



**Q10212. Iran – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 18 June 2009**

**Current information on the treatment of people (in particular ethnic Kurds) who have been caught with anti-government materials by the Iranian Intelligence Service (Itlaat)**

A report from the *US Department of State* under the heading ‘2008 Human Rights Report: Iran’, subheading ‘Role of the Police and Security Apparatus’ states:

“Several agencies share responsibility for law enforcement and maintaining order, including the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), the LEF under the Interior Ministry, and the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The Basij and various informal groups known as the "Ansar-e Hizballah" (Helpers of the Party of God) were aligned with extreme conservative members of the leadership and acted as vigilantes.

Corruption and impunity were problems. The regular and paramilitary security forces both committed numerous, serious human rights abuses, but there were no transparent mechanisms to investigate security force abuses and no reports of government actions to reform them.” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Iran*)

The same report under the heading ‘National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities’ states:

“The constitution grants equal rights to all ethnic minorities and allows for minority languages to be used in the media and schools. The government disproportionately targeted minority groups, including Kurds, Arabs, Azeris, and Baluch, for arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention, and physical abuse. These groups also reported political and economic discrimination, particularly in the provision of economic aid, granting of business licenses, university admissions, permission to publish books, and housing and land rights. State broadcasting had weekly programs in ethnic languages, but the government consistently denied minorities their constitutional right to study and use their language in school.”(ibid)

It also states:

‘According to AI, in January authorities detained and questioned three child care facility directors in Kurdistan province on the grounds that they permitted the teaching of a no national language. Authorities threatened other facilities with closure. Kurds were not allowed to register certain names for their children in official registries.’ (ibid)

It also states:

“In 2006 Kurds clashed with police, reportedly resulting in three deaths and more than 250 arrests. There were also strikes and demonstrations in 2005 following the killing of a Kurdish activist by security forces. According to HRW and other sources, security forces killed at least 17 persons and wounded and arrested large numbers of others” (ibid)

An April 2009 report from the *UK Border Agency* under the heading ‘Country of Origin Information Report – Iran’ subheading ‘Security Forces’ states:

“The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) is ranked by experts as one of the largest and most active intelligence agencies in the world. And yet it has been shrouded in so much mystery that apart from occasional revelations, little has ever been made public about its operations and functions. The notable exception to this came in 1998, when a series of gruesome murders of Iranian dissidents by MOIS hit squads led to the disclosure of a catalogue of crimes that had been committed by MOIS agents for more than a decade.” (UK Border Agency (21 April 2009) *Country of Origin Information Report – Iran*, p.40)

Under the heading 'Kurds', it also states:

“According to Freedom House’s Freedom in the World report, 2 July 2008, there are roughly five million Kurds in Iran, although an Amnesty International report estimates that 12 million Kurds live in Iran, between 15-17 per cent of the population. The Sunni Kurds are concurrently victimised by two forms of discrimination, ethnic and religious. Kurdish opposition groups suspected of separatist aspirations, such as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), are brutally suppressed. The Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), a militant separatist group, conducted a number of guerrilla attacks in 2007. Kurds are found in the Kurdistan Province in northwestern Iran. A UNHCR report stated, however, that ethnic Kurds can be found in all walks of life in Iran both in the private and public economic sectors as well as in Iran’s military and civilian establishments.” (ibid, p.121)

A report by *Freedom House* under the heading ‘Freedom in the World - Iran (2008)’, states:

“Although the constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, such abuses are increasingly routine. Suspected dissidents are often held in unofficial, illegal detention centers run by a security apparatus consisting of the intelligence services, the IRGC, judicial officials, and the police. Allegations of torture are common in such centers and in the notorious Evin prison. Although legislation banning the use of torture in interrogations was promulgated in 2004, reports of torture persisted in 2007. Political prisoners are held under deplorable conditions, and supporters who protest their detention or defend their cause are also prosecuted. Prison conditions in general are notoriously poor, and there are regular allegations of abuse and death in custody.” (Freedom House (2008) *Freedom in the World - Iran 2008*)

It also states:

“The constitution and laws call for equal rights for all ethnic groups, allowing considerable cultural and linguistic freedom, but in practice these rights are restricted by the authorities. Ethnic Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, and Azeris complain of political and economic discrimination. Kurdish opposition groups suspected of separatist aspirations, such as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), are brutally suppressed. The autonomy of Kurds in neighboring Iraq has inspired agitation for greater rights among Iran’s roughly five million Kurds. The Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), a militant separatist group, conducted a number of guerrilla attacks in 2007.”(ibid)

A report from *Amnesty International* under the heading ‘Amnesty International Report 2009 – Iran’, subheading ‘Kurds’, states:

“Members of the armed group, Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, known by its Kurdish acronym PJAK, continued to attack Iranian forces. Many Kurds who were detained faced charges of membership or support of PJAK or other groups. Some, like teacher Farzad Kamangar, who denied the charge and was tortured, were sentenced to death following unfair trials.

Proponents of greater recognition of the Kurdish language and cultural and other rights were arrested and imprisoned after unfair trials.”(Amnesty International (28 May 2009) *Amnesty International Report 2009 – Iran*)

It also states under the heading ‘Justice system’

“Scores of government critics were arrested, often by plain-clothes officials who did not show any form of identification. Some were detained without trial for long periods beyond the control of the judiciary and were reported to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated and denied access to medical care, lawyers and their families. Others were sentenced to prison terms after unfair trials or were serving sentences imposed in previous years.” (ibid)

An October 2007 report from *BBC Monitoring* under the heading ‘TV reports Iraqi Sulaymaniyah demonstration for Turkey dialogue; update’ states:

"A member of the Karbala Governorate Council accused Karbala officials of responding to orders by Iranian Itlaat [Ministry of Intelligence and Security] to purchase land plots and real-estate to accommodate Iranian elements. Ahmad al-Husayni, an independent Council member, urged the official authorities to interfere to end such practices and preserve the Arab character of Karbala Governorate. No comment by the governorate's officials could be obtained on the accusations." (BBC Monitoring (22 October 2007) *TV reports Iraqi Sulaymaniyah demonstration for Turkey dialogue; update*)

A report from *Kurdish Aspect* under the heading ‘Iranian agents captured in Kurdistan’ states:

“Kurdish police in the city of Hewler (Arbil) in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) have captured ten Iranian intelligence agents, according to Kurdish Medias.

The agents were ethnic Kurds sent by the Iranian intelligence service (Itlaat) and members from the same spy cell operating in Hewler, Kurdish authorities reported. Documents binding them to Itlaat were found in their safe houses and in their possession.” (Kurdish Aspect (28 August 2007) *Iranian agents captured in Kurdistan*)

## References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

**Sources Consulted:**

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