

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	802
Land:	Iran
Kilde:	British Home Office
Titel:	Country Background Note: Iran
Udgivet:	oktober 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	8. januar 2020



Home Office

Country Background Note: Iran

Version 6.0

October 2019

Preface

Purpose

This note provides a summary of and links to country of origin information (COI) for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) general background to the country concerned, including demography and geography; and (2) issues which may be relevant to protection claims. Unlike country policy and information notes, it does **not** contain an assessment of risk, availability of protection or reasonableness of internal relocation.

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

Country of origin information

The country information 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 \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

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

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after this date is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. 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, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

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 him 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:

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

5th Floor

Globe House

89 Eccleston Square

London, SW1V 1PN

Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

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](#).

Contents

Country information.....	6
1. History	6
2. Geography and demography	6
2.1 Key geographic and demographic points	6
2.2 Map	7
2.3 Administrative divisions	7
2.4 Main population centres	8
2.5 Transportation	9
3. Constitution.....	9
4. Iranian Calendar	9
5. Political system	10
5.1 The Supreme Leader	10
5.2 The President	10
5.3 Electoral system	10
6. Economy.....	11
7. Media and telecommunications	12
8. Citizenship and nationality	13
8.1 Nationality Law	13
9. Corruption.....	13
10. Official documents	14
10.1 Passports	14
10.2 National identity cards	14
10.3 Birth certificates (shenasnameh)	15
10.4 Forged documents	15
11. Healthcare	15
Key issues relevant to protection claims.....	16
12. Adulterers	16
13. Ahwazis	16
14. Children	16
14.1 Education	16
14.2 Child abuse	16
14.3 Child labour	17
15. Civil society	18
16. 'Double jeopardy'	20
17. Freedom of expression	20

18. Freedom of movement.....	21
18.1 Entry and exit procedures.....	21
18.2 Internal movement.....	21
19. Kurdish and Kurdish political groups.....	21
20. Military Service	22
21. Religious minorities.....	22
21.1 Atheists.....	22
21.2 Baha'i	22
21.3 Christians and Christian converts.....	23
21.4 Zoroastrians	23
22. Sexual orientation and gender identity or expression	24
23. Smugglers	24
24. Women	24
24.1 Overview	24
24.2 Honour crimes against women.....	25
24.3 Forced marriage	25
24.4 Domestic abuse.....	25
Annex A: Legal expert report	27
Bibliography	32
Version control.....	35

Country information

Updated: 18 September 2019

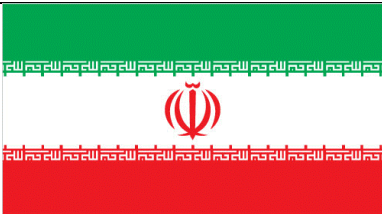
1. History

- 1.1.1 A full timeline of Iran's history can be found on the [BBC's Iran profile](#)¹.
- 1.1.2 The [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) has a history of Iran from 640 common era (CE) to the present².

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Geography and demography

2.1 Key geographic and demographic points

Full country name:	Islamic Republic of Iran ³
Area:	Total: 1,648,195 sq. km About 6.5 times the area of the UK ⁴
Flag:	 ⁵
Population:	83,024,745 (July 2018 estimate) ⁶
Capital city:	Tehran ⁷
Other key places:	See Main population centres .
Position:	Bordering the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, between Iraq and Pakistan. Land borders with Afghanistan, Armenia, Iraq, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Turkmenistan ⁸ .
Languages:	Persian (official), Azeri Turkic and Turkic dialects, Kurdish, Gilaki and Mazandarani, Luri, Balochi, Arabic ⁹ . For more information see: Ethnologue's Languages of Iran

¹ BBC News, 'Iran profile – timeline', last updated 9 April 2019, [url](#)

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, Iran – History, [url](#)

³ BBC, Iran country profile, last updated 24 September 2018, [url](#)

⁴ The True Size of, [url](#)

⁵ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁶ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁷ BBC, Iran country profile, last updated 24 September 2018, [url](#)

⁸ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁹ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

Ethnic groups:	Persian (61%), Azerbaijani (16%), Kurdish (10%), Luri (6%), Turkmen and Turkic Tribes (2%) Arab (2%), Arab (2%), Balochi (2%), other groups (1%) ¹⁰ .
Religion:	Muslim (official) 99.4% (Shia 90-95%, Sunni 5-10%), other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian) 0.3%, unspecified 0.4% (2011 estimate). ¹¹

[Back to Contents](#)

2.2 Map

2.2.1 The CIA World Factbook published the following map¹²:



2.2.2 Other maps:

- [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, Iran Maps](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Administrative divisions

2.3.1 There are 31 provinces (ostanha, singular - ostan); Alborz, Ardabil, Azarbayjan-e Gharbi (West Azerbaijan), Azarbayjan-e Sharqi (East Azerbaijan), Bushehr, Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari, Esfahan, Fars, Gilan, Golestan, Hamadan, Hormozgan, Ilam, Kerman, Kermanshah, Khorasan-e

¹⁰ World Atlas, 'Largest Ethnic Groups in Iran', 18 July 2019, [url](#)

¹¹ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

¹² CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

Jonubi (South Khorasan), Khorasan-e Razavi (Razavi Khorasan), Khorasan-e Shomali (North Khorasan), Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh va Bowyer Ahmad, Kordestan, Lorestan, Markazi, Mazandaran, Qazvin, Qom, Semnan, Sistan va Baluchestan, Tehran, Yazd, Zanjan¹³.

[Back to Contents](#)

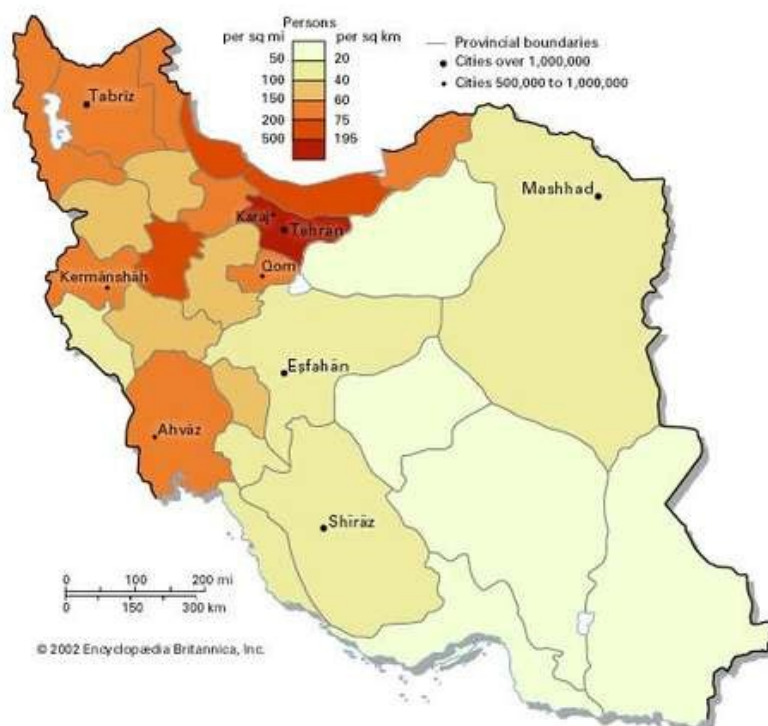
2.4 Main population centres

2.4.1 The population is concentrated in the north, northwest, and west, reflecting the position of the Zagros and Elburz Mountains; the vast dry areas in the center and eastern parts of the country, around the deserts of the Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut, have a much lower population density¹⁴.

2.4.2 Major urban areas and their estimated population sizes are:

- Tehran (capital), 8.896 million;
- Mashhad, 3,097 million;
- Esfahan, 2.041 million;
- Shiraz, 1.605 million;
- Karaj, 1.585 million;
- Tabriz, 1.582 million (2018)¹⁵.

2.4.3 The following map shows the population density of Iran¹⁶:



¹³ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁵ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica, Iran, Settlement patterns, last updated 14 August 2019, [url](#)

2.5 Transportation

- 2.5.1 Iran's centres of population are widely scattered, and transportation is made difficult by mountainous and desert terrain. Motor vehicles—buses and lorries in particular—are the most important means of transportation for both passengers and goods. Since the early 1990s the Iranian government has allocated considerable resources to road construction and repair, and about half the roads are now paved¹⁷.
- 2.5.2 Iran is served by 5 major ports on the Persian Gulf, the largest being BandarʿAbbās. Oil terminals at Ābādān and Khārk Island, destroyed or damaged in the war with Iraq, have since been rebuilt, as have port facilities at Khorramshahr and Bandar-e Khomeynī. Iran has expanded its facilities at the port of Būshehr and built a new port at Chāh Bahār (Bandar Beheshtī) on the Gulf of Oman. Caspian seaports, including Bandar-e Anzalī (formerly Bandar-e Pahlavī) and Bandar-e Torkaman (formerly Bandar-e Shāh), are primarily used for trade with nations to the north¹⁸.
- 2.5.3 The state-owned airline, Iran Air, serves the major cities and provincial capitals. Some major European, Asian, and African airlines also serve Iran. Tehran, Ābādān, Eṣfahān, Shīrāz, and BandarAbbās have international airports¹⁹.
- 2.5.4 According to 2013 and 2017 figures there are 319 airports in Iran, 140 with paved runways and 179 with unpaved runways²⁰.
- 2.5.5 According to 2017 figures there are 9021km of railway tracks in Iran used to transport both goods and passengers²¹.

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Constitution

- 3.1.1 See full official translation of the [1979 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran \(last amended in 1989\)](#)²².

[Back to Contents](#)

4. Iranian Calendar

- 4.1.1 The Iran Chamber Society, stated that: 'The Iranian calendar (also known as the Persian calendar or the Jalaali Calendar) is a solar calendar currently used in Iran and Afghanistan. It is observation-based, rather than rule-based, beginning each year on the vernal equinox as precisely determined by astronomical observations from Tehran.'²³

¹⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Iran, Transportation, last updated 14 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Iran, Transportation, last updated 14 August 2019, [url](#)

¹⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Iran, Transportation, last updated 14 August 2019, [url](#)

²⁰ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

²¹ The World Bank, 'Rail Lines: Iran', undated, [url](#)

²² Iranian Constitution, 1979 (last amended in 1989), [url](#)

²³ Iran Chamber Society, 'Iranian Calendar Converter', undated, [url](#)

- 4.1.2 The [Iran Chamber website](#) can convert dates between the Iranian and the Gregorian calendar²⁴.

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Political system

5.1 The Supreme Leader

- 5.1.1 Freedom House, in its 'Freedom in the World 2018' report, ('the 2018 Freedom House report'), covering events in 2017, noted that:

'The supreme leader, who has no fixed term, is the highest authority in the country. He is the commander in chief of the armed forces and appoints the head of the judiciary, the heads of state broadcast media, and the Expediency Council—a body tasked with mediating disputes between the Guardian Council and the parliament. He also appoints six of the members of the Guardian Council; the other six are jurists nominated by the head of the judiciary and confirmed by the parliament, all for six-year terms. The supreme leader is appointed by the Assembly of Experts, which also monitors his work. However, in practice his decisions appear to go unchallenged by the assembly, whose proceedings are kept confidential. The current supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, succeeded Islamic Republic founder Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.'²⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

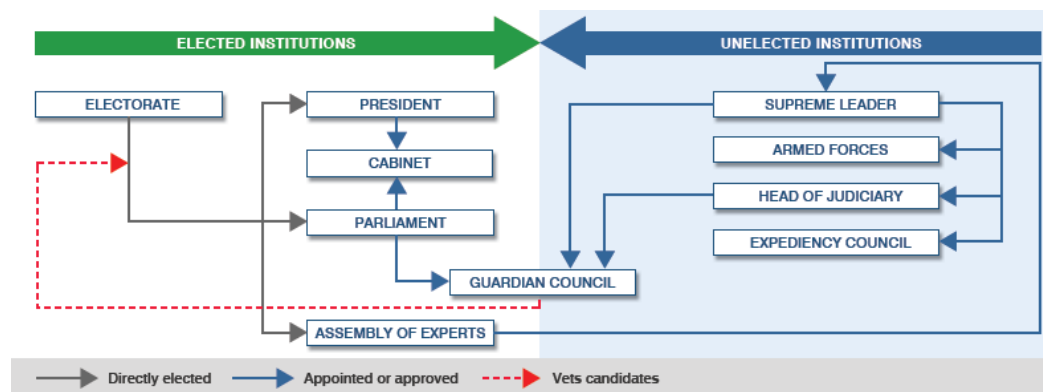
5.2 The President

- 5.2.1 See [Iran's Constitution](#), Section IX, about executive power in Iran²⁶.
- 5.2.2 President Hassan Rouhani is the current President. He was elected for a second term in 2017, with 57% of more than 40 million votes²⁷.

[Back to Contents](#)

5.3 Electoral system

- 5.3.1 BBC News guide on 'How Iran is ruled' dated 9 June 2009 provided the following diagram of the power structures in the governance of Iran²⁸:



²⁴ Iran Chamber Society, 'Iranian Calendar Converter', undated, [url](#)

²⁵ Freedom House, Iran Report 2018 (section A), January 2018, [url](#)

²⁶ Iran Constitution, [url](#)

²⁷ BBC News, 'Iran election', 20 May 2017, [url](#)

²⁸ BBC News, 'How Iran is ruled', June 2009, [url](#)

5.3.2 The 2018 Freedom House report noted that:

'The electoral system in Iran does not meet international democratic standards. The Guardian Council, controlled by hard-line conservatives and ultimately by the supreme leader, vets all candidates for the parliament, the presidency, and the Assembly of Experts. The council typically rejects candidates who are not considered insiders or deemed fully loyal to the clerical establishment, as well as women seeking to run in the presidential election. As a result, Iranian voters are given a limited choice of candidates.'²⁹

5.3.3 See also the '[Iran Portal](#)', which describes Iran's power structure and political institutions³⁰.

[Back to Contents](#)

6. Economy

6.1.1 The following table contains some key points:

Currency	Iranian Rial ³¹
Exchange Rate	1 GBP = 51,011 Iranian Rial (August 2019) ³²
GDP per capita	US\$20,100 (2017 estimate) ³³

6.1.2 Other notable points:

- Employment by occupation:
 - Agriculture: 16.3%
 - Industry: 35.1%
 - Services: 48.6% (2013 estimate)³⁴
- Unemployment rate: 11.8% (2017 estimate)³⁵

6.1.3 Recent sanctions by the United States have had a significant effect on Iran's economy, living costs have risen dramatically and the value of the rial has plummeted. There has also been a significant drop in oil exportation as well as shortages of imported products and goods made abroad. For more information see articles by the [BBC](#), [Global News](#), [Al Jazeera](#) and the [Times of Israel](#).

6.1.4 For details of available social support see the United States Social Security Administration's 2018 [Social Security Programmes throughout the World: Iran](#)³⁶.

²⁹ Freedom House, Iran report 2018 (section A), January 2018, [url](#)

³⁰ Iran Portal, undated, [url](#), [url](#)

³¹ BBC, Iran country profile, last updated 24 September 2018, [url](#)

³² XE Currency Converter, 21 August 2019, [url](#)

³³ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

³⁴ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

³⁵ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

³⁶ USSSA, Iran social security programs, undated, [url](#)

7. Media and telecommunications

7.1.1 Key media/telecommunications points:

International dialing code:	+98 ³⁷
Internet domain:	.ir ³⁸
Broadcast media:	State-run broadcast media with no private, independent broadcasters: Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) operates 19 nationwide channels including a news channel, about 34 provincial channels, and several international channels. About 20 foreign Persian-language TV stations broadcasting on satellite TV are capable of being seen in Iran; satellite dishes are illegal and, while their use is subjectively tolerated, authorities confiscate satellite dishes from time to time. IRIB operates 16 nationwide radio networks, a number of provincial stations, and an external service; most major international broadcasters transmit to Iran (2018).³⁹
News agencies	Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) - state-run, English-language pages Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) - English-language pages Fars News Agency - affiliated to Revolutionary Guards, English-language pages Mehr News Agency - affiliated to Islamic Propagation Organisation, English-language pages⁴⁰
Newspapers	Tehran Times – state-run English language daily Iran Daily – English language, published by state news agency IRNA Sharq (the East) – reformist daily E'temad – reformist daily Kayhan (Universe) – conservative daily

³⁷ Countrycode.org, Iran Country Code, [url](#)

³⁸ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

³⁹ CIA World Factbook, 'Iran', last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰ BBC, 'Iran profile – media', last updated 2 May 2017, [url](#)

	Resalat (Message) – conservative daily Jomhuri-ye-Eslami (Islamic Republic) – conservative daily Jaam-e Jam (Jam’s Cup) – large-circulation daily published by IRIB⁴¹
Radio	IRIB operates 16 nationwide radio networks, a number of provincial stations, and an external service; most major international broadcasters transmit to Iran.⁴²

7.1.2 Other notable points:

- There were an estimated 56.7 million internet users in December 2017⁴³.
- See [Freedom of expression](#) for information on the treatment of journalists and the press.

[Back to Contents](#)

8. Citizenship and nationality

8.1 Nationality Law

- 8.1.1 See [Iran’s Nationality Law](#) (Articles 976 to 991), Book Two of the Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran⁴⁴.
- 8.1.2 Also see: [‘Iran’s Citizenship Law: Political Considerations or Recognition of Inherent Human Rights?’](#), Oxford Human Rights Hub, 8 October 2015⁴⁵.
- 8.1.3 The United States Department of State (USSD) human rights report for 2018 stated: ‘Women may not directly transmit citizenship to their children or to noncitizen spouses. Only children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers who reside in Iran for 18 years and whose parents’ marriage is officially registered with the government are eligible to apply for citizenship’.⁴⁶ This was corroborated by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)⁴⁷.

[Back to Contents](#)

9. Corruption

- 9.1.1 Transparency International ranked Iran at number 138 out of 180 countries in the [Corruption Perceptions Index 2018](#) and had a score of 28 out of 100 (0 is ‘highly corrupt’ and 100 is ‘very clean’).⁴⁸

⁴¹ BBC, ‘Iran profile – media’, last updated 2 May 2017, [url](#)

⁴² CIA World Factbook, ‘Iran’, last updated 13 August 2019, [url](#)

⁴³ Internet World Stats, ‘Usage and Population Statistics’ Iran, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Civil Code, Book 2 (pp. 93-97), [url](#)

⁴⁵ Oxford Human Rights Hub, ‘Iran’s Citizenship Law’, 8 October 2015, [url](#)

⁴⁶ USSD, 2018 Human Rights Report, March 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Transparency International, ‘Iran’, undated, [url](#)

- 9.1.2 The United States Department of State (USSD) human rights report for 2018 stated:

'The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government implemented the law arbitrarily, sometimes pursuing apparently legitimate corruption cases against officials while bringing politically motivated charges against regime critics or political opponents. Most officials continued to engage in corrupt practices with impunity. Many expected bribes for providing routine services or received bonuses outside their regular work, and individuals routinely bribed officials to obtain permits for otherwise illegal construction.'⁴⁹

- 9.1.3 The 2018 DFAT report stated:

'A number of high-level prosecutions of corruption cases have taken place in recent years. In March 2016, a billionaire businessman was sentenced to death for fraud and economic crimes after he was convicted of withholding billions of dollars in oil revenue channelled through his companies. In July 2017, a top presidential aide (and brother to the president) was arrested on charges related to financial crimes (although many observers believe the arrest was politically motivated). In October 2017, a court found former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad guilty of illegally transferring USD1.3 billion from the National Iranian Oil Company to the Treasury.'⁵⁰

- 9.1.4 Also see Al-Monitor, '[How do Iran's Corrupt Networks Operate?](#)', 13 February 2018⁵¹.

[Back to Contents](#)

10. Official documents

10.1 Passports

- 10.1.1 Iranian passports are burgundy, with the Iranian Coat of Arms on the top of the front cover. Passports serve as proof of Iranian citizenship. All Iranian passports have been biometric since February 2011⁵².

[Back to Contents](#)

10.2 National identity cards

- 10.2.1 Every permanent resident of Iran over the age of 15 (including non-citizens) must hold a National Identity Card (NID). NID are compulsory for a range of activities, including obtaining passports and driver's licences and using a bank⁵³.
- 10.2.2 The front of the NID includes the bearer's photograph, National Identity Number, full name, date of birth and shenasnameh [Iranian Birth Certificate] number. The reverse features the bearer's residential numerical code, validity date, and the numerical identifier of the issuing office⁵⁴.

⁴⁹ USSD, 2018 Human Rights Report, March 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁵¹ Al-Monitor, 'How do Iran's Corrupt Networks Operate?', 13 February 2018, [url](#)

⁵² Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁵³ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁵⁴ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

10.3 Birth certificates (shenasnameh)

- 10.3.1 Birth registration is compulsory and must occur within 15 days of birth. Hospitals issue birth certificates for new born children. Parents then submit these certificates along with their own National Identity Card or shenasnameh to the local Office for the National Organisation for Civil Registration (ONOCR), who then issues the child's shenasnameh. Where a child is born at home, a doctor's note stating all of the particulars of the birth is required for a birth certificate and subsequent issuing of a shenasnameh⁵⁵.

10.4 Forged documents

- 10.4.1 For information on the availability of forged documents, the penal code and penalties for forgery and procedures for checking documents see the legal expert report located at [Annex A](#).
- 10.4.2 For details on a wide range of official documents see The US State Department, [Iran: Reciprocity and Civil Documents](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

11. Healthcare

- 11.1.1 For information on the healthcare system in Iran see the [Medical and Healthcare Issues CPIN](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

⁵⁵ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

Key issues relevant to protection claims

The issues below are not meant to be exhaustive; rather the key topics which may be relevant to protection claims.

12. Adulterers

12.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Adulterers](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

13. Ahwazis

13.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Ahwazis](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

14. Children

14.1 Education

14.1.1 The British Council report 'Voices - What does school education look like in Iran?', dated 21 April 2015, stated that:

'The education system in Iran is divided into two main levels: primary education and high-school education. All children attend compulsory primary level from ages 6 to 12 and high school from ages 12 to 18. There are many free public schools as well as private schools with high tuition fees. There are also schools called "Nemuneh Mardomi", which are believed to be better than public schools and more affordable than private schools.'⁵⁶

14.1.2 Despite the Iranian constitution stating that the use of regional and ethnic languages is freely permitted in schools this is not generally the case and lessons are taught in Farsi⁵⁷.

14.1.3 For more information on education in Iran, see:

- Section 2.26 of the [DFAT 2018 Country Report](#)
- Section 6 – Children of the [US State Department 2018 Human Rights Report](#).
- [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

14.2 Child abuse

14.2.1 The USSD 2018 report stated:

'There was little information available on how the government dealt with child abuse. The law states, "Any form of abuse of children and juveniles that causes physical, psychological, or moral harm and threatens their physical or mental health is prohibited," and such crimes carry a maximum sentence of three months in confinement or 10 million rials (\$235).

⁵⁶ The British Council, 'Voices – What does school education look like in Iran', 21 April 2015, [url](#)

⁵⁷ UNPO, 'Minorities campaign for right to education in their mother tongue', 26 September 2018, [url](#)

‘The legal minimum age of marriage for girls is 13, but girls as young as nine years old may be married with permission from the court and their fathers. In 2017 UNICEF reported that 17 percent of girls in the country were married before reaching age 18 and that approximately 40,000 were married before 15. In her March report, UNSR Jahangir stated this number was likely higher, as thousands of underage marriages were not reported. The UNSR also previously cited statistics from the Tehran-based Association to Protect the Rights of Children, according to which 17 percent of all marriages in the country involved girls married to “old men.”

‘The legal age requirements for consensual sex are the same as those for marriage, as sex outside of marriage is illegal. There are no specific laws regarding child sexual exploitation, with such crimes either falling under the category of child abuse or sexual crimes of adultery. The law does not directly address sexual molestation nor provide a punishment for it.’⁵⁸

14.2.2 For more information on child abuse in Iran, see:

- [Iran Human Rights fact sheet](#)
- [Deutsche Welle](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

14.3 Child labour

14.3.1 A report published in June 2018 by Iran Human Rights Monitor stated:

‘Despite international efforts to eradicate child labor and while the world’s child labor rates have fallen by a third since 2,000, the phenomenon of child laborers has remained rife in Iran.

‘Millions of children are either sold or sent off to work by their impoverished families. Poverty imposed by the regime is driving parents to such measures in order to keep themselves above water. To repay their debts or gain meager sums of money, some poor families rent their children as young as five and less who might experience years of violence and abuse.

‘According to the Vice-President of the Association for the Protection of Children’s Rights, Tahereh Pazhuhesh, “Despite global reduction in the child labor statistics, we see child labor surge in Iran.”

‘These children work as breadwinners, losing their only opportunity of childhood as they toil along the highways and streets, amidst the smoke and commotion or in sweatshops.

‘Iranian society is all too familiar with images of child laborers. Children are frequently seen working as vendors, cleaning car windscreens, or working on farms and in factories. Most of them have dropped out of school.’⁵⁹

14.3.2 The United States Bureau of International Labor Affairs (USILAB) stated that child labour was used in the production of bricks and the weaving of carpet⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ USSD, 2018 Human Rights Report, March 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁹ IHRM, ‘Children without childhood, the grim reality of Iran child laborers’, 11 June 2018, [url](#)

⁶⁰ USILAB, ‘2018 List of goods produced by child labor or forced labor’, 20 September 2018, [url](#)

14.3.3 For more information on child labour in Iran, see:

- [National Council of Resistance of Iran](#)
- [Radio Farda](#)
- [Humanium](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

15. Civil society

15.1.1 The government restricted the operations of and did not cooperate with local or international human rights NGOs investigating alleged violations of human rights. The government restricted the work of domestic activists and often responded to their inquiries and reports with harassment, arrests, online hacking, and monitoring of individual activists and organization workplaces⁶¹.

15.1.2 Independent human rights groups and other NGOs faced continued harassment because of their activism, as well as the threat of closure by government officials following prolonged and often arbitrary delays in obtaining official registration⁶².

15.1.3 During 2018 the government prevented some human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists, and scholars from traveling abroad. Human rights activists reported intimidating telephone calls, threats of blackmail, online hacking attempts, and property damage from unidentified law enforcement and government officials. The government summoned activists repeatedly for questioning and confiscated personal belongings such as mobile phones, laptops, and passports. Government officials sometimes harassed and arrested family members of human rights activists. Courts routinely suspended sentences of convicted human rights activists, leaving open the option for authorities to arrest or imprison individuals arbitrarily at any time on the previous charges⁶³.

15.1.4 Front Line Defenders, an Irish organisation with the aim of ‘protecting human rights defenders at risk’⁶⁴, covered the treatment of human rights defenders in their [profile of Iran](#).

15.1.5 Human Rights Watch stated in their events of 2018 report:

‘While scores of human rights defenders and political activists remain behind bars for their peaceful activism, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization increased their targeting of human rights defenders and activists.

‘Since January 24 [2018], the Revolutionary Guards’ Intelligence Organization has detained Taher Ghadirian, Niloufar Bayani, Amirhossein Khaleghi, Houman Jokar, Sam Rajabi, Sepideh Kashani, Morad Tahbaz, and Abdolreza Kouhpayeh, eight environmental activists accused of using environmental projects as a cover to collect classified strategic information, without providing any evidence of wrongdoing.

⁶¹ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 5), March 2019, [url](#)

⁶² USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 5), March 2019, [url](#)

⁶³ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 5), March 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Front Line Defenders, About Us, undated, [url](#)

‘...Since June [2018], Ministry of Intelligence authorities intensified their crackdown against human rights defenders. Those arrested include prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh and her husband Reza Khandan, as well as Farhard Meysami, another human rights defender, for their peaceful activism in opposing compulsory hijab laws. The Ministry of Intelligence also arrested four other human rights lawyers, Qasem Sholehsadi, Arash Keykhosravi, Farokh Forouzan, and Payam Derafshan. On September 6, authorities released Derafshan and Forouzan on bail.

‘In the first days of September [2018], authorities also arrested Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi, two women’s rights defenders who teach workshops for women on realizing equal rights in marriage, at their homes in Tehran.’⁶⁵

- 15.1.6 An article published in September 2019 by Human Rights Watch entitled ‘Iran: Draconian sentences for rights defenders’ stated:

‘Iran’s judiciary is dramatically increasing the costs of peaceful dissent in Iran, Human Rights Watch said today. Since July 31, 2019 alone, revolutionary courts have sentenced at least 13 activists to prison sentences of more than a decade for peaceful dissent.

“Again and again, Iranian revolutionary court judges have been ensuring that anyone who dares challenge the authorities will pay a draconian price,” said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “When activists who raise issues that concern many Iranians are crushed with such harsh sentences, the judiciary’s promise of combating wrongdoing becomes a mockery of justice.”

‘In just the most recent cases, on September 7, a revolutionary court sentenced six labor rights activists to sentences ranging from 14 to 19 years. On August 27, the lawyer for a 22-year-old woman who had protested compulsory hijab announced that she had been sentenced to a total of 24 years. On July 31, a revolutionary court sentenced three other women detained for protesting compulsory hijab laws to sentenced ranging from 11 to 18 years.

‘On August 24, the lawyer for Kioomars Marzban, a satirist who has been in pretrial detention for a year, tweeted that his client has been sentenced to 23 years. Similarly over the past two weeks, a journalist and an activist arrested during a peaceful May day protest have been sentenced to more than 10 and 11 years in prison, respectively.

‘In each case, if the sentence is upheld, the person will have to serve the harshest sentence among the charges for which they have been convicted.’⁶⁶

- 15.1.7 Freedom House also reported on the [treatment of human rights activists](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch, ‘World Report 2019 – Iran’, 15 January 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁶ HRW, ‘Iran: Draconian sentences for rights defenders’, 10 September 2019, [url](#)

16. 'Double jeopardy'

- 16.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Fear of punishment for crimes committed in other countries – 'Double Jeopardy' or re-prosecution](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

17. Freedom of expression

- 17.1.1 The constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, except when words are deemed “detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public”⁶⁷.
- 17.1.2 According to the law, “anyone who engages in any type of propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran or in support of opposition groups and associations shall be sentenced to three months to one year of imprisonment”⁶⁸.
- 17.1.3 The government severely restricted freedom of speech and of the press and used the law to intimidate or prosecute persons who directly criticized the government or raised human rights problems⁶⁹.
- 17.1.4 The USSD report for 2018 also noted, ‘The government monitored meetings, movements, and communications of its citizens and often charged persons with crimes against national security and of insulting the regime, citing as evidence letters, emails, and other public and private communications. Authorities threatened arrest or punishment for the expression of ideas or images they viewed as violations of the legal moral code.’⁷⁰
- 17.1.5 Other notable points:
- Reporters Without Borders ranked Iran at 170 out of 180 countries for press freedom in 2019 and labelled it as ‘one of the most oppressive countries’⁷¹.
 - Freedom House declared Iran’s ‘press freedom status’ as ‘not free’ in 2017⁷².
 - The US State Department noted that the government banned, blocked, closed, or censored publications deemed critical of officials and also harassed, detained, abused, and prosecuted publishers, editors, and journalists, including those involved in internet-based media, for their reporting⁷³.
- 17.1.6 For further information about the situation for journalists in Iran, see:
- [Reporters Without Borders](#)
 - Section 3.70 of the [Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018 Country Information Report on Iran](#)

⁶⁷ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 2), March 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁸ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 2), March 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁹ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 2), March 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁰ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 2), March 2019, [url](#)

⁷¹ Reporters Without Borders, 2019 World Press Freedom Index, Iran, [url](#)

⁷² Freedom House, ‘Freedom of the Press 2017- Iran’, 7 November 2017, [url](#)

⁷³ USSD, 2018 Human Rights Report, March 2019, [url](#)

- Section 2(a) of the [US Department of State 2018 Human Rights Report](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

18. Freedom of movement

18.1 Entry and exit procedures

- 18.1.1 For information on entry and exit procedures, see the country policy and information note on [Iran: Illegal exit](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

18.2 Internal movement

- 18.2.1 The USSD 2018 report stated that:

‘The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights, with some exceptions, particularly concerning migrants and women.

‘... Judicial sentences sometimes included internal exile after release from prison, which prevented individuals from traveling to certain provinces. Women often required the supervision of a male guardian or chaperone to travel and faced official and societal harassment for traveling alone.’⁷⁴

- 18.2.2 The 2018 DFAT report stated:

‘Article 33 of the Constitution states that no one can be banished from their place of residence, prevented from living in the place of their choice, or compelled to reside in a given locality, except in cases provided by law. In practice, the government has placed some restrictions on internal movement. Certain groups, including registered refugees and individuals subject to security monitoring, are prevented from travelling to certain provinces without permission.

‘Iranians can and do relocate for a variety of reasons, with many rural Iranians moving to major cities in search of employment. Internal relocation is generally easier for men and family groups than for single women, who are likely to face official and societal harassment for travelling alone, particularly in rural areas. Certain groups, including Kurds, religious minorities, Baha’i, and those evading military service, are less able than other Iranians to relocate internally. The nationwide capacity of the centrally-organised state security services means that an individual facing adverse official attention is unlikely to escape this by internally relocating. However, men facing adverse attention from non-state actors may be able to escape through internal relocation, depending on individual circumstance.’⁷⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

19. Kurdish and Kurdish political groups

- 19.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Kurds and Kurdish political group](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

⁷⁴ USSD, 2018 Human Rights Report, March 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁵ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

20. Military Service

20.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Military service](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

21. Religious minorities

21.1 Atheists

21.1.1 The Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) stated the following in a compilation of Iranian COI:

‘A May 2017 country report of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, BZ) states that while atheism is forbidden in Iran, it is not uncommon for people to claim that they do not believe. It is impossible to say how many people actually consider themselves atheists. Former Muslims who have become atheists are by definition considered to be apostates and are thus at risk of persecution and, possibly, the death penalty. If it becomes known that a person is atheist, he or she may face the same societal problems as Muslim converts to Christianity i.e. expulsion and discrimination. According to sources, persons who view themselves as atheists will usually not publicly express this, which enables them to live a normal life in Iran. While the sources do not explicitly refer to theism and deism, they note that a large part of Iran’s population have a secular lifestyle, which means that they do not practice their Islamic faith, for example by not attending meetings at the mosque or refraining from fasting during Ramadan. It is noted that atheists, deists and theists (like all followers of Non Islamic faiths) have to adhere to Islamic rules of conduct.’⁷⁶

21.1.2 Amnesty International stated the following in their June 2019 report entitled ‘Iran: Failing on all fronts’:

‘Freedom of religion and belief continues to be systematically violated. The authorities impose, on people of all faiths as well as atheists, codes of conduct rooted in a strict interpretation of Shi’a Islam. The right to change or renounce religious beliefs continues to be violated, with those converting from Islam or professing atheism at risk of arbitrary detention, torture and the death penalty.’⁷⁷

21.1.3 For more information see the June 2017 query response produced by ACCORD entitled [‘Treatment of atheists by State and non-State actors’](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

21.2 Baha’i

21.2.1 For information on the Baha’i faith and its teachings, see [the website of the Baha’i community of the UK](#).

21.2.2 The USSD International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 stated that the government harass, interrogate and arrest Baha’is and place restrictions on Baha’i businesses or force them to shut down. Members of the Baha’i community face societal discrimination and harassment, and employers

⁷⁶ ACCORD, ‘Iran: COI Compilation’, July 2018, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Amnesty International, ‘Iran: Failing on all fronts’, June 2019, [url](#)

experienced social pressures not to hire Baha'is or to dismiss them from their private sector jobs. Baha'is reported there were continued incidents of destruction or vandalism of their cemeteries⁷⁸.

21.2.3 This was corroborated by the Australian DFAT which stated that:

'authorities continue to harass, interrogate and arrest Baha'i; the government uses anti-Baha'i rhetoric in official statements; employers face considerable societal pressure not to employ Baha'i or to dismiss them from private sector jobs; there have been several cases of vandalism in Baha'i cemeteries; Baha'i are unable to legally reproduce or distribute religious literature; and Baha'i families are excluded from official recognition of family law matters, including marriages, divorces and custody arrangements.'⁷⁹

21.2.4 There were at least 79 Baha'is held in Iranian prisons as of November 2018⁸⁰.

21.2.5 More information on the treatment of Baha'i can be found in the [Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation \(ACCORD\) Iranian COI compilation](#) published in July 2018.

[Back to Contents](#)

21.3 Christians and Christian converts

21.3.1 For information on Christians and Christian converts, see the country policy and information note on [Christians and Christian Converts](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

21.4 Zoroastrians

21.4.1 For information on the Zoroastrian faith and its teachings, see [The World Zoroastrian Organisation website](#).

21.4.2 The Zoroastrian religion is a recognised faith under Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution and is the oldest religious community in Iran. Most Zoroastrians live in Tehran, with smaller communities in Yazd and Kerman⁸¹. There are approximately 25,000 Zoroastrians in Iran⁸².

21.4.3 The Iranian media, senior government officials and government-affiliated religious officials have occasionally portrayed Zoroastrians as devil worshippers and polytheists. This has reportedly led to some Zoroastrians concealing their religious background, fearing harassment or discrimination⁸³.

21.4.4 More information on the treatment of Zoroastrians can be found in the [Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation \(ACCORD\) Iranian COI compilation](#) published in July 2018.

[Back to Contents](#)

⁷⁸ USSD, 'Iran - International Religious Freedom Report for 2018', 21 June 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2019 - Events of 2018', 15 January 2019, [url](#)

⁸¹ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁸² USSD, 'Iran - International Religious Freedom Report for 2018', 21 June 2019, [url](#)

⁸³ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

22. Sexual orientation and gender identity or expression

22.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Sexual orientation and gender identity or expression](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

23. Smugglers

23.1.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Smugglers](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

24. Women

24.1 Overview

24.1.1 The 2018 DFAT report stated:

‘Women face considerable barriers to their full participation in society. Women generally require the permission of a male guardian to travel alone and face considerable societal harassment for doing so, particularly in more conservative rural areas. Married women require the permission of their husbands to leave the country. Under Article 1117 of the Civil Code, a husband may prevent his wife from working in occupations deemed incompatible with family interests, or the dignity of himself or his wife. While Iranian women have gained greater rights to divorce in recent years, Article 1133 of the Civil Code continues to dictate that men can divorce at will but women cannot. While men are permitted to marry up to two permanent wives in polygamous marriages and an unlimited number in ‘temporary’ marriages, women are unable to do so. If a wife refuses to obey her husband without a ‘reasonable excuse’, she can lose certain rights, including the right to maintenance and spousal support.’⁸⁴

24.1.2 The USSD International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 stated:

‘The government continued to require women of all religious groups to adhere to “Islamic dress” standards in public, including covering their hair and fully covering their bodies in loose clothing – a manteau (overcoat) and a hijab (headscarf) or, alternatively, a chador (full body length semicircle of fabric worn over both the head and clothes). Although the government at times eased enforcement of rules for such dress, it also punished “un-Islamic dress” with arrests, lashings, fines, and dismissal from employment.’⁸⁵

24.1.3 For more information see:

- [USSD 2018 Human Rights Report \(section 6\)](#)
- [DFAT 2018 report \(section 3.78 – section 3.89\)](#)
- [ACCORD July 2018 COI Compilation \(section 6.5\)](#)
- [Human Rights Watch – Events of 2018](#)
- [Amnesty International 2017/2018 Report](#)
- [Freedom House – Freedom in the World 2019 - Iran](#)

⁸⁴ Australian DFAT, Country Information Report Iran, 7 June 2018, [url](#)

⁸⁵ USSD, ‘Iran - International Religious Freedom Report for 2018’, 21 June 2019, [url](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

24.2 Honour crimes against women

- 24.2.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Honour crimes against women](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

24.3 Forced marriage

- 24.3.1 See the country policy and information note on [Iran: Forced marriages](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

24.4 Domestic abuse

- 24.4.1 The law does not prohibit domestic violence. Authorities considered abuse in the family a private matter and seldom discussed it publicly⁸⁶.
- 24.4.2 A study presented at the nongovernmental Imam Ali Foundation's May 2017 conference in Tehran on violence against women in the country found that 32% of women in urban areas and 63% in rural areas had been victims of domestic violence⁸⁷.
- 24.4.3 Amnesty International noted in their annual report for 2017/18 that: 'Acts of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence...[were] committed with impunity.'⁸⁸
- 24.4.4 In August 2014, the UN General Assembly stated that 'inadequate social service provisions challenge the State's ability to provide safety and redress for [domestic violence] victims.'⁸⁹
- 24.4.5 Claims of domestic violence, even when proven, are not often adequately punished. The sentence tends to be a fine unless the offence committed is found to have disrupted public order and caused social insecurity in which case a prison sentence of two to five years may be imposed (article 614 of the Islamic Penal Code). Judicial authorities rarely make such factual findings considering that they expect women to reconcile with their husbands and accept violence as an "incidental" fact of family life.⁹⁰
- 24.4.6 The 2018 DFAT report noted: 'While state and NGO shelters for abused women exist, they are only in major cities, are poorly resourced and advertised, and tend to focus on reconciling women with their abusive husbands.'⁹¹
- 24.4.7 For more information see:
- [February 2018 Danish Immigration Service and Danish Refugee Council Report](#)
 - [Center for Human Rights in Iran](#)

⁸⁶ USSD, 2018 human rights report (section 6), March 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁷ CHRI, 'Official opposes new proposal against domestic violence', 28 August 2017

⁸⁸ Amnesty International, 'Iran 2017/2018', February 2018, [url](#)

⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, 'Situation of human rights in Iran' (para 18), 27 August 2014, [url](#)

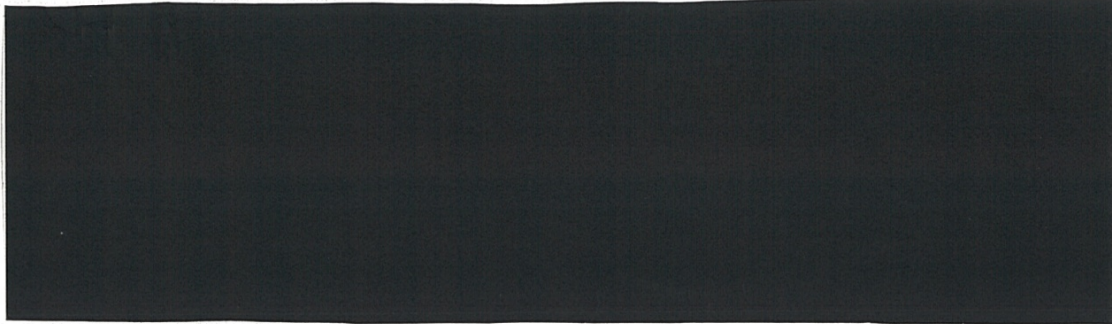
⁹⁰ WLUM, 'IRAN: Gender Discrimination at Its Worst', October-November 2014, Available on request

⁹¹ DFAT report, Iran, June 2018 (p. 33), [url](#)

- [DFAT 2018 report \(section 3.80 – 3.81\)](#)
- [Open Democracy](#)
- [Omid Foundation](#)
- [Iranian Red Crescent Medical Journal](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

Annex A: Legal expert report



UK Visas & Immigration
C/O British Embassy, Tehran
Ferdowsi Street, Tehran 11

Tehran 31 March 2017

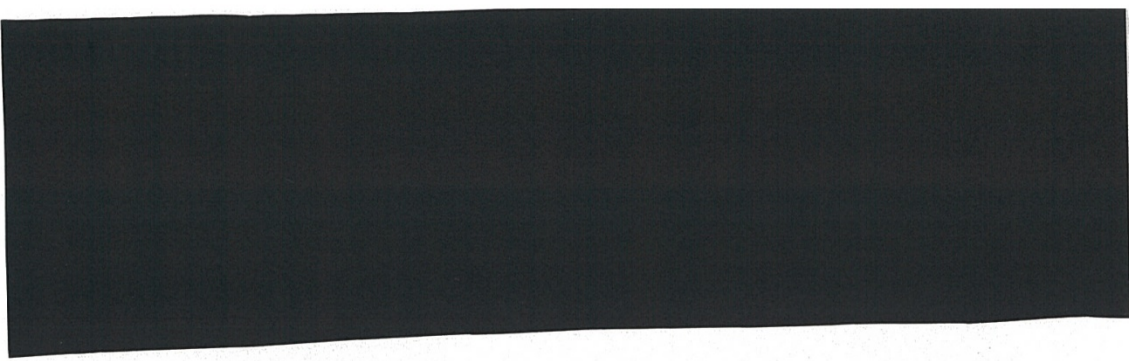
Dear Sirs ,

Pursuant to your instructions contained in your mail of 19.002.2017 followed by hand-delivered hard copy received at my office and the ensuing exchanges of mail with [REDACTED] regarding widespread availability of fraudulent documentation in Iran (including outside court rooms), please be apprised as follows:

Indeed, the frequency of forgery and producing (i.e. use or abuse of fraudulent papers) fraudulent documents in general (although two different counts under the Iranian penal law) is high in Iran either because the penalty is not adequately intimidating or the gains are rewarding enough to justify the enterprise and the risks associated with it. In reality, many people easily get off the hook in total or quasi-impunity so much so that the general temptation could be that forgery pays off. Hence the willingness and temptation are extremely high in Iran especially after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the eight-year war with Iraq that followed it and the socio-economic dislocation that the two events entailed.

The crime of forgery encapsulates a wide spectrum of documents in wide use as well as different motivations. While for some forgers (or ordering parties of counterfeit documents), presentation of their "customized" document is a matter of life and death and they are desperate to get through one way or the other with the forged document (such as the case of high profile football players who had engaged, like many other draft dodgers, in fraud to evade compulsory public conscription and whose case was highlighted in the press and social media some two or three years ago or poorly-remunerated civil servants or other employees who seek at all cost to produce a higher educational certificate to get a pay rise and win better chances of promotion and advancement in the organization), many others are eager to take the risk to be able to show off or "improve" their social standing by just showing off through relying on a higher educational diploma. That is the case with many politicians and industrialists the most notorious of which was the case of the ex-minister of the interior and IRGC high-ranking officer Ali KORDAN (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Kordan) that led to introduction of the word "Kordanize" (cf. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Kordanize>) and its coined derivatives such as kordan kordanification kordanophobia kordanism kordanic kordanicly.... after he released a counterfeit honorary doctorate from no less than University of Oxford which was found replete with misspellings, typing errors and had a garbled English believed to be unimaginable to have been drafted by any even unsophisticated native English speaker, let alone be undersigned by three renowned chairs of law at such a prestigious establishment.

Cases like the above are over-abundant and the foregoing was just tip of the iceberg specially when the counterfeit document is intended to be released to an audience outside Iran (such as immigration authorities) as the forger or the party standing to benefit from its release (rightly) believes that there is a greater chance of success and a reduced risk of any legal hassle. Thus, in the Iranian press, you can find everyday stories of organized gangs or one-man forgery enterprises having been dismantled and brought to trial or people found to have been practicing as a family doctor or even a specialist or as a barrister or solicitor specially in small towns and villages but also large cities for years with subsequent discovery that they just had a secondary education diploma or even less than that or still forgers (using state-of-the-art technology such as sophisticated scanners and laser color printers or latest versions



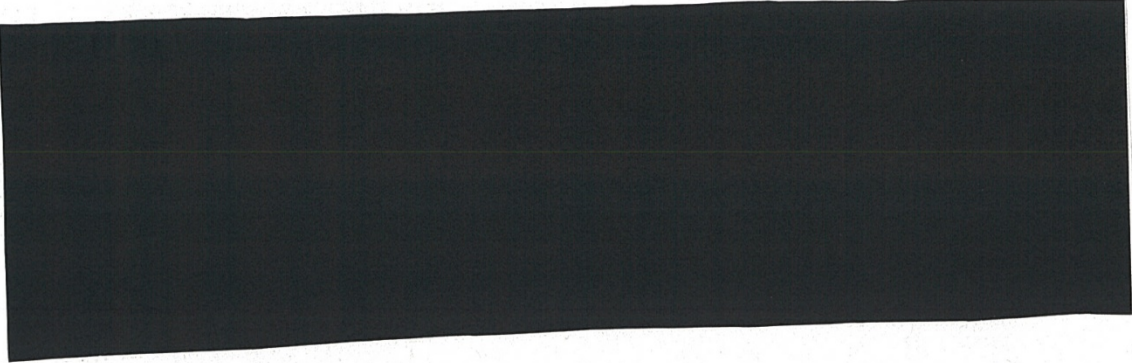
of such software s as Photoshop or Corel Draw) having succeeded in selling off other people's properties by releasing a counterfeit title deed or a tampered power of attorney from the owner of record by profiting from his residence outside Iran or his staying away from the locality (Cf. inter alia articles appearing on page 3 of Etellaat morning daily ,issue dated 01.10.1394 or 22.12.2015 quoting deputy minister of education acknowledging that his organization had to face organized forgery of educational certificates or still article published ibid i.e. in Etellaat newspaper, issue dated 10.09.1394 corresponding to 01.12.2015 on page 13 quoting General Mohammadi , Head of Tehran Criminal Investigation Police ,disclosing widespread release of counterfeit medical prescriptions by phony doctors)

While the law deals with forgery under Art. 745 et seq. of the Islamic Penal Code of 2013, penalizing forgery and use of a forged documents as two separate counts and applying aggravated circumstances when the forger is working for a state institution, the penalty is believed to be far from dissuasive while the statute of limitations (time bar that is not applicable for *hodoood* or *qisas* crimes), commuting of penalty, conditional release , pardons and amnesties (on a number of grounds such as national or religious occasions) not to speak of even suspended jail terms (in the new law in departure from the previous penal code) or replacing the sentence with alternative punishments if the perpetrator is a first offender and not a habitual criminal or still postponement of entry of a judgement not to speak of overpopulation of prisons with the resulting clear instructions to judges to minimize jail sentences ... concur all to neutralize and corrode any deterrent effect that the penalties laid down under those law articles might otherwise have or exercise.

Of course the state has come up with some palliative measures to fight off and remedy effects of such widespread forgery through, inter alia, introduction of security holograms and labels, use of more efficient watermark papers or showing a growing tendency to generalize use of smart ID cards or security token, cryptographic keys, digital signatures (at notaries public or registries such as company registry), embossed or studded seals, biometric data such as fingerprint details, tamper resistant material in title deeds and some educational certificates etc..

Alongside these security devices and running parallel to them, there is a whole panoply of double checking and verification measures taken by the public or private institution which serve as recipients or envisioned recipients of documents. Thus, universities recheck directly with Education Boards to see whether high school diplomas and other credentials produced by newly enrolled students are authentic; notaries public check online (through an intranet directly linking them to Land Registry Organization) title deeds released by vendors before proceeding to recording of closing of title; employers in both public and private sectors correspond directly with Public Conscription Organization for confirmation of authenticity of military service discharge or exemption or call up deferment documents produced to them (as employing people with military service liability is penalized)Even court clerks recheck personal details of barristers at the web site of the bar association to ensure that they are dealing with truly licensed attorneys.

Back to the main theme of our report i.e. purported court documents released specially outside Iran and as pointed out above as historical background to the emergence or unprecedented expansion of forgery industry , the 1979 revolution and the protracted armed conflict that erupted with Iraq almost immediately (in an interval of less than two years right after) brought above drastic social upheavals top among which was a redistribution of wealth (at the



expense of the middle classes and further pauperization of the lower social classes and, in short, wage earners including civil servants and to the benefit of bazar merchants or even more modest shopkeepers and other self-employed). This phenomenon coupled with the cultural cleavage and rift that drove away and alienated the elite but also wide segments of Iranian population unhappy with "islamization" (or perceived and presented as such) of the whole life, brought many of them to explore and espouse the idea of emigration and definite settlement outside Iran. And not all of such prospective or would be emigrants were skilled or rich enough to be greeted and welcomed in such host nations as USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or could otherwise qualify for facilities offered by such states to minorities through such organizations dedicated to refugees as HIAS, UNHCR or friendly association of certain religious or ethnic minorities.

This gave rise to or seriously whipped up demands for counterfeit documents likely to be invoked or relied upon to justify application for protection and shelter outside Iran by those groups of either genuinely disgruntled or economically hard pressed segments seeking better life for themselves and desperate to ensure less gloomy prospects to their children overseas which demands were initially met by those "nouveaux pauvres" among the civil servants driven to despair and unable to make both ends meet at the end of the month. Thus, it was from inside the courtrooms or the office of court clerks that the first blank court ruling stationery, arrest warrants, interrogation forms... were smuggled out to be then filled in and tailored to specific needs of ultimate beneficiaries and this outside the court room by professional forgers or by the emigration applicants themselves. However, by and by, professional forgers felt that they had a sufficient number of copied blanc material in their arsenal to dispense with court room insider collaborators or accomplices and to rely on their own "expertise". At the same time, internal surveillance and checking apparatus within the judiciary was showing growing awareness in reaction to such complicity and was determined to crack down on such leaks and practices.

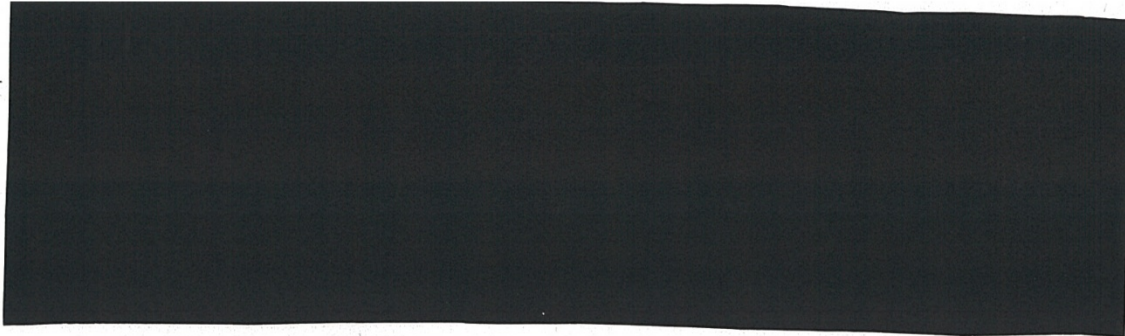
This growing tendency to "self-sufficiency" of forgers was helped by the introduction of computers in the 1990s or thereabouts (with the precise date depending on the location of the courts involved with larger cities preceding small towns in the move towards computerization) and the old typewriter written judgments and writs were gradually scrapped and shelved. Generalization of personal computers and, specifically, introduction of certain software such as Photoshop allowed greater degree of flexibility to cope with increasing demands and also room to display their fraud expertise and modus operandi. Regarding Iranian successive waves (in reaction to the socio-economic conjuncture back at home in Iran) of protection emigration, one should say that the first countries falling victim of such fraudulent documents were those of Scandinavia (basically Sweden but also Denmark and, to a smaller scale, Norway) where the social welfare program and proliferation of refugee associations or holding themselves out as such were found attractive and also of great help by many Iranian candidates for emigration. However with these Scandinavian states reception and accommodation capacities running by and by over-stretched beyond their reasonable capacity and as a result of emergence of xenophobic or openly racist organization in these Scandinavian states, some also left for countries farther to the south in West and Central Europe (France, the Netherlands basically but also Germany and Austria in Central Europe). Thus, people speaking not a word of Kurdish or Arabic or perfectly heterosexual or entertaining no extramarital affairs in Iran were able to accede to the status of refugees (and for some even nationality of the host country through marriage or otherwise) by claiming affiliation with ethnic minorities or seeking protection as LGBT or claiming death threats purportedly received from a cheated husband or an over-zealous father or brother of their mistress due to an extramarital affair. The same holds true regarding affiliation with Baha'i religion (not enjoying recognition in the Constitution and indeed deprived of many civic rights) without the asylum authority bothering to seek authenticity of their affiliation or claims of being militants or activists of certain banned and outlawed organizations while, in reality, they could be at best qualified as mere sympathizers with no exposure to any risk whatsoever arising from such sympathies. However, they were able to apply successfully for refugee status by posting their photos or names on dubious bespoke weblogs or in other social media and thus put the immigration and

asylum authority before the fait accompli by claiming irreversibility of such public announcements and tweets while many of them did not (or still do not) have the required political awareness or consciousness and could be at best characterized , to use a defunct Marxism terminology, as *lumpenproletariat*..

At the same time, while existence of genuine asylum seekers applying bona fides for refugees status and genuinely seeking protection from persecution cannot be denied (such as religious minorities not recognized in the constitutions and of course genuine LGBTs) ,there are persistent allegations (not independently checked or verified) and all sorts of wild rumors and reports in the Iranian pro-governmental press claiming to be based on confessions made by the asylum seekers that there are paid "clinics" or bespoke surgeries (reportedly in South-East Turkey) where applicants for asylum status in Europe are put under localized or general anesthesia before wounds are inflicted on them to develop ecchymosis , hematoma and cicatrices in support of claims of undergoing torture in Iran or other Near Eastern countries.

Coming to your question regarding Ministry of Justice, please note that it has purely administrative functions (such as allocation of budget) and has nothing to do with administration of justice which is left to the care of the judiciary whose head, as head of one of the three separate powers (Cf. Art. 57 of the Iranian Constitution) , is appointed by the supreme leader of Iran while minister of justice is named by the head of state (president). Accordingly, apart from two or three websites catering to the whole nation for service of process and filing online petitions and complaints as well as for information and updating of lawyers and public at large who are in possession of the indispensable user name and password to log in (cf. <http://sakha3.adliran.ir/> or <http://sana.adliran.ir/>), there are no websites covering nationwide the whole justice apparatus in Iran.. In other words, each judicial complex or district has its own databank or database accessible only to judges and court clerks within that particular judicial complex or ,in some cases, district. Thus, there is (so far at least) no central nationwide database for civil cases while penal records database (on the basis of which police clearance certificates are released) is only accessible to prosecutors, police and other authorities within the security and intelligence apparatuses.

Regarding uniformity of security features contained within court documents in Iran, please note that Iran is a unitary state and not a federal one. This implies absolutely no departure from centrally approved procedures (also forms and templates) and substance (corpus juris to discuss merits of the case) at the initiative of individual judges or districts and, perhaps, to the detriment and prejudice of individual innovation as the practice predicates a monotonousness which best characterizes it in a marked and sharp difference from common law states, uniformity: same Persian word-processing software used by courts all over Iran, same font, same page setup, same margins and borders, same brightness of the paper used to print out court rulings, layout and the whole material presentation inclusive of the various parts (introduction and preamble, main body, closing paragraphs), file processing and identification (allocation of a 16-digit unique code whose first two digits correspond to the Iranian law in which the case is filed by a private party or is opened by public prosecutor's office such as 96 followed by 14 other digits in reference to cases opened or filed in the current Iranian year of 1396 which corresponds to the period running from 21.03.2017 to 20.03.2018; it is noteworthy that before computerization, case numbers featured or were composed of a combination of 3 elements separated by a slash (/) or a hyphen (-) and representing ,respectively, relevant Iranian year, court bench or chamber number and the case number proper) as well as other minute details (original ruling only to be signed by the judge with the true copies , certified by the court clerk, sent out in duplicate for service of process on each litigant in a given adjudication . Again ,the process server collects signature of the served party only on one counterpart (which is then sent back to court and kept on file as proof or record of service) while the process-server himself signs and dates the other counterpart (date as of which statutory deadlines for appeal, payment of costs... run) which he hands over to the served party or close relatives as detailed out under the Iranian Civil Procedure Code on service of process. Thus, no



counterpart produced by an asylum applicant can bear his own signature (that counterpart should have gone to court) while no counterpart released by an applicant can omit signature of the process server or his mention of the date of service .It is noteworthy that the same identification code system (16-digit numbers) also applies to all other process including arrest warrants, summons (citations), interim /interlocutory writs...

Thus, in a nutshell, there are no bespoke or customized rules for any municipality or jurisdiction and uniformity is the golden rule that prevails. As to clues and other distinctive details which allow you to tell an authentic document from a counterfeit, I should say that you somehow acquire such experience and experience over and through years of practice. Nonetheless, in addition to the aforesaid material presentation, minute details and procedural rules associated with summoning and service of process, it is basically the garbled and stilted language , poor legal reasoning, wrong article numbers ,over harsh punishments (exceeding even what has been provided for in the law book), lack of coherence and consistency, wrong jurisdiction (specially undue reference to revolutionary courts to dramatize the case whereas they are competent only for matters dealing with state security and drugs and not apostasy ,gambling, marital infidelity, sodomy or, in general, solicitation or actual penetrative sex by gays and lesbians, taking liquor or attending "promiscuous" social events and entertainments which are the main reasons cited in support of asylum applications and all of which fall within the scope of competence of ordinary penal courts or even detection of such silly mistakes as wrong shape of seals (ink stamps) or wrong emplacement for signature or still wrong names of judges or article number or producing a court document date of which coincides with a bank holiday in Iran and impossible for a court to hold its session. There is also usually misspelling specially in regards to legal terminology and boilerplate legalese expression all the more so as they are basically loan words from Arabic (which is the language of the Koran and the Sharia) and which a non-legally literate or poorly literate Iranian is prone to misspell to the same degree and extent that an ordinary British subject or American citizen may misspell legal jargon borrowed from Latin or Greek.

The foregoing was what the undersigned , freshly back from an overseas visit ,could immediately recollect within time constraints (on a remaining last day Iranian new year second batch of protracted public holiday and in the run up to resumption of business on Mon.) as pertinent to elaborate or expound on or in relation with the scope defined in the instructions. Please do feel free (and you will be more than welcome) to get back to me for any additional information or eventual clarification so as to dispel any ambiguity that you may find in my drafting. Thank you.



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[Back to Contents](#)

Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **6.0**
- valid from **15 November 2019**

Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information.

[Back to Contents](#)