Iran's future by participating in opposition coalitions abroad ...'<sup>174</sup>

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### **13. Kurdistan Free Life Party / Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK)**

#### **13.1 Background**

- 13.1.1 Based in the KRI<sup>175</sup>, 'the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) was founded by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 2004 when the group restructured and created affiliates for different Kurdish regions.'<sup>176</sup>
- 13.1.2 The article published by TNA on 17 June 2025 stated:
- 'Standing somewhat separately, PJAK is the Iranian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and exists within that broader transnational ideological movement. For some observers, there is little distinction between the two.
- '... [T]he PKK ... is undergoing major structural and strategic changes. On 12 May [2025], the PKK announced that it had ended its armed struggle against Turkey and had disbanded as an organisation. The PJAK insists that the PKK's declaration does not apply in its case, but its actions will

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<sup>170</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.1), 24 November 2022

<sup>171</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.2), 24 November 2022

<sup>172</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 3.1.3), 24 November 2022

<sup>173</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Komala's Role in the 1990s ...) 30 March 2025

<sup>174</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#) (Komala's Current Situation ...) 30 March 2025

<sup>175</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish Iranian groups protest planned wall around Koya camp](#), 23 February 2024

<sup>176</sup> Kurdish Peace Institute, [Israel-Iran War: How Will Kurdish Actors Respond?](#), 17 June 2025

nevertheless be affected by the dynamics of its parent group.<sup>177</sup>

- 13.1.3 PJAK has a militia and a political wing, known as the Free Democratic Society of East Kurdistan (KODAR) and both are banned in Iran<sup>178</sup>. The Amwaj.media article noted Siamand Moeini and Zilan Vejin as the leaders of PJAK, and it published the below PJAK logo<sup>179</sup>:



- 13.1.4 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article stated: 'PJAK attracted many Kurdish youths and carried out significant armed operations against the Revolutionary Guards in the border regions in the mid-2000s.'<sup>180</sup>
- 13.1.5 The Landinfo query response, published on 4 December 2023, stated: 'The party declared a ceasefire in 2011, but sporadic clashes with Iranian security forces have occurred since then.'<sup>181</sup>
- 13.1.6 The same Landinfo response also stated:  
'PJAK has bases in the Qandil mountains near the bases of the Turkish-Kurdish party PKK, with which they are closely allied. This is a mountainous area in the border regions with Iran that is practically outside the control of Iraqi authorities or the KRG. The party's leader, Siamand Moini, stated in September 2023 that it was completely out of the question for PJAK to relinquish their weapons. Landinfo has found no indications that PJAK has relinquished weapons or evacuated their bases. In November 2023, the human rights organization Hengaw reported that there were fierce battles between the Revolutionary Guard and PJAK near Baneh in the Kordestan province of Iran.'<sup>182</sup>
- 13.1.7 An article published on 21 June 2025 by the Middle East Forum, which 'promotes American interests in the Middle East and protects the West from Middle Eastern threats'<sup>183</sup>, stated: 'PJAK itself is not a mainstream force in Iranian Kurdistan; its influence remains limited.'<sup>184</sup>
- 13.1.8 An article published by Rudaw, a global media outlet based in Erbil, the Kurdish region of Iraq<sup>185</sup>, on 20 July 2025 stated:  
'... [T]he [Eastern Kurdistan Units] YRK ... [is] the armed wing of the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) ... On May 12 [2025], the PKK announced its dissolution and intention to disarm after being urged to do so by their

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<sup>177</sup> TNA, [How Kurdish groups in Iran are reacting to Israel's war](#), 17 June 2025

<sup>178</sup> The Iran Primer, [Iran's Troubled Provinces: Kurdistan](#), 3 February 2021

<sup>179</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>180</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala's Five Decades ...](#), 30 March 2025

<sup>181</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (page 1), 4 December 2023

<sup>182</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (pages 4 to 5), 4 December 2023

<sup>183</sup> Middle East Forum, [Homepage](#), no date

<sup>184</sup> Middle East Forum, [Iran's Kurds at a Crossroads](#), 21 June 2025

<sup>185</sup> Rudaw, [About Us](#), no date

founder, Abdullah Ocalan, who said it was time to take the struggle for Kurdish rights in Turkey into the political sphere.

‘However, PJAK has said it would continue its armed struggle against Tehran despite PKK’s decision to dissolve itself, saying Ocalan’s decision does not include them.

“We, as the forces of Eastern Kurdistan (western Iran), will not remain defenseless against these types of attacks and will defend ourselves to the end within the framework of our legitimate rights. We do not attack anyone in any way, but we always defend ourselves,” the group added.

‘PJAK ... has clashed with Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and is banned in Iran.’<sup>186</sup>

- 13.1.9 An article about PJAK, published on 29 November 2022 by the Modern Insurgent, a self-described independent media organisation that focuses on insurgencies, rebel organisations, and political movements<sup>187</sup>, stated: ‘... PJAK has two separate armed wings: a mixed, but primarily male fighting group (the YRK) and one exclusively for women (the HPJ).’<sup>188</sup>

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## 13.2 Membership and recruitment

- 13.2.1 A Landinfo report on the PJAK, published on 18 December 2020, provided information on membership types, citing various sources:

‘Representatives of the PJAK explained in a meeting with Landinfo that there are different types of membership and different ways of being associated with the movement. They distinguish between three types of members:

1. Professional cadres. These are persons who have dedicated their lives to PJAK and are full-time warriors.
2. Regional cadres. These are persons who live primarily in Europe and Iran, but also in KRI.
3. “Support members”. These are members who do not dedicate their whole lives to the party, but who still want to make an effort.

‘There are similarities between regional cadres and support members. One difference, however, is that the regional cadres in Europe undergo a training program. Unlike professional cadres, regional cadres – both in Iran and Europe – can marry and have children.

‘Although PJAK’s membership does not consist exclusively of Iranian Kurds, PJAK is in reality, and in essence, an Iranian-Kurdish movement.’<sup>189</sup>

- 13.2.2 The Landinfo report noted in regard to KODAR:

‘According to representatives of PJAK, the purpose of KODAR is for individuals from different backgrounds to work together. There is no requirement for KODAR members to share PJAK’s ideology, and it is possible to be affiliated with KODAR without being a member of PJAK. It was further pointed out that it is also possible to be a member of other

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<sup>186</sup> Rudaw, [Kurdish armed group blames Iran for deadly Sulaimani drone attack](#), 20 July 2025

<sup>187</sup> Modern Insurgent, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>188</sup> Modern Insurgent, [Free Life Party of Kurdistan \(PJAK\)](#) (Military/Political ...), 29 November 2022

<sup>189</sup> Landinfo, [... PJAK](#) (page 18, section 5), 18 December 2020

political parties such as KDP-I or Komala, while simultaneously being affiliated with KODAR.’<sup>190</sup>

13.2.3 The same Landinfo report noted in regard to member numbers that:

‘The number of members in PJAK is uncertain. Different sources have different estimates. The question is also who is included, whether only the cadres, whether members of the cell structure are counted, and whether regional cadres and support members are included in the calculation.

‘... According to analyst James Brandon [in 2018], PJAK has between 1,000 and 2,000 warriors . Academic and author Michael Gunter estimates [in 2020] the number of fighters in PJAK to be about 3,000, just under half (45 percent) are believed to be women. In addition, Gunter points out that PJAK allegedly have thousands of activists inside Iran . This is in line with information provided by Bishir [Shamal Bishir, Head of Foreign Affairs, PJAK<sup>191</sup>] in 2012 – that PJAK had the main part of its organization and membership in Iran. Representatives of PJAK informed Landinfo in 2019 that they do not want to state the number of cadres.

‘The conflicting estimates of the number of cadres and activists illustrate how demanding it is to have access to reliable empirical evidence about a group that is referred to operate in secret.’<sup>192</sup>

13.2.4 The Modern Insurgent article, published in November 2022, stated:

‘Estimates place the combined fighting force of these two groups [the YRK and the HPJ] around 3,000, with about half being women. Many of their members have combat experience, if not in Iran then in Syria.’<sup>193</sup>

13.2.5 The Rudaw article, published on 24 October 2024, noted that since its establishment, PJAK had recruited ‘... hundreds of young men ...’<sup>194</sup>

13.2.6 The March 2025 IranNews.ge article stated: ‘PJAK, with its promotion of Apoist ideology and a network of covert supporters inside, has attracted a ... part of society, especially radical youth.’<sup>195</sup>

13.2.7 A statement published in July 2025 by Iranian Kurdistan Human Rights Watch (IKHRW), which describes itself as a ‘monitoring body’<sup>196</sup>, stated:

‘According to numerous reports, including documents published by human rights NGOs, the United Nations, and independent regional bodies, PJAK has recruited hundreds of adolescents into its training camps in recent decades. These claims are substantiated by images published by PJAK and PKK websites showing their fallen combatants. It is abundantly clear that many of these individuals were underage at the time of their recruitment into PJAK and, according to international law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, should not be used as soldiers. Furthermore, it’s crucial to note that PJAK, in a new policy, no longer publishes the dates of individuals’ recruitment on its website to avoid accusations of using and recruiting children. PJAK had, in fact, pledged in an agreement in Geneva to cease

<sup>190</sup> Landinfo, [... PJAK](#) (pages 11 to 12, section 3.2), 18 December 2020

<sup>191</sup> Landinfo, [... PJAK](#) (page 33), 18 December 2020

<sup>192</sup> Landinfo, [... PJAK](#) (pages 19 to 20, section 5.2), 18 December 2020

<sup>193</sup> Modern Insurgent, [Free Life Party of Kurdistan \(PJAK\)](#) (Military/Political ...), 29 November 2022

<sup>194</sup> Rudaw, [PJAK kills IRGC member in Kurdistan province](#), 24 October 2024

<sup>195</sup> IranNews.ge, [... Komala’s Five Decades ...](#) (Evaluation of Komala’s Strengths ...), 30 March 2025

<sup>196</sup> IKHRW, [The Killing of an Iranian Kurdish Child Soldier in PJAK](#), 24 July 2025

using children as soldiers - a pledge that, according to Iranian Kurdistan Human Rights Watch, has not only been violated but is contradicted by new evidence indicating the continued recruitment of children in recent years.<sup>197</sup> CPIT has been unable to substantiate the IKHRW claims about the recruitment of child soldiers by PJAK.

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### 13.3 Membership structure and activities

13.3.1 Citing a range of sources, the Landinfo report on the PJAK stated, 'Equality between women and men is a stated goal; both sexes must be equally represented at all levels in the organization, and they undergo the same training program. It is estimated that up to half of the members are women ...'<sup>198</sup>

13.3.2 Referring to PJAK's presence in Iran, the Landinfo report noted:

'PJAK is present in Iran, but all activity takes place underground, mainly in secret cells. Due to the Iranian authorities' active intelligence activities against PJAK, the organization has become very cautious with regard to all forms of activity and meeting activities.

'There is limited open and reliable information about cell structure, command lines and how many members there are in total. Representatives of PJAK are reluctant to share such information. It is in the nature of cell organization that this is about secret activity, and that the various cells should not have knowledge of other cells. The cells are largely autonomous and have developed their own methodology in the work. The cells develop their own, adapted precautions not to be revealed, for example how they store information material and which communication channels they use.

'PJAK considers those associated with such cells to be "regional cadres" ... According to PJAK itself, the regional cadres should not be about women and men under arms, but about raising people's awareness on issues that PJAK considers important – spreading their ideas and worldview. Later, when the contact and trust is established, it may be relevant to go into PJAK's ideology. In addition, the regional cadres report to the movement's leadership in northern Iraq, including who has been wounded or killed in hostilities, information about arrests, and the situation of those in prison. If someone is engaged in armed clashes and is injured and arrested, the management will be informed of this.'<sup>199</sup>

13.3.3 The Landinfo query response, published on 4 December 2023, noted that in recent decades ... PJAK ... was the only group to have engaged in military guerrilla activities in the border areas between Iran and Iraq<sup>200</sup>.

13.3.4 The Rudaw article, published on 24 October 2024, noted that since its establishment, PJAK had fought 'bloody battles with the IRGC.'<sup>201</sup>

13.3.5 The same article also stated:

'At least one soldier of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

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<sup>197</sup> IKHRW, [PJAK, Child Soldiers, and Unanswered Questions in BBC Persian's Report](#), July 2025

<sup>198</sup> Landinfo, [... PJAK](#) (page 10, section 3), 18 December 2020

<sup>199</sup> Landinfo, [... PJAK](#) (page 24, section 7), 18 December 2020

<sup>200</sup> Landinfo, [Iranian-Kurdish parties ...](#) (translated into English) (page 1), 4 December 2023

<sup>201</sup> Rudaw, [PJAK kills IRGC member in Kurdistan province](#), 24 October 2024

was killed this week [October 2024] in a clash with the opposition Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) in northwestern Iran.

‘The clash took place in a mountainous area of Kurdistan province ... Fighting broke out when PJAK members were passing through the area and were “surrounded and ambushed” by Iranian forces, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network reported on Thursday [24 October 2024].

‘... Two other IRGC members were injured in the skirmish, according to Hengaw Organization for Human Rights.’<sup>202</sup>

- 13.3.6 CPIT was unable to find any more recent, information on PJAK membership cards and confirmations in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 13.4 Membership cards and confirmation

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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## 14. State treatment

### 14.1 Discrimination

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<sup>202</sup> Rudaw, [PJAK kills IRGC member in Kurdistan province](#), 24 October 2024

- 14.1.1 The Iranian Constitution states: ‘Article 19 (No Discrimination, No Privileges): All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; color, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.’<sup>203</sup>
- 14.1.2 The July 2023 DFAT report stated: ‘Some Kurdish groups complain they are unable to express their ethnic identity. This includes an inability to use the Kurdish language in schools, inability (or unwillingness) of officials to register births officially and restrictions on Kurdish language media.’<sup>204</sup>
- 14.1.3 Freedom House published a report entitled ‘Freedom on the Net 2023’ on 4 October 2023 (Freedom on the Net report). The report, which covered the period from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023, and cited various sources, stated: ‘... [I]nternet shutdowns are more commonly ordered in Kurdish-majority provinces than other parts of Iran ...’<sup>205</sup> For more information about cyber surveillance in Iran, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).
- 14.1.4 On 6 October 2023, the UNHRC published a ‘Report of the Secretary-General’ which stated: ‘Ethnic and religious minorities continue to be discriminated against and face systemic marginalization in law and in practice.’<sup>206</sup>
- 14.1.5 On 9 February 2024, the UNHRC published a ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights’ which stated:  
 ‘During his six-year mandate, the Special Rapporteur has remained extremely concerned at the alarming nature of violations perpetrated against ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. Ethnic minorities, including the Kurds ... have consistently been harassed, targeted and victimized, denied their fundamental rights to equality and non-discrimination, and deprived of their linguistic and cultural rights and identity ... Kurds, also face extreme poverty, destitution and denial of the political and economic infrastructure necessary for growth and development. They have also faced high levels of discrimination in access to justice and political participation, and are denied education and employment rights, health care and basic government services.’<sup>207</sup>
- 14.1.6 On 19 March 2024, Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI), a measure of the political, economic, and governance direction of countries<sup>208</sup>, from ‘a German non-profit think tank’<sup>209</sup>, published its ‘Iran Report’, covering the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023 (BTI 2024 Iran report). It stated: ‘Non-Persian ethnic groups, including ... Kurds ... often encounter discrimination and marginalization. They may face restrictions on their cultural rights, language use limitations, and unequal access to resources and opportunities. Marginalized ethnic groups have also reported instances of forced displacement, [and] land confiscation ...’<sup>210</sup>

<sup>203</sup> Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (page 10), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

<sup>204</sup> DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.55), 24 July 2023

<sup>205</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom on the Net 2023 – Iran](#) (section B7), 4 October 2023

<sup>206</sup> UNHRC, [... human rights ... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 42), 6 October 2023

<sup>207</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ... human rights ...](#) (paragraph 78), 9 February 2024

<sup>208</sup> BTI, [Methodology](#), no date

<sup>209</sup> Ecoi.net, [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#), updated 19 May 2020

<sup>210</sup> BTI, [Iran report](#) (page 28), 19 March 2024

- 14.1.7 The USSD 2023 Country Report, referring to Iranian citizens' rights to learn, use and teach their own languages and dialects, stated: 'Nonetheless, the government discriminated against minorities.'<sup>211</sup> As noted above, the USSD 2024 Country Report provided no coverage of racial or ethnic violence and discrimination<sup>212</sup>.
- 14.1.8 The EUAA Country Focus report stated: 'As noted by Barzoo Eliassi, ... [a] Kurd cannot become the president of Iran or occupy high positions in politics. Only the twelve-Imam Shia Muslims have access to high positions within the government.'<sup>213</sup>
- 14.1.9 Citing information from an expert on the Kurdish population and regions in Iran, with extensive and recent field expertise on Kurdish regions, including in Iran (who wished to remain anonymous for security reasons)<sup>214</sup>, the same EUAA Country Focus report, stated: 'Kurds continue to be perceived by the Islamic Republic "as a threat to the foundation of the country", and being Kurdish and Sunni in Iran is a double disadvantage.'<sup>215</sup>
- 14.1.10 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated: 'Despite the equal rights promised by the Iranian constitution, the Kurds continue to face systematic discrimination that limits their access to employment, housing, education, and political positions.'<sup>216</sup>
- 14.1.11 The Zagros statement went on to state:
- 'Kurdish regions in Iran suffer from blatant economic neglect, leading to entrenched poverty and chronic underdevelopment. Industrial projects are limited or prohibited, and although the region is rich in natural resources like oil and gold, the benefits of their extraction do not accrue to the local populations. The revenues generated are largely directed towards the center of the country, thereby reinforcing the economic disparities between Kurdish regions and the rest of Iran.
- '... The environmental policies of the Iranian government are severely damaging to Kurdish regions. The destruction of forests, the diversion of water resources, and the drying up of Lake Urmia and Lake Zeribar have caused dangerous natural phenomena that gravely affect local communities.
- '... Kurds in Iran face strict cultural restrictions that deeply affect their daily lives and collective identity. The state imposes limitations on the choice of Kurdish names for children, which constitutes a direct infringement on the cultural expression of the Kurds.'<sup>217</sup>
- 14.1.12 A query response published by the EUAA on 17 October 2024, citing information from an expert on the Kurdish population and regions in Iran, stated: '... "[T]he state harbours a general distrust of Kurds, but this is particularly pronounced with Sunni Kurds. In terms of employment and interactions with government institutions, Sunni Kurds and other religious minorities face systemic disadvantages, as the state's bureaucracy is largely

<sup>211</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (page 72), 23 April 2024

<sup>212</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#), 12 August 2025

<sup>213</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.7.2), June 2024

<sup>214</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (Annex 1: Bibliography), June 2024

<sup>215</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.7.2), June 2024

<sup>216</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>217</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

structured to cater to Shia Muslims”.<sup>218</sup>

14.1.13 Citing an anonymous expert, the same EUAA query response stated: ‘... “Yarsan Kurds like other Kurds are discriminated [against] but being a Yarsan does not mean you would be targeted by the security forces even though the discrimination is inherent in the system against ethnic and religious minorities such as the Kurds”.<sup>219</sup>

14.1.14 Amnesty International’s annual human rights report, published on 28 April 2025, stated: ‘Ethnic minorities, including ... Kurds ... faced widespread human rights violations, including discrimination in access to education, employment, adequate housing and political office. Under-investment in regions populated by ethnic minorities continued, exacerbating their poverty and marginalization.’<sup>220</sup>

14.1.15 See also [Religion and faith](#), [Language](#), and [Education and employment](#).

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## 14.2 Political activists and protestors

14.2.1 The Iranian Constitution states:

‘Article 26 (Freedom of Association): The formation of parties, societies, political or professional associations, as well as religious societies, whether Islamic or pertaining to one of the recognized religious minorities, is permitted providing they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic. No one may be prevented from participating in the aforementioned groups, or be compelled to participate in them.

‘Article 27 (Freedom of Assembly): Public gatherings and marches may be freely held, provided arms are not carried and that they are not detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam.’<sup>221</sup>

14.2.2 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated:

‘The DIS reports [in 2020] ... that any form of political or civil engagement in the country that does not fall under the government’s jurisdiction is viewed with suspicion. Particularly in the Kurdish region, every activity is considered in terms of security, even civil and cultural activities are often seen as political. Therefore, individuals engaged in civil or cultural activities are, according to the DIS report, repressed.

‘According to a journalist in the KRI, the Iranian government does not distinguish in most cases between party members and supporters of Kurdish political parties or even independent activists. The persecution of individuals is therefore arbitrary and varies from case to case. Whether the Iranian government makes a distinction in the prosecution of party members and supporters depends, among other factors, on the intelligence officer in charge. The government classifies the activities of Kurdish political parties as dangerous. Consequently, greater efforts are made to monitor and identify individuals working for these parties. Any form of political or civil society activism that does not fall within the government’s jurisdiction raises

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<sup>218</sup> EUAA, [Iran; Human rights situation \[Q72-2024\]](#) (section 1.4), 17 October 2024

<sup>219</sup> EUAA, [Iran; Human rights situation \[Q72-2024\]](#) (section 1.4), 17 October 2024

<sup>220</sup> AI, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 203), 28 April 2025

<sup>221</sup> Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (page 11), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

suspicion and increases the risk of surveillance. In the Kurdish regions of the country, the risk of surveillance increases with any form of activist engagement. Party members are trained on how to protect themselves. However, supporters typically do not receive such training and may not be adequately prepared. As the government has a cyber army that monitors social media, it can in some cases identify supporters through their activities on social media.

'The cyber army of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has an estimated 45,000 personnel, whose main task is to monitor individuals opposing the Iranian government, including critics, academics, intellectuals, students and activists, and to collect information about them. In addition, a separate department of the IRGC intelligence has been established in the Kurdish region. As part of this monitoring, the authorities intercept phone calls of individuals and track social media usage. The Kurdish region is also militarised. There are about 1,800 checkpoints, several military installations and a strong security presence. According to [the Danish Immigration Service] DIS, the authorities monitor the population through these checkpoints. In the Kurdish cities, there are also many spies, according to a journalist's statements in the [Kurdistan Region of Iraq<sup>222</sup>] KRI. They are referred to as "anonymous soldiers" as they use a pseudonym instead of their real names, making their identification more difficult. Local residents also work as informants.

'... According to interview partners from DIS, the majority of those arrested are not party members, but supporters or individuals who do not belong to any political party. The likelihood of being arrested increases for both members and supporters with the level of participation in party activities. Authorities assume that any active Kurdish person is linked to a political party.'<sup>223</sup>

For more information about online monitoring by the Iranian authorities, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance and surveillance activities](#).

- 14.2.3 The same ACCORD report also stated: 'The person responsible for the Komala KTP for confirming memberships in Scandinavia describes in an email that the party is banned in Iran. Members and individuals who have any kind of sympathy for the party are viewed as enemies of God and enemies of the Iranian government, which carries the death penalty. For this reason, according to the representative, anyone working with the party is in danger.'<sup>224</sup>
- 14.2.4 An article about Iran's intelligence agencies, published on 17 February 2023 by The Iran Primer stated: 'In Iran, agencies have a wide range of targets, from underground organizations to government employees suspected of opposing the regime ... The agencies are particularly concerned about Arab, Kurdish and Baluch separatist groups.'<sup>225</sup>
- 14.2.5 The BZ Iran COI report, which cited various sources, stated: 'Some politically and culturally active Kurds encountered problems in Iran when they engaged

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<sup>222</sup> World Bank, [The Kurdistan region of Iraq ... Executive summary \(English\)](#), 2 June 2016

<sup>223</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (sections 5.1 and 5.2), 24 November 2022

<sup>224</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5.5), 24 November 2022

<sup>225</sup> The Iran Primer, [Explainer: Tactics of Iranian Intelligence](#), 17 February 2023

in activities on behalf of their ethnic group, especially when these activities had not been permitted or licensed. The authorities were quick to regard these activities as political action aimed at undermining national security and domestic stability, and as a first step towards secession.<sup>226</sup> The report noted Kurdish language lessons as an example of an activity that the Iranian authorities would apply this characterisation to<sup>227</sup>. However it was noted that the report did not specify what kind of problems it was referring to as having been encountered.

- 14.2.6 The BZ Iran COI report also stated: ‘Some politically and culturally active Kurds who attended demonstrations could ... face problems, especially if they attended anti-government protests.’<sup>228</sup> Again, the source did not provide any information regarding what possible problems an individual could face.
- 14.2.7 The Amwaj.media article, published on 15 September 2023, stated that in the aftermath of Mahsa Amini’s death, ‘[i]nside Iran, where Kurdish areas were particularly in the grip of widespread unrest, the IRGC only managed to assert authority by cracking down with brute force.’<sup>229</sup> See paragraphs 13, 93 to 95 and 97 of the [Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, published by the UNHRC on 2 February 2024](#) for more information about the government’s response to the protests, and the disproportionate impact this had on ethnic minorities, including Kurds.
- 14.2.8 Citing the expert on Kurdish populations and regions, including in Iran, who wished to remain anonymous, the EUAA Country Focus report stated: ‘In each governmental office there is a security office, known as the herasat that is tasked to carry out interviews, asking questions ... including questions on Kurdish independence, armed groups, political affiliation, among others.’<sup>230</sup> The Country Focus report also noted that the questioning process referred to is known as ‘gozinesh’ (screening) according to Barzoo Eliassi (see also paragraph 10.2.4)<sup>231</sup>.
- 14.2.9 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated: ‘Kurdish political demonstrations in Iran are regularly suppressed by security forces, often with excessive violence. Kurdish activists, even those advocating peaceful solutions, are frequently arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The Iranian government justifies these actions by citing threats to national security, but human rights defenders denounce these repressions as blatant violations of political and civil rights.’<sup>232</sup>
- 14.2.10 The anonymous expert cited by the EUAA in its query response published on 17 October 2024 stated: “when it comes to activities that are considered or deemed to be detrimental to the national security of the state, then average Kurds are targeted harshly by the state. Members or sympathisers of opposition groups such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) are automatically targeted and detained”.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>226</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (section 3.1.1.2), September 2023

<sup>227</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (section 3.2.2.2), September 2023

<sup>228</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (section 3.1.1.2), September 2023

<sup>229</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>230</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.7.2), June 2024

<sup>231</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.7.2), June 2024

<sup>232</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>233</sup> EUAA, [Iran; Human rights situation \[Q72-2024\]](#) (section 1.3), 17 October 2024

14.2.11 On 28 March 2025, the UNHRC published a 'Report of the independent international fact-finding mission' which cited various sources to state:

'New evidence reaffirmed that security forces deployed military-grade weapons and military equipment in protests in Kurdish-populated provinces more frequently than in central regions and immediately after protests began, resulting in injuries and killings of protesters ...

'... Witness statements and death certificates obtained by the Mission showed additional instances of killings of protesters at or near protest sites in peak protest towns in Kurdish-populated provinces, including Bukan, Mahabad, Sanandaj and Javanrud. In some of these cases, victims were shot dead with firearms.

'... As part of the targeted civilian population, the Mission found that the authorities acted with aggravated discriminatory intent against Kurdish and Baluchi minorities ... for their participation and support for the protests. Considering the decades-long deep-rooted structural and institutional discrimination and marginalization of these groups, the State created a permissive environment for such criminal conduct.'<sup>234</sup>

14.2.12 CPIT was unable to find any recent information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) on the treatment of Kurds who produce, print, and/or distribute written political materials, such as leaflets, including whether or, if so, to what extent, Kurdish political groups continue to do so (see also paragraph 9.2.5). For historic information on this topic, see the previous version of this CPIN ([Version 4.0](#)), published in May 2022 and pages 17 to 21 of the [joint report published in September 2013 by the DIS and the DRC](#).

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### 14.3 Monitoring in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI)

14.3.1 Citing various sources, the DIS FFM report stated:

'While Iran does not have any military bases within the KRI, sources stated that Iran has a covert presence, through which the Iranian government pressures, harasses or targets Iranian Kurds. A local Human Rights NGO further elaborated that Iranian agents enter the KRI in disguise, or open front companies and businesses ... According to multiple sources, Iranian Kurds in KRI have experienced assassinations, threats and abduction attempts perpetrated by Iran.'<sup>235</sup>

14.3.2 The same DIS report also stated:

'Wladimir van Wilgenburg added that the Iranian intelligence service often carries out attacks and assassination on Iranians living in KRI, regardless of the Iran-Iraq security agreement. A local Human rights NGO stated that nine Iranian Kurdish refugees, who were either members of a Kurdish party, independent activists or human rights workers have been assassinated in KRI since 2021. Three of these assassinations, as well as a failed assassination attempt on an Iranian Kurdish lawyer in Erbil ... have taken place since January 2023. Sources provided several examples of assassinations of Iranian Kurds in the KRI ... [in which] Iran has been accused of being the perpetrator ... It was pointed out by sources that the

<sup>234</sup> UNHRC, [Report of the ... fact-finding mission ...](#) (paragraphs 67, 69 and 114), 28 March 2025

<sup>235</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (sections 3.2 and 3.2.1), June 2024

IRGC commits assassinations, and then returns to Iran. [see page 28 of the [DIS fact-finding mission report](#) for examples of assassinations]

‘... A local Human Rights NGO added that Iran creates an atmosphere of lack of safety amongst Iranian Kurdish refugees, by conducting threatening phone calls, abduction attempts or by shooting at Iranian Kurdish residences. The source noted that this compels many Iranian Kurds to join political parties to get safety.

‘... Multiple sources mentioned that members of Iranian Kurdish parties have been targeted by Iranian threats or assassinations. Some of these have been peshmergas or low-level party members. However, not just members of Iranian Kurdish parties are targeted by Iran, as Iranian Kurds who are politically active in the media or comment on politics in Iran, can be targeted by Iranian pressure too. Especially vulnerable are those individuals who have families in Iran. Occasionally, Iranian Kurdish journalists, working for media in KRI, receive threats involving their family members in Iran.

‘Two local NGOs pointed to the following profiles as being targeted by the Iranian government: Iranian Kurds, who have left Iran and continue their work from exile, i.e. activists, including party members, supporters as well as non-party-affiliated activists, journalists and human rights defenders ...

‘Iranian Kurdish refugees, who fled Iran in the wake of the 2022-protests, included individuals, who were not members of Iranian Kurdish political parties. However, they were still exposed to threats and warnings from Iran.

‘According to an Iranian Kurdish Scholar, Iran does not send threatening texts to every Iranian Kurd in KRI, but targets the active ones, which is enough to affect the whole community.’<sup>236</sup>

14.3.3 The RFE / RL article, published on 19 July 2024, stated:

‘Tehran is upping the ante in its effort to go after Iranian Kurds abroad it deems “terrorists,” demanding that Baghdad extradite leaders and members of Iranian-Kurdish opposition groups based in Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

“A list of nearly 120 terrorists who identify themselves as noble Kurds has been sent to Iraq for extradition and their trial will be held soon,” Iranian judiciary official Kazem Gharibabadi said on July 13 [2024].

‘... Kurdish and Iraqi media have reported that the list contains the names of some 120 leaders and members of Iranian-Kurdish groups opposed to Tehran.

‘... Neither Iraq’s central government nor the government of the Kurdistan region immediately responded to the extradition request.’<sup>237</sup>

14.3.4 A query response, published on 16 May 2025 by the COI Unit of the Office for Foreigners (Poland), citing various sources, stated:

‘... Iran has repeatedly conducted bombings of various targets on Iraqi territory, including around Erbil, attacking locations linked to Iranian Kurds from the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), who have sought refuge across the border. Iran first carried out such attacks in 2018, but their peak

<sup>236</sup> DIS, [Iranian Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#) (sections 3.2.1.1 to 3.2.1.3), June 2024

<sup>237</sup> RFE / RL, [Iran Intensifies Pressure On Iraq To Extradite Iranian-Kurdish Leaders](#), 19 July 2024

occurred in 2022 ... At the turn of 2023 and 2024, there was a resurgence of attacks, indirectly as a result of the outbreak of conflict in Israel and Gaza – pro-Iranian militias intensified their attacks on American military bases in the Middle East. Furthermore, Iran again directly targeted sites in Kurdistan.’<sup>238</sup>

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#### 14.4 Arrests, convictions and imprisonment

##### 14.4.1 The ACCORD report, published in November 2022, stated:

‘Landinfo states [in its May 2020 report] that Iranian Kurdish parties are considered illegal organizations in Iran. Membership or association with these parties is strictly punished. Even non-party civil activism is suspected of being interpreted as politically oppositional activity and is suppressed by the authorities in Kurdish areas. Individuals participating in demonstrations or other protest actions are suspected of party membership and risk arrest.

‘... In some cases, individuals who are members of an opposition party but not publicly active are quietly arrested without the media being informed. Sometimes, no one is informed about the conditions of the detainees. It may be that individuals are detained and later released without anyone ever knowing about it.

‘... The sections of the penal code used against opposition members are vague and prescribe penalties ranging from several months to thirty years in prison. According to a representative of the KDP-I, there are various factors that influence the length of a prison sentence for those arrested on suspicion of party affiliation. These include whether party affiliation can be proven, whether the person was arrested in connection with a military operation, whether a confession exists, the personal attitude of the judge towards Kurds, and whether the arrested individual is to be merely deterred from further political engagement or made an example of.

‘... A representative of Komalah-CPI stated to Landinfo that prominent members of the parties are generally punished more severely than others. According to a Komala PIK supporter, individuals who admit their party affiliation during questioning receive harsher penalties than those who deny their affiliation. Komalah-CPI members are serving prison sentences in Iran, but the Iranian authorities are not necessarily aware of their membership in the party. In the years leading up to the interview (2019), there were death sentences against members of other Komala parties.’<sup>239</sup>

##### 14.4.2 An article published by RFE / RL on 23 October 2023 noted that an accusation of affiliation with PJAK was ‘... a charge tantamount to “waging war against God” in Iranian jurisprudence.’<sup>240</sup>

##### 14.4.3 The BZ Iran COI report stated: ‘Kurds associated with any of those [political] parties [listed at paragraph 9.1.2] can face lengthy prison sentences and in some cases even the death penalty.’<sup>241</sup>

##### 14.4.4 The Report of the Secretary-General of 6 October 2023, published by the UNHRC, stated: ‘Members of ethnic minorities, in particular the Baloch, Kurd

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<sup>238</sup> Office for Foreigners (Poland), COI Unit, [Iran: Security Situation ...](#) (page 10), 16 May 2025

<sup>239</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5.2), 24 November 2022

<sup>240</sup> RFE / RL, [Iranian-Kurdish Activist Askari Sentenced Again To Death ...](#), 23 October 2023

<sup>241</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (section 3.1.1.2), September 2023

and Ahwazi Arab ethnic minorities, reportedly constitute the majority of political prisoners ...<sup>242</sup>

- 14.4.5 The Hengaw article about Kurdish language teachers in Iran, published on 23 February 2024, stated: '... [I]n 2024 ... 6 Kurdish language teachers were arrested, and 7 others were sentenced by the Iranian judiciary to a total of 20 years 8 months of punitive imprisonment, and 1 year of suspended imprisonment.'<sup>243</sup>
- 14.4.6 The BTI 2024 Iran report stated: 'During the first two weeks of 2023, at least 96 Kurds were arrested in the government crackdown on the nationwide protests; among those arrested were 13 children, according to a Kurdish rights group.'<sup>244</sup>
- 14.4.7 The USSD 2023 Country Report stated: 'The government arrested and prosecuted Kurds for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association ... Authorities [also] suppressed the activities of Kurdish NGOs by denying them registration permits or bringing security charges against persons working with such organizations.'<sup>245</sup> The report did not provide any further detail regarding the scale or extent to which these occurred. Furthermore, as the USSD 2024 Country Report provided no coverage of racial or ethnic violence and discrimination, there was insufficient information to indicate either a decline or an improvement of such practices<sup>246</sup>.
- 14.4.8 On 26 June 2024, the USSD published its '2023 Report on International Religious Freedom' which stated: 'Officials arrested and disappeared ... Kurdish ... individuals, including civil society activists, labor rights activists, environmentalists, writers, university students, teachers, and political activists.'<sup>247</sup>
- 14.4.9 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated: 'In 2024, repression against the Kurds intensified, with arbitrary arrests, acts of torture, and executions of Kurdish activists. Human rights defenders and environmental activists continue to denounce the disproportionate use of force by Iranian authorities, as well as the inhumane detention conditions in which Kurdish political prisoners are held.'<sup>248</sup>
- 14.4.10 In its annual report on human rights violations in Iran in 2024, published on 31 December 2024, Hengaw stated: 'In 2024, at least 1,235 individuals were arrested or abducted by security forces, with their full identities verified by the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights. Of the total cases of arrests, 630 were Kurds (51%) ... Additionally, 45 children and teenagers under the age of 18 were arrested, including ... 20 Kurds [44%] ...'<sup>249</sup> It is noted that Hengaw did not provide any details regarding its methodology within its report.
- 14.4.11 The Hengaw report also noted that of 33 individuals sentenced to death in 2024 (not including 5 individuals whose death sentences were overturned),

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<sup>242</sup> UNHRC, [... human rights ... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 42), 6 October 2023

<sup>243</sup> Hengaw, [International Mother Language Day ...](#), 23 February 2024

<sup>244</sup> BTI, [Iran report](#) (page 7), 19 March 2024

<sup>245</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (page 73), 23 April 2024

<sup>246</sup> USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#), 12 August 2025

<sup>247</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (page 19), 26 June 2024

<sup>248</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>249</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

11 (33%) were Kurds<sup>250</sup>.

14.4.12 Additionally, the same Hengaw report stated that: '... 468 political, religious, and civil activists were sentenced to imprisonment, flogging, and social restrictions. Over 30% of the convicted individuals (153 people) were Kurds ...'<sup>251</sup> The Hengaw report also noted that of at least 22 prisoners who died in Iranian prisons in 2024, 3 were Kurdish political prisoners<sup>252</sup>.

14.4.13 On 10 January 2025, IranWire, an Iranian news website<sup>253</sup>, published an article which stated:

'At least 65 Kurdish citizens, including activists, environmentalists, and former political prisoners, have been arrested by the Islamic Republic's Intelligence Ministry agents across western provinces over the past month.

'The arrests, conducted between December [2024] and January [2025], spanned multiple cities, including Sanandaj, Mahabad, Oshnavieh, Saqqez, Bukan, and Piranshahr.

'Reports indicate that many of the detentions were carried out by plainclothes agents without judicial warrants and involved physical violence.

'In late December [2024], nine Kurdish citizens were detained in Saqqez and Oshnavieh, and their current whereabouts remain unknown.

'Four additional individuals were arrested in Piranshahr, Sardasht, and Mahabad and were reportedly transferred to an Intelligence Ministry detention facility in Urmia.

'After 27 days, families of the detainees have been unable to obtain any information about their loved ones' locations, charges, or conditions, despite repeated attempts.'<sup>254</sup> The article did not provide any further details regarding the reasons for the arrests.

14.4.14 On 1 July 2025, Hengaw published its report on human rights violations for the first 6 months of 2025, which stated:

'In the first half of 2025, at least 822 - whose identities have been fully verified by ... Hengaw ... - were arrested or forcibly disappeared by security forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is important to note that hundreds of other[s] were arrested during June [2025] but have not yet been verified and are not included in this report ... Of those verified, 370 (45%) were Kurdish ... Among the detainees were 22 children and teenagers, including ... 9 [who were] Kurdish [41%].'<sup>255</sup> It is noted that Hengaw did not provide any details regarding its methodology within its report.

14.4.15 The same Hengaw report also stated:

'In the first half of 2025, at least 155 political, religious, and civil activists in Iran were tried and sentenced by the judiciary of the Islamic Republic to punishments including execution, imprisonment, and flogging. At least five individuals - including ... one Kurdish activist - were sentenced to death. Additionally, at least 150 political, religious, and civil activists were

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<sup>250</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>251</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>252</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>253</sup> IranWire, [About IranWire](#), no date

<sup>254</sup> IranWire, [Iran Detains 65 Kurdish Citizens Without Judicial Warrants](#), 10 January 2025

<sup>255</sup> Hengaw, [... report on ... human rights violations ... during the first half of 2025](#), 1 July 2025

sentenced to prison terms, flogging, and various social restrictions. More than 30% of those sentenced (47 individuals) were Kurds ...<sup>256</sup>

14.4.16 Additionally, the Hengaw report noted that of at least 29 prisoners that reportedly died during the first half of 2025, 2 were Kurdish political prisoners<sup>257</sup>.

14.4.17 Iran Prison Atlas (IPA) is 'a comprehensive database of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Iran'<sup>258</sup>, which was 'started and operated by Iranian activists and former political prisoners'<sup>259</sup>. The current version of the IPA, which is based on information gathered since March 2016<sup>260</sup>, recorded a verified count of 1,407 political prisoners/ prisoners by conscience that were arrested between 1980 and 2025<sup>261</sup>. Of those 1,407 prisoners, 415 (~29%, 394 males, 21 females) were Kurds and a further 25 (~2%) were 'probably' Kurds (22 males, 3 females)<sup>262</sup>. CPIT noted that the ethnicity of an additional 279 (~20%, 193 males, 86 females) was recorded as unknown<sup>263</sup>, therefore the actual and proportional numbers of Kurds in detention may be higher.

14.4.18 Additionally, the IPA stated: '... [R]estrictions on the free flow of information are significant barriers to providing a comprehensive atlas of political prisoners, prisoners of conscience, prisons, and perpetrators in Iran. IPA researchers attempt to document as many cases as possible, however, we believe that the actual number of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Iran is higher than what is represented in the atlas.'<sup>264</sup>

14.4.19 For examples of the imprisonment/convictions of Kurdish political oppositions, or those perceived as such, between October 2023 and March 2025, see the following (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- an [RFE / RL article, published on 23 October 2023](#), about a man who was sentenced to death in absentia on account of his alleged affiliation with PJAK and for his involvement in a 2014 altercation between PJAK and an IRGC commander who was injured. On 28 October 2024, the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), a press association of human rights advocates in Iran for the daily reporting of human rights violations<sup>265</sup>, reported that after the Supreme Court overturned his death sentence, and ordered his case for retrial, he was fined and resented to 15 years in prison<sup>266</sup>
- a [Hengaw article, published on 24 December 2023](#), about a Kurdish woman who was conditionally released from prison in December 2023 after serving 3 years of a 5 year prison sentence on charges of membership of PJAK

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<sup>256</sup> Hengaw, [... report on ... human rights violations ... during the first half of 2025](#), 1 July 2025

<sup>257</sup> Hengaw, [... report on ... human rights violations ... during the first half of 2025](#), 1 July 2025

<sup>258</sup> United for Iran, IPA, [About](#), no date

<sup>259</sup> United for Iran, [Who We Are](#), no date

<sup>260</sup> United for Iran, IPA, [About](#), no date

<sup>261</sup> United for Iran, IPA, [Prisoners](#) (Arrests by Activity Persecuted and Arrests in Years), no date

<sup>262</sup> United for Iran, IPA, [Prisoners](#) (Prisoners Count by Ethnicity), no date

<sup>263</sup> United for Iran, IPA, [Prisoners](#) (Prisoners Count by Ethnicity), no date

<sup>264</sup> United for Iran, IPA, [About](#), no date

<sup>265</sup> HRANA, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>266</sup> HRANA, [Nayeb Askari Sentenced to 15 Years in Prison and Heavy Fine ...](#), 28 October 2024

- pages 18 to 19 of a report on the death penalty, published in December 2023 by the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI), a New York-based organisation of journalists, researchers and human rights advocates who document and report on human rights conditions in Iran<sup>267</sup>. The report, which was submitted to the UN OHCHR, reported the continued detention in December 2023 of a Kurdish dissident rapper whose death sentence on charges of ‘waging war’ and ‘assembly and collusion with the intention of acting against the security of the country’ was overturned in December 2022. The report included allegations of torture and forced confessions. On 28 March 2025, CNN reported that the rappers’s death sentence was replaced with a sentence of five years’ imprisonment but that he escaped to Germany from Iran in late 2024 while on medical furlough from prison after he was ordered to return to prison early by the Iranian authorities<sup>268</sup>
- an [RFE / RL article, published on 5 March 2024](#), about a man convicted of ‘propaganda against the system’ and membership in the KDPI, and sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment. At the time of writing, CPIT was unable to find an update regarding his status in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- an [RFE / RL article, published on 26 April 2024](#), about a Kurdish language lecturer, and member of the board of directors of ‘Nojin’ (a cultural-social organisation), who was sentenced to a total of 11 years in prison (1 year of which was suspended) and exile in April 2024 on charges of ‘disrupting national security’ for her support of protests. She was reportedly acquitted of the charges against her in August 2024<sup>269</sup>  
270 271
- paragraphs 37 and 38 of the [UN fact finding mission report, published by UNHRC on 28 March 2025](#), which reported on 3 Kurdish women activists and human rights defenders who were sentenced to death, between July and October 2024, for alleged membership of Komala and PJAK. The sentences were reportedly handed down after ‘serious violations of the right to a fair trial and confessions obtained under torture.’<sup>272</sup> At the time of writing, in sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)), there were no reports of the death sentences having been carried out, however the Iranian Supreme Court reportedly upheld the death sentences of at least 2 of the 3 women<sup>273 274</sup>
- a [Hengaw article dated 11 December 2024](#) about a civil activist, Kurdish language instructor, and board member of the NGO, Nojin, with previous convictions, who, on 9 December 2024, was handed a reduced sentence after retrial of 2 years in prison (1 year suspended) for ‘forming groups and gatherings with the intent to disrupt national

<sup>267</sup> CHRI, [Who We Are](#), no date

<sup>268</sup> CNN, [From death row to exile, Iranian-Kurdish rapper gives firsthand account ...](#), 28 March 2025

<sup>269</sup> KolbarNews, [... Kurdish Language Instructor, Acquitted of Charges](#), 26 August 2024

<sup>270</sup> Front Line Defenders, [... acquitted from “forming groups” charge](#), 28 August 2025

<sup>271</sup> UNPO, [UNPO Welcomes the Acquittal of ...](#), 10 October 2024

<sup>272</sup> UNHRC, [Report of the ... fact-finding mission ...](#) (paragraph 37), 28 March 2025

<sup>273</sup> IranWire, [Iran's Supreme Court Upholds Death Sentence ...](#), 18 August 2025

<sup>274</sup> Iran HRS, [Pakshan Azizi: Death Sentence Confirmed by Supreme Court](#), 24 June 2025

security'<sup>275</sup>. It is noted that his arrest was reportedly made during the 2022 protests<sup>276 277</sup>

- an [IranWire article dated 15 January 2025](#) about a Kurdish researcher/journalist and editor-in-chief of an international magazine who was sentenced to one year in prison for 'propaganda against the Islamic Republic'<sup>278</sup>. He reportedly began serving his sentence on 4 May 2025<sup>279 280</sup>
- an [article published \(in Farsi\) on 23 March 2025 by the Kurdistan Human Rights Network \(KHRN\)](#), 'a France-based independent, non-profit and non-partisan organisation promoting human rights and documentation of violations in Iran's Kurdish region'<sup>281</sup>. The article reported that at least 10 Kurdish activists, including 2 children, were arrested in connection with Nowruz celebrations (Persian New Year<sup>282</sup>). The article stated there was no further information about the whereabouts of the arrested Kurds, nor about the charges brought against them. CPIT found reports of 4 of those arrested having been released on bail on 29 March 2025<sup>283 284</sup>. However, at the time of writing, CPIT was unable to find any further updates regarding the men from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- a [Hengaw article dated 24 March 2025](#) about 3 further men who were arrested the day prior in connection with the Nowruz celebrations in Kurdistan, with no further information available about their whereabouts, condition, or charges against them. At the time of writing, CPIT was unable to find any updates regarding the 3 men from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 14.5 Detention and torture

14.5.1 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated: 'DIS notes in its report that individuals known to the Iranian authorities to be associated with opposition parties are at risk of being arrested, detained and tortured (including through mock executions). Every detainee is at risk of being tortured, regardless of their actual political opinion or affiliation.

'The Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran has stated [in January 2022] that Kurdish political activists are being held in secret detention facilities that are not monitored by independent bodies. Torture and ill-treatment are widespread.'<sup>285</sup>

14.5.2 The Report of the Secretary-General of 6 October 2023, published by the

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<sup>275</sup> Hengaw, [... Kurdish language instructor, sentenced to two years in prison](#), 11 December 2024

<sup>276</sup> HRANA, [Edris Menbari Sentenced to 2 Years in Prison](#), 11 December 2024

<sup>277</sup> IranWire, [Iranian Activist Sentenced to Two Years for 2022 Protests](#), 12 December 2024

<sup>278</sup> IranWire, [Kurdish Journalist Sentenced to One Year in Prison by Iranian Court](#), 15 January 2025

<sup>279</sup> HRANA, [Azhdar Piri Imprisoned to Begin Serving One-Year Sentence](#), 8 May 2025

<sup>280</sup> KHRN, [Kurdish journalist sent to Karaj prison to serve one-year sentence](#), 8 May 2025

<sup>281</sup> KHRN, [About us](#), no date

<sup>282</sup> Preston, Charles, Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Nowruz](#), updated 27 June 2025

<sup>283</sup> KHRN, [Seyfollah Khan Ghaffari](#), no date

<sup>284</sup> KolbarNews, [Marivan: Temporary Release of Three Detained Citizens from Nowruz 1404 Arrests](#), 29 March 2025

<sup>285</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5.3), 24 November 2022

UNHRC, stated:

‘While the Government stated that all detention facilities used during the protests were official and subject to judicial oversight, OHCHR received reports that, as a result of overcrowding in prisons in Kurdistan Province, in particular following the nationwide protests, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps resorted to using non-official detention facilities, including basements and houses, to detain protesters. According to testimonies analysed by OHCHR, there are serious allegations that torture and sexual abuse, or threats thereof, are being carried out by prison guards in those facilities. Individuals detained in those facilities, including women, were allegedly held in solitary confinement for up to a week.’<sup>286</sup>

- 14.5.3 In its annual report on human rights violations in Iran in 2024, published on 31 December 2024, Hengaw noted that of at least 22 prisoners who died in Iranian prisons in 2024, 9 (41%) were Kurdish prisoners, 5 of whom reportedly died due to torture<sup>287</sup>.
- 14.5.4 In its report covering human rights violations in the first half of 2025, published on 1 July 2025, Hengaw noted that of at least 29 prisoners who died in Iranian prisons during the first 6 months of 2025, 11 (38%) were Kurdish prisoners, 3 of whom reportedly died due to torture<sup>288</sup>.
- 14.5.5 For an example of Kurdish political opponents, or those perceived as such, who were reportedly subjected to torture, see the following (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list): pages 3 to 4 of the [USSD 2023 Country Report on Human Rights practices](#), which reported on 2 Kurdish-Iranian citizens who were tortured to death in Orumiyeh prison, one of whom having been accused of membership in an unspecified Kurdish opposition party (the other was reportedly arrested without explanation).
- 14.5.6 See also [Arrests, convictions and imprisonments](#) and [Executions and extra-judicial killings](#).

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## 14.6 Fair trial

- 14.6.1 The EUAA Country Focus report stated: ‘... [A]n expert on the Kurdish population and regions in Iran noted that most people tried on political and security charges would appeal in an appeal court and the Supreme Court. However, the source pointed out that the authorities “do not follow the regular procedures when dealing with some people,” particularly those seen as “security concerns”.’<sup>289</sup>
- 14.6.2 The same EUAA report stated:

‘As noted by expert Behrooz Chamanara [Director of the International Institute for the Study of Kurdish Societies (IISKS) in Germany<sup>290</sup>] ... the severity of court sentences revealed geographical disparities. According to the expert, “while a particular offence might warrant a 10-year sentence in Tehran, it could result in a death penalty in areas like Kurdistan ...” The

<sup>286</sup> UNHRC, [... human rights ... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 16), 6 October 2023

<sup>287</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>288</sup> Hengaw, [... report on ... human rights violations ... during the first half of 2025](#), 1 July 2025

<sup>289</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 3.5.1), June 2024

<sup>290</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (Annex 1: Bibliography), June 2024

source also noted that persons who participated in demonstrations in these regions often faced more severe consequences. In numerous cases, Kurdish ... defendants faced harsher sentences when they were detained in cities such as Tehran, Urmia, or Isfahan.

'... [E]xpert [Barzoo Eliassi] noted that ethnic minorities, including Kurds, mostly did not have access to lawyers, including in cases where executions were carried out. Another expert ... [Behrooz Chamanara] noted that "in Kurdish regions, intelligence services wield significant influence over the judiciary", resulting in constraints on lawyers' activities ... The selection process strongly favoured lawyers with ties to the authorities, leaving persons facing charges with only one or two choices in some Kurdish cities.'<sup>291</sup>

14.6.3 See also [Executions and extra-judicial killings](#).

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## 14.7 Executions and extra-judicial killings

14.7.1 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated:

'The NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) writes that in April 2022, an unprecedented number of secret executions are taking place in Iranian regions with ethnic minorities. According to IHR, the majority of those executed due to their political affiliation belong to ethnic minorities, particularly the Kurdish minority. Between 2010 and 2021, 137 individuals were executed because of their affiliation with banned political and militant groups, of which 70 were Kurds (51%) ...'<sup>292</sup>

14.7.2 The article that was published by the Fikra Forum on 13 September 2023 stated: 'While the attacks decreased after the Iranian protests largely died down by January this year [2023] after a huge crackdown — with at least 537 killed — Iran has continued to carry out assassinations against Iranian Kurdish opposition figures in the Kurdistan Region, including one in July [2023] against two PDKI members.'<sup>293</sup>

14.7.3 The Report of the Secretary-General of 6 October 2023, published by the UNHRC, stated that ethnic minorities including Kurds constitute '... a disproportionate percentage of persons executed on political and national security-related charges. They also continue to be disproportionately affected by the excessive use of force, thus suffering injury and loss of life, in particular in the context of the latest protests. Between 19 September 2022 and 23 May 2023, at least 490 Kurdish protesters were reportedly killed in that context, among them 445 men and 45 women.'<sup>294</sup> The report did not provide numbers of non-Kurdish protesters killed in the same context/ time period, though sources reported at least 500 to 550 protesters were killed between September 2022 and September 2023<sup>295 296 297</sup>. HRANA reported the majority of those killed were within the first three months of the protests,

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<sup>291</sup> EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (sections 3.7 and 3.7.1), June 2024

<sup>292</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5.3), 24 November 2022

<sup>293</sup> Wilgenburg, Wladimir van, for the Fikra Forum, [Iran's Pressure Campaign ...](#), 13 September 2023

<sup>294</sup> UNHRC, [... human rights ... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 42), 6 October 2023

<sup>295</sup> Just Security, [... Iran's "Women, Life, Freedom" Protests](#), 11 June 2025

<sup>296</sup> BBC News, [Iran: A really simple guide to the protests](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>297</sup> IHRNGO, [One Year Protest Report: At Least 551 Killed ...](#), 15 September 2023

from September 2022<sup>298 299</sup>.

- 14.7.4 The December 2023 CHRI report on the death penalty stated: 'There is no precise information regarding the number of secret executions. However, the number of executions taking place without the knowledge of defense lawyers or prisoners' families have increased, especially in regards to Kurdish, Arab and Baluch ethnic minorities.'<sup>300</sup> The report did not provide any further information or expand upon how it reached this conclusion.
- 14.7.5 On 5 March 2024, Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO), a Norway-based 'non-profit, human rights organization with members inside and outside Iran'<sup>301</sup>, and ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty), a French professional association that campaigns against the death penalty<sup>302 303</sup>, jointly published an 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023'. The report stated:
- '... [T]he absolute majority of those executed for their political affiliation belong to ethnic groups, the Kurds in particular. An overview of Iran Human Rights reports between 2010-2023 shows that at least 154 people were executed for affiliation with banned political and armed groups. Of those, 76 (49%) were Kurdish ... with a majority of them being Sunni Muslims. There are several possible reasons for the overrepresentation of ethnic groups in execution figures. One explanation might be that the authorities use more violence to create fear due to higher opposition amongst the population in those regions. During the nationwide protests following Jina (Mahsa) Amini's state killing, Kurdish regions and Baluchistan were the areas with the longest-lasting protests, and almost half of all protesters killed on the streets were from Baluchistan, Kurdistan and other Kurdish towns in other provinces.'<sup>304</sup>
- 14.7.6 The joint 2023 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran also noted that of at least 39 people who were executed under the security-related charges of moharebeh (enmity against God), efsad-fil-arz (corruption on earth) and baghy (armed rebellion), in 2023, 8 of them (20.5%) were Kurdish<sup>305</sup>.
- 14.7.7 Amnesty International published a report on 3 April 2024 about executions in Iran in 2023. The report, which cited various sources, stated: 'In 2023, 38 individuals were recorded as having been executed for "enmity against God" (moharebeh) and/or "corruption on earth" (efasd-e fel arz). Of these, over half were in connection with alleged acts that should never result in the death penalty, including robbery, espionage, possession of arms, drawing weapons, and membership in Kurdish opposition groups.'<sup>306</sup> The report did not provide a breakdown of how many of the 38 executions were specifically related to membership in Kurdish opposition groups.
- 14.7.8 The same Amnesty International report went on to state:
- 'The authorities executed at least 82 men from Kurdish-populated provinces

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<sup>298</sup> BBC News, [Iran protests: "No going back" as unrest hits 100 days](#), 26 December 2022

<sup>299</sup> RFE / RL, [At least 522 Have Died in Iran Protests, Human Rights Report Says](#), 15 January 2023

<sup>300</sup> CHRI, [The Death Penalty in the Republic of Iran](#) (page 29), December 2023

<sup>301</sup> IHRNGO, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>302</sup> ECPM, [Discover ECPM: About Us](#), no date

<sup>303</sup> ECPM, [Discover ECPM: History](#), no date

<sup>304</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023](#) (page 88), 5 March 2024

<sup>305</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023](#) (page 46), 5 March 2024

<sup>306</sup> AI, [... Iran's ... execution crisis since the 2022 uprising](#) (footnote 29 on page 12), 3 April 2024

[though AI was unable to ascertain whether all 82 individuals were Kurdish<sup>307</sup>] in 2023 – 18 in Kermanshah province, 18 in Kurdistan province and 46 in West Azerbaijan province. Of these 82 individuals ... seven [were executed] for “corruption on earth” (efsad fel arz) and/or “enmity against God” (moharebeh), [and] one for “armed rebellion against the state” (baghi) ...

‘Additionally, at least 14 individuals from the Kurdish ethnic minority were executed in other parts of the country in the provinces of Alborz, Fars, Gilan, Ilam, Hormozgān, Markazi, Sistan and Baluchestan, and South Khorasan. Of these ... two [were executed] for “corruption on earth” (efsad fel arz) ...

‘... Kurdish minorities were disproportionately impacted by the authorities’ cruel practice of executing individuals in secret and without prior notice to their families. Authorities also sometimes buried victims in secret and refused to return their bodies to their families.’<sup>308</sup>

14.7.9 The Zagros statement to the UN Secretary General, dated 12 August 2024, stated: ‘During the first six months of 2024, 76 Kurdish citizens were executed in Iran. This number continues to rise, with an increasing number of death sentences handed down against Kurdish political activists, often following unfair trials based on charges of “Moharebeh” (enmity against God) or terrorism.’<sup>309</sup>

14.7.10 In its 2024 human rights violations annual report, published on 31 December 2024, Hengaw noted that of 901 prisoners who were executed in Iran in 2024, 183 of them (20.5%) were Kurdish<sup>310</sup>. The report stated: ‘Among those executed, 13 individuals were sentenced to death for political or religious activities or for alleged participating in “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. Of these, 10 were Kurds ... The majority of death sentences were related to drug charges ...’<sup>311</sup>

14.7.11 On 12 March 2025, the UNHRC published a ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights’ which, citing various sources, stated: ‘The Special Rapporteur has received submissions indicating that the death penalty disproportionately affects ...Kurds, who make up 9–10 per cent of the population, [and] remain overrepresented in broadly defined security offences, accounting for 29 per cent of such cases in 2024 [according to the Iran Human Rights submission, which CPIT was unable to access directly]. Furthermore, of the 154 executions reported for affiliation with banned political and armed groups between 2010 and 2023, Kurds constituted nearly half (49 per cent) ...’<sup>312</sup>

14.7.12 The same report of the Special Rapporteur also stated: ‘Estimates include: at least ... 100 Kurds out of a total of 937 prisoners executed [11%] (Abdorrahan Boroumand Center); at least ... 84 Kurds out of a total of 975 executed [9%] (Iran Human Rights); and at least ... 233 Kurds out of a total of 968 executed [24%] (Kurdistan Human Rights Association).’<sup>313</sup>

<sup>307</sup> AI, [... Iran’s relentless execution crisis since the 2022 uprising](#) (section 3.1.2), 3 April 2024

<sup>308</sup> AI, [... Iran’s relentless execution crisis since the 2022 uprising](#) (section 3.2), 3 April 2024

<sup>309</sup> Zagros, [Written statement : The Situation of the Kurds ...](#), 12 August 2024

<sup>310</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>311</sup> Hengaw, [... annual report: widespread human rights violations ... in 2024](#), 31 December 2024

<sup>312</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ...](#) (paragraph 19), 12 March 2025

<sup>313</sup> UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ...](#) (footnote 27 on page 5), 12 March 2025

14.7.13 On 13 June 2025, the UNHRC published a 'Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the human rights situation' which stated: 'In 2024, the death penalty continued to have a disproportionate impact on minority groups. According to information received by [the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights] OHCHR, at least ... 84 Kurdish prisoners were executed in 2024, accounting for ... 9 per cent of the total number of executions recorded in 2024, mainly for drug-related crimes and for murder.'<sup>314</sup>

14.7.14 For some examples of executions and extra-judicial killings of Kurdish political activists, see the following (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- page 47 of the [March 2024 IHRNGO and ECPM annual report on the death penalty in Iran](#), which reported on a male Kurdish political prisoner who was secretly executed in Kermanshah Central Prison on 22 February 2023 without his family being notified on charges of 'moharebeh through membership of Komeleh party and the murder of a traffic officer'<sup>315</sup>. It also reported on a second male Kurdish political prisoner who was arrested while working as a kolbar (smuggler) and was executed in March 2023 after he was '[t]ortured to accept bogus charges of firearms possession and membership in political groups ...'<sup>316</sup>
- For more information about Kurds involved in smuggling, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Smugglers](#).
- the [Amnesty International article published on 24 January 2024](#) about '... a man from Iran's Kurdish Sunni minority whose decade-long pleas for a fair retrial, excluding torture-tainted "confessions", were ignored', leading to his execution on 23 January 2024. The article went on to state that the man was: '... the fourth man since November 2023 to be arbitrarily executed from a group of seven Kurdish Sunni men sentenced to death over a decade ago in an unfair trial that lasted only a few minutes and relied on torture-tainted "confessions". There are mounting fears that the Iranian authorities are intent on imminently carrying out the executions of the three remaining men from the group ...'<sup>317</sup> Between May and July 2024 it was reported that the remaining 3 men from the group were also executed<sup>318 319 320</sup>
- an [RFE / RL article, published on 29 January 2024](#), which reported the executions of 4 Kurdish political prisoners who were alleged to be members of Komala and to have been recruited via their membership to plot an attack on Isfahan, Iran, on behalf of Israel. Their executions allegedly followed confessions obtained under torture and unfair trials.

14.7.15 See also paragraphs 14.5.3 to 14.5.5, [Detention and torture](#)

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<sup>314</sup> UNHRC, [... human rights ... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 11), 13 June 2025

<sup>315</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023](#) (page 47), 5 March 2024

<sup>316</sup> IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023](#) (page 47), 5 March 2024

<sup>317</sup> AI, [Iran: Executions of ... Kurdish man mark plunge into new realms of cruelty](#), 24 January 2024

<sup>318</sup> IHRNGO, [Kurdish Political Prisoner Anwar Khezri Executed After 14+ Years ...](#), 1 May 2024

<sup>319</sup> KHRN, [Kurdish prisoner of conscience executed after 14 years in jail](#), 15 May 2024

<sup>320</sup> KHRN, [Iran executes Kurdish prisoner of conscience after 14 years in jail](#), 25 July 2024

## 14.8 Targeting of activists' family members

### 14.8.1 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated:

'Members of the families of party members or supporters are also at risk of being summoned, interrogated, arrested and detained. A source from DIS stated that if authorities are aware that a person is a family member of a political party member, they are at risk of being tortured. Family members of individuals engaged in social or political activities are monitored (through phone and computer as well as their movements). The authorities' treatment of the family can vary from case to case. There are instances of fathers being summoned by the intelligence service and having to assure that they would not meet their children. One father was arrested for visiting his daughter, a political activist living in a camp in the KRI in Iraq. The punishment of family members varies depending on the level of activity of the activist. In some cases, families have been arrested and charged. Close family members such as spouses, children, parents, or siblings are more likely to be detained. In some cases, the authorities have arrested additional family members for having contact with the politically active person outside the country.

'Family members of arrested or detained activists are threatened to keep the arrest secret. If the arrest is not kept secret, the torture against the detainee is harsher. Family members may also be denied a position in the public service in their hometown and may have to move to another city to find employment.

'Families with a civil or politically active member outside of Iran are particularly closely monitored and pressured. There are examples of family members being arrested or threatened with death because one of their close relatives engaged in extensive political or human rights activities abroad.

'Interview partners from Landinfo [in February 2021] also confirm that family members of Kurdish activists are subjected to various forms of pressure and surveillance. Siblings, for instance, can lose their study placements or be excluded from certain activities because they do not receive a security clearance. In other cases, it is reported that close family members are summoned for questioning or arrested and prosecuted. Others are subject to reporting obligations or travel bans. Close relatives of individuals who engage socially or politically also face the risk of being monitored. This can include the surveillance of phone calls, computer usage, or their physical movement patterns.'<sup>321</sup>

For more information about online monitoring by the Iranian authorities, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).

### 14.8.2 An RFE / RL article, published on 16 August 2023, stated:

'The most prolonged protests and the deadliest crackdowns during the demonstrations [following the death in police custody on 16 September 2022 of Mahsa Amini<sup>322</sup>] occurred in regions that are home to ethnic minorities, including Kurds ... who have long-standing grievances against the state.

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<sup>321</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5.4), 24 November 2022

<sup>322</sup> RFE / RL, [Iranian Authorities Ratchet Up Pressure Against ... Families ...](#), 16 August 2023

‘As the demonstrations slowed in the spring [of 2023], Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and other security forces turned their attention to family members of those slain, embarking on a wave of arrests, punishments, and intimidation to keep them in check.’<sup>323</sup>

14.8.3 The Amwaj.media article, published in September 2023, stated: ‘Across the Kurdish-majority areas in western Iran, hundreds of activists and family members of protesters killed in last year’s [2022’s] protests have been summoned, detained or threatened not to take any action on the anniversary of Amini’s death. Even Amini’s father was reportedly interrogated on Sept. 11 [2023] and threatened not to hold an event to commemorate his daughter on the date of her passing.’<sup>324</sup>

14.8.4 A 16 October 2024 report entitled ‘Iran; Treatment by the authorities of family members of dissidents residing abroad’ was written by the COI unit of the Belgium Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS – CEDOCA). The report stated:

‘Cedoca ... asked Dr Maghzi [Dr Afrooz Maghzi, an Iranian lawyer and human rights researcher affiliated with the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany] if there are discernible patterns in the authorities’ targeting of family members of dissidents residing abroad, to which she replied:

“‘Yes, there are some patterns in the way the Iranian regime targets dissidents abroad. The regime often focuses on dissidents who have organizational ties with political groups, especially those that Iran claims have military branches, such as ... Kurdish political parties like Komala and (Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK)) ... While many of these groups have declared that their military goals are dismantled, the Iranian government continues to target their members and families under this pretext ...’”<sup>325</sup>

14.8.5 For some individual examples of the targeting of Kurdish political activists’ family members, between January and July 2024, see the following (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- an [Amnesty International appeal for action, dated 18 January 2024](#), which, prior to the execution of the 4 alleged Komala members, accused of having plotted an attack on Isfahan on behalf of Israel (see paragraph 14.7.14), stated: ‘On 14 January 2024, their families gathered outside Evin Prison in Tehran, where they suspect their loved ones are held, to protest their death sentences and demand visitation. In reprisal, the Ministry of Intelligence summoned the family members of the four men and threatened them with death, torture and imprisonment if they continued to protest and enquire about their loved ones.’<sup>326</sup>
- an [article published on 24 July 2024 by the KHRN](#), about the arrest of several family members of one of the women Kurdish activists who was sentenced to death on charges of ‘armed insurrection’ (baghi) through membership of PJAK (see also paragraph 14.4.19). The article reported that her family members were ‘... released after several days of

<sup>323</sup> RFE / RL, [Iranian Authorities Ratchet Up Pressure Against ... Families ...](#), 16 August 2023

<sup>324</sup> Amwaj.media, [Inside story: Will IRGC pressure on Kurds backfire on Tehran?](#), 15 September 2023

<sup>325</sup> CGRS – CEDOCA, [... family ... of dissidents ... abroad](#) (page 5), 16 October 2024

<sup>326</sup> AI, [Forcibly disappeared men at risk of execution ...](#), 18 January 2024

interrogation.<sup>327</sup>

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## 14.9 Monitoring of sur place activities

14.9.1 The Iran Primer article published on 17 February 2023 stated: 'In Europe and abroad, the [Iranian intelligence] agencies track dissidents in exile, some of whom have networks in Iran that agitate against the government. Intelligence agencies have targeted a broad range of exiled oppositionists, including ... Kurdish separatist groups ...'<sup>328</sup>

14.9.2 The BZ Iran COI report stated:

'Activists who stood up for the interests of ... [Kurds] abroad could be subject to surveillance and intimidation. There are indications of active surveillance of the Iranian diaspora by the Iranian government. For instance, the [Government of Netherlands'] [General Intelligence and Security Service<sup>329</sup>] AIVD, [Military Intelligence and Security Service<sup>330</sup>] MIVD and [National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security<sup>331</sup>] NCTV refer to a range of intelligence and influencing activities, including the targeting of the Iranian diaspora in the Netherlands. This can lead to self-censorship, openly propagating the Iranian government's position or active cooperation with intelligence agencies. According to several sources, the political activities of people abroad who have certain links to Iran are monitored, because the Iranian authorities see them as a security risk. This policy applies no matter which ethnic group a person belongs to. This may also affect family or friends still living in Iran.

'... The question of whether the political activities of Kurds abroad are actively monitored by the Iranian authorities could not be answered unequivocally. Here ... reference can be made to the above-mentioned finding by the AIVD, MIVD and NCTV that a range of intelligence and influencing activities are carried out, which also target the Iranian diaspora in the Netherlands. It is not known whether Kurds are monitored more intensively than other groups within the diaspora.'<sup>332</sup>

14.9.3 See also see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).

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## 14.10 Returnees

14.10.1 The ACCORD Iranian opposition parties report stated: '... [A] representative of the CPI explained to ACCORD that CPI members living in the diaspora and active do not feel safe returning to Iran. Working for an opposition party and being a dissident, whether inside or outside of Iran, is considered life-threatening.'<sup>333</sup>

14.10.2 The same ACCORD report also stated:

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<sup>327</sup> KHRN, [Iran court sentences Kurdish activist Pakhshan Azizi to death](#), 24 July 2024

<sup>328</sup> The Iran Primer, [Explainer: Tactics of Iranian Intelligence](#), 17 February 2023

<sup>329</sup> AIVD, MIVD and NCTV, [Threat Assessment State-sponsored Actors 2](#) (page 4), November 2022

<sup>330</sup> AIVD, MIVD and NCTV, [Threat Assessment State-sponsored Actors 2](#) (page 4), November 2022

<sup>331</sup> AIVD, MIVD and NCTV, [Threat Assessment State-sponsored Actors 2](#) (page 4), November 2022

<sup>332</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.1.2), September 2023

<sup>333</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5), 24 November 2022

‘According to the [February 2020] DIS report, the Iranian government suspects all Kurds of activism. If a Kurd leaves the country without permission, there is a risk that suspicion against the person will increase and that leaving the country will be seen as evidence of activism. According to the Kurdistan Human Rights Network, the Iranian government claims that individuals returning to Iran in possession of a security letter (in Persian: aman-nameh) should not face difficulties. However, there are examples of returnees from the KRI that show that the protection of the security letter is not upheld in practice, particularly in cases where the individual is accused of political activism. In some cases, returnees have been summoned, arrested, or even detained by the security authorities.

‘Referring to the KHRN, DIS states that a person accused of political affiliation with one of the Kurdish opposition parties is generally unable to return to a normal life in Iran. In many cases, the person will keep their previous political affiliation and activities secret in order to avoid surveillance by the Iranian authorities. A DIS source noted that a person returning from Europe to Iran is subjected to a higher degree of suspicion by the authorities than someone returning from the KRI. Some returnees are arrested, others are not. The authorities question returnees about the reasons for their asylum applications as well as the actions they have taken against the Iranian government. DIS describes five cases of Iranian Kurds who had applied for asylum in Europe and were arrested upon their return to Iran.’<sup>334</sup>

14.10.3 Citing confidential sources, the BZ Iran COI report stated: ‘According to one source, ethnicity as such does not play a role when someone returns. According to another source, ethnicity may result in arbitrary or discriminatory punishment on return, if an offence has already been committed.’<sup>335</sup>

14.10.4 On 22 November 2024, Landinfo published a report entitled ‘Thematic note: Iran: Reception and processing of returned asylum seekers’ (English translation). The report, which cited various sources, stated:

‘The information and statistics [in the report] only include individuals who have returned through assisted return programmes, or who have been deported by [the Police Immigration Unit] PU. Norwegian authorities do not have statistics on Iranians who organise and carry out their return independently.

‘The Danish Immigration Service [in their 2020 report] has spoken with the Kurdish Human Rights Network (KHRN) and the Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan – Geneva (KMMK-G) about the return issues for Iranian Kurds. KHRN believed that a person who has applied for asylum abroad will face “difficulties” because they will be interrogated about the reasons for their asylum application, what they have said about the Iranian authorities, and what actions they have taken against the government. More specific information is not provided in the report.

‘KMMK-G believed that Iranian Kurds are often suspected of being activists, especially if they have travelled out of Iran without permission. Additionally, the source claimed that those returning from Europe will be met with greater suspicion than those returning from the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI): some

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<sup>334</sup> ACCORD, [Iran: Information about the parties ...](#) (section 5.5), 24 November 2022

<sup>335</sup> BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (section 5.2.1), September 2023

will be arrested, and others will not [according to DIS' 2020 report].'<sup>336</sup>

N.B. the information quoted above, and all other COI quoted from this source throughout the rest of this CPIN was originally published in Norwegian. All COI from this source has been translated using a free online translation tool. As such 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

- 14.10.5 For more information about the treatment of returnees who departed Iran illegally, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Illegal exit](#) and for more information about the treatment of returnees who have carried out surveillance activities, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance, and surveillance activities](#).

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<sup>336</sup> Landinfo, [... returned asylum seekers](#) (translated) (sections 2 and 6.5), 22 November 2024

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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# Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Background
  - Brief history
  - Demography
  - Language – linguistic diversity of Kurdish populations in Iran, including geographical information
  - Religion – religious diversity of Kurdish populations in Iran
- State treatment
  - Legal rights
  - Discrimination
  - Arbitrary arrest and detention
  - Fair trial
- Education and employment
  - Access to education, proportion of Iranian Kurds who do not attend Iranian schooling
  - Levels of employment among the Kurdish populus and the degree to which Kurds rely on 'illegitimate' forms of employment, such as smuggling
- Kurdish political parties - Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI), Kurdish Democratic Party Iran (KDP -I), Komala (Komaleh/ Komalah) parties, Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), including information on:
  - Background
  - Recruitment to and member profile
  - Membership cards and verification
  - Member roles and activities
- State treatment of Kurdish political activists and family members
  - State targeting of activists and family members
  - Monitoring in the KRI
  - Arrests, allegations of torture, and executions
  - State treatment of people on return to Iran, including those involved in sur place activities

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- Version **5.0**
- valid from **6 October 2025**

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### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

### Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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## Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI and assessment.

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## Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

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The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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