



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Iran

Iran – IRN36664 – Mormons – Turkey –
2009 post-election protests – Saderat bank
18 May 2010

1. Deleted.
2. **Is there any information about the Mormons who are Iranians who reside in Turkey but travel to Iran on missions?**

Several sources were located confirming that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) does not presently have any presence in Iran, though it did briefly establish a mission there between July 1975 and December 1978.¹ One source notes that most of the Iranians who converted during this time have since fled to other countries.² Several sources confirmed that there is an LDS presence in Turkey, though no information was located confirming that missions are conducted from Turkey to Iran.

The LDS Church in Iran

An article from the website ‘Mormon World’ published in June 2009 states that there are:

no current LDS Missions, missionaries nor any kind of activity by the LDS Church in Iran...It is important to note that the Mormon Church does not actively proselyte in countries where it is forbidden. There is a strict policy for all Mormons – expats working abroad, visiting tourists, students etc – to refrain from teaching about the Church if such activities are prohibited.³

Turkish Muslim scholar Ilhan Yildiz, a visiting professor at the Brigham Young University (a private institution owned by the LDS), also notes the issue of prohibition against teaching by the LDS and other Christian groups in Middle Eastern countries. Yildiz states that the Church has made non-proselytizing commitments to government leaders and issues strict instructions to Church

¹ ‘Mormon Church in Iran – A brief history and Iranian Mormon converts’ 2009, Mormon World website, 21 June <http://www.mormonworld.org/mormon-middle-east/mormon-church-in-iran-a-brief-history-and-iranian-mormon-converts/> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 2; ‘International Latter Day Saints Database: Iran’ (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter Day Saints website <http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=main&wid=103> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 3; ‘The Church in the Middle East and Muslim Nations’ 2009, LDS Church Growth website, 1 February <http://ldschurchgrowth.blogspot.com/2009/02/church-in-middle-east-and-muslim.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 4; Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007 – Attachment 5

² ‘The Church in the Middle East and Muslim Nations’ 2009, LDS Church Growth website, 1 February <http://ldschurchgrowth.blogspot.com/2009/02/church-in-middle-east-and-muslim.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 4

³ ‘Mormon Church in Iran – A brief history and Iranian Mormon converts’ 2009, Mormon World website, 21 June <http://www.mormonworld.org/mormon-middle-east/mormon-church-in-iran-a-brief-history-and-iranian-mormon-converts/> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 2

members to honour such commitments.⁴ The LDS, however, uses “alternative methods” to contact people and teach the gospel in such countries:

One of the most common means of generating interest was to write articles about LDS doctrine and history for the local newspapers and to include an invitation for callers, or visitors, to come to the missionary’s room for further discussion because Middle Eastern customs and government restrictions prevented door-to-door contacting.⁵

Yildiz also notes the presence of “humanitarian missionaries” in Middle Eastern countries – i.e. missionaries performing development work but not actively proselytizing:

If someone asks about the church, they [humanitarian missionaries] will explain their beliefs and give them books about the LDS Church. If the person wants to become a member of the church, the missionaries encourage them to go to Europe to be baptized. They are told that they can be baptized if they want to live in Europe or the United States, but they cannot be baptized if they want to return to their country because their family, neighbours and friends will reject them in some Middle Eastern countries [such] as Iranian [sic].⁶

Yildiz does not state in which Middle Eastern nations these “humanitarian missionaries” are operating, or where missionaries using “alternative methods” to contact potential converts are located.⁷ The report published on the ‘Mormon World’ website about the LDS Church and Iran notes the presence of Iranian members of the LDS Church in a range of other countries including Switzerland, Ecuador, Italy and Japan, though the source does not make clear whether or not these individuals were first exposed to the Church while in Iran or subsequent to leaving the country.⁸ The author of the article published on the ‘Mormon World’ website in 2009 notes, however:

The LDS Church, as far as I know, does not keep a record of (or at least publicly) how many members from “x” country may exist throughout the world if that country is not open to the Gospel. It is, therefore, next to impossible to accurately estimate how many Mormons there may be throughout the world with Iranian roots.

There is no current information indicating that exposure to the LDS is occurring in Iran, and sources confirm that there is no formal missionary activity in the country. Indeed, official Church policy warns against teaching in countries like

⁴ Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007 – Attachment 5

⁵ Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007 – Attachment 5

⁶ Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007 – Attachment 5

⁷ Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007 – Attachment 5

⁸ ‘Mormon Church in Iran – A brief history and Iranian Mormon converts’ 2009, Mormon World website, 21 June <http://www.mormonworld.org/mormon-middle-east/mormon-church-in-iran-a-brief-history-and-iranian-mormon-converts/> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 2

Iran where Christian proselytising is banned.⁹ Further, Mormonism is a “foundational” religion – that is, converts must have access to a temple, church literature etc, and cannot worship in accordance with LDS beliefs without this “foundation”.¹⁰ For this reason converts cannot be baptised in countries like Iran, and would be encouraged by Church members to go overseas in order to be baptised and practice the religion.

The LDS Church in Turkey

The LDS Church does have a fledgling presence in Turkey; however, sources indicate that little proselytising is occurring within the country, and no information was located about missions being launched from Turkey into Iran or other neighbouring countries.

The International Latter Day Saints Database states that Turkey has four congregations of the LDS, with an average of 49 members per congregation.¹¹ The LDS Church Growth, Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints and Latter-Day Saints Church News websites all confirm that there are four LDS Church branches in Turkey;¹² however, branches are reported to consist of mostly expatriate members with no concerted effort to conduct missionary work among Turkish citizens presently occurring.¹³

The International Latter Day Saints Database states that Turkey has one full-time mission, the Bulgaria Sofia mission.¹⁴ The Bulgaria Sofia Mission’s website states that Turkey, along with Serbia and Macedonia, fell under the mission’s jurisdiction from 2000.¹⁵ No mention is made of any proselytizing missions being made to neighbouring countries.

The Cumorah: International Resources for Latter-Day Saints website, states that Church members in Turkey are mostly foreigners or from other (non-Turkish) ethnic groups, with very few Turks joining. National active membership is reported at 80 to 100, or 40% of

⁹ ‘Mormon Church in Iran – A brief history and Iranian Mormon converts’ 2009, Mormon World website, 21 June <http://www.mormonworld.org/mormon-middle-east/mormon-church-in-iran-a-brief-history-and-iranian-mormon-converts/> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 2

¹⁰ Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007 – Attachment 5

¹¹ ‘International Latter Day Saints Database: Turkey’ (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter Day Saints website <http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=main&wid=223> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 6

¹² ‘The Church in the Middle East and Muslim Nations’ 2009, LDS Church Growth website, 1 February <http://ldschurchgrowth.blogspot.com/2009/02/church-in-middle-east-and-muslim.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 4; ‘Country Profiles: Turkey’ 2010, Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints website <http://www.jesuschrist.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/turkey> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 7; ‘Country information: Turkey’ 2010, Latter-Day Saints Church News website, 1 February <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58669/Country-information-Turkey.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 8

¹³ ‘Country information: Turkey’ 2010, Latter-Day Saints Church News website, 1 February <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58669/Country-information-Turkey.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 8; Turkey’ 2006, Brigham Young University Global Mormonism Project website http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=169 - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 9

¹⁴ ‘International Latter Day Saints Database: Turkey’ (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter Day Saints website <http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=main&wid=223> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 6

¹⁵ ‘A Short History of the Bulgaria Sofia Mission’ 2010, Bulgaria Sofia Mission website <http://www.bulgariasofiamission.org/mission-info/history> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 10

total membership; however, some local Turkish Church members have served in leadership positions.¹⁶ Cumorah reports that senior missionaries in Turkey cannot preach about the Church but only answer questions without instigating a conversation about non-Muslim religion.¹⁷

3. Are there any references to the burning of the Saderat bank during the post-election protests in Tehran occurring in June 2009?

Two sources were located that refer to the burning of a Saderat bank in Tehran in June 2009. As noted in previous research response IRN36494¹⁸, one blog post dated 14 June was located with a photo of a burning building identified as “Saderat bank located on the ground floor of Ehsan shopping center. Amirabad, in front of the university dorm.”¹⁹ The blog post includes a large number of photos and amateur video footage of the post-election protests; however, many of these are undated. It is consequently not clear whether or not the photo purporting to be of Saderat bank burning correlates to the date the blog post was published – 14 June 2009.

One additional source was located referring to the Saderat bank burning in Tehran in June 2009. A Twitter account named ‘Iranian Student (Change_For_Iran)’ that “tweeted” from Tehran throughout the June protests, has a “tweet” published 14 June that reads “5.17 am people outside are burning Saderat bank building or as it seems from this far [sic]”.²⁰

Attachments

1. Deleted.
2. ‘Mormon Church in Iran – A brief history and Iranian Mormon converts’ 2009, Mormon World website, 21 June <http://www.mormonworld.org/mormon-middle-east/mormon-church-in-iran-a-brief-history-and-iranian-mormon-converts/> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
3. ‘International Latter Day Saints Database: Iran’ (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter Day Saints website <http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=main&wid=103> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
4. ‘The Church in the Middle East and Muslim Nations’ 2009, LDS Church Growth website, 1 February <http://ldschurchgrowth.blogspot.com/2009/02/church-in-middle-east-and-muslim.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
5. Yildiz, I. 2003, ‘The Missionary Works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Middle East’, paper presented at *18th Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference*, Center for Middle Eastern Studies: University of Chicago, 9-10 May

¹⁶ ‘Turkey’ (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter-Day Saints website http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=missiology_articles&story_id=18 - Accessed 14 May 2010 – Attachment 11

¹⁷ ‘Turkey’ (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter-Day Saints website http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=missiology_articles&story_id=18 - Accessed 14 May 2010 – Attachment 11

¹⁸ Refugee Review Tribunal Country Advice & Information 2010, IRN36494, 12 April – Attachment 13

¹⁹ ‘Riot in Tehran Streets’ 2009, *Street Journalists* website, 28 November <http://www.enqlab.com/2009/11/28/riot-in-tehran-streets/> – Accessed 21 April 2010 – Attachment 12

²⁰ ‘Change_for_Iran’ 2009, *Twitter*, June http://twitter.com/change_for_iran - Accessed 14 May 2010 – Attachment 14

http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/mehat/past_conferences/papers03/yildiz_ilhan.doc - Accessed 24 September 2007.

6. 'International Latter Day Saints Database: Turkey' (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter Day Saints website
<http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=main&wid=223> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
7. 'Country Profiles: Turkey' 2010, Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints website
<http://www.jesuschrist.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/turkey> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
8. 'Country information: Turkey' 2010, Latter-Day Saints Church News website, 1 February
<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/58669/Country-information-Turkey.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
9. Turkey' 2006, Brigham Young University Global Mormonism Project website
http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=169 - Accessed 13 May 2010.
10. 'A Short History of the Bulgaria Sofia Mission' 2010, Bulgaria Sofia Mission website
<http://www.bulgariasofiamission.org/mission-info/history> - Accessed 13 May 2010.
11. 'Turkey' (undated), Cumorah: International Resources for Latter-Day Saints website
http://www.cumorah.com/index.php?target=missiology_articles&story_id=18 - Accessed 14 May 2010.
12. 'Riot in Tehran Streets' 2009, *Street Journalists* website, 28 November
<http://www.enqlab.com/2009/11/28/riot-in-tehran-streets/> - Accessed 21 April 2010.
13. Refugee Review Tribunal Country Advice & Information 2010, *IRN36494*, 12 April.
14. 'Change_for_Iran' 2009, *Twitter*, June http://twitter.com/change_for_iran - Accessed 14 May 2010.
15. Deleted.
16. Deleted.
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