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Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Iran: Honour crimes against women

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Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country information

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

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 make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. 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. IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration,

5th Floor, Globe House, 89 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1PN.

Email: chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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Policy guidance

Updated: 17 October 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm because the woman is at risk of being subject to an 'honour' crime.

1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 For the purposes of this guidance an 'honour' crime is violence committed by those who aim to protect the reputation of their family or wider tribe and community.
- 1.2.2 Although 'honour' crimes may be perpetrated against both men and women, this note is confined to 'honour' crimes against women.

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 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](#)).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Particular social group

- 2.2.1 Women in Iran form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because they share a common characteristic that cannot be changed and have a distinct identity which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.2.2 Although women in Iran form a PSG, this does not mean that establishing such membership will be sufficient to make out a case to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case will be whether the particular person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.2.3 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and [Gender issues in the asylum claim](#).

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2.3 Assessment of risk

- 2.3.1 There are no reliable statistics on the prevalence of 'honour' crimes in Iran and whilst they take place in all kinds of families from different social classes and educational backgrounds, it is more likely to occur in the outermost provinces, among Iran's ethnic minorities living near the border areas and amongst uneducated people. The likelihood of 'honour' killings decreases with education, urbanisation and access to society's services and is likely to be a rare occurrence among Persian Iranians (see [Prevalence of honour crimes](#)).
- 2.3.2 The victims of 'honour' crimes are most likely to be married women who are suspected of adultery, but girls who are suspected of having relations with any males who are not relatives can also be targeted. The nature of 'honour' killings reportedly vary but families sometimes hire outsiders to run over girls who they consider need to be killed for damaging the family's honour. Some evidence also suggests that girls are sometimes pressured into committing suicide so that no one would be punished for their deaths with a high number of female suicides by self-immolation being reported (see [Prevalence of honour crimes](#) and [Societal attitudes](#)).
- 2.3.3 The onus is on the person to substantiate a claim that they would be a risk of being a victim of an honour crime on return to Iran.
- 2.3.4 For further information and guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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2.4 Protection

- 2.4.1 The Islamic Penal Code (IPC) does not criminalise 'honour' crimes. 'Honour' killings can however be prosecuted under the IPC as murder, but in line with Islamic principles, there are possible legal mitigation - the IPC reduces the punitive measures for fathers and other family members that murder or physically harm children in honour killings. The IPC also provides a defence where a man kills his wife if he catches her committing zina (adultery) (see [Legal position](#) and [Protection](#)).
- 2.4.2 Where the authorities have tried to stop 'honour' crimes by sentencing the perpetrators to long prison terms, new strategies quickly evolve to circumvent punishments with families finding different ways to murder women accused of damaging a family's honour. In 'honour' killing, it is extremely unlikely for the head of the victim's family to demand punishment. Perpetrators therefore frequently serve a short prison sentence or may avoid punishment altogether (see [Avenues of redress](#)).
- 2.4.3 Decision makers must assess whether effective protection is available in relation to the particular circumstances and profile of the person. Any past persecution and past lack of effective protection may indicate that effective protection would not be available in the future. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they would be unable to access effective protection.
- 2.4.4 See also the country policy and information note on [Iran: Background Information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

- 2.4.5 For further information and guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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2.5 Internal relocation

- 2.5.1 Decision makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation on a case-by-case basis taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person.
- 2.5.2 Women can face difficulties in Iran travelling alone and can face official and societal discrimination when doing so in rural areas. Men are able to restrict their wives movements outside of the home and women are required to seek permission from their spouse before applying for a passport or travelling abroad. Reports also suggest that men are able to stop their wives from travelling even if they have previously given their consent.
- 2.5.3 Internal relocation is likely to be unreasonable for many women but may be viable depending on the individual facts of the case. The onus would be on the person to show that they are unable to internally relocate.
- 2.5.4 See also the country policy and information note on [Iran: Background information, including actors of protection and, internal relocation](#).
- 2.5.5 For further information and guidance on internal relocation and the factors to be considered, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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2.6 Certification

- 2.7.1 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.
- 2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 'Honour' crimes are more likely to occur in the outermost provinces and among Iran's ethnic minorities living near the border areas, although there are no reliable statistics.
- 3.1.2 'Honour' crimes can be prosecuted under the Islamic Penal Code (IPC) as murder, but in line with Islamic principles, there are possible legal justifications which reduce their severity or in some cases result in no punishment.
- 3.1.3 Effective state protection is unlikely to be available for women at risk of an honour killing/crime. However, each case needs to be carefully considered on its facts and the onus is on the person to show that they would be a risk of an 'honour' crime on return to Iran.

- 3.1.4 Internal relocation is likely to be unreasonable for many women in Iran. However, each case needs to be carefully considered on its facts with regard to the availability of state support, employment and family members or friends in other parts of the country.
- 3.1.5 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'.

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Country information

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4. Definition of honour crime

- 4.1.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015 citing various sources stated that:

'Both women and men are vulnerable to honour-related violence in Iran. An honour killing is a murder committed or ordered by a husband, a father, a brother or another relative as a punishment to a family member who is seen to have damaged the family's reputation by their actions. Such actions can include extramarital sex, refusal to an arranged marriage, choosing one's own spouse without the family's approval, becoming a victim of rape, homosexual acts or excessively liberal behaviour and dress. In the most extreme cases, even a suspicion of such actions is enough. Due to cultural reasons, women and girls are the mostly likely victims of honour killings.'¹

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5. Prevalence of honour crimes

- 5.1.1 The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) report on 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women' dated 8 March 2013 stated that 'Due to the clandestine nature of such practices, a lack of government reporting and other factors, there are no precise statistics about the rate of honor killings in Iran.'²

- 5.1.2 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015 citing various sources stated that:

'Honour killings are an established phenomenon in many of Iran's outermost provinces, while they are less common in cities. According to Bakhtiarnezhad's survey [a field survey carried out in Iran concerning honour by anthropologist Parvin Bakhtiarnezhad in 2009-2010 in communities where there had been murders of girls and women], honour killings are most common among nomads and uneducated people. The victims are most likely to be married women who are suspected of adultery, but young girls who are suspected of having relations with boys can also be targeted.

¹ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltairan_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

² Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', 8 March 2013 <http://iranhrdc.org/english/publications/legal-commentary/1000000261-gender-inequality-and-discrimination-the-case-of-iranian-women.html#16>. Accessed: 7 June 2017.

‘No comprehensive statistics are available on the subject, but Iran’s criminal police occasionally publish information about cases and the number of honour killings known to the police.

‘According to police statistics, a total of 340 honour killings in which the victims were women took place in Iran between March 2011 and March 2012. Most of the murders were committed in Kurdistan and Khuzestan. As many as 40% of all murders in Khuzestan are believed to be honour-related.

According to police statistics, there are 2 500 murders in Iran per year. Men account for approximately two thirds of all murder victims. A total of 15-18% of the murders known to the police are honour-related. Moreover, approximately one in three murders is committed by a member of the victim’s family or a relative. Of these, approximately one in five is a case in which one married partner, usually the husband, murders the other. As many as 62% of murders in which the victim is female are committed by a member of the victim’s family or a relative, which is strongly suggestive of these cases being honour killings. Honour killings take place in all kinds of families from different social classes and educational backgrounds.

‘Honour killings most commonly take place among the ethnic minorities living near Iran’s borders (Kurds, Lori, Arabs, Baloch and Turkish-speaking communities), whose social practices are more conservative than those of the mainstream Persian population. Honour killings are especially common in areas where state infrastructure is scarce and tribal traditions strong. The likelihood of honour killings decreases with education, urbanisation and access to society’s services.’³

- 5.1.3 The Australian Government’s Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT) ‘Country Report for 2016’ (‘the 2016 DFAT Report’) stated that:

‘DFAT is not aware of reliable statistics concerning honour killings, but assesses as credible claims that the practice exists among a number of tribal minorities. The practice is most prevalent in the provinces of Khuzestan and Ilam, and among tribal peoples such as the Kurdish, Lur, Arab, Baluch and Turkish-speaking tribes. Honour killings are likely to be a rare occurrence among Persian Iranians.’⁴

- 5.1.4 The 2017 US State Department’s report, covering events in 2016 (‘the 2017 USSD report’) stated that: ‘There were no official reports of killings motivated by “honor” or other harmful traditional practices during the year [2016], although human rights activists reported that such killings continued to occur, particularly among rural and tribal populations.’⁵

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³ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, ‘Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran’, 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltain_finaFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

⁴ Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Country Report for 2016’ (section 4.2), 21 April 2016, available on demand. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

⁵ US Department of State, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016’ (section 6), 7 March 2017, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265496>. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

6. Legal position

6.1 Legislation

- 6.1.1 There is no legislation which prohibits honour crimes and/or honour killings but they can be prosecuted under the Penal Code.
- 6.1.2 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015 citing various sources stated that:

'Articles 299 and 630 of the Iranian Penal Code protect perpetrators of honour killings. Pursuant to Article 299, the qisas punishment that normally follows from a murder, which can be as severe as execution, does not apply to a father or a paternal grandfather who kills his own child. Article 630 gives a man the right to kill his adulterous wife and her lover if he catches them in the act. Although a man has a legal right to kill his wife and lover if he catches them in the act of adultery, cases in which the provision is applied in practice are rare. According to Sharia law, the man would need to have four witnesses to the act, which is almost impossible to achieve in practice.'⁶

- 6.1.3 The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) report on 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women' dated 8 March 2013 stated that the practice of honour killing is: '[...] primarily caused by different cultural and social factors and while Iranian laws fall short of calling for the outright implementation of honor killing, they are nonetheless remiss in not prescribing a harsh punishment for the practice.'⁷

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6.2 Implementation of the law

- 6.2.1 The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) report on 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women' dated 8 March 2013 stated that:

'Article 630 of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code (IPC) contains provisions on the husband's right to commit killings, assault and battery in cases where his wife has committed zina[adultery]: "When a man sees his wife committing zina with another man, provided that he is certain that his wife is willing [to have sex], he can kill both of them in the same position; however if he knows that his wife acts under coercion, he may only kill the man [i.e. her rapist]. The same rule applies to assault and battery."⁸

⁶ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalan_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

⁷ Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', 8 March 2013 <http://iranhrdc.org/english/publications/legal-commentary/1000000261-gender-inequality-and-discrimination-the-case-of-iranian-women.html#16>. Accessed: 7 June 2017.

⁸ Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', 8 March 2013 <http://iranhrdc.org/english/publications/legal-commentary/1000000261-gender-inequality-and-discrimination-the-case-of-iranian-women.html#16>. Accessed: 31

- 6.2.2 Amnesty International noted in its report published in March 2015: 'Under the Penal Code, men who assault or even kill their wives are excluded from the punishments ordinarily applied to such [honour] crimes (Article 630). Fathers or paternal grandfathers who kill their children or grandchildren are not subject to proportional punishments (Article 301), which may exacerbate the risk of "honour crimes" against girls and women.'⁹
- 6.2.3 The UN Human Rights Council published a 'Written statement submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status' dated 25 May 2015 in which they stated that:
 'Articles 301 and 302 of the new Islamic penal code have facilitated honour killings. Iran's penal code based on Ghisas (retribution) leaves the punishment to a family member who is either the culprit himself or a close family member. In case of a wife killing, the husband pays half of Diyeh (blood money) to the wife's family to seek their pardon.'¹⁰
- 6.2.4 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015 citing various sources stated that:
 'The fact that Iranian culture encourages honour killings nevertheless contributes more to honour killings than legislation. Experiences from Khuzestan show that when the authorities tried to weed out the tradition by sentencing perpetrators to long prison terms, a new strategy quickly evolved to circumvent punishments: families began to hire outsiders to run over girls who needed to be murdered for damaging the family's honour, which left them with just small fines to pay. Tribes in Khuzestan even have shared kitties for paying blood money. Based on the interviews conducted by Bakhtiarnejad, perpetrators of honour killings in Khuzestan in particular know the law and the potential repercussions well. Perpetrators get a prison sentence of ten years at most or possibly just one or two years and are celebrated as heroes after their release. The local community gives strong support to perpetrators, and whole neighbourhoods can join forces to prevent the police from arresting the guilty parties.'
 'Islamic law includes a principle called qisas, which gives private individuals the right to demand retaliation in kind for a murder or deliberate bodily injury. The principle is prone to creating a culture of impunity in situations in which the perpetrator and the victim are from the same family. In honour killing and domestic violence cases, it is extremely unlikely for the head of the family to demand punishment. Perpetrators therefore frequently get away with a short prison sentence or may avoid punishment altogether if the head of the family forgives the act. The qisas principle does not apply if a father or a grandfather kills his own child or grandchild. In these cases, a judge will

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⁹ Amnesty International, 'You shall procreate- Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran', March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/1111/2015/en/>. Accessed: 31 May 2017.

¹⁰ UN Human Rights Council, 'Written statement* submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status', 25 May 2015, http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1435222728_g1511999.pdf. Accessed: 6 June 2017.

impose a prison sentence of between three and ten years. However, there have also been reports of cases in which a father has spent just six months in prison after killing his daughter due to the latter's marriage intentions.¹¹

6.2.5 The 2016 DFAT Report stated that:

'Iranian authorities are unlikely to actively combat honour killings. While these can be prosecuted under the Penal Code as murder, but in line with Islamic principles, there are possible legal justifications. For example, Article 630 of the revised Penal Code retains the legal justification for a husband to kill his wife and her lover if they are caught in flagrante. The revised Penal Code also adds a paragraph to Article 300 which stresses the exemption of husband from qisas (retaliation) in cases where he kills his wife and her lover in flagrante.'¹²

'[...] a father can only be sentenced to three to ten years' imprisonment for killing his child. According to the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, in practice this gives fathers legal immunity if they kill their children and opens the door to more honour killings without any effective and deterrent punishment. In cases where another family member kills a girl or woman in the family, Islamic Shari'a gives the victim's next of kin (awliya-al-dam) the right to determine whether the condemned should be sentenced to death or be forgiven.'

'NGOs have claimed that those who conduct honour killings in Iran are usually supported by the family of the victims, and often receive short sentences.'¹³

6.2.6 The 2017 US State Department (USSD) human rights report covering events in 2016 stated that:

'The penal code reduces punitive measures for fathers and other family members who murder or physically harm children in domestic violence or "honor killings." Under the law the principal of "qisas" (punishment in kind) does not apply to murders within the family committed by the father. If a man is found guilty of murdering his daughter, the punishment is between three and 10 years in prison rather than the normal death sentence or payment of "diyah" for homicide cases.'¹⁴

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¹¹ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalan_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

¹² Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Country Report for 2016' (section 4.3), 21 April 2016, available on demand. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

¹³ Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Country Report for 2016' (section 4.4 & 4.5), 21 April 2016, available on demand. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

¹⁴ US Department of State, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016' (section 6), 7 March 2017, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265496>. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

7. Societal attitudes

- 7.1.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015, based on a range of sources, stated that:

'Honour killings are an established phenomenon in many of Iran's outermost provinces, while they are less common in cities.'

'Honour killings most commonly take place among the ethnic minorities living near Iran's borders (Kurds, Lori, Arabs, Baloch and Turkish-speaking communities), whose social practices are more conservative than those of the mainstream Persian population. Honour killings are especially common in areas where state infrastructure is scarce and tribal traditions strong. The likelihood of honour killings decreases with education, urbanisation and access to society's services.'

'Women are also sometimes pressured into committing suicide so that no one will be punished for their deaths. More than half of the honour killings of women that came to the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women were made to look like suicides by self-immolation. According to the Ebtekar newspaper, suicides committed by women are especially common in certain areas where forced marriages and repression of women's rights are wide-spread. For example, a high number of female suicides by self-immolation have been reported in Ilam in the last decade, many of which, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, were linked to lack of shelters and legal protection for female victims of violence, difficulty in obtaining a divorce, child custody laws that favour the father and pervasive gender discrimination throughout society.'¹⁵

- 7.1.2 The UN Human Rights Council published a 'Written statement submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status' dated 25 May 2015 in which they stated that:

'Honour killing is not an act of violence by one man against a woman. It is a set of male-dominated system which demonstrates itself in forced marriages, early marriages, female virginity, female genital mutilation, acid attack, deprivation from education, all of which systematise social relations between men and women. The killing of a woman is related to the man's honour to sustain the system of male domination.

'Men's social status is diminished among their tribe, village, and hometown and within the family if such code of honour is broken by a female family member. Often those who kill a family member admit pressures by the society they live in plays an important role.'¹⁶

¹⁵ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalan_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 23 May 2017.

¹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, 'Written statement* submitted by the Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status', 25 May 2015, http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1435222728_g1511999.pdf. Accessed: 6 June 2017.

8. Availability of state protection against ‘honour’ crimes

- 8.1.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on ‘Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran’ dated 26 June 2015, based on a range of sources, stated that:

‘The Constitution of Iran guarantees all citizens the right to seek justice and to receive legal aid and advice. However, cultural factors often form barriers to women’s opportunities to seek and get justice. As Iran’s legislation is based on Islamic criteria that discriminate against women, men rule the justice system. Studies on the subject reveal that women have a negative attitude towards the justice system and their opportunities of getting justice through the system. Taking domestic violence cases to court is seen as shameful, which is why only few cases ever go that far. The formal justice system is therefore not enough of a guarantee of an individual’s rights, taking into account the underlying customs and sociocultural norms.

‘The general socio-legal status of women is a much researched topic in Iran, but no accurate qualitative or quantitative information is available on the gender-based bias of the justice system. For example, the cultural factors that restrict women’s access to justice are not adequately known. There are also no official research data on the opportunities of women to get justice in domestic violence cases in practice. In her book on women’s access to the justice system, Maranlou nevertheless identified certain gender-based obstacles to getting justice, such as cultural factors, lack of legal knowledge, the justice system’s bias against women, lack of financial independence, discriminatory legal provisions and fear of social ostracism.

‘Women’s threshold for turning to the justice system can be extremely high, as there is often a social stigma attached. Iran’s traditional culture views divorce and talking about marital problems as shameful, which is why friends and relatives of women who are victims of domestic violence often pressure them to keep quiet about the issue for as long as possible.

‘Iran’s justice system has been described as chronically incompetent at identifying women whose lives are at risk if they have to return to their violent husbands. Moreover, Iran is a society built on social connections: the justice system is corrupt and much depends on personal connections. Knowing someone who works in the justice system can be instrumental in pushing a case forward or holding one back. Other common obstacles to justice in Iran include the cost of court proceedings, long processing times, insufficient number of judges and competent staff, and limited opportunities for receiving legal assistance and reimbursement for costs.’¹⁷

¹⁷ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, ‘Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran’, 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltailran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 8 May 2017.

9. State and non state support groups and shelters

9.1 State support groups

- 9.1.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015, based on a range of sources, stated that:

'Iran has shelters run by both the state and non-governmental organisations. According to the UN, there are nevertheless not enough shelters and they do not provide long-term support through employment and housing for women trapped in abusive situations. The Iranian State Welfare Organisation (Sazman-e Behzisti) has maintained a network of approximately 30 'health houses' for unmarried girls who have run away from home since the beginning of the 21st century. These institutions provide temporary housing, professional counselling and skills development for runaway girls. However, reports indicate that girls have also been sexually abused by the authorities in at least one of these institutions. In any case, the shelters built on the initiative of the Cabinet of the reformist President Khatami have been said to be a failure, as they are not widely used or run properly.'

'According to the Head of the State Welfare Organisation's Department of Social Problems, who oversees the operation of the shelters, the shelters are open 24 hours a day and provide therapy for victims of domestic violence free of charge. Based on the information released by the State Welfare Organisation, temporary shelters in different provinces helped a total of 2 000 victims of domestic violence last year. The victims came to the shelters either on their own initiative or were referred there by social services, police or courts. There is also a special helpline (Seda-ye Yara) for victims of violence against women.'¹⁸

- 9.1.2 According to the UN General Assembly report on the situation of human rights in Iran dated August 2015:

'There are no support services such as '[...] shelters, legal and psychological counselling, specialized assistance or rehabilitation.' In commenting on this report the authorities stated that: '[...] various mechanisms existed to support victims of domestic violence, including intervention and rehabilitation centres, a social emergency telephone line, rehabilitation centres for affected women and girls, 31 health houses and specialized social assistance.'¹⁹

¹⁸ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltain Iran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 8 May 2017.

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic Iran', 31 August 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/352. Accessed: 16 May 2017.

9.2 Non Government Organisations

- 9.2.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service on 'Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran' dated 26 June 2015 states that:

'Non-governmental organisations have played a major role in running shelters in Iran. However, these shelters are mostly designed for prostitutes and female drug addicts living on the streets. One example of a non-governmental organisation that promotes the rights of children is Iran's Association of Children's Rights (Anjoman-e Hemayat az Hoquq-e Kudakan), which runs a few shelters for homeless and ill-treated children and teenagers. However, these shelters are not able to accommodate all those in need.'

'Women who have lived in shelters are stigmatised, and shelters are not considered a good solution to families' problems, as, according to one shelter worker, "if a woman cannot adapt to family life, she will also not be able to adapt living in society".'²⁰

- 9.2.2 The OMID Foundation was set up to help young women in Iran who are victims of sexual, physical or mental abuse. The OMID foundation webpage states that they started with:

'[...] a small group of 15 women, OMID now caters to more than 200 women at any one time. OMID centers take the best teachers and psychologists in Tehran to provide therapy and education for over 200 girls at any one time. Close to 200 young women are enrolled in the three-year OMID program during the day time. After classes they return home. For those who have run away from abusive families or been abandoned, home is the OMID shelter, a local authority home or by themselves.'²¹

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²⁰ Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288. Accessed: 8 May 2017.

²¹ OMID Foundation, 'About us', undated <http://www.omidfoundation.com/index.php/about-us/>. Accessed: 8 May 2017.

Version control and contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about this note and your line manager, senior caseworker or technical specialist cannot help you, or you think that this note has factual errors then [email the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this note (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability, you can [email the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **17 October 2017**

Changes from last version of this note

First CPIN on this subject. Previously this topic was included in the more general 'women' CPIN.

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