



August 2011

A commentary on the March 2011 Iran Operational Guidance Note

This commentary identifies what the 'Still Human Still Here' coalition considers to be the main inconsistencies and omissions between the currently available country of origin information (COI) and case law on Iran and the conclusions reached in the March 2011 Iran Operational Guidance Note (OGN), issued by the UK Border Agency. Where we believe inconsistencies have been identified, the relevant section of the OGN is highlighted in blue.

An index of full sources of the COI referred to in this commentary is also provided at the end of the document.

This commentary is a guide for legal practitioners and decision-makers in respect of the relevant COI, by reference to the sections of the Operational Guidance Note on Iran issued in March 2011.

To access the complete OGN on Iran go to:

<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/countryspecificasylum/policyogns/>

The document should be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. This document should not be submitted as evidence to the UK Border Agency, the Tribunal or other decision makers in asylum applications or appeals. However, legal representatives are welcome to submit the COI referred to in this document to decision makers (including judges) to help in the accurate determination of an asylum claim or appeal.

The COI referred to in this document is not exhaustive and should always be complemented by case-specific COI research.

Contents

3.7 Political opponents and opposition supporters	p. 2
3.8 Christians/Christian converts	p. 10
3.8.6 Other religious and ethnic minorities	p. 17
3.9 Adulterers	p. 35
3.11 Women	p. 40
3.12 Kurds and supporters of Kurdish political parties (KDPI, Komala, or PJAK)	p. 46
3.13 Smugglers	p. 64
4.3 Minors claiming in their own right	p. 68
Index of sources	p. 77

3.7 Political opponents and opposition supporters

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

3.7.19 Conclusion. There is a real risk that high profile activists and political opponents who have come to the attention of the authorities would on return to Iran face a real risk of persecution and should be granted asylum for reason of his or her political opinion.

3.7.20 Depending on the particular circumstances, some persons who do not have a political profile - which would include for example student demonstrators or other anti-government protestors - are likely to be perceived by the authorities in Iran to oppose the regime and may similarly face a real risk of persecution or ill-treatment on return. Caseowners must consider carefully whether the personal circumstances of the individual concerned are such that he or she would face a real risk of persecution on return to Iran.

3.7.21 Those who have engaged in opposition political activity in the UK might depending on their level of involvement similarly face a real of risk of persecution on return to Iran on account of that activity and in such cases a grant of asylum will also be appropriate. The test to be applied in such cases is set out in detail in BA (Demonstrators in Britain – risk on return) Iran CG [2011] UKUT 36 (IAC) – see above.

In the conclusion of this section highlighted above, the OGN identifies ‘student demonstrators’ and ‘other anti-government protestors’ amongst those persons who do not have a political profile but may be perceived as government oppositionists, and therefore may be at risk of persecution in Iran. It is considered that the following COI supports the contention that ‘family members of perceived political opponents’ should also be included within this risk category:

- [Amnesty International, Iran: "Arbitrary arrests, torture and executions continue, 20/05/2011](#)
[...] Amnesty International is concerned by the Iranian government’s continuing clampdown on dissent including arbitrary arrests and the torture or other ill-treatment of people who express view opposed to those of the government. Some of those arrested have even been executed, after apparently unfair trials, including at least one minor. [...]
Amnesty International continues to call on the Iranian government to end the continuing cycle of repression and fully respect Iran’s obligations under international human rights law.
In particular, Amnesty International urges the government to:
- release immediately and unconditionally anyone held solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, or solely on account of their family links to individuals who oppose the Iranian authorities; [...]
- [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011, 12/05/2011](#)
[...] The constitution prohibits public demonstrations that “violate the principles of Islam,” a vague provision that was regularly invoked in 2009 and 2010 to deny permit requests. Vigilante and paramilitary organizations that are officially or tacitly sanctioned by the government—most notably the Basij and Ansar-i Hezbollah—regularly play a major role in breaking up demonstrations. Heavy mobilizations of these forces helped to prevent large-scale opposition rallies during 2010. The effort included intimidation, physical attacks, and severe restrictions on freedom of movement targeting opposition leaders and their families. [...]
- [Human Rights Watch, Investigate Reported Killings of Demonstrators, 29/04/2011](#)
[...] Iranian security forces should immediately halt the use of excessive force against demonstrators in an ethnic Arab province of southwestern Iran, Human Rights Watch said today. The authorities should open independent and transparent investigations into all alleged killings there since protests began on April 14, 2011, Human Rights Watch said. [...]

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Iranian rights activists and international media have reported that Iranian security forces fired live ammunition as well as teargas at largely peaceful protesters on a number of occasions, killing several dozen protesters since the demonstrations began. Human Rights Watch also received reports that authorities have arrested several hundred protesters and rights activists in Khuzestan and severely curtailed communications in the area. [...]

A resident of the city of the Ahvaz told Human Rights Watch that security forces including Basij, armed police, plainclothes agents, and intelligence agents surrounded and infiltrated several Arab-majority areas in Ahvaz a week prior to planned demonstrations on April 15. He said that for about a week prior to the protests Ahvaz appeared to be under martial law. Movement between Arab neighborhoods in Ahvaz became extremely restricted as security forces set up checkpoints throughout the city, and masked security forces began launching home raids and arresting targeted individuals including rights activists. The resident told Human Rights Watch that he witnessed several dozen young Arabs being picked up by plainclothes security officers during some of these raids.

According to the witness, clashes broke out on April 14 between security forces attempting to arrest several individuals in the Homa neighborhood of Ahvaz and the residents' families and neighbors. The clashes led to the deaths of three individuals. The resident told Human Rights Watch that the next day, Friday, hundreds of Ahvazi residents filled the streets of Ahvaz but because of the heavy security presence protests remained isolated and scattered within the various Arab neighborhoods. [...]

➤ [US Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)

[...] Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

[...] f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

[...] There were reports during the year that the MOIS arrested and harassed family members of political prisoners and human rights activists, banning them from speaking to foreign media or traveling abroad, blocking their telephone conversations, making false criminal charges against them, and blocking their access to higher education.

From early February to March 9, authorities detained Saleh Noghrehkar, the nephew of former presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi and the head of the legal team for Mousavi's campaign, in Evin Prison, reportedly to intimidate Mousavi and his wife.

[...] On January 13, authorities released from prison Nushin Ebadi, a professor of dentistry and sister to Nobel Prize-winning human rights lawyer and activist Shirin Ebadi. Intelligence officers arrested Nushin, who was not involved in human rights issues and did not participate in any of the postelection protests, in December 2009.

There were also reports that authorities threatened and arrested family members of expatriates who posted critical comments about the country on social networking Web sites such as Facebook. According to media accounts, an Iranian-American studying abroad reported in 2009 that he received an e-mail warning him that his relatives in Iran would be harmed if he did not delete an online petition he had created relating to the imprisonment in Iran of a human rights activist; he claimed that security agents arrested his father two days later and held him briefly.

➤ [Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] One of the most alarming trends this year was the increased intimidation and harassment of lawyers. A significant number of lawyers, particularly those involved in high profile cases, were arrested, intimidated into dropping sensitive cases, or forced to flee the country for fear of their and their families' safety.

Mohammad Mostafaei was one example. He was the original lawyer defending Sakineh Mohammadi-Ashtiani, condemned to death by stoning for adultery. When her case came to global prominence in July, he gave a number of interviews and released documents into the public domain to highlight the flaws in her case. As a result, his offices were repeatedly raided. Refusing to back down, Mr Mostafaei was arrested a number of times and questioned about his activities in defending Ms Ashtiani. Facing growing and determined harassment, and with another arrest warrant out against him, Mr Mostafaei was forced to flee Iran. Close family members were then arrested in an attempt to make him return to Iran. Another

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

lawyer took up Ms Ashtiani's case. When he continued the publicity campaign to keep her sentence in the global conscience, he too was arrested. He remains in prison. These were not isolated cases. [...]

In a number of high-profile cases, we were aware of unwarranted raids against offices and private houses. There were a number of instances, including in Mr Mostafaei's and Dr Shirin Ebadi's cases, when family members and friends were detained in order to put pressure on suspects either to confess or to turn themselves in. Alongside other countries, we raised these issues directly with the Iranian authorities. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, More Than 1,000 Political Arrests' In Iran In Past Year, 23/03/2011](#)

[...] Iran has arrested more than 1,250 people over the past 12 months for participating in protests or for their political views, according to a human rights group, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

The report by the Human Rights House of Iran (HRHI), which is based outside Iran, says at least 1,256 people including students and journalists were arrested in the period.

HRHI's Mojtaba Samienejad told Radio Farda that those arrested include 185 students*, 165 members of religious minorities, 129 political activists, 129 Kurdish activists, 43 journalists and bloggers, 40 Turkoman activists, 22 labor activists, 20 human rights activists, eight women's rights activists, and eight Arab activists.

Most were detained in Tehran, the center of most of the protests.

Samienejad said the number of people detained does not include those whose arrests were not made public by their family members or the judicial authorities.

"Obviously, providing the total number of detainees in Iran is impossible," Samienejad said. He said that is because there is no free access to relevant information about detainees and because prisoners and their families could be endangered if they go public with such information. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, New Crackdown On Iran Students Alleged Following Protest Deaths, 16/03/2011](#)

[...] Student activists are reported to be coming under pressure in Iran following opposition protests last month during which at least two students were killed, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

A former student activist of Tehran's Sharif University of Technology told Radio Farda on March 13 that 16-18 students of that university have been detained since mid-February.

But she said the total number could be higher as their families have been warned against publicizing their plights. [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Free Opposition Leaders and Their Families, 02/03/2011](#)

[...] Authorities should immediately release two prominent opposition leaders and their family members and allow them to engage in peaceful political activity, Human Rights Watch said today. The government is holding Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, their wives, and one of Karroubi's sons. Authorities recently transferred the two leaders and their wives to another location after restricting their movement and placing them under house arrest for more than two weeks, opposition members said. [...]

➤ [Iran Focus, Clinton: Iran crackdown has killed protesters, abused human rights, 24/02/2011](#)

[...] U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday accused Iran of a repressive crackdown on protesters and political opponents in the past 10 days, including the killing of peaceful demonstrators by security forces.

"Security forces have beaten, detained and -- in at least three cases -- killed peaceful protesters," Clinton said in a statement. "Off the streets, the regime's leaders have targeted human rights defenders and political activists, and authorities have recently rounded up ex-government officials and their families; former members of parliament; clerics and their children; student leaders and their professors; as well as journalists and bloggers." [...]

➤ [Reporters Without Borders, Journalists arrested, relatives held hostage in new crackdown, 17/02/2011](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] Reporters Without Borders condemns the government's renewed crackdown of the past few days including a wave of arrests of journalists that began on 14 February and cases of harassment of journalists' families.

The authorities have stepped up cyber-attacks on news websites and disruption of the Internet in a sweeping form of censorship designed to stifle the protest movement and prevent information about demonstrations from circulating. The same methods were used after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection in June 2009 only this time they have been reinforced.

On 15 February, intelligence ministry agents attacked the home of Hossein Karoubi, the executive director of the newspaper Etemad Meli, which has been closed. They broke down the front door and manhandled members of his family. They are still outside the house and are, in effect, holding the family hostage.

At the same time, Ganeh Jaleh, the brother of Saneh Jaleh, one of the demonstrators who was killed in the course of violence targeted against the 14 February protests, was arrested after giving an interview to Voice of America in which he contradicted the government's claims in the media it controls that his brother was a member of pro-government militia. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Hanged Iranian Political Prisoner's Relatives, Friends 'Detained', 29/12/2010](#)

[...] Seven friends and relatives of Iranian political prisoner Ali Saremi are reported to have been detained outside Tehran's Evin prison where he was hanged on December 28, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

Saremi's brother Hassan told RFE/RL the family was not notified in advance of his impending execution. He said seven friends and relatives, including Saremi's sister, wife, daughter, and son-in-law, went to Evin prison after being informed by Ali's cellmates at Gohardasht prison that he had been suddenly transferred. Hassan Saremi said they were detained there on December 28 by security forces.

According to Iranian state media, Saremi, 62, was found guilty of membership of the exiled opposition group Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO), "waging war against God," and "propaganda activities against the sacred regime of Islamic Republic of Iran."

"My brother was not a member of the Mujahedin Khalq Organization," Hassan Saremi said. He added that his brother was an MKO "sympathizer," who traveled to Camp Ashraf in Iraq, the MKO base camp, only to visit his son. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Jailed Iranian Filmmaker Hospitalized, Family Members Detained, 16/12/2010](#)

[...] Jailed Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Nourizad has been hospitalized and members of his family including his wife have been detained, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

Nourizad's wife Fateme Maleki, their children, and his elderly parents were detained outside Evin prison on December 16 as they tried to find out which hospital he had been taken to. [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Issues Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran Submitted by Human Rights Watch to the UN Human Rights Committee on the occasion of its Pre-Sessional Review of Iran, December 2010](#)

[...] Authorities continue to prevent workers from forming independent trade unions such as the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, teachers' associations, and the Coordination Committee for Establishment of Trade Unions. Security forces block these and other groups from holding meetings or engaging in public protests. Government crackdowns sometimes turn violent, and many group members have been arrested and convicted of committing various national security-related crimes. Family members of those prosecuted have also been subject to arbitrary arrests. Several labor leaders, such as Mansour Osanloo, Mahmoud Salehi and Majid Hamidi, are currently serving prison sentences on politically motivated charges.³⁹ [...]

➤ [Mianeh \(Institute for War and Peace Reporting \(UK\)\), Quiet Intimidation in Iran, 17/09/2010](#)

[...] In the days leading up to Quds Day, thousands of Tehran residents received anonymous phone calls demanding that they stay at home.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

"The first few times they called me, I was completely unnerved," an opposition supporter who has been detained in the past said. "I kept having a conversation with an interrogator in my head, looking for reasons and explanations I could give for even the simplest daily activities. Gradually, as I discovered that some of my colleagues and friends were receiving similar calls, I stopped being afraid. Now I don't answer calls from unknown numbers."

The threatening phone calls do not just target people who, like this opposition supporter, have already run foul of the regime. Relatives of people killed during last summer's protests against the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have also been harassed.

The mother of Ashkan Sohrabi, an 18 year-old student who died on June 20, 2009, has received calls from people who say she is wasting her time going to visit his grave, as they have seen him alive.

A psychologist in Tehran says this kind of pressure is designed to let individuals know the regime is "observing his every move like God, and thus break his will" – so much so that individuals may begin to believe they are in fact guilty of something. [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Stop Abuse of Political Prisoners, 06/08/2010](#)

[...] Iranian prison authorities should end the solitary confinement of 17 political prisoners and afford them all the protections to which they are entitled, including access to their families and lawyers, Human Rights Watch said today. All 17 have been on a hunger strike since July 26 to protest deteriorating conditions inside Evin Prison and have been prohibited from contacting their families.

The 17 are among hundreds held in Ward 350 of Tehran's Evin Prison, many of whom were unlawfully detained as part of the mass arrests of political dissidents and peaceful demonstrators following the disputed June 12, 2009 presidential election. There is speculation that more prisoners may have joined the hunger strike in recent days.

[...] Persian-language media have reported that since the inmates initiated their strike their families have attempted to speak with the Tehran prosecutor, Jafari Dolatabadi, and other officials to gain access to the inmates, secure their transfer back to the general ward, and improve prison conditions. On August 2, after they were again turned away by Evin Prison guards, members of the families began their own hunger strike in solidarity with the 17 inmates.

On August 4, after family members gathered outside the General Prosecutor's office in Tehran to demand access to their relatives in detention, anti-riot police attacked them with batons, forcibly removed pictures of their imprisoned family members from their hands, and threatened them with arrest, Kalame reported. An Iranian human rights activist in close contact with family members told Human Rights Watch that in recent days government authorities have threatened the families and warned them not to give press interviews. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election, 09/06/2010](#)

[...] The vast majority of the well-over 5,000 arrested since June 2009 have been ordinary citizens – women and men, workers and the unemployed, students and professionals – who went out into the streets to protest against the announced election result, or against human rights violations that occurred. Most were released after days or weeks, but some were held for months. Some still languish in the harsh conditions prevalent in most of Iran's prisons, particularly in the provinces. These are the "nameless" prisoners (gomnam) – the lesser-known people whose cases have not garnered much media attention.⁸

In addition to these prisoners, there have been sweeping arrests before and after demonstrations which since July have taken place only on days of national importance when public demonstrations are generally held, such as Qods Day, the last Friday of Ramadan, the anniversary of the seizure of the US Embassy on 4 November 1979, National Students' Day on 7 December, and the religious festival of Ashoura (the 10th day of the Islamic month of Moharram which fell on 27 December in 2009).

Those targeted for arrest have included political and human rights activists, journalists, women's rights defenders and students. As time has progressed, new groups have been brought into the fold of suspicion, including clerics, academics, former political prisoners and their relatives, people with family links to banned groups, members of Iran's ethnic and religious minorities – particularly the Baha'is, but also other minorities such as Christians, Dervishes, Azerbaijanis, Sunni Muslims (who are mostly Baluch and Kurds), and lawyers who have defended political detainees. [...]

FAMILY MEMBERS OF PROMINENT FIGURES AND DETAINEES

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Some of those arrested appear to have had nothing to do with the demonstrations and unrest other than being relatives or friends of people arrested or wanted by the authorities. The authorities are reported to use the arrests of such people – who are usually held for days or weeks – as a means of putting further pressure on detainees or others. In at least some cases, it appears they are held in circumstances amounting to hostage-taking.

Noushin Ebadi, a medical lecturer at the Azad University of Tehran and the sister of Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi, was arrested on 28 December and held for almost three weeks, apparently to put pressure on Shirin Ebadi, who is currently abroad, to stop speaking out about human rights violations in Iran.

Two sisters, Leila and Sara Tavassoli, were arrested on 28 December and 3 January respectively. Their father, Mohammad Tavassoli, who was also arrested after Ashoura, is active in the Freedom Movement, and their uncle, Ebrahim Yazdi, is the leader of the Freedom Movement. He too was arrested on 28 December but released for medical treatment in February. Sara Tavassoli's husband, Farid Taheri, was also arrested. Sara and Leila Tavassoli were later released on bail and Sara Tavassoli was sentenced in late May 2010 to six years' imprisonment and 74 lashes for briefly participating in the Ashoura demonstrations and for visiting Mir Hossein Mousavi and his wife after his nephew was killed during the Ashoura demonstrations. The fiancée of Qazvin International University student Arsalan Abadi who had been arrested after the Ashoura demonstrations, was reportedly arrested in February and held for 17 days in Evin Prison, in an apparent attempt to force him to "confess". Two of his sisters were also detained. An initial charge of moharebeh was not accepted by the judge in his trial before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in March. In May he was sentenced to nine and a half years in prison. [...]

- [Amnesty International, Urgent Action Further information on Urgent Action 102/10 \[MDE 13/056/2010\], 21/05/2010](#)

[...]Ja'far Kazemi is now known to be among six men facing execution in Iran for their alleged links to the banned group, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI). In some cases, these links may amount to no more than having contact with family members linked to the PMOI. The six could be executed at any time. [...]

- [Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Violent Aftermath: The 2009 Election and Suppression of Dissent in Iran, February 2010](#)

[...] 2.6.8 December 27: Ashura

[...] Bodies of those who died were returned to their families for burial under the condition that they not publicize the death or the cause of death.²⁸⁵ Reportedly, family members of the victims were put under pressure to declare that the deaths of their loved ones were accidents.²⁸⁶ Witnesses who saw law enforcement trucks run over protestors have reportedly been arrested. Police Chief Ahmadi-Moqaddam had claimed that the truck that ran over civilians was stolen from NAJA and that the thief who was the real culprit is being pursued.²⁸⁷ However, the families of those arrested have been pressured not to speak of the reasons for the arrests.²⁸⁸ [...]

- [Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of relatives of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status, including former members of the Bureau of National Security \(SAVAK\), of a Fedayeen organization, or opposition protestors, 04/01/2010](#)

[...] Information about the treatment of relatives of Iranians who have claimed refugee status was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 16 December 2009, the executive director of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), an organization based in the United States (US) which aims to document the human rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution (IHRDC n.d.), stated that whether relatives in Iran are targeted is "more an issue of dissent and criticism," and depends on whether the refugee continues their activities outside Iran (IHRDC 16 Dec. 2009). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 22 December 2009, a professor of political science at York University similarly stated that authorities will selectively target the relatives of some dissidents who are active outside Iran. The Executive Director of the IHRDC stated that relatives who are targeted typically face the threat of being called into local police or intelligence offices; in cases of a more active dissident, the

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

relatives can face more serious consequences, such as having family possessions or property confiscated by the government (IHRDC 16 Dec. 2009).

In 9 December 2009 correspondence with the Research Directorate, the director of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHR), an organization based in New York and Hamburg that supports Iranian human rights activists (ICHR 5 Jan. 2009), stated that whether relatives are targeted by authorities . . . depends on the nature of activities of the person who left Iran and how much the Iranian government is sensitive to those activities. In general, the Iranian intelligence and security forces target the families of activists and dissidents as a means to force them to end their activities. Interviewing former detainees, we routinely hear that interrogators threaten to harm or detain family members of the detainees if they do not cooperate or make false confessions.

[...] Media sources report cases where family members in Iran received threats by authorities because of the activities of their relatives (NPR 5 May 2008; The Wall Street Journal 4 Dec. 2009). National Public Radio (NPR) reports that in 2007, an Iranian activist who fled Iran after receiving a death sentence and subsequently worked as a Persian language radio broadcaster in Washington, DC, quit her job because her family in Iran had received threats (5 May 2008). The Wall Street Journal conducted interviews with approximately 90 Iranians abroad, including students, housewives, doctors, lawyers and businesspeople, and found that "dozens" of those who criticized Iran on Facebook or Twitter said that their relatives in Iran were questioned or temporarily detained because of their activities (4 Dec. 2009). The Wall Street Journal also reports that a prominent human rights lawyer in Iran stated that prior to the summer of 2009 she did not believe that the Iranian government threatened Iranians abroad or their families back in Iran (4 Dec. 2009). However, since that time, she noted, ". . . the cases are too many to count. Every day I get phone calls and visits from people who are being harassed and threatened' because of relatives' activities abroad" (The Wall Street Journal 4 Dec. 2009). [...]

Post-election protesters

The Director of the ICHR stated that "[t]he relatives of post-election protestors have been heavily targeted, [including] those of persons residing inside Iran, those who have left and are seeking asylum, and those who were already abroad and engaged in protests outside Iran" (ICHR 9 Dec. 2009). He noted that the ICHR has received several reports of such "persecution" (ibid.). Amnesty International (AI) reports that following the protests against the June 2009 election, harassment of clerics, political leaders and journalists became an integral component of the government's response to political dissent (AI Dec. 2009, 28). During student protests in December 2009, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei, the government's chief prosecutor, reportedly stated, "'[f]rom now on, we will show no mercy' to protesters or their families" (Pittsburg Post-Gazette 9 Dec. 2009). The Professor of Political Science stated that a senior security official announced that they would target those outside Iran who criticize the government (22 Dec. 2009). [...]

- [The Christian Science Monitor, "Mousavi supporters say Iran ordered murder of his nephew," 28/12/2009](#)

[...] The Islamic Republic has a long history of using family members to put psychological pressure on political prisoners. Former prisoners have said their parents or siblings were brought into adjoining interrogation cells to be tortured within earshot as a means of breaking them. [...]

- [The Star-Ledger \(Newark, New Jersey\), "In Iran, Secret Prisons and Hidden Horrors Political detainees detail torture, beatings at detention centers," 17/12/2009](#)

[...] Iran's most infamous prison, Evin, has been renovated and it appears the conduct of the jailers and interrogators has been moderated. Instead of beating detainees or hanging them up from the ceiling by their feet, they are now more likely to use psychological operations. These include de-personalizing prisoners by referring to them by their numbers or telling prisoners that their family members have been arrested and will be tortured. One detainee described hearing his elderly father being tortured in an adjoining cell while he sat opposite his interrogator, alone and unscathed.

- [Iran Focus, Families of detained Iran reformists arrested: report, 25/10/2009](#)

[...] Iranian authorities have detained 35 relatives and supporters of jailed reformists, including wives and children, the reformist Sarmayeh newspaper reported on Saturday. In a separate report reformist website

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

norooznews said "armed, masked guards" on Thursday raided a prayer ceremony in Tehran attended by families and supporters of jailed reformists who opposed the June re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Sarmayeh reported that initially 60 people were arrested, among them the wives and children of jailed reformists including from the Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF) party, and that 35 remain in detention. The prayer ceremony to pay respect to the jailed reformists was being held at the residence of reformist Shahab Tabatabai's father-in-law. Tabatabai, a senior campaigner for the main defeated presidential candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, has been sentenced to five years in prison for his alleged role in the post-election unrest which rocked Tehran. The IIPF website, norooznews, condemned what it called an "unbelievable attack on a prayer ceremony," adding: "How will they clean the disgraceful stain of the attack by armed, masked guards on a family gathering?" The website stressed that Mousavi's proposed political front, the Green Path of Hope, will not be "harmed by arresting several of our dear ones. Such actions mean rather the defeat of the coup people than a show of their power." Opposition leaders have repeatedly charged that the June 12 poll was rigged to return Ahmadinejad to power. Iran has already sentenced to death three people who were also detained in the post-vote unrest. Other reformists have been given varying jail terms. About 4,000 people were arrested during anti-Ahmadinejad demonstrations in Tehran soon after the election, and 140, including senior reformers and journalists, have been put on trial for allegedly seeking a "soft" overthrow of the Islamic regime and inciting protests.

➤ [Inter Press Service News Agency \(IPS\), Rights-Iran: Groups Call for Special U.N. Probe, 22/09/2009](#)

[...] The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran and HRW said the government is covering up deaths in detention by forcing families to claim their loved ones died of natural causes. Both organisations have collected accounts from victims' families that government agents have exerted tremendous pressure on them not to discuss the deaths of their children. The father of one victim who was shot and killed by security forces during a demonstration, and who wished to remain anonymous, told HRW: "When I insisted to security authorities who turned over the body of my son to tell me the reason for my son's death and how he was killed, they forbade me from doing any media interviews, saying it will endanger my family." "They threatened me further by saying if I pursued the matter my other son's life will be in danger. They also forbade us from holding a memorial service," the father said. On Jun. 22, plainclothes agents detained Ebrahim Sharifi for one week. He provided detailed testimony to the campaign regarding his torture and rape during detention. He said he was subjected to severe beatings, mock executions, and sexual assault. When he attempted to file a complaint and told several judicial authorities what had happened, intelligence agents threatened him and his family, forcing him into hiding. Sharifi's full account is detailed in a new 14-page report by the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, "Accelerating Slide into Dictatorship." [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Grandchildren Of Dissident Iranian Ayatollah Arrested, 15/09/2009](#)

[...] Three grandchildren of Iranian dissident Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri have been arrested in the Islamic holy city of Qom, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports. The father of the three, Ahmad Montazeri, told Radio Farda that the charges against his sons and the reason for their arrest by the Qom Special Clergy Court are unclear. The children's father said 22-year-old Mohammad Mahdi Montazeri, 18-year-old Mohammad Sadegh Montazeri, and 20-year-old Mohammad Ali Montazeri are not politically active. [...]

3.8 Christians/Christian converts

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

3.8.14 *Conclusion.* According to the case law, one of the fundamental questions to be determined in each case is whether there is a real risk that a **Christian convert** has already or will come to the attention of the authorities.

3.8.15 **Converts who can demonstrate that in Iran or in the UK they have and will continue to practise evangelical or proselytising activities because of their character or their affiliation to evangelical churches or who would wear in public outward manifestations of their faith such as a visible crucifix, will attract the adverse notice of the authorities on return to Iran and should be considered at risk of persecution. In such cases a grant of asylum will be appropriate.**

3.8.16 **Moreover, there may be some Christian converts who can demonstrate that they have come to the attention of the authorities previously for different reasons and this in combination with their conversion will put them at real risk of persecution.** The conversion plus additional risk factors may compel the authorities to show an adverse interest in the individual where knowledge of the conversion in itself would not be of interest. Where applicants are able to demonstrate such a risk, a grant of asylum is likely to be appropriate.

The guidance provided for this particular category of claims only refers to the risk for Christian converts, despite the title of this section including 'Christians' and some COI being referenced in paragraphs 3.8.6 and 3.8.8 which highlights the treatment of this particular group. It is considered that the following COI supports the contention that 'Christians' and not just Christian converts are at risk in Iran and should also be included within this risk category:

- [Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Iran: eleven Christians walk free from court, 19/05/2011](#)

[...] Six other members of the Church of Iran, based in Shiraz, are still awaiting the outcome of a consultation on their case. They are charged with blasphemy. After struggling to find evidence to convict them, the case was adjourned to allow time for the prosecution to seek the opinion of Iran's traditional churches concerning the validity of the charge. Another member of the Church of Iran, Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, is also still awaiting a date for his appeal against a death sentence for apostasy.

[...] We continue to urge the acquittal of the six in Shiraz, whose charges are baseless, and of Pastor Nadarkhani, whose death sentence is an appalling violation of the right to freedom of religion and belief, which, as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Iran is obliged to uphold. We also call for the immediate release of house church pastor Vahik Abrahamian, who remains imprisoned in Hamadan despite the release of his three co-accused." [...]
- [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] During the past year, religious freedom conditions continued to deteriorate, especially for religious minorities such as Baha'is, Christians, and Sufi Muslims, and physical attacks, harassment, detention, arrests, and imprisonment intensified. Even the recognized non-Muslim religious minorities protected under Iran's constitution – Jews, Armenian and Assyrian Christians, and Zoroastrians – faced increasing discrimination and repression.

[...] During the reporting period, the number of incidents of Iranian authorities raiding church services, harassing and threatening church members, and arresting, convicting, and imprisoning worshippers and church leaders has increased significantly. Christians, particularly Evangelical and other Protestants, are subject to harassment, arrests, close surveillance, and imprisonment; many are reported to have fled the country. Indigenous Assyrian and Armenian Christian religious leaders also have been targeted. Since becoming president, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for an end to the development of Christianity in Iran. The government requires Evangelical Christian groups to submit congregation

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

membership lists. Rhetoric from political and religious leaders demonizing and insulting the Christian community also has increased significantly. For example, in January 2011, the governor of Tehran, Morteza Tamaddon, publicly referred to detained Christians as “deviant and corrupt” and vowed to identify and detain more. He likened Evangelical Christians to the Taliban and accused them of placing —themselves within the religion of Islam like a pest and under the cover of Christianity and with the support of England they have 80 designed a movement. In August 2010, Ayatollah Hosseini Booshehri, a religious leader and member of the Assembly of Experts, gave speeches throughout the country, particularly in Qom, against the spread of house churches in Iran and referred to Christians as —our enemy. Since June 2010, more than 250 Christians have been arbitrarily arrested throughout the country, including in Arak, Bandar Abbas, Bandar Mahshahr, Ardabil, Tabriz, Khoramabad, Mashhad, Hamadan, Rasht, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Elam. In December 2010 and January 2011 alone, approximately 120 Christians were arrested. At the end of the reporting period, at least 15 Christians remained in prison because of their religious activities. In cases involving offenses based on religious belief, Iranian authorities typically release prisoners, but leave the charges against them or their convictions in place in order to be able to threaten them with re-imprisonment at any future time. In September 2010, pastor Vahik Abrahamian, his wife Sonia Keshish-Avanesian, Arash Kermanjani, and Arezo Teymouri were arrested at Abrahamian’s home in Hamadan. All four were held in solitary confinement for 40 days and reportedly suffered physical abuse and psychological pressure. The four have been charged with propagating Christianity, opposing the Islamic Republic, and having contact with exiled opposition figures. At the end of the reporting period, the four remain in prison and no trial has been scheduled. In June 2010, Christian pastor Behrouz Sadegh-Khandjani, Mehdi Furutan, Mohammad Beliad, Parviz Khalaj, and Nazly Beliad were arrested on charges of apostasy, holding political meetings, blasphemy, and —crimes against the Islamic order. The Revolutionary Court in Shiraz found the five men guilty of crimes against the Islamic order and sentenced each to one year in prison. After serving eight months, they were released on bail in February 2011. Their lawyer has appealed the one-year prison sentence. Reportedly, the five have been informed by authorities that they will stand trial on the blasphemy charges in the near future. In April 2010, Iranian authorities arrested Ali Golchin, a Christian convert, in Varamin, and confiscated several bibles, his computer, identification cards, and other personal belongings. After nearly three months in prison, much of the time in solitary confinement, Golchin was released in July and was never charged. Also in April, authorities raided the home of Christian pastor Behnam Irani in Karaj and confiscated personal belongings, including religious materials; he was released on bail in June. In February 2010, Hamid Shafiee, a Christian priest, and his wife, Reyhaneh Aghajari, were arrested in the central city of Isfahan. Security agents seized their personal belongings, including books, telephones, CDs, and a number of Bibles in Persian. Their whereabouts and the charges against them are unknown. In October 2009, Youcef Nadarkhani, a pastor from northern Iran, was arrested after he questioned the Muslim monopoly on the religious instruction his children were receiving in school, arguing that the Iranian constitution permits parents to raise children in their own faith. Nadarkhani, and later his wife, Fatemeh Passandideh, were charged with apostasy. While his wife was released in October 2010 after four months in prison, Nadarkhani was convicted and sentenced to death by a court in Gilan province. In December, Nadarkhani’s lawyer appealed the ruling. At the end of the reporting period, Nadarkhani remains in prison while he awaits a decision from the Iranian Supreme Court. [...]

➤ [UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Section VII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Iran, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] Under the Iranian constitution, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are protected religions. However, in 2010, religious minorities in Iran continued to face restrictions on the right to practise their religion, and faced discrimination and restrictions on access to employment and education. Muslims do not have the right to change their religion in Iran, and apostasy is punishable under law.

[...] Christians from more informal “house churches”, those who had converted from Islam and those involved in evangelism faced mounting harassment at the end of 2010. Christian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani was reportedly sentenced to death on charges of apostasy in September. His appeal was still outstanding at the end of the year. Pastor Behrouz Sadegh-Khanjani was arrested in June and was

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

charged with apostasy and blasphemy. Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported that 25 Christians from house churches were arrested on 26 December, and up to 100 others were detained and then released. Both Baha'is and some Christians are regularly accused by the Iranian authorities of acting as foreign agents. [...]

➤ [Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Iranian news website suspended after reporting burning of New Testaments, 16/03/2011](#)

[...] Mohabat News, the only active news agency inside Iran reporting on the recent mass arrests of Christians in the country, was suddenly suspended today. It is unclear why the website has been disabled, however in the past the authorities have been known to shut down websites run by human rights groups and critics of the regime under the guise of defending the nation against "cyber warfare". In recent months a staff member of Mohabat News was allegedly threatened via an email from the Revolutionary Guard, which stated that he and his family would be targeted, and "bad things" would happen to them as a result of Mohabat's output. The suspension of Mohabat News came the day after it reported the seizure and burning of 600 New Testaments by authorities in western Iran on 7 February 2011. In a routine border inspection of a bus in Salmas in Western Azerbaijan, the Office of Contraband Search and Seizure along with the Revolutionary Guards reportedly discovered two boxes, each containing 300 New Testaments that had allegedly been smuggled across the border. No passengers claimed ownership of the confiscated boxes, and the official website of the Revolutionary Guards accused the United States of playing a major role in this incident. These developments have occurred within the context of escalating fears for religious minorities in Iran. The Baha'i International Community recently reported that so far this month, the Iranian authorities have arrested at least nine Baha'is who provided schooling to children in a region of Iran devastated by an earthquake seven years ago. The authorities allege the Baha'is "took advantage" of the desperate need for teachers following the earthquake. Furthermore, at least 282 Christians have been arrested in around 34 cities in Iran since June 2010. All have faced many hours of intense interrogation and most have faced long periods in solitary confinement. At least fifteen of these Christians remain in prison, including Khalil Yarali, who was held in solitary confinement for 28 days in an unknown place and under intense interrogations before being transferred to Karoon prison in Ahwaz. CSW Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "The sudden suspension of Mohabat News is a disturbing development, and we await clarification on the reasons behind it. However, CSW is deeply concerned both by the restrictions placed on the publication, importation and reprinting of Christian literature, which have caused the rise in smuggling, and by the continuing cycle of arrests and detentions of Baha'is and Christians on the basis of their religious beliefs. We once again call on the Iranian government to respect its international obligations to uphold all aspects of the right to religious freedom, and to also release those who are still held without charge."

➤ [UN Human Rights Council, Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011](#)

[...] 26. [...] Reports also continued to be received about Christians, in particular converts, being subjected to arbitrary arrest and harassment. [...]

➤ [Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Iranian government detains more Christians in another wave of arrests, 18/02/2011](#)

On the evening of Sunday 13 February, an estimated 45 Christians were temporarily detained overnight by the Iranian authorities in various towns and cities, including at least five people who were held in Tehran's notorious Evin prison. At least one woman was detained in Mashad, while two men were detained in Ahwaz, and other men in Karaj, Robat Karim and Dezful. One man and his pregnant wife were released after being informed that they must return for questioning once their child is born. The wave of arrests and temporary detentions by the Iranian government appear to be part of the government's wider tactic of repression and intimidation of the Christian community. Similar tactics have been deployed against Iran's Baha'i community. Concern is mounting for seven Baha'i leaders detained since early 2008 after it was revealed that two of them, Mrs Fariba Kamalabadi and Mrs Mahvash Sabet, have been transferred to the brutal 'Section 200' of Gohardasht prison on 12 February. The Baha'i International Community reports that Mrs Fariba Kamalabadi has been physically threatened by inmates, and that both women were told

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

prior to the move that the inmates of Section 200 had been 'warned' about them. The five male Baha'i leaders were transferred in late January to Section 4 of the prison, which is more crowded and where they are now suffering severe physical privations. Encouragingly, several Christians who were detained in the wave of arrests that began on 26 December 2010 have also been released on bail. Those released include six who were held in Tehran and four who were held in Isfahan, including Assemblies of God pastor Leonard Keshishian. Some of the Christians have reported that whilst detained they were kept in solitary confinement for lengthy periods and were subjected to harsh interrogation. However, more than 30 Christians remain in prison in various cities across Iran. On 15 February Pastor Behrouz Sadegh-Khanjani, a second generation Christian detained in Shiraz since June 2010 and charged with crimes against the Islamic Order, political meetings and blasphemy, was released on bail along with four other Christians from Muslim backgrounds after a court failed to reach a verdict. Pastor Khanjani now awaits a further hearing, which is expected to take place in April. There has been no update on the appeal against a death sentence for apostasy by Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, who was arrested in October 2009 and received written confirmation of this sentence in November 2010. CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "CSW deplores the systematic targeting of religious minorities by the Iranian government. As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is legally obligated to uphold international standards of religious freedom for all its citizens."

➤ [Minority Rights Group, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, February 2011](#)

[...] The Constitution does provide for recognized religious minority status for Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians, all of whom have a long historical presence in Iran. The current Constitution, ratified in November 1979 and amended in July 1989, stipulates at Article 13 that these three groups – and only these three – are 'free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education' within the limits of the law. In addition, the three recognized religious minorities have a representation quota in the Iranian Parliament. But these constitutional protections should not blind us to the reality of their secondary status, and legislated representation has not proven a mechanism for the realization of equality for these communities.

[...]As of the end of September 2010, a Christian pastor, Yousef Nadarkhani, had been sentenced to death on charges of apostasy, according to the International Federation for Human Rights. In a further indication of the dangers facing Christian converts, in January 2011 the governor-general of Tehran Province, Morteza Tamaddon, described 'Evangelical proselytising Christians as a deviate [sic] and corrupt tendency' and reported that 'their leaders had been arrested in the Tehran province and more will be arrested in future'.⁶² [...]

➤ [Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 70 Christians arrested and detained over Christmas in Iran, 05/01/2011](#)

In the early hours of Christmas day the Iranian government arrested 25 Christians and sought to detain 16 others. 50 other Christians have also been detained but it is unclear as yet what the full details are surrounding their cases. This was the second year running that security services in Iran had targeted Christians over the Christmas period. Of the 25 detained, 11 have been released. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has serious concerns for the remaining 14 individuals still in prison. The individuals are all evangelical believers. They include pastors and leaders from within the house church networks of Iran. The government puts severe pressure on such individuals interrogating them brutally and holding them in solitary confinement in order to obtain the names of other church members, to deter them from continuing to practice their faith and to threaten them with further ramifications for Christian activities. One of the most troubling developments in the latest arrests has been the anti-Christian rhetoric used in public media by religious leaders and members of the Iranian government. Morteza Tamaddon, the Governor of Tehran, announced the arrest of several evangelical leaders in a speech in Tehran on 4 January 2010. "Just like the Taliban... who have inserted themselves into Islam like a parasite, they have crafted a movement with Britain's backing in the name of Christianity," he told state-run news agency, IRNA. Mr. Tamaddon described the Christians as "tabshiri" or 'missionaries' and threatened more arrests in the near future. Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director of CSW, said: "We condemn this brutal attack on evangelical Christians in Iran. The arrest of 70 members of one group reveals the clear targeting of

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

individuals along religious lines. Iran is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and is therefore legally obligated to uphold international standards of religious freedom for all its citizens.”

➤ [Christian Solidarity Worldwide, CSW gravely concerned for two Iranian pastors charged with apostasy, 21/12/2010](#)

[...] Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is deeply concerned by reports that two Iranian pastors have been charged with apostasy, and that one of them currently faces a death sentence. Their cases come at a time when religious minorities in the country are experiencing an increase in persecution, including detention and imprisonment. Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, from Rasht in Northern Iran, is currently being held incommunicado in Lakan prison. The Pastor was arrested on 13 October 2009 and charged with apostasy after he questioned the Muslim monopoly on the religious instruction of children in Iran, which contravenes the Iranian constitution, which permits parents to raise children in their own faith, and violates international statutes to which Iran is party, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). He was reportedly tried and informed orally in late September that he was to receive the death penalty, although the written sentence was not issued until 13 November. Pastor Nadarkhani’s lawyers filed an appeal on 5 December, but a date for the hearing has yet to be announced. Pastor Behrouz Sadegh-Khanjani, a second generation Christian from Tehran and chairman of the Pastoral Council of the Church of Iran, has been detained in a high security prison in Shiraz since June this year. Pastor Khanjani was initially arrested in January 2010 after being summoned to Shiraz to offer an explanation for church activities, and was detained along with two other Christians. He was released on bail on 17 March, then was once more summoned to Shiraz on 16 June to “present his defence”, but was re-arrested and transferred to the infamous “Plate 100 Prison”. Pastor Khanjani has now been charged with apostasy, blasphemy, and contact with the enemy. The possible penalty is a death sentence. He too is held incommunicado, and despite the gravity of the charges, he has only been given access to his attorney once in the period between his arrest and late November. For the majority of his imprisonment Pastor Khandjani has been kept in solitary confinement, and CSW has received reports that his health is suffering due to extremely unhygienic conditions and deliberate mistreatment. CSW’s sources also report that Christian prisoners are subjected to eight hours of interrogation a day and some are kept in cramped rooms where they are unable to sleep. CSW’s Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, “We are deeply concerned for the welfare of Pastors Nadarkhani and Khanjani, who are detained in appalling conditions and cannot be contacted. They are being held solely for exercising their right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief. The international community must continue to urge the Iranian Government to release all those detained on the basis of their religious affiliation, to adhere to its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the CRC, and to ensure that all of its citizens can fully exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief”.

➤ [U.S. Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17/11/2010](#)

[...] Christians, particularly evangelicals, continued to be subject to harassment and close surveillance. During the reporting period, the government enforced its prohibition on proselytizing by closely monitoring the activities of evangelical Christians, discouraging Muslims from entering church premises, closing churches, and arresting Christian converts. Members of evangelical congregations were required to carry membership cards, photocopies of which must be provided to the authorities. Worshipers were subject to identity checks by authorities posted outside congregation centers. The government restricted meetings for evangelical services to Sundays, and church officials were ordered to inform the Ministry of Information and Islamic Guidance before admitting new members.

On April 14, 2010, government agents raided Christian Pastor Behnam Irani's home in Karaj and confiscated personal belongings such as cameras, computers, and Bibles. He was released on June 30, 2010, on bail.

On April 11, 2010, government agents arrested 19-year old Daniel Shahri, a Christian, on the basis of insulting Islam. Shahri was able to contact his parents on April 14, 2010, while being held in a prison in Isfahan. He was released on April 24, 2010 on bail and awaits a trial date.

On March 7, 2010, government officials imprisoned a Christian convert on charges of starting a home-based fellowship and promoting Christian doctrine. He was released on March 16 after posting bail.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

On February 28, 2010, Hamid Shafiee, a Christian priest, and his wife, Reyhaneh Aghajari, were arrested in the central city of Isfahan. Security agents seized their personal belongings, including Persian Bibles. Their whereabouts and the charges against them were unknown at the end of the reporting period.

On February 20, 2010, plainclothes security agents in Tehran arrested an Armenian Christian pastor, Vahik Abrahamian; reportedly, he was being held in Evin prison.

On February 2, 2010, state security agents arrested Reverend Wilson Issavi, the pastor of the Evangelical Church of Kermanshah in Isfahan, on charges of "converting Muslims." Issavi's wife was able to visit him once and reported he had been tortured. On March 29 he was released from prison on bail.

On January 8, 2010, the Fars Provincial Ministry of Intelligence detained an unknown number of persons who were reportedly Christians. Under interrogation the detainees gave the names of those leading Christian groups in the area leading to further arrests.

On December 24, 2009, Pakdasht security forces raided a home-church gathering and arrested the 15 members who were in attendance. All 15 were released in early January with orders to return to sign documents. Upon returning three were rearrested and held until March 17 when they were released.

On December 17, 2009, security officers raided a Christian worship gathering in Karaj and arrested the two leaders, Kambiz Saghadee and Ali Keshvar-Doost. The security officers also confiscated Bibles and Christian books. No updates were available at the end of the reporting period.

On December 16, 2009, security officers on orders from the Revolutionary Court of Mashhad searched the home of and arrested Hamideh Najafi, a Christian woman residing in Mashhad. They said that she would be charged with "contacting foreign Christian television networks." The three security officers seized religious items. Najafi was released in early January and sentenced to three months of house arrest and threatened with losing custody of her 10-year-old daughter if she spoke about Christianity.

Between June and August 2009, there were at least 30 cases of Christians arrested and detained across the country, mostly during church gatherings. All were released by September 2009.

In May 2009 security officials arrested five Christian converts in Karaj who had gathered in a home for Bible study and worship. The house where they were meeting was searched, and several Bibles were confiscated. The five were being held at an unknown location, and no updates were available at the end of the reporting period.

In May 2009 authorities arrested Abdul Zahra Vashahi in Bandar Manshahr, father of a prominent Christian-Iranian human rights activist in the United Kingdom, after warning him that he would be held accountable for his son's activities. He was released six days later.

In May 2009 a court in Ouroumieh reportedly denied pension benefits to Fatemeh Pauki, a retired Christian school teacher from West Azerbaijan Province. Pauki had been repeatedly detained and forced by authorities to promise to end her contact with Christian groups. Her husband, who had been detained and harassed by authorities over the years as well, was mysteriously killed in 2005.

In late March 2009, according to domestic human rights groups, a revolutionary court closed the Pentecostal church of Shahr Ara in Tehran, which belonged to Assyrian Christians. According to reports, the stated reason for the closure was the "illegal activities" of converting Muslims to Christianity and "accepting converts" to worship as members of the congregation.

In March 2009 a Shiraz court sentenced three Christian converts--Seyed Allaedin Hussein, Homayoon Shokouhi, and Seyed Amir Hussein Bob-Annari--to 8-month prison terms with 5 years' probation. The judge warned the men to discontinue their Christian activities or risk being tried as apostates.

On May 23, 2010, charges were dropped against two members of the Christian community, Maryam Rostampour and Marzieh Amirizadeh Esmailabad, who had been arrested in March 2009. The women were held in Evin Prison under reported psychological abuse and lack of adequate medical care. The two converts were released in November 2009 without bail. They were charged with apostasy and called back for trial in early April 2010 when charges were dropped the following month.

In January 2009 authorities arrested three Christians --Hamik Khachikian (an Armenian Christian), Jamal Ghalishorani, and Nadereh Jamali (both Christian converts) --in Tehran. Their homes were searched and their computers and books were confiscated. Khachikian was released without charges on January 28, while Ghalishorani and Nadereh were later released on bail.

In October 2008 Ramtin Soodmand, a Christian, was released on bail. Soodmand had been arrested on August 21, 2008, on charges of spreading antigovernment propaganda.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

In July 2008 plain clothes security officers raided the home of Isfahan Iranian Christians Abbas Amiri and his wife, Sakineh Rahnama, during a meeting. Both Amiri and Rahnama died of injuries suffered during the raid. Authorities denied permission for the local Christian community to hold a memorial service for the couple.

In June 2008 a Christian convert couple, Makan Arya and Tin Rad, reportedly were seized from their home in Tehran. Authorities accused Arya of "activities against national security" and Rad of "activities against the holy religion of Islam." Officials threatened to charge the two with apostasy. After being forced to sign statements swearing that they had not converted from Islam, Arya and Rad were released on bail. The two were forced to leave their church, and Arya was pressured to display pictures of Muslim leaders in his storefront window to ward off continued attacks on his shop.

According to a September 2008 report, Christian converts Mahmoud Matin-Azad and Arash Basirat were released after a tribunal ruled that the charges of apostasy brought against the men were invalid. The two were arrested in Shiraz in May 2008.

Christian convert Mojataba Hussein, arrested in May 2008, remained in detention. His family did not know where he was being held, and requests for a visit were denied.

[...] Although the constitution gives Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians the status of "protected" religious minorities, in practice non-Shi'a Muslims faced substantial societal discrimination, and government actions continued to support elements of society who create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities. President Ahmadinejad's agenda stressed the importance of Islam in enhancing "national solidarity" and mandated that government-controlled media emphasize Islamic culture in order to "cause subcultures to adapt themselves to public culture." After President Ahmadinejad took office in August 2005, conservative media intensified a campaign against non-Muslim religious minorities, and political and religious leaders issued a continual stream of inflammatory statements. The campaigns against non-Muslims contributed to a significantly worse situation for non-Muslim society throughout the reporting period. Sunni Muslims and Christians encountered societal and religious discrimination and harassment at the local, provincial, and national levels. [...]

➤ [International Federation for Human Rights, The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, October 2010](#)

[...] Christians

Generally speaking, there are two groups of Christians in Iran, who may be classified as ethnic and 'non-ethnic'. Ethnic Christians include the Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans. Many of them are followers of the Orthodox Church, but some are also Catholics or Protestants. 'Nonethnic' Christians are mostly followers of the Protestant and Evangelical churches and many are converts from Islam. The recognition of Christianity as one of the three non-Islamic religions accepted by the Constitution has given a safe margin to the ethnic Christians only. 'Non-ethnic' Christians, however, have faced great pressure because, unlike the 'ethnic' Christians, they are involved in proselytising. Former Muslims who have converted from Islam are frequently persecuted, ill-treated and prosecuted for their beliefs. According to Islamic tenets, Prophet Mohammad was the last prophet of God and Islam the last and ultimate religion on earth. Any conversion from Islam to other religions is forbidden and considered as an act of apostasy. Even if a person was not a Muslim before conversion to Islam, but decided to give up Islam and convert back to his/her previous religion or another religion, s/he would be considered apostate. The evangelical priests and missionaries are also persecuted for proselytising, i.e. attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. Some examples of the persecuted Christians in recent years follow:

- Ghorban Dordi Tourani, pastor of House group Church, was killed with his throat cut outside his house in the northern city of Gonbad in November 2005.
- Mohammad Jaber and Mohammad Ali Ja'afarzadeh, of the House group Church, were killed in May 2007.⁴⁷
- Abbas Amiri was killed by security forces in Isfahan in 2008. His wife reportedly also "died of injuries under torture".⁴⁸

Other than those unlawful killings, newly converted Christians are regularly detained and held for long periods in detention. They are occasionally charged with apostasy, but in recent years most have either been released after a period in detention or received imprisonment sentences. There are frequent attacks on public celebrations of Christmas every year in various cities including Rasht and Karaj as well as Tehran.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Most recently, a number of followers of the Pentecostal Church were arrested in Tehran and Rasht in June 2010. They included Pastor Behrouz Sadeq Khanjani, who was arrested in Shiraz. Another priest of the Church, Yousef Nadarkhani, has been in detention in Rasht since October 2009, for objecting to the practice of forcing Christian school students to read the Quran. A house-church pastor, Behnam Irani, who had been detained in Karaj in April 2010, was released on bail in late June. All three pastors had been detained in previous years as well. Their lawyer said the main charge against them was apostasy, but they had also been charged with “acting against the national security,” “insulting Islam,” and “propaganda against the system.” He also said that the number of newly converted Christians charged with apostasy was on the rise and he represented about 10 of them.⁴⁹ Wilson Issawi, pastor of the Assyrian Pentecostal Church of Kermanshah, was arrested in February 2010 and released on bail in March. The authorities had earlier sealed his Church and banned him from returning to Kermanshah or reopening the Church. In 2009, two other Assyrian Pentecostal Church centres had been closed down in the Shahrara district of Tehran and the city of Urmia in north-western Iran. Books on Christianity are published in small print runs and they are not available in the provinces. Christians have to travel to Tehran to acquire religious books. In early June 2010, Gerdab.ir, one of the websites of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, reported that hundreds of “distorted versions” of the Old and New Testament had been discovered at the border and burnt on the spot.

Other religious and ethnic minorities

Excerpt from March 2011 OGN

3.8.6 Government rhetoric and actions create a threatening atmosphere for nearly all non-Shi'a religious groups, most notably for Baha'is, as well as Sufi Muslims, evangelical Christians, and members of the Jewish community and there are reports of government imprisonment, harassment, intimidation, and discrimination based on religious beliefs.

Despite the general information on the adverse treatment of religious minorities referred to in paragraph 3.8.6, no conclusion is reached regarding their risk of persecution. Furthermore, no additional COI is included on these particular groups nor is any COI included on the treatment of Baluchis, Ahwazi Arabs, Azeris or Zoroastrians.

The following is a snapshot of available COI in the public domain from the main human rights sources at the time of writing this commentary which supports the position that some minority religious groups are also at risk of persecution. It is divided under the following headings:

- [Ahwazi Arabs](#)
- [Azeris](#)
- [Bah'ais](#)
- [Baluchis](#)
- [Jews](#)
- [Sabeen Mandaens](#)
- [Sufi Muslims](#)

Ahwazi Arabs

- [Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Iran, 06/07/2011](#)

[...] Arabs in Iran's Khuzestan province have faced decades of marginalization and under-development. According to the Ahwaz Human Rights Organization, in its submission for the February 2010 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council, the province is rich, and produces 90 per cent of Iran's oil, but one-third of its population lives in abject poverty. They have little access to sanitation, proper housing, and no regular access to clean water or electricity. Access to employment is also limited, and Arabs suffer discrimination in language rights, which impacts on their access to media and other

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

sources of news and information, and to cultural activities. The Ahwaz Human Rights Organization reported that, 'due to discrimination, almost all Ahwazi women living in rural areas are illiterate', and states that 'while the illiteracy rate is about 10-18 per cent in Iran, it is over 50 per cent among Arab men in Khuzestan, and even higher for Ahwazi women' [...]

➤ [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] Muslim minorities continue to face repression. Several of the country's ethnic minorities – Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, and Turkmen – practice Sunni Islam. This means these groups are doubly affected, and subject to discriminatory policies based on both their ethnic identity and their faith. Sunni Muslim leaders regularly are intimidated and harassed by intelligence and security services and report widespread official discrimination. In addition, the Iranian government discriminates against the Sunni community in government employment, particularly in leadership positions in the executive and judicial branches. Some Iranian Sunni leaders have reported widespread abuses and restrictions on their religious practice, including detentions and abuse of Sunni clerics, as well as bans on Sunni teachings in public schools and Sunni religious literature, even in predominantly Sunni areas. The Sunni community still has not been able to build a mosque in Tehran and, in recent years, Sunni mosques were destroyed in eastern Iran near Zabol, Sistan-Baluchistan, and Mashhad. In January 2010, there were reports that 19 Sunni clerics had been arrested for spreading Sunni teachings in several parts of the country, including Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Baluchistan, West Azerbaijan, Ahvaz, Tavalesh, and Khorassan provinces. Their whereabouts are unknown. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2011: Iran, 13/05/2011](#)

[...] In September, four Ahwazi Arabs held since June 2009 were reported to have been sentenced to death on charges including "enmity against God and corruption on earth". [...]

➤ [Minority Rights Group, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, February 2011](#)

[...] In April 2005, the province of Khuzestan, home to most of Iran's Arabs,²⁴ also witnessed widespread protests, this time centring on a leaked secret letter allegedly written by former Vice President Mohammad Abtahi. The letter briefly outlined a policy to radically alter the province's demographic makeup by moving Arabs (especially those with higher education) to other parts of the country, whilst moving non-Arabs into the region, the end in mind being a reduction of the province's Arab population to a third of what it was in 2005.²⁵ The authenticity of the letter was never proven and Abtahi and the Khatami administration (1997–2005) adamantly denied authorship.

Apocryphal or otherwise, the letter led Arabs of Khuzestan to mobilize and give voice to long-held grievances against the state, in much the same way Azeris would a year later. When the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing visited Iran in 2005, he reported that in Ahwaz, Khuzestan's capital, 'thousands of people [were] living with open sewers, no sanitation, no regular access to water, electricity and no gas connections', despite the fact that the province has been the cornerstone of Iran's massive oil wealth for more than a century.²⁶ That Khuzestan furnishes much of Iran's wealth but receives very little of it for local development has been the single greatest source of grievance amongst Iranian Arabs. This antagonism is only further enflamed by large government development projects (like the Dekhoda sugar cane plantation) that have uprooted and displaced upwards of 200,000 to 250,000 Arabs, with compensation for confiscated land being as little as one-fortieth of market value.²⁷ Perhaps more troubling is that the government does not offer jobs in these projects to local Arabs. Instead, it prefers to plan and build new cities like Shirinshahr for non-Arabs brought to the province from places including Yazd in central Iran, an initiative with obvious implications for Abtahi's abovementioned denial.²⁸ In February 2006, Amnesty International reported that government-directed migration of non-Arabs into Khuzestan is linked to economic policies that offer zero per cent interest loans to migrants, but not to Arabs.²⁹

The province is also beset by other problems resulting from a century of deliberate neglect and underdevelopment: higher illiteracy, lower life expectancy and higher unemployment rates than the rest

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

of country are just three examples.³⁰ In regard to economic inequality, Khuzestan is only outdone by Sistan-Baluchistan, another province where ethnic minorities constitute the bulk of the population, where unverifiable reports put 76 per cent of the population below the poverty line, in stark contrast to the national rate of 18 per cent.³¹ [...]

➤ [International Federation for Human Rights, The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, October 2010](#)

[...] The Iranian Arabs in Khuzestan are facing different problems in comparison with some other ethnic groups.

Around 15 April 2005, a controversial letter dated 1999 and attributed to Mr. Mohammad Ali Abtahi, advisor to then President Khatami, surfaced in Ahvaz. While the alleged writer denied its authenticity, the letter suggested policies for transfer of Arabs in other parts of Iran, the settling of non-Arabs in Khuzestan, and removing Arab names of places. The Arabs who peacefully demonstrated against the letter in Ahvaz were fired upon by the police and the security forces. Consequently, protests spread to many other cities in the province and in the resulting excessive use of force by the authorities, scores of people were reported to have died including at least two children; hundreds were injured and hundreds arrested, including women and children.

Iranian Arab activists have argued that, regardless of the authenticity of the letter, those policies aimed at changing the demographic composition of the Arab-inhabited regions have been gradually implemented over the years. They contend that several hundred thousand non-Arabs have been settled in Ahvaz from 1996-2006. This policy goes hand in hand with measures aimed at confiscation of land and displacing the local Arabic-speaking population as well as denying them their cultural rights. The above discriminatory practices were voiced by the former MP for Ahvaz (2000-2004) and leader of the Lejnat al-Wefaq al-Eslami (Islamic Unity Party; IUP), Jasem Shadidzadeh Al-Tamimi, in an open letter to then President Khatami in late April 2005, a few days after the outbreak of the protests. Those concerns are summarised as follows:

- More than 15,000 people have been displaced to Mashhad because their lands have not been demarcated properly and the military forces are quartered there; Many refugees of the Iran-Iraq war are still living in other cities, 20 years since it ended;
- People's lands have been confiscated with no or negligible compensation, e.g. more than 120,000 hectares were expropriated for a cane sugar expansion project, more than 47,000 hectares for an agricultural project of the war veterans in the Jofeir region, more than 25,000 hectares for fishery construction, and more than 6,000 hectares for housing 'devout people' from northern and north-eastern Khuzestan province in areas bordering the city of Shoush; More than 50,000 were displaced in Shirinshahr residential estate for expansion of cane sugar project;
- More than 4,000 people were made homeless due to the demolition of the Sepidar housing complex in Ahvaz;
- Arabs were discriminated against by the denial of licence to the IUP, the refusal of publication licence for an Arabic-language newspaper and the refusal of permission to establish NGOs;
- Arabs are the most numerous prisoners in Khuzestan.³³

Mr. Shadidzadeh, having been disqualified from standing for parliamentary election in 2004, was detained and later released without charge. The IUP had engaged in lawful peaceful activities to represent the rights of the Arab population and its list of all-Arab candidates had won all the seats with the exception of one in the municipal council elections in Ahvaz in 2003. Nevertheless, the authorities outlawed the IUP in November 2006.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, who visited Iran in July 2005, confirmed these concerns and added her own:

"The UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing observed disproportionately poor living conditions that may point to a significant degree of neglect in relation to the housing necessities of ethnic minorities. Such groups seem to have been suffering from uneven distribution of development resources from the national authorities in Tehran.

"The living conditions in Khuzestan and Kermanshah in poor neighbourhoods mainly inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Muslim Sufis were extremely unsatisfactory. Particularly serious conditions were observed in places like Ghal'e Channan and Akhar Asphalt in Ahvaz with, in some cases, a complete lack of basic services impacting

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

negatively on the populations' health status, in addition to contributing to severe security problems. Most poor neighborhoods were unpaved, open-air sewage was sometimes observed and uncollected garbage blocked streets, obstructing traffic and access from the outside in case of emergencies...

"Information was also received suggesting that displacement caused by development projects and land confiscation disproportionately affected minority groups.

"In Khuzestan, the Special Rapporteur visited lands traditionally cultivated by Iranian Arabs, which were expropriated by the Government for remarkably low prices in order to provide space for development projects and plantations."³⁴

The rate of unemployment among the Arabs is reportedly much higher than the national average. There is a shortage of water, electricity and sanitation in Khuzestan. Despite the pressing water shortage in the province, there are reports that water is to be channeled from the Karun River in Khuzestan to Isfahan, Yazd and Rafsanjan in other provinces. [...]

Azeris

➤ [Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Iran, 06/07/2011](#)

[...] The Azeri community continues to face restrictions on the use of their language, including in the media, as well as political and social marginalization. In 2010, the case of an Azeri woman, Sakhineh Mohammed Ashtani, who was accused of adultery, attracted international attention when she was sentenced to death by stoning. It was argued that one of the factors that stood against her during her trial was that she did not speak Farsi well enough to be able to understand the proceedings in the case. Ashtani has reportedly been subject to torture. Her previous sentence was revoked, but she continues to face a sentence of death by hanging [...]

➤ [U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)

[...] On August 25, the brother of Azeri activist Youssef Soleiman reported that prison authorities administered electric shocks and gave psychotropic drugs to his brother. Soleiman was arrested on June 16; no charges had been announced in his case at year's end.

[...] On June 29, authorities released Azeri minority activist Ali Bikas from Evin Prison after an appeals court acquitted him of all charges

[...] Ethnic Azeris comprised approximately one-quarter of the country's population, were well integrated into government and society, and included the supreme leader among their numbers. Nonetheless, Azeris complained that the government discriminated against them, banning the Azeri language in schools, harassing Azeri activists or organizers, and changing Azeri geographic names. Azeri groups also claimed a number of Azeri political prisoners had been jailed for advocating cultural and language rights for Azeris. The government charged several of them with "revolting against the Islamic state."

On April 2, approximately 10,000 Azeris demonstrated near Lake Urmia, located between the provinces of West Azerbaijan and East Azerbaijan, to protest the government's lack of attention to the drying out of the lake. The protesters also demanded the preservation of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage. Authorities arrested more than 100 demonstrators.

On May 25, intelligence officials arrested Akbar Azad, an Azeri author and journalist, at his home in Tehran. After his arrest, security forces searched his home and confiscated his computer, books, and personal property. At year's end he remained in detention.

On August 1, two to three thousand Azeris reportedly demonstrated for the right to be educated in Azeri Turkish and to condemn discrimination against their community. According to the RFE report, Basij militants broke up the demonstration and arrested at least 12 individuals.

[...] In May 2009 media sources reported that 16 ethnic Azeris were injured during clashes with police in the city of Tabriz and 15 demonstrators were arrested. Protests also took place in the town of Orumiyeh and in Tehran. The demonstrations commemorated riots of 2006 in Tabriz and other cities protesting a newspaper caricature depicting Azeris as cockroaches. [...]

➤ [Minority Rights Group, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, February 2011](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] In May 2006, a state-owned weekly ran a cartoon that depicted a cockroach uttering the English equivalent of 'huh?' in Azeri whilst in conversation with a Persian-speaking boy. The cartoon, drawn by an ethnic Azeri whose 'joke' was seemingly misinterpreted,¹⁹ was enough to trigger waves of protests. Initially mobilized on university campuses in Tabriz, the provincial capital of East Azerbaijan, the gatherings soon led to other protests in regional cities and towns, resulting in the closure of many shops and bazaars, and the gathering of tens of thousands of people on the streets and ultimately in front of the parliament in Tehran.

The government responded by shutting down the weekly and jailing its cartoonist and editors.²⁰ The protestors wanted apologies from the Minister of Culture and the local authorities that had cracked down violently on the protests (which were given), and a further apology from President Ahmadinejad (which was not).²¹ At the end of May 2006, they crafted a resolution that included a brief historical narrative of the 'unjust and discriminatory distribution of national resources, political power, and socio-cultural status among ethnic and religious minorities in Iran since 1925.'²² They also included a list of eleven specific demands relating directly to the Azeri minority that, amongst other things, included recognition of Azeri-Turkic as an official language and the right to use and teach it in schools; the right to a free press and media in Azeri-Turkic; and the right to organize cultural events, NGOs, political parties and trade unions. According to both a 2010 report by the International Federation for Human Rights and to interviews by the BBC with Azeris living in the border area with Azerbaijan in 2010, restrictions on the use of the Azeri language, Azeri-language media and other forms of cultural expression are still in place, and Azeris continue to face social, economic and political marginalization.²³ [...]

➤ [International Federation for Human Rights, The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, October 2010](#)

[...] The main problems that the Iranian Azeri Turks face concern cultural discrimination. Many people believe that languages other than Persian should be promoted in Iran and their speakers be allowed access to education in their own language.

Azeris have also complained of disrespect for their culture and language. Some controversial cartoons in the government newspaper, daily Iran, depicted cockroaches speaking Azeri Turkic in May 2006, and caused uproar in many cities of the north-western Iranian provinces and parts of Tehran. Scores of demonstrators were arrested, some were injured and four were said to have died in Naqadeh, a city in the West Azerbaijan province of Iran.

Since then, the Iranian Azeri cultural activists commemorate what is known as the "cartoons anniversary" every year, which the authorities try to contain through a policy of detainment; 31 activists were arrested in May 2010.

At the start of every school year, on 23 September, many Iranian Azeri students boycott the schools to protest and draw attention to the denial of their right to be educated in Azeri Turkic. The authorities respond with arrests. In 2006, two young teenagers, Mohammad Reza Evezpoor, aged 14, and his brother Morteza, aged 16, were among at least 15 who were detained in Tabriz, the provincial capital of East Azerbaijan.

Azeri cultural activists have criticised the local radio and TV channels for not carrying enough Azeri-Turkic language programmes. Responding to such criticism in April 2010, head of the Zanjan Province Radio and TV revealed: "We are not legally authorised to broadcast [programmes for children, adolescents and young people] in local language. Tehran must give authorisation for Turkish broadcasting of those programmes to enable us to do it... Based on their instructions, 50% of the programmes must be in Persian."³⁶

Azeri cultural activists point out that the authorities are pursuing a policy of blocking the spread of the Azeri Turkic by preventing children from watching programmes in their mother tongue.

Azeri cultural activists have faced problems for writing about or celebrating the Mother Tongue Day, and demanding education in their mother tongue. In June 2010, the appeal court of Azerbaijan sentenced Mr. Alireza Farshi and his wife Sima Didar to six months imprisonment for taking part in a demonstration in May 2009 in the Il Guli [People's Lake] Park of Tabriz, where "Education in Turkish" was one of the slogans.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Detentions also occur frequently in July every year, when thousands of Iranian Azeris gather at Fort Babak (Qaleh Babak) near the town of Kalibar in East Azerbaijan province to mark the birthday of an Iranian leader by the name of Babak, who rebelled against the Arab Islamic rulers

1,200 years ago. In May 2010, according to Iranian Azeri sources, a court in Kalibar tried Ayat Mohammad Jafari and sentenced him to 91 days imprisonment for "disrupting public order" by taking part in the 2004 celebrations at Fort Babak.

The same sources allege that some military personnel have been expelled from the armed forces for taking part in Azeri Turkic cultural activities or celebrations in recent years. Firooz Yousefi, a non-commissioned officer, was said to have been expelled from the Army for pan-Turkism in March 2010 and later detained in June.

Some of the Azeri Turkic publications that were banned in the past few years include Yarpaq, Dilmaj, Neday-e Azarabadegan, Varavi, Shams-e Tabriz, and Yashmaq.

- Sa'eed Matinpour, a journalist and cultural activist from the city of Zanjan, was arrested in 2007 and tried in a court behind closed doors, where his lawyer was not present. In June 2008, he was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment for "propaganda against the Islamic system," and "relations with foreigners," which he is currently serving. Matinpour is known for his writings protesting human rights violations by the Iranian authorities and calling for increased political, cultural and linguistic rights of the Azeri people in Iran, including the right to education and to publish in Azeri Turkic. [...]

Bah'ais

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Baha'is In Iran 'Summoned' To Intelligence Ministry, 09/08/2011](#)

Dozens of Baha'is in cities across Iran are reported to have been summoned to the Intelligence Ministry in recent weeks because of their activities in the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

Diane Ala'i, the community's representative to the United Nations in Geneva, told Radio Farda that some of the Baha'is were interrogated and some detained for having helped Baha'i students who wanted to pursue their higher education.

Some 14 Baha'is who worked at the BIHE were taken into custody in Tehran, Karaj, Shiraz, and Esfahan in May. Ala'i said seven of them are still being held in Tehran's Evin prison.

The BIHE was established unofficially in 1987 to provide higher education for young Baha'is barred from universities because of their religious beliefs.

Ala'i said initially the arrested Baha'is were charged with "acting against national security," but more recently the charge brought against them is "being a member of an illegal institute."

"The Baha'i International Community considers such measures suppression and pressure on the Iranian Baha'is," Ala'i said.

She said the recent arrests show that even though the Iranian authorities claim that Baha'is are allowed to study at universities, they are denied admission to universities and not allowed to pursue their studies through distance learning

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Baha'is arrested in several Iranian cities, 02/08/2011](#)

[...] Iranian state media have reported the arrests of an unspecified number of Baha'is in cities across the country, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

Arrests were reported in Tehran, Karaj, Esfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Yasouj, and Larestan.

The state Fars News Agency reported on July 31 that the arrested Baha'is belonged to an "international corruption network" engaged in "promoting and propagandizing the Baha'i cult through sex appeal and homosexuality."

The names of the arrested Baha'is were not made public.

Abdolkarim Lahiji, vice president of the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, told RFE/RL the Iranian regime has brought new charges against the Baha'i followers in order to justify its persecution of them.

Lahiji said that for the past 30 years the authorities were under the impression that by intensifying pressure on the Baha'is they could force them to abjure their faith.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

"Now that they have failed, they are adopting new policies to harass the Baha'i community," he added. Lahiji also noted that when Mohammad Javad Larijani, as the head of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, openly and officially calls Baha'ism a "cult" and expresses the establishment's hostility toward cults, state persecution of Baha'is increases. Such statements are construed by officials as authorizing the use of any kind of violence against Baha'is, Lahiji added [...]

➤ [Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Iran, 06/07/2011](#)

[...] The trial of seven Bahá'í leaders (including two women), who were arbitrarily arrested in 2008 and held without charge for 20 months, began in January 2010. In August, it was reported that Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm – who deny charges of espionage, propaganda activities against the Islamic order, and 'corruption on earth', among other allegations – were given 20-year jail sentences. Independent observers were not allowed to attend the trial. In September, the Bahá'í World News Service reported that lawyers representing the seven were informed that the sentence had been reduced to ten years on appeal. At the time of writing, MRG had received reports that the 20-year sentences were re-imposed in March 2011 [...]

➤ [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] The Baha'í community has long been subject to particularly severe religious freedom violations in Iran. Baha'is, who number at least 300,000, are viewed as "heretics" by Iranian authorities and may face repression on the grounds of apostasy. Since 1979, Iranian government authorities have killed more than 200 Baha'í leaders in Iran, and more than 10,000 have been dismissed from government and university jobs. Baha'is may not establish places of worship, schools, or any independent religious associations in Iran. In addition, Baha'is are barred from the military and denied government jobs and pensions as well as the right to inherit property. Their marriages and divorces also are not recognized, and they have difficulty obtaining death certificates. Baha'í cemeteries, holy places, and community properties are often seized or desecrated, and many important religious sites have been destroyed. In recent years, Baha'is in Iran have faced increasingly harsh treatment, including increasing numbers of arrests and detentions and violent attacks on private homes and personal property. Nearly 400 Baha'is have been arbitrarily arrested since 2005 and, at end of the reporting period, at least 75 Baha'is remain in prison on account of their religious beliefs. Dozens of Baha'is are awaiting trial while others were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 90 days to several years. All of those convicted are reportedly in the process of appealing the verdicts. According to human rights groups, more than 300 Baha'is have cases that are still active with authorities, despite having been released from detention. Also in recent years, Baha'í cemeteries in various parts of the country, including Tehran, Ghaemshahr, Marvdasht, Semnan, Sari, Yazd, Najafabad, and Isfahan, have been desecrated, defaced, or in some way blocked to the Baha'í community. Over the past several years, several articles in the government-controlled newspaper Kayhan, whose managing editor is appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, have vilified and demonized the Baha'í faith and its community in Iran. Iranian authorities also have gone to great lengths in recent years to collect information on all members of the Baha'í community in Iran and to monitor their activities. In March and May 2008, seven Baha'í leaders – Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naemi, Saeid Rezaie, Mahvash Sabet, Behrouz Tavakkoli, and Vahid Tizfahm – were arrested and taken to the notorious Evin prison in Tehran. After numerous postponements, the trial for the five men and two women started in January 2010 and concluded in June. They were formally charged with espionage, propaganda activities against the Islamic order, the establishment of an illegal administration, cooperation with Israel, acting against the security of the country, and corruption on earth. In August 2010, the seven Baha'is were sentenced to 20 years in prison and moved to Gohardasht prison in Karaj, a facility known for violence between inmates and unsanitary conditions. In September, authorities informed the seven Baha'is orally that the 20-year sentences were reduced to 10; however, prison authorities told the seven in March 2011 that the original 20-year sentences had been reinstated. Attorneys for the seven Baha'is, including Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, have had extremely limited access to their clients and court proceedings and have said categorically that the charges against them are baseless. USCIRF met with family members of the

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

imprisoned Baha'i leaders when they visited Washington in February 2011. During the reporting period, dozens of Baha'is have been arrested in several different cities throughout the country, including Tehran, Babolsar, Karaj, Nazarabad, Shahrekord, Semnan, Mashhad, Bandar Abbas, and Ghaemshahr. In most of these cases, Ministry of Intelligence officials appeared at the homes of Baha'is, searched the premises and confiscated computers, books and other materials, and then made arrests. No formal charges have been filed. In March 2011, six Baha'is were arrested in Kerman, four for allegedly providing education for young children and the other two for unknown reasons. All six remain in detention. Three Baha'is from Isfahan, including two teenagers, were arrested in early 2011 for teaching children classes. They were subsequently released. In January 2011, Navid Khanjani, a twenty-four year old Baha'i who began advocating for human rights after he was denied access to higher education, was sentenced to 12 years in prison after being convicted of "engaging in human rights activities, illegal assembly, and disturbance" of the general public's opinion. His lawyers are preparing an appeal. In March 2010, at least 50 young Baha'is were banned from travel outside the country, and some received prison sentences ranging from one to four years for teaching underprivileged children in southeastern Iran. During the past year, emboldened by Iranian law and policy, militant societal actors have physically attacked Baha'is and committed violent acts, including arson on Baha'i homes and businesses, with impunity. A recent wave of arson attacks on Baha'i-owned businesses in Rafsanjan appears to be part of a campaign to fracture relationships between Baha'is and Muslims in the city. Since October 2010, at least a dozen shops have been attacked and at least 20 Baha'i homes and businesses have received letters warning that Baha'is will suffer severe consequences for forming friendships with Muslims. In June 2010, in the village of Ivel in Mazandran province, Iranian authorities demolished approximately 50 Baha'i homes as part of a long-running, officially-sanctioned campaign to expel the Baha'is from the region. The vast majority of homes were unoccupied since the Baha'i residents had fled after previous incidents of violence or as a result of official displacement. In the past, Baha'is have not been allowed to attend university in Iran. Although the Iranian government maintains publicly that Baha'is are free to attend university, reports over the past year indicate that the de facto policy of preventing Baha'is from obtaining higher education remains in effect. Of the very few Baha'is who were enrolled in universities in recent years, most were expelled once their religious beliefs became known. Furthermore, during the past few years, young Baha'i schoolchildren in primary and high schools increasingly have been vilified, pressured to convert to Islam, and in some cases expelled on account of their religion. [...]

- [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Baha'is Deplore Arrests Of Academics In Iran, 24/05/2011](#)
The Baha'i International Community has described as "unjustifiable" the arrests of more than a dozen Baha'is in cities across Iran, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.
The community said in a statement from Geneva on May 23 that some 14 Baha'is were arrested during weekend raids on as many as 30 homes in Tehran, Karaj, Shiraz, and Esfahan.
It said those arrested were active in an institute established for Baha'i students who had been barred from higher education.
Baha'i International Community spokesman Farhad Sabetian told Radio Farda that books, CDs, and other teaching materials were confiscated. The arrested Baha'is have been taken to an unknown location, Sabetian said.
The Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) was established unofficially in 1987 to provide higher education online for young Baha'is denied entrance to universities by the government because of their religious beliefs, Sabetian said. The institute came under pressure in 1998, when some 36 faculty members and staff were detained, and again in 2001 and 2002.
Sabetian said although those involved in the institute have been subjected to pressure in recent years, the Iranian government never branded their activities illegal.
- [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2011: Iran, 13/05/2011](#)
[...] Seven Baha'i leaders arrested in 2008 were sentenced in August to 20 years' imprisonment following grossly unfair proceedings. They were convicted of espionage and engaging in propaganda against Islam. In September, the sentences were reportedly halved on appeal. [...]
- [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011: Iran, 12/05/2011](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] Some 300,000 Baha'is, Iran's largest non-Muslim minority, are not recognized in the constitution, enjoy virtually no rights under the law, and are banned from practicing their faith. Baha'i students are barred from attending university and prevented from obtaining their educational records. Under Ahmadinejad, concerted efforts to intimidate, imprison, and physically attack Baha'is have been carried out by security forces, paramilitary groups, and ordinary citizens with impunity. Hundreds of Baha'is have been executed since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and at least 60 were in prison in 2010 because of their beliefs. In August 2010, seven Baha'i leaders—which constituted the group's entire leadership—were sentenced to 20 years in prison, later reduced to 10 years, on charges of espionage and "engaging in propaganda against Islam." Since October 2010, numerous arson attacks against Baha'i homes and businesses in the city of Rafsanjan have been carried out in order to force them out of their communities. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, IRANIAN BAHA'I LEADERS HIT BY 'VINDICTIVE' SENTENCE EXTENSION, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] The reimposition of 20-year jail terms on seven leaders of Iran's Baha'i religious minority is "outrageous", Amnesty International said today as it made a renewed call for their immediate release. The seven had previously had their sentences cut from 20 to 10 years by an Iranian appeal court, only for the authorities to reverse the decision.

[...] The seven Baha'i leaders, two women and five men, are held in harsh conditions at Reja'i Shahr (also known as Gohardasht) prison in Karaj, near Tehran. They were convicted of alleged crimes including "espionage for Israel", "insulting religious sanctities" and "propaganda against the system" by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran in August last year. They denied all the charges against them.

[...] Arrests and harassment of Baha'is has increased sharply in recent years, with at least 79 Baha'is currently in prison. [...]

➤ [UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Section VII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Iran, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] Baha'is, who are not a recognised religious minority, continued to face particular harassment and discrimination. In August, seven Baha'i leaders were sentenced to 20 years in prison, a sentence that was subsequently reduced to 10 years on appeal. They were acquitted of the original charges relating to state security and propaganda against the regime, but convicted of charges relating to establishing an illegal organisation in a trial that failed to meet international standards. Other members of the Baha'i community in Iran face discrimination, harassment or imprisonment, with reports of more than 50 Baha'is being detained in Iran at the end of the year. [...]

➤ [UN Human Rights Council, Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011](#)

[...] 25. Concerns continued with respect to the treatment of the Baha'i community and other minorities in Iran which have been highlighted in previous reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. Special Procedures mandate holders continued to raise cases involving members of the Baha'i community with the Iranian authorities. The authorities note that while Baha'i is not recognized as an official religion, its followers enjoy equal social, civil and citizen's rights; they assert, however, that the Baha'i community has recruited members by irregular means or has acted against national security. On 13 August 2010, a number of Special Procedure mandate holders drew the attention of authorities to the cases of at least six members of the Baha'i community Mr. Ghavamoddin Sabetian, Mr. Hedayatollah Rezaie, Mr. Houman Hourbod, Ms. Noura Nabilzadeh, Ms. Sara Mahboubi and Mr. Moshtagh Samandari, who were arrested by officials from the Intelligence Ministry in the months of June and July 2010. Concerns were expressed that in most cases, Intelligence Ministry agents searched their homes and confiscated materials related to their religion.

26. In August 2010, the seven Baha'i community leaders, Ms. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saied Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, Ms. Mahvash Sabet,

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

were sentenced to 20 years in prison; their sentences were subsequently reduced to 10 years. The seven had been detained since 14 May 2008, although were only produced for trial on 12 January 2010. The High Commissioner for Human Rights raised their case several times in letters to and meetings with the Iranian authorities, expressing deep concern that these trials did not meet due process and fair trial requirements. She requested the opportunity for independent observers to monitor this and other high profile grounds, although this was rejected by the Iranian authorities. Although the seven were charged with acting against national security, espionage and spreading corruption on earth, the High Commissioner expressed concern that the charges brought against them appeared to constitute a violation of Iran's obligations under the ICCPR, in particular freedom of religion and belief, and freedom of expression and association. Reports also continued to be received about Christians, in particular converts, being subjected to arbitrary arrest and harassment. [...]

➤ [Minority Rights Group, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, February 2011](#)

[...] The persecution of minority religions – or, in fact, any Iranian minority – is most pronounced in the case of the Bahá'ís. This religious minority group does not enjoy the constitutional guarantees that are formally afforded to Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, nor, indeed, any legal protection under Iran's Islamic laws. Officially, they are considered heretics who constitute a political opposition and not a religious community, thereby attempting to undercut protestations to respect international laws and conventions on the freedom of religion. In 1985, for example, in a press release by the Islamic Republic's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, 'Bahá'ism' is referred to 'not specifically as a religious cult but rather a political party committed to the United States and Israel and devoted to furthering their predatory goals in Iran.'⁶⁵

Such statements continue to be echoed today, recently by Hossein Shariatmadari, a close confidant of the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and the managing editor of the conservative state-run paper Keyhan, who branded Bahá'ís as terrorists and Israel's fifth column. Mohammad Javad Larijani, the Secretary General of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, reiterated the same as the head of Iran's delegation at the 2010 UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review.⁶⁶ He denied that Bahá'ís suffered from any violations of human rights and claimed that they were, on the contrary, economically flourishing, and that the country tolerated them in spite of their 'cultish' traits and espionage activities for Israel and the United States.⁶⁷

These and other similar statements made by various government officials and senior clerics have long been the basis for the regime's organized efforts against this minority.⁶⁸ Between 1978 and 2005, 219 Bahá'ís were summarily killed by revolutionary courts on account of their faith, with the case of Bahman Samandari taken as the exemplar of the 'summary trial'.⁶⁹ He was arrested on 17

March 1992 and executed the next day, whilst the international community was in session at the UN Commission on Human Rights, considerations of due process, legal counsel and the like being obviously redundant, as far as the Iranian authorities were concerned.⁷⁰

Iranian authorities have often denied that the Islamic Republic's policy towards Bahá'ís is because of their religion and indeed have sought opportunities to frame them politically. A recent case is the ongoing detention since 2008 of the informal leadership of the Iranian Bahá'í community. They have been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment on charges of conspiring against the Islamic Republic, and their lawyers – drawn from Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi's The Defenders of Human Rights Center – have also been subject to intimidation, imprisonment, and attacks on their person by state agents.⁷¹

In January 2010, three Bahá'ís were arrested, allegedly in connection with the Green Movement, the popular uprising that swept Iran in the aftermath of the disputed presidential election of June 2009.⁷² This protest movement saw millions of Iranians – irrespective of ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic identities – take to the streets, where thousands were arrested and scores killed by state authorities.⁷³ As regards the specific arrest of the Bahá'ís, Tehran's state prosecutor declared that 'they were not arrested because they are Bahá'í, but for playing a role in organising the Ashura protests, [...] for having sent pictures of the unrest abroad [...] and because] arms and ammunition were seized in some of their homes'.⁷⁴[...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2011: Iran, 24/01/2011](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] The government denies adherents of the Baha'i faith-Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority-freedom of religion. In August the judiciary convicted seven leaders of the national Baha'i organization to 20 years each in prison; their sentences were later reduced to 10 years each. The government accused them of espionage without providing evidence and denied their lawyers' requests to conduct a prompt and fair trial. [...]

- [Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Issues Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran Submitted by Human Rights Watch to the UN Human Rights Committee on the occasion of its Pre-Sessional Review of Iran, December 2010](#)

[...] The government denies adherents of the Baha'i faith, Iran's largest non-Muslim religious minority, the right to freely practice their religion. In August 2010, a court convicted seven leaders of the national Baha'i organization to 20 years in prison after holding them in detention for 20 months without charge; their sentences were later reduced to 10 years' imprisonment. They were convicted of espionage after an unfair trial in which no evidence was presented against them. [...]

- [International Federation for Human Rights, The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, October 2010](#)

[...] Considered to be 'man-made' in comparison with 'divine' religions, the Baha'i faith is seen as the worst form of heresy by the Islamic Republic authorities. It originated in Iran in the 19th century and its founder claimed to be a messenger of God. Islam recognises Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity as divine anterior religions, but Muslims believe Prophet Mohammad was the ultimate prophet of God and Islam the ultimate divine religion. Others, such as the Baha'i faith, are man-made religions and thus tantamount to apostasy. Its followers are considered to be apostates and frequently accused of spying for Israel, presumably because their founder is buried in Israel and their Centre is also located there. In early 2009, in a letter to the intelligence minister, then Prosecutor-General Ayatollah Dorri Najafabadi noted that the Baha'i World Centre is located in Israel and then emphasised: "[The Baha'is] have long-standing and solid relations with the Zionist regime and they engage in collecting information, infiltrating activities and demolishing the ideological foundations of the people."

Followers of the Baha'i faith, reportedly numbering around 300,000, have been treated particularly harshly since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. By estimates of the Baha'i International Community, more than 200 Baha'is are believed to have been killed since 1979, many by execution.

Although the waves of killings and executions have subsided since the early 1990s, pressure on the Baha'i community has increased since the incumbency of President Ahmadinejad in 2005.

Problems faced by the Baha'is may be listed under at least five categories:

1. Direct political persecution. Members of the Baha'i community are frequently arrested and spend long periods in detention or sentenced to imprisonment.

It is beyond the scope of this report to give full details of such persecution, but we provide a few non-exhaustive examples from 2010. Since the beginning of 2010, numerous Baha'is have been sentenced to imprisonment, e.g. two in Hamedan to one year each; five in Mashhad to five years each and four to two years each; one in Semnan to three years; one in Sari to one year and one to six months; one in Bonab to one year. Scores of others have been detained in Tehran, Shiraz, Yazd, Sari, Semnan and elsewhere.

Seven Baha'is, who were responsible for coordinating the Baha'i community's affairs, were detained in March and May 2008 and have been held since. They appeared in court several times, the last being in June 2010, but it is still unclear what specific charges they are facing, except the recurring charge of espionage and the vaguely worded charges of "propaganda against the Islamic system," and "corruption on earth." In early August 2010, they were sentenced to 20 years imprisonment each and promptly sent to the remote Rajai-Shahr Prison outside the city of Karaj. In September 2010, the appeal court commuted their sentences to 10 years imprisonment each.

A total of 140 Baha'is were reportedly arrested during the post-election protests in 2009, of whom 40 are believed to remain in detention at the time of writing in July 2010.

2. Demolition of cemeteries and property. The cemeteries of Baha'is in various cities have been regularly attacked and demolished, completely or partially, by bulldozers, e.g. in Mashhad (June 2010); Damavand, west of Tehran (April 2010); Abadan and Khorramshahr, southern Iran (December 2009); Villashahr and

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Najafabad, central Iran (September 2009); northern city of Qaemshahr for the fourth time (January 2009); Isfahan (September 2008). Permission to bury the deceased Baha'is is frequently refused. Houses and property have not been spared either. While there have been recurrent reports of attacks on property, the most recent case involves the demolition of 50 houses of Baha'is in a village near Sari, in the northern Mazandaran province in June 2010. The Baha'i community has also reported a number of cases of land and property confiscation.

3. Denial of education. The Baha'i students have regularly been deprived of entering the university. For many years, Baha'i students were denied the right to higher education by the requirement to declare their allegiance to Islam or one of the three officially recognised religions in application forms. The requirement was removed in 2004, but Baha'i students who passed the university entrance examinations were still not able to enrol. They had been described as Muslims on university entrance examination result forms. They protested and were subsequently denied enrolment. Out of nearly 180 Baha'is who were admitted in 2006, most were expelled after the authorities established their religious allegiance, which the Baha'is refuse conscientiously to conceal. In 2007, at least 130 were expelled. In the current academic year, they are facing the restriction pronounced by the CSSB (See Employment and Education Regulations above).

Even Baha'i children in primary and secondary schools and their parents are insulted and face pressure from school authorities.

4. Denial of employment and business. A similar discrimination persists in employment by state institutions, which are legally bound not to employ the Baha'is. The state also refuses to issue business licences to followers of the faith or revokes the existing licences by refusing to extend them when they come up for renewal, unless they recant their belief.

5. Denial of social rights. Baha'is are not covered under the social security and pension system. They do not have the right to inheritance and do not qualify for financial compensation in case of physical harm or being killed. Marriage and divorce solemnised by the Baha'is are not recognised, and they cannot get married or divorced at the state-authorized notaries public, where couples are required to declare their religions in order to be stated in marriage or divorce documents. This is not possible for Baha'is, because under the Constitutional provisions, Iranians can be only Muslims or followers of one of the three recognised religions. [...]

The following two reports have been written by the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office and specifically document the treatment of Baha'i in Iran:

- [UN Human Rights Council, Written statement* submitted by the Bahá'í International Community, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, 17/02/2011](#)
- [The Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office, The compliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as concerns the situation of the Baha'is, December 2010](#)

Baluchis

- [Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Iran, 06/07/2011](#)

[...] Sistan-Balochistan, where many Baloch live, is one of Iran's most impoverished provinces, where according to MRG's recent briefing on minorities in Iran, 'human rights have been violated in a way unseen in other parts of the country'. Over decades this has resulted in disproportionate poverty rates, low standards of living, and linguistic and cultural repression. The armed pro-Balochi group Jondallah has engaged in the execution of non-Balochis and government officials, and taken part or expressed support for suicide bombings. This has resulted in an increased militarization of the province and a rise in extra-judicial killings of Balochis by the state.

This cycle of violence looked set to continue past year-end when a suicide attack occurred at the Imam Hussein mosque in Chabahar, in south-eastern Iran. The bombing took place during the Shi'a holy day, Ashura, when worshippers mark the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussein. An estimated

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

39 people were killed. According to the UK's *Guardian* newspaper and other media, Jondallah claimed responsibility. At the end of 2010, 11 Baluch prisoners were reportedly executed for alleged membership of Jondallah following the attack, however all had been imprisoned before the attack took place [...]

➤ [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] Muslim minorities continue to face repression. Several of the country's ethnic minorities – Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, and Turkmen – practice Sunni Islam. This means these groups are doubly affected, and subject to discriminatory policies based on both their ethnic identity and their faith. Sunni Muslim leaders regularly are intimidated and harassed by intelligence and security services and report widespread official discrimination. In addition, the Iranian government discriminates against the Sunni community in government employment, particularly in leadership positions in the executive and judicial branches. Some Iranian Sunni leaders have reported widespread abuses and restrictions on their religious practice, including detentions and abuse of Sunni clerics, as well as bans on Sunni teachings in public schools and Sunni religious literature, even in predominantly Sunni areas. The Sunni community still has not been able to build a mosque in Tehran and, in recent years, Sunni mosques were destroyed in eastern Iran near Zabol, Sistan-Baluchistan, and Mashhad. In January 2010, there were reports that 19 Sunni clerics had been arrested for spreading Sunni teachings in several parts of the country, including Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Baluchistan, West Azerbaijan, Ahvaz, Tavalesh, and Khorassan provinces. Their whereabouts are unknown. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2011: Iran, 13/05/2011](#)

[...] Mohammad Saber Malek Raisi, a Baluch youth aged 15 from Sarbaz, was reported in July to have been held without charge or trial since September 2009, possibly to force his elder brother to surrender to the authorities. In December, 11 Baluch men convicted after unfair trials were executed in Zahedan, apparently in retaliation for the PRMI bomb attack five days earlier. [...]

➤ [U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)

[...] Local and international human rights groups alleged serious economic, legal, and cultural discrimination against the Baluch minority during the year. Baluch journalists and human rights activists faced arbitrary arrest, physical abuse, and unfair trials, often ending in execution. In 2008 authorities executed Baluch journalist and education activist Yaghoob Mirnehad in Zahedan for alleged membership in the militant group People's Resistance Movement of Iran (formerly Jundallah), which the government considers a terrorist group. [...]

➤ [Minority Rights Group, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, February 2011](#)

[...] At the opposite end of the country, in the almost-forgotten province of Sistan-Baluchistan, the human rights situation is similarly troubling. Home to the mostly Sunni Baluchi people, the province is reportedly the poorest of Iran's provinces. Here, it is alleged that human rights have been systematically violated in a way unseen in other parts of the country.

Like Iran's Kurdish, Arab and Azeri regions, Sistan- Baluchistan also has a long history of armed and unarmed struggle against the state. Deliberate infrastructural neglect, poor standards of living, disproportionate poverty rates, and state antagonism for regional culture and language remain sources of entrenched discontent.³⁹ But today's context cannot be understood without reference to what has come to be known as the 'Tasuki Incident'. On 16 March 2006, a convoy of vehicles near the town of Tasuki was attacked by an armed group called Jondallah, self-described as a 'campaign for freedom and democracy in Iran [... which seeks] to protect the Baluch people and other religious and ethnic minorities.'⁴⁰ The group purports to 'accept the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other United Nations conventions or resolutions,'⁴¹ but has, since its inception in 2005, taken responsibility for numerous events that seriously undermine its claims. The 'Tasuki Incident', for instance, involved the capture of numerous government officials and the roadside execution of 23 of them who were identified as not being Baluchi. Seven further non-Baluchis were taken hostage, four of whom were killed and the

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

rest released, and the incident was followed by more bombings and killings, some of which the group justified and for which they claimed responsibility.⁴²

This violence provided the pretext for the further militarization of the province by government forces and an increase in the number of executions and extrajudicial killings by the state.⁴³ Between January and August 2007, for example, Amnesty International reports that Iran executed 166 people, 50 of whom were Baluchis, and all but one of whom were executed in the wake of a Jondollah attack in February 2007.⁴⁴ One member of parliament reported in March 2007 that 700 people were awaiting execution in the province of Sistan-Baluchistan, a number so large and controversial that Baluchi sources report that the provincial authorities were having to send Baluchis to places outside the province to be executed.⁴⁵ Most of those who await the death penalty have likely been convicted of crimes related to the drug trade. But it does not pass unnoticed to most observers that capital punishment in Sistan-Baluchistan, as with everywhere else in the country, has been used to 'quell political unrest, intimidate the population and send a signal that dissent will not be tolerated'.⁴⁶ At the end of 2010, 11 Baluch prisoners were executed for alleged membership of Jondollah, following a suicide bombing on 15 December 2010 at a mosque in Chabahar, in Sistan-Baluchistan. All had been imprisoned prior to the attack.⁴⁷

As important as Jondollah has become in understanding the state's relationship with the Baluchi people, it would be a mistake to allow the group's militancy and Tehran's counterinsurgency to obscure other problems found in Baluchi regions. It would likewise be a mistake to conflate all Baluchi protests with Jondollah's activities. This has been the lens through which Tehran views its policy in this region of the country, complete with analogies to the so-called 'war on terror' and al-Qaeda.⁴⁸ Indeed, the fallout from the violence has doubtless made it all the more difficult for human rights advocates on the ground and abroad to push for change on the array of iniquities that affect the day-to-day lives of the Baluchi people. [...]

➤ [International Federation for Human Rights, The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, October 2010](#)

[...] Much of the plight of the Baluchis has been outlined under the section dealing with Sunni Muslims and clerics (see below). However, there are other aspects specific to the Baluchi people as an ethnic community.

The Sistan-Baluchistan province, the main location of the Baluchi people, is the least developed region of the country. It is believed that the province has a rate of unemployment five times the national average and the highest proportion of illiteracy. The amount of investment in the province has been the lowest and the number of executions the highest in the last few years. Ninety per cent of the people are believed to be economically vulnerable and at least 45 per cent live under the poverty line. Drug smuggling and distribution is widespread. The State Welfare Organisation maintains that the province ranks first in drug addiction. It is the most insecure province.

Education in schools is conducted only in Persian. The state radio broadcasts a few programmes in Baluchi language, but the local state TV channel does not broadcast any Baluchi-language programmes. Baluchi publications are mainly imported from Pakistan, but they are not readily available.

The senior officials of the ethnically populated provinces, civilian and military, are usually appointed from among the non-natives and the Shi'a, and this policy has been pursued with special care in the Sistan and Baluchistan province. City governor is the highest position the Baluchis have been appointed to, and there have been only a handful of them. There have not been any Baluchi ministers, governors-general or ambassadors since the Islamic revolution. The armed forces do not appoint Baluchis even to lower ranks.

This policy has been reinforced by giving preference to the predominantly Shiite Zabulis, who constitute about 20 per cent of the province's population. Since the taking of office by President Ahmadinejad in 2005, this trend has been further reinforced. The 2005 appointment of a Zabuli governor-general, Mr. Habibollah Dehmardeh, reportedly led to the purge of the local government of Baluchis.

Even the selection system for the teachers training colleges was allegedly rigged in 2006 to purge the Baluchis and grant the quotas for the Baluchi towns to the Zabulis.

In addition, there appears to be a national policy of resettlement of non-Baluchis in Baluchistan in order to dilute the demographic make-up of the region. Baluchi sources maintain that hundreds of thousands of

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

people are brought in from other provinces and resettled in Baluchistan in order to change the proportions of ethnic population in the province. Forced eviction and land confiscation complement this policy. For example, forced evictions are said to have taken place in rural areas of the city of Iranshahr in May 2005 and in the port city of Chabahar in June 2005, where the local people were forced out of their homes. The homes were demolished and the land was taken over to construct houses for security forces. The residents were not offered any alternative housing.

Following her July 2005 visit to Iran, the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing recommended to the Iranian government to “focus on historically marginalized provinces, such as Ilam, Khuzestan and Sistan-Baluchistan, with budget allocation aiming at ensuring the realization of human rights, including provision of civic services to people and communities in the region.”

The government’s response to the armed campaign by a group calling itself the People’s Resistance Movement of Iran (otherwise known as the Jondollah), has been especially deadly for Baluch civilians. For instance, after an incident at Tasuki in March 2006, where two dozen Iranian military and other officials were taken hostage and killed by the Jondollah, scores of Baluchis were reportedly hanged, often after summary trials and in public. It is believed that many were not perpetrators of the attacks but had family ties to those in the Jondollah. In March 2007, Mr. Shahriyari, the MP for Zahedan, said that 700 people were on death row in Sistan and Baluchistan province with sentences upheld by the Supreme Court.

- Yaqub Mehrnahad, head of the of the Voice of Justice Young People’s Society, a registered NGO, was arrested with some other members of the Society in Zahedan in May 2007. He was also representative of the daily Mardomsalary in the province. He spent over a year in detention during which he was sentenced to death and his sentence was upheld. He was finally executed on 4 August 2008. Mehrnahad had been accused of cooperation with the Jondollah. He had never taken up arms and was reportedly not given access to lawyers during his detention. [...]

Jews

➤ [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] In recent years, official policies promoting anti-Semitism have risen sharply in Iran, and members of the Jewish community have been targeted on the basis of real or perceived ties to Israel. President Ahmadinejad and other top political and clerical leaders have made public remarks during the reporting period actively denying the Holocaust and calling for the elimination of the state of Israel. In 2010, there continued to be officially-sanctioned anti-Semitic propaganda, involving official statements, media outlets, publications, and books. In recent years, in line with a stepped-up state-sponsored campaign, numerous programs broadcast on state-run television advanced anti-Semitic messages, a prominent newspaper held a Holocaust denial editorial cartoon contest, and the Iranian government sponsored a Holocaust denial conference. Anti-Semitic editorial cartoons depicting demonic and stereotypical images of Jews, along with Jewish symbols, also were published in the past year.

Official government discrimination against Jews continues to be pervasive, fostering a threatening atmosphere for the approximately 25,000-30,000 member Jewish community. According to the State Department, despite minimal restrictions on Jewish religious practice education of Jewish children has become increasingly difficult in recent years, and distribution of Hebrew religious texts is strongly discouraged. [...]

➤ [U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)

[...] The government’s anti-Israel stance, in particular the president’s repeated speeches decrying the existence of Israel and calling for the destruction of its “Zionist regime,” created a threatening atmosphere for the 25,000-person Jewish community. Government officials continued to make anti-Semitic statements, organize events during the year designed to deny the Holocaust, and sanction anti-Semitic propaganda. The government also limited distribution of nonreligious Hebrew texts and required Jewish schools to remain open on Jewish Sabbath [...]

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

- [UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Section VII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Iran, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] The small Jewish population in Iran remains protected as an officially recognised minority. However, some antisemitic news articles were reported which accused the Jewish population of espionage for foreign countries. Vitriol against Israel remained standard practice from all sections and echelons of government, with Israel and “Zionists” being blamed for most of Iran’s ills. These comments are widely replayed in the media. The line between statements against Israel and against Jews outside Iran often remained blurred. Senior government officials, including the president, continued to cast doubt on the historical accuracy of the Holocaust. [...]

Sabean Mandaean

- [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] During the past few years, the unrecognized Sabean Mandaean religious community, numbering between 5,000 and 10,000 people, has been facing intensifying harassment and repression by authorities. There were reports that members of the Sabean Mandaean community experienced societal discrimination and pressure to convert to Islam, and they were often denied access to higher education. [...]

Suffi Muslims

- [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] During the past year, arrests and harassment of Sufi Muslims increased significantly. If the religious identity of a Sufi Muslim student was made known, the university generally expelled him or her. Sufi Muslims have faced growing government repression of their communities and religious practices, including increased harassment and imprisonment of prominent Sufi leaders by the intelligence and security services and destruction of prayer centers and hussainiyas (places of worship). In 2010, some Shi’a clerics and prayer leaders denounced Sufism and Sufi activities in both sermons and public statements. Government restrictions on Sufi groups and places of worship have become more pronounced.

Over the past few years, authorities have detained hundreds of Sufi Muslims, particularly from the Nematollahi Gonabadi order, sentencing many to imprisonment, fines, and floggings. In January 2011, three Iranian lawyers who defended Sufi dervishes were sentenced to prison terms. Farshid Yadollahi and Amir Eslami were sentenced to six months by a penal court on Kish Island in southern Iran and Mostafa Daneshjoo was sentenced to seven months by a court in the northern province of Mazandaran. According to human rights groups, the three lawyers were found guilty of “propagating lies and creating public anxiety”, while their clients were acquitted of “acting against national security”. Also in January, Iranian authorities broke into the home of Morteza Mahjoubi, a Gonabadi Sufi leader, in Isfahan. Reportedly, authorities physically attacked Mahjoubi and others at his home and arrested Mahjoubi, his son, and several others. They remain in detention. In October 2009, Gholam Abbas Zare-Haqiqi was sentenced to four years in prison for allowing a burial at a Sufi cemetery, a practice banned in Iran.

Since 2006, several prayer centers of the Gonabadi order have been demolished or attacked by Iranian authorities, including the demolition of a center in Isfahan in February 2009 and an attack on another center in June 2010. In July 2009, riot police and security forces arrested 20 Sufi practitioners in the northeastern city of Gonabad. They were among more than 200 Sufi dervishes who gathered to protest the arrest of Hossein Zareya, a local leader. The police reportedly injured several protesters with the use of force and tear gas. In May 2010, most received sentences of flogging or imprisonment.

Furthermore, since December 2010, Iranian state television has been airing a series of programs designed to denigrate and demonize Sufism, particularly the Nematollahi Gonabadi order. There also have been reports over the past few years that the government is considering a ban on Sufism. [...]

- [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Lawyer For Iranian Sufi Dervishes Detained, 19/05/2011](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

A lawyer who has represented Sufi dervishes pressured by Iranian authorities has been detained at his office in northern Iran, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports. Mostafa Daneshjou was taken away on May 18 to an unknown location by 10 plainclothes security agents, Daneshjou's lawyer, Farshid Yadollahi, told Radio Farda. Yadollahi added that the Intelligence Ministry Office in the town of Behshahr had previously filed a complaint against Daneshjou because of a case in which he represented two Sufi dervishes from the Nematollahi Gonabadi order. Daneshjou was originally sentenced to seven months in jail in January 2010 after being found guilty of libel, insult, and spreading lies. Daneshjou was represented at the time by Yadollahi and Amir Eslami. Yadollahi said Daneshjou was later acquitted of the first two charges, but an appeals court upheld his seven-month sentence.

[...] Yadollahi said the lawyers of dervishes are subjected to even greater pressure from the judicial system than the dervishes themselves, because their work on dervishes' cases often highlights the fact that the arrests of the dervishes are unlawful. Yadollahi and Eslami have also represented dervishes. In January 2010, they were both sentenced to six months in prison on charges of "acting against national security, spreading lies, and stirring up public opinion. There have long been tensions between dervishes -- a fraternity within the Sufi tradition -- and those who favor a more conservative interpretation of Islam. But Sufi officials and human rights groups say the harassment of Sufis has significantly increased since President Mahmud Ahmadinejad took office in August 2005. Many Sufis have been sentenced to lashings and imprisonment, and several of their houses of worship and cemeteries have been destroyed. In 2009, a Gonabadi house of worship was demolished in Isfahan. [...]

- [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2011: Iran, 13/05/2011](#)
[...] In May, 24 Dervishes were sentenced to prison terms, internal exile and flogging for taking part in a 2009 demonstration in Gonabad, north-eastern Iran. [...]
- [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011: Iran, 12/05/2011](#)
[...] Sufi Muslims have also faced persecution by the authorities. [...]
- [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Eight Dervishes Arrested In Iran, 14/04/2011](#)
[...] Eight Gonabadi dervishes are reported to have been arrested in different cities across Iran, in a fresh crackdown on members of the Shi'a-Sufi order, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports. The eight -- Alireza Abbasi, Ramin Sultankhah, Abdurazah Kashani, Shukrullah Husseini, Ali Kashanifer, Mohamad Marvi, Ali Marvi, and Zaffar Mobeeni -- were detained on April 13 in the cities of Gonabad, Beydokht, and Quchan, and taken to Vakilabad prison in Mashhad. Farshid Yadollahi, a lawyer for the dervish association and a member of the Nematollahi Sufi community, told RFE/RL that the eight were arrested in connection with a protest two years ago for which they were already punished. He said they were among a group of Gonabadi dervishes detained and tried in Gonabad in summer 2009 for protesting a ban on Sufi burials in Beydokht. The city is special to Gonabadi dervishes as it is the birthplace of some of their leaders. Most of the group -- including those arrested this week -- later received sentences of flogging or imprisonment. Yadollahi said the eight again face charges of disrupting public order. Nearly 200 Gonabadi dervishes were summoned to court last month for questioning over allegations of "disrupting public order" and "insulting high-ranking authorities of the regime." [...]
- [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Revolutionary Court Charges Sufi Dervishes, 08/03/2011](#)
[...] A Revolutionary Court in the western Iranian city of Boroujerd has brought some 189 Gonabadi dervishes to court for questioning and presented 10 with criminal charges, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports. Mostafa Azmayesh, a representative of the Nematollahi Gonabadi Sufi Muslim community outside Iran, told Radio Farda on March 6 that the dervishes were questioned on the previous day on charges, including "disobedience," "disrupting public order," and "insulting high-ranking authorities of the regime." [...]
- [Human Rights Watch, World Report 2011: Iran, 24/01/2011](#)
[...] Iranian laws continue to discriminate against religious minorities, including Sunni Muslims, in employment and education. Sunni Muslims, about 10 percent of the population, cannot construct mosques in major cities. In 2010, security forces detained several members of Iran's largest Sufi sect, the

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Nematollahi Gonabadi order, and attacked their houses of worship. They similarly targeted converts to Christianity for questioning and arrest. [...]

➤ [International Federation for Human Rights, The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, October 2010](#)

[...] The various Sufi orders, including Nematollahi, Naqshbandi, Qaderi, Yazidi and others have been victims of repression, especially in recent years. The Nematollahi Gonabadi Order has recently been persecuted most severely. The Nematollahi Gonabadi Order members consider themselves to be Shi'a Muslims. Their prayer centres are called hosseinieh, named after Hossein, the third imam of the Shi'a. Their leader Dr. Noorali Tabandeh celebrates the important religious events, in particular the days of Tasa and Ashura, that mark the martyrdom of the third Shi'a Imam Hossein. Nevertheless, their belief that anybody from any religion may find God and their practical rejection of the clerical hierarchy and dogma is anathema to the Islamic Republic authorities. The Nematollahi Gonabadi Order has faced harsher pressure than ever since the taking of office of Mr. Ahmadinejad in 2005, and in particular in the last couple of years. The support by their leader, Dr. Noorali Tabandeh, for Mehdi Karrubi, a reform-oriented presidential candidate in 2009, led to further repression of the Order. The hosseiniehs of the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order were demolished in the city of Qom in February 2006, in the city of Borujerd in November 2007 and in Takhteh Fulad of Isfahan in February 2009. During the latter attack, the Tomb of Dervish Nasser Ali, a cultural heritage monument, was also demolished. Their prayer centre in a village in Isfahan, a private house, was demolished in July 2008. In Ahvaz and Omiyeh, both in Khuzistan province, their hosseiniehs were attacked by people throwing Molotov Cocktails in June and October 2008 respectively. Ministry of Intelligence agents attacked the Order's hosseinieh in Karaj in June 2010. Hundreds of dervishes of this Order have been detained and arrested or been subjected to other ill treatment on various occasions over the past few years. Others have been sentenced to fines or imprisonment, e.g. Mohammad Esma'il Salahi in Maybod (Yazd), who was sentenced to one year in September 2008, Jamshid Lak in Dorood (Lorestan) sentenced to 74 lashes in January 2009, and Amin Dalvand, in Qom, sentenced to one year in October 2009. In May 2010, 24 dervishes from the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 91 days to five months, flogging, and internal exile for a demonstration outside the Governor's Office in Gonabad, eastern Iran, in July 2009. The demonstration had been prompted by the detention of Mr. Gholam-Abbas Zare-Haqiqi, the supervisor of the Dervishes cemetery, known as Mazar-e Soltani, in Bidokht, who had allowed a burial to take place there, despite a government directive banning such burials. Mr. Zare-Haqiqi has also been sentenced to four months imprisonment. He also faces an outstanding imprisonment sentence of seven months for a similar case in the past. In other instances, various people have been expelled from work or lost their licences for their affiliation with the Nematollahi Gonabadi Order. For example, three female teachers, Lida Taban, Vida Taban and Faezeh Vahedi, were expelled from work in Karaj and Hashtgerd after seven years of teaching in July 2008. Three university professors, Dr. Nassir Ahmadi, Emad Mardani and Dr. Bijan Bidabadi, were also expelled in July 2008, while two lawyers, Mostafa Daneshju and Omid Behroozi lost their licences for the same reason, also in July 2008. Another lawyer, Farshid Yadollahi, also lost his licence. All three had represented the cases of dervishes on various occasions. [...]

3.9 Adulterers

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

[...] 3.9.10 *Conclusion.* Adultery, given traditional and societal attitudes, can attract treatment amounting to torture, degrading treatment, and/or the death penalty. The key considerations in cases where applicants claim to fear persecution due to adultery are whether they did indeed commit adulterous acts under the Iranian Penal Code; whether this was known or likely to be made known to the public and the Iranian authorities; and **whether persecution and serious harm would be among the likely consequences of this public knowledge.**

3.9.12 Where an individual is at risk of being prosecuted for adultery a grant of Humanitarian Protection or asylum will be appropriate. A male adulterer who has transgressed Iranian law cannot be regarded as facing persecution on account of his membership of a particular social group. However women are not treated equally before the law and may therefore face persecution on account of their membership of a particular social group and the grant of asylum in these circumstances may be appropriate.

The current OGN concludes that individuals who are at risk of being prosecuted for adultery should be granted humanitarian protection or asylum. However, as the highlighted sentence above demonstrates, one of three key considerations in assessing such cases is “whether persecution and serious harm would be among the likely consequences of this public knowledge”. It can be argued that COI available in the public domain but not included in the current OGN on the threat of stoning and the actual execution of individuals, as well as receiving the punishment of lashings, supports the view that persecution and serious harm are a very likely consequence of being accused of adultery. It is considered that the following COI demonstrates that this point should not be included among the key considerations in assessing risk, but instead should form part of the main conclusion for this category of claim:

➤ [Amnesty International, The life of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani remains in the balance, 11/07/2011](#)

[...] A year after public attention was cast upon Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani’s plight, her life appears to remain in the balance.

Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, a 43-year-old woman from Iran’s Azerbaijani minority, was sentenced in 2006 to be stoned to death for “adultery while married”. She was also sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for her role in her husband’s murder which, according to her lawyer, was reduced to five years’ imprisonment for complicity in the murder. She remains in prison in Tabriz. In a letter sent by the Iranian Embassy in Spain to Amnesty International Spain on 8 July 2011, the Iranian authorities reiterated that she was sentenced to death by stoning and to 10 years’ imprisonment for murder.

[...] The life of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani continues to remain in the balance as she is held with a final sentence of stoning passed against her which has been sent to the Office for the Implementation of Sentences and could therefore be carried out at any time [...]

➤ [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011](#)

[...] Women convicted of adultery may be stoned to death.

[...] Women also have been sentenced to death under Islamic law. For example, Sakineh Ashtiani, an Azeri woman, was convicted of adultery in 2006 and sentenced to death by stoning. In October 2010, when rumors surfaced that Ashtiani’s impending death sentence would be carried out within days, an

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

international outcry helped delay it. The Iranian government is reviewing the case while she remains in prison. [...]

- [U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)

[...] Adultery remained punishable by death by stoning, but there were no reported executions by stoning during the year. The law provides that a victim of stoning is allowed to go free if he or she escapes. It is much more difficult for women to escape as they are buried to their necks whereas men are buried only to their waists. According to AI, 10 women and four men were at imminent risk for death by stoning at year's end (see section 1.e.).

[...] There is no law prohibiting "honor" killings, although no cases were documented during the year. The law permits a man to kill his adulterous wife and her consorts if he is certain she consented. Women convicted of adultery may also be sentenced to death, including by stoning.

[...] Women sometimes received disproportionate punishment for crimes such as adultery, including death sentences (see sections 1.a. and 1.e., Trial Procedures). The testimony of two women is equal to that of one man. The blood money paid to the family of a female crime victim is half the sum paid for a man. [...]
- [UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Section VII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Iran, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] The extent of international feeling about the use of stoning was made clear to Iran in July when the case of Sakineh Mohammadi-Ashtiani, sentenced to be stoned on alleged adultery charges, was brought to global attention. As the case developed and publicity grew, the charges against her evolved into murder charges for involvement in the killing of her husband. The international outcry against her stoning may have contributed to the temporary stay of Ms Ashtiani's execution, and highlighted the importance of continuing to raise such cases internationally. [...]
- [UN Human Rights Council, Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011](#)

[...] 8. [...] On 5 January 2011, the judiciary in Tehran convicted a woman Ms Saeeda known as Kimya to 100 lashes for adultery.

[...] 21. The application of stoning as a method of execution in Iran was again a focus of concern during this period. Under the existing Islamic Penal Code of Iran, adultery while married is punishable by stoning. Despite a moratorium on stoning declared by the head of Judiciary in 2002, the Judiciary continues to sentence both men and women to execution by stoning. The instruction serves as guidance for individual judges but lacks binding legal effect.

22. The Human Rights Committee holds the view that stoning to death for adultery is a punishment that is grossly disproportionate to the nature of the crime. Likewise, the Special Rapporteur on Torture stressed that states cannot invoke provisions of domestic law to justify the violation of human rights obligations under international law, including the prohibition of corporal punishment. Iran however maintains that the punishment of stoning for married persons who commit adultery serves as deterrence in order to maintain the strength of family and society and that such charges are, by design, very difficult to prove. At a judicial colloquium held in December 2010 (detailed below), Dr Mohamad Javad Larijani argued that stoning should not be categorised as a 'method of execution', but rather a method of punishment which is actually more lenient because 50 per cent of persons survive. Nevertheless, the authorities have indicated that parliament is currently reviewing the punishment of death by stoning.

23. The case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, who was sentenced to death by stoning in 2006, received considerable international attention. Ms Ashtiani was convicted of the murder of her husband, but was also charged with adultery while being married and sentenced to death by stoning. She has already spent five years in prison and received 99 lashes. Following an international outcry, the authorities confirmed, most recently on 17 January 2011, that the "stoning penalty of Ms Ashtiani is suspended since families of her husband have forgiven her, but she was sentenced to 10-years imprisonment." On 9 February 2011, Iran's Prosecutor General announced that the sentence of Ms Ashtiani has not been revoked.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

During the trial proceedings, the authorities however arrested Mr Javid Houtan Kiyan, her defense attorney, and Mr Sajjad Qaderzadeh, her son, and also aired her confessions on television, which raised serious concerns about the fairness of the trial proceedings. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Iran: Executions by Stoning, December 2010](#)

[...] Ja'far Kiani was buried up to his waist and stoned to death on 5 July 2007 in Iran's north-western province of Qazvin. He had been convicted a decade earlier of "adultery while married" with Mokarrameh Ebrahimi, with whom he had two children and who was also sentenced to death by stoning. Her life was later spared. Stoning is mandatory under the Iranian Penal Code for "adultery while married" for both men and women – conduct that the vast majority of states do not criminalize, let alone punish with death. Stoning is a particularly repugnant and cruel form of execution. Iranian law specifies that the stones must be large enough to cause injury and eventually death, but not so large as to kill the victim immediately. This form of execution is therefore deliberately designed to prolong the suffering of victims. The most common method of execution in Iran is hanging, and hundreds of men and women are put to death this way every year. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Amnesty International has documented at least 77 stonings, but believes the true figure may well be higher, particularly as it was not able to record figures for all the years between 1979 and 1984. Those sentenced are frequently poor or otherwise marginalized members of society. Most of those sentenced to death by stoning are women for the simple reason that they are disadvantaged in the criminal justice system, and face wide-ranging discrimination in law, particularly in regard to marriage and divorce. However, in recent years more men are known to have been stoned to death than women. In 2002, the then Head of the Judiciary declared a moratorium on stoning. However, Iranian law gives judges wide discretionary powers when deciding on sentencing, and since 2002 at least five men and one woman have been stoned to death. Additionally, at least two men and one woman sentenced to stoning have been hanged instead. In January 2009, the Spokesperson for the Judiciary stated that the directive to judges on the moratorium had no legal weight and that judges could ignore it. In June 2009, the Legal and Judicial Affairs Committee of Iran's parliament recommended the removal of a clause permitting stoning from a new draft revision of the Penal Code. This remains under discussion in parliament. A draft submitted for comment to the Council of Guardians, which checks legislation for conformity to the Constitution and Islamic law, is reported to omit any reference to the penalty of stoning. However, either the parliament or the Council of Guardians could reinstate the clause on stoning. In addition, even if the penalty is removed from law, stoning sentences could still be imposed by judges under legal provisions that require them to judge cases by their knowledge of Islamic law where no codified law exists.

[...] At least 10 women and four men are believed to be at risk of death by stoning, although several cases are still under review and alternative sentences may be imposed. At least one other woman, **Maryam Ghorbanzadeh**, originally sentenced to stoning (see picture below), is facing execution by hanging for "adultery while married". The case of **Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani** has generated widespread international attention. She was convicted in 2006 after an unfair trial for "adultery while married". She was also separately convicted of murder, later reduced to complicity in murder for which she was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. A 43-year-old mother of two from Iran's Azerbaijani minority, she speaks Azerbaijani Turkic and has limited knowledge of Persian, the language used by the courts. She did not know that the Arabic loan word *rajm* used when she was sentenced meant stoning, and fainted with shock when fellow inmates explained. She was found guilty by three of the five judges who heard her case. Although she told the court that her "confession" had been forced out of her and was not true, the three judges convicted her on the basis of "the knowledge of the judge", a provision in Iranian law that allows judges to decide on subjective grounds whether or not a defendant is guilty even if there is no clear or conclusive evidence. In May 2007 the Supreme Court confirmed the stoning sentence. Later still, the Amnesty and Clemency Commission twice rejected her requests for clemency. Since her case became the focus of widespread international campaigning, the Iranian authorities have made several unclear and sometimes contradictory statements relating to her legal status and likely fate. The authorities appear to be attempting to deflect criticism by portraying her as a dangerous criminal who deserves to be executed. She remains on death row in Tabriz' Central Prison and has been denied visits by her children and lawyer since August 2010. Another woman from Iran's Azerbaijani minority, 19-year-old **Azar Bagheri**, was sentenced to stoning. Married at 14, she was no more than 15 when arrested. An appeal court

subsequently changed the sentence to flogging, but her lawyer remains concerned that stoning may be reinstated by the Supreme Court, which is currently reviewing the case. **Iran Eskandari**, a woman from the Bakhtiari tribe in the south-western province of Khuzestan, was sentenced to stoning for adultery and five years in prison for being an accomplice in the murder of her husband, verdicts upheld by the Supreme Court in April 2006. According to reports, she was talking to the son of a neighbour in her courtyard when her husband attacked her with a knife. She was left bleeding and unconscious on the floor. While she was unconscious, the young man allegedly killed her husband. When police interrogated her, she reportedly admitted to adultery with her neighbour's son, a "confession" she later retracted. In June 2007 the Discernment Branch of the Supreme Court overturned the stoning sentence and sent her case back for retrial before a criminal court in Khuzestan. That court reimposed the stoning sentence. Her case has been with the Amnesty and Clemency Commission since February 2009. Iran Eskandari remains in Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz city. Also in Khuzestan, **Khayrieh Valania** was sentenced to death for being an accomplice to murder and to execution by stoning for adultery. According to reports, her husband was violent towards her and she was having an affair with a relative of her husband, who then murdered her husband. Khayrieh Valania confessed to adultery but denied any involvement in the murder. Reports indicate that the verdict has been upheld and the case sent to the Head of the Judiciary for permission to carry out the execution. **Ashraf Kalhori (or Kalhor)**, aged about 40 and a mother of four, was sentenced to death by stoning for adultery and to 15 years' imprisonment for taking part in the murder of her husband in April 2002. Her previous request to divorce him had been rejected by a judge. She says that the killing was accidental, but police accused her of having an affair with a neighbour and encouraging the attack. She was reported to have "confessed" to adultery under police interrogation, but later retracted her statement. She was scheduled to be stoned before the end of July 2006, but her execution was stayed temporarily. On 23 February 2009, it was reported that the Amnesty and Clemency Commission had rejected her plea and that her sentence could now be implemented at any time, although on 2 June 2009, the Spokesperson for the Judiciary said that the Amnesty and Clemency Commission had not yet reached a decision in her case. **Kobra Babaei** and her husband **Rahim Mohammadi**, who have a 12-year-old daughter, were sentenced to stoning for "adultery while married" in April 2008 by a court in Eastern Azerbaijan Province. The court also convicted Rahim Mohammadi of "sodomy" for which the penalty is execution, "the method to be specified by the judge". In April 2009, the Supreme Court confirmed all the sentences. According to their lawyer, the couple had turned to prostitution after a prolonged period of unemployment. In July 2009, the Spokesperson for the Judiciary denied that the couple's sentences were final, but Rahim Mohammadi was nevertheless hanged on 5 October 2009. His lawyer, who had not been informed of the execution beforehand, as is required by law, said afterwards that there was no evidence of "sodomy" and that he believed this charge was brought to allow the authorities to hang Rahim Mohammadi, rather than stone him to death. Other women reported to have been sentenced to stoning in Mashhad but about whom little else is known are "**M. Kh**" (convicted in 2008 and whose case is believed to be connected to **Houshang Khodadadeh** who was stoned to death in Mashhad in December 2008), and a woman known only by her family name of "**Hashemi-Nasab**". Their fate remains unclear. A 21-year-old woman and a man, **Abbas Hassani**, 34 and a father of two, were both sentenced to stoning in Mashhad by Branch 5 of the Khorassan-e Razavi General Court in late 2009. Their sentences were upheld on appeal, and confirmed by the Supreme Court on 14 June 2010. They were accused of "adultery while married" after the woman's husband made a complaint after he found mobile phone pictures in his wife's possession. Abbas Hassani is reported to be at imminent risk of execution as his sentence has been sent to the Office for the Implementation of Sentences Another woman and man – **Sarieh Ebadi** and **Vali or Bu-Ali Janfeshan** – had stoning sentences against them upheld in August 2010, according to reports. It appears that at no stage of the legal process were they allowed lawyers of their choice. They are said to have been held in Oroumieh Central Prison, West Azerbaijan province, since 2008. Among the men sentenced to stoning is **Mohammad Ali Navid Khomami**. According to a 7 April 2009 report in the Iranian newspaper Ham Mihan, he was convicted of "adultery while married" in the city of Rasht, Gilan province in northern Iran. No further details are available. Fears for his life increased after the Spokesperson for the Judiciary confirmed on 5 May 2009 that another man had recently been stoned to death in Rasht. This was believed to be 30-year-old **Vali Azad** from Parsabad, executed in secret in Lakan Prison on 5 March 2009. According to an August 2009 report in the Iranian newspaper Sarmayeh, Naghi Ahmadi was sentenced to stoning in Sari, Mazandaran, also northern Iran, in June 2008. His lawyer said that he and a woman were sentenced

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

after they confessed to “adultery while married” after Naghi Ahmadi had gone to the woman’s house one night when her husband was away. The woman was apparently not sentenced to stoning. The reason for this may relate to Article 86 of the Penal Code, which states that if “adultery” occurs when a spouse is away due to “travel, imprisonment or other extraneous circumstances” the person will not be stoned to death. [...]

3.11 Women

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

3.11.19 Conclusion. The evidence is that those actively involved in women's rights groups are at risk on return of arbitrary arrest and detention as well as smear campaigns in the state-run media, verbal and physical harassment, travel bans, and other forms of suppression. As such they are likely to qualify for asylum for reason of their imputed political opinions.

The current guidance provided in the OGN and highlighted above restricts those women at risk due to their imputed political opinions to those who are "actively involved in women's rights groups". The following COI available in the public domain however suggests that this category is wider and rather includes all women who are involved or perceived to be involved in promoting and upholding human rights, and in particular lawyers and journalists:

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Blogger Expected At Women's World Cup Reported Missing, 14/07/2011](#)

Iranian actress and blogger Pegah Ahangarani is missing amid concerns she may have been arrested in Tehran, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

Ahangarani was scheduled to travel to Germany on July 4 to blog about the 2011 women's soccer World Cup for Deutsche Welle.

Farhad Payar, an independent journalist who also works with Deutsche Welle, told Radio Farda on July 13 that Ahangarani was summoned to Iran's Intelligence Ministry the day before her planned departure and warned she would be arrested if she went to the airport.

Payar added that Ahangarani has been missing for the past few days and no one has heard from her. He said that after Ahangarani was threatened she would not go anywhere alone.

Ahangarani had visited Germany in 2009 to blog from the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) for Deutsche Welle.

As a member of opposition presidential candidate Mir Hossein Musavi's election campaign team during the disputed June 2009 presidential election, she was summoned and interrogated during the postelection unrest.

A second Iranian woman sports photojournalist, Maryam Majd, who was scheduled to travel to Duesseldorf, Germany on June 17 to report on the women's soccer World Cup, was arrested just before her trip.

Majd, a member of a campaign that supports Iranian women being allowed to attend men's soccer games, is still in custody but it is not known on what charges she is being held.

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Female Photojournalist Missing, 22/06/2011](#)

[...] A female sports photojournalist who had campaigned for Iranian women to be allowed to attend men's soccer games is missing amid reports she has been taken into custody in Tehran, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

[...] Meanwhile, an Iran-based source close to Majd told Radio Farda on June 21 that "four men, most likely from the Intelligence Ministry, went to Majd's father's house on June 16 and arrested her after searching her room."

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, added that her family said the men also took some of Majd's personal belongings with them. Her current whereabouts are unknown.

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran said Majd's family has so far refrained from talking to the media about their daughter's situation.

Majd is a member of a campaign that supports Iranian women being allowed to attend men's soccer matches, which is currently forbidden in Iran.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

She has worked with the banned magazine "Zanan" ("Women), the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), and the sports daily "Tamasha." [...]

➤ [Amnesty International/International Commission of Jurists, Rights organizations condemn continued persecution campaign against lawyers in Iran, 23/05/2011](#)

[...] Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today condemned the ongoing arrests and imprisonment of several prominent lawyers in Iran which they see as part of an orchestrated attempt by the Iranian authorities to repress dissent in the country. The two organizations are calling for the immediate and unconditional release of lawyers Nasrin Sotoudeh, Mohammad Seyfzadeh, Maedeh Ghaderi, and Ghasem Sholeh Saadi, who are detained arbitrarily in violation of Iran's obligations under international law. They are prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association, or for their work as defence lawyers. The two organizations are also calling for the conviction of Khalil Bahramian, a lawyer sentenced for publicly expressing his views about flaws in the judicial process in the cases of some of his clients who were executed, to be overturned, as he would be a prisoner of conscience if imprisoned. In addition, the organizations are seeking clarification of the current legal status of Javid Houtan Kiyan, a lawyer who represented Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, a woman sentenced to death by stoning for "adultery while married", including any charges brought against him and any sentences imposed. If – as appears - he is held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, including in connection with his work as a defence lawyer on behalf of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, he should be released immediately and unconditionally. The allegations that he has been tortured while in detention should be investigated immediately and anyone found responsible for abuses brought to justice. The recent targeting of lawyers, notably those who defend political prisoners and prisoners facing the death penalty, is part of the Iranian government's ongoing crackdown on civil society following the post-June 2009 election unrest in the country. By targeting defence lawyers, the Iranian authorities are limiting access to competent legal representation, a basic right and important fair trial guarantee.

[...] However, Amnesty International and the ICJ condemn the increasing number of lawyers who face or who have been convicted of vaguely worded charges stemming from their peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association and their work as lawyers. These lawyers are: Nasrin Sotoudeh, the defence lawyer of Mohammad Oliyaeifard, is herself currently imprisoned in Tehran's Evin Prison. She was arrested on 4 September 2010 after she presented herself in compliance with a court summons. A mother of two young children, Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced on 9 January 2011 to 10 years on the charge of "acting against national security, including membership of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)" (a human rights organization forcibly closed by the authorities) and one year for "propaganda against the system" and has been banned from practising law and leaving the country for 20 years.

[...] Maedeh Ghaderi, a member of Iran's Kurdish minority, is a lawyer based in Mashhad, north-east Iran. She was arrested on or about 2 March 2011. Maedeh Ghaderi had been representing her husband, Ali Parandian, a member of the opposition Green Movement who was arrested in January 2011. It is not known whether Ali Parandian has had access to any other lawyer since his wife's arrest. She went on hunger strike in mid-April 2011 to protest at her continuing detention without charge or trial, after which unconfirmed reports suggested that she and her husband are under investigation by Branch 904 of the Revolutionary Court in Mashhad on suspicion of contacts with the Party For Free Life of Kurdistan, a Kurdish armed group known by its Kurdish acronym PJAK. PJAK was formed in 2004, and carried out armed attacks against Iranian security forces, but declared a unilateral ceasefire in 2009, although it still engages in armed clashes with security forces in what it terms "self-defence".

[...] Javid Houtan Kiyan, a member of Iran's Azerbaijani minority, is a lawyer based in Tabriz, northwest Iran, who represented Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, a woman sentenced to death by stoning for "adultery while married". He was arrested on 10 October 2010 in his office along with Sajjad Qaderzadeh, Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani's son and two German journalists who were conducting an interview with them about her case. Sajjad Qaderzadeh was released on bail in December 2010, and the German journalists were released in February 2011 after being sentenced to a fine. In March 2011, a letter attributed to Javid Houtan Kiyan alleged that he was tortured while held in solitary confinement in Section 209 of Evin Prison from 11 October to 12 December 2010. Since 1 November 2010, when a prosecutor

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

said that he was held on suspicion of having three forged or duplicate ID cards, the Iranian authorities have given no information concerning his legal situation. Other sources have since suggested that he has been sentenced to between one to 11 years in prison on various charges, and may still be facing other charges. Most – if not all – of these appear to relate to his defence of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani. [...]

➤ [Word Organisation Against Torture, Iran: Arbitrary detention of Ms. Maryam Bahreman and Ms. Mahbubeh Karami, 17/05/2011](#)

[...] The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Iran. Description of the situation: The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources of the arbitrary detention of Ms. Maryam Bahreman, a civil society activist involved in the defence of women rights, notably as a member of One Million Signatures Campaign in Shiraz, and of Ms. Mahbubeh Karami, another member of the One Million Signatures Campaign. According to the information received, on May 11, 2011, at 7.30 a.m., officers of the security forces from the Intelligence Ministry came to the house of Ms. Maryam Bahreman with a detention order. They reportedly arrested her on the charge of "action against national security", and searched her house for three hours, confiscating some personal items including her cell phone, her laptop and some books. At the time of writing, her whereabouts remain unknown. Ms. Bahreman has been very active for women's rights in Shiraz for many years. In particular, she was the General Secretary of Pars Women's Association (*Anjoman e Zanan Pars*), which was closed in 2007. The Observatory was also informed that on May 11, 2011, Ms. Mahbubeh Karami, who was sentenced to three years imprisonment by Branch 54 of the Appeal Court of Teheran in February 2011 on charges of "membership to human rights activists collective", "propaganda against the system" and "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against the national security", received a summons to present herself within three days at Evin prison to start serving her sentence. On May 15, 2011, she went to Evin prison, where she was immediately arrested and where she remains detained. She is suffering from acute depression and under high-dosage medication. The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about Ms. Maryam Bahreman and Ms. Mahbubeh Karami's arbitrary detentions, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities amid the current general crackdown on the Iranian civil society, and calls upon the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release them, as well as all human rights defenders presently detained in the country. [...]

➤

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Journalist Charged Over 'Unauthorized Blog', 13/04/2011](#)

[...] Prominent Iranian journalist and human rights activist Zhila Baniyaghoub is facing a new criminal charge based on statements written on her blog, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports. Baniyaghoub's trial at a still unspecified date will be her fourth since Iran's controversial June 2009 presidential election. Baniyaghoub was arrested in June 2009 during the postelection crackdown along with her husband, fellow journalist Bahman Amouee. She was released on bail after two months in detention. In June 2010, Baniyaghoub was charged with "spreading propaganda against the regime" and "insulting the president." She was sentenced to one year in prison and banned from any journalistic activities for 30 years. To date, she has not been taken to prison to serve her term. Baniyaghoub is editor in chief of the Focus on Iranian Women website and also writes in her personal blog, "We Are Journalists." Baniyaghoub's lawyer, Farideh Gheirat, has said that in her client's new case, which was presented at a preliminary hearing on April 9, a new charge was made of "having a personal blog without any authorization from government authorities." Attorney Mohammad Hossein Aghasi told Radio Farda on April 11 that there is nothing in Iran's constitution forbidding people from having personal blogs. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Iran: International Women's Day celebration marred by continued detention of dozens of women, 08/03/2011](#)

[...] Amnesty International today called on the Iranian authorities to release immediately all women detained arbitrarily in Iran, including political activists, rights defenders and members of religious and ethnic minorities. Highlighting the cases of nine women prisoners of conscience submitted to the UN

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Commission on the Status of Women in August 2010 under its communications procedure and published today as a ten-page document, the organization deplored that despite the calls for their release or for charges against them to be dropped, Hengameh Shahidi, Shiva Nazar Ahari, Alieh Aghdam-Doust, Ronak Safazadeh, Zeynab Beyezidi, Mahboubeh Karami, Behareh Hedayat, Ma'soumeh Ka'bi, and Rozita Vaseghi are all either imprisoned or facing imminent imprisonment. Amnesty International also expressed concern that dozens of other women are currently detained arbitrarily, many as prisoners of conscience, for their peaceful political activities, or their work defending human rights. Among them are prominent political activists Zahra Rahnavard and Fatemeh Karroubi, currently held in unclear conditions which may amount to enforced disappearance along with their respective husbands, the opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi. Fakhrolsadat Mohtashempour, a member of the Central Committee of the reformist opposition party, the Islamic Iran Participation Front, was arrested on 1 March 2011, apparently in reprisal for her continuing advocacy for the release of her imprisoned husband, politician Mostafa Tajzadeh, previously a Deputy Interior Minister under former President Khatami and adviser to Mir Hossein Mousavi. On the same day, journalist Mahsa Amrabadi, who is awaiting the outcome of her appeal against a one-year prison sentence for "propaganda against the system", was also arrested. Fellow journalist Nazanin Khosravani, who has written for several reformist publications and who has been detained since 2 November 2010, is facing trial on charges of "acting against national security". Prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, arrested on 4 September 2010, is serving an 11-year prison term imposed after conviction on the same vaguely-worded charge. Fatemeh Masjedi, a member of the One Million Signatures Campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality), a grass roots initiative which campaigns for changes to Iranian legislation which discriminates against women, began serving a six-month sentence in Langaroud Prison, Qom in January 2011. She was convicted of "spreading propaganda against the system in favour of a feminist group (the Campaign) by distributing and collecting signatures for a petition to change laws discriminating against women, and for publication of materials in support of a feminist group opposed to the system". Many other women political prisoners and prisoners of conscience are serving long-prison terms, imposed after unfair trials. Fariba Kamalabadi and Mahvash Sabet, two women leaders of the unrecognized Baha'i minority in Iran were sentenced with five Baha'i men in August 2010 to 20 years in prison for "crimes" including "espionage for Israel", "insulting religious sanctities" and "propaganda against the system". They were acquitted on appeal in September 2010 of some of the charges, including espionage, but are serving a reduced sentence of ten years upheld on appeal, for charges including "acting against state security" and "propaganda against the system". In recent weeks, they have been moved to Section 200 of Reja'i Shahr Prison (also known as Gohardasht) in Karaj, a prison notorious for its particularly harsh conditions and are reported to have received physical threats from other prisoners. Mahdieh Golrou, a student's and women's rights activist arrested in December 2009, is serving a two year prison term for her peaceful activities and may have to serve a previously suspended one year prison term. She is also facing new charges relating to an open letter published in November 2010 for the occasion of Student Day in Iran. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Iran urged to drop prison sentences against human rights activists, 10/01/2011](#)

[...] Amnesty International has denounced the prison sentences imposed on two leading Iranian human rights defenders and urged the authorities to drop all charges against them. Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh has been jailed for 11 years on charges of "acts against national security", "anti-regime propaganda" and belonging to the Centre for Human Rights Defenders. The charges relate to her human rights work after the country's disputed 2009 presidential elections. It appears that Sotoudeh may not yet have been told the verdict and sentence imposed on her. Journalist Shiva Nazar Ahari had her four-year prison sentence imposed for "acts against national security" and other charges, confirmed by an appeal court on Sunday. She may also face flogging; it remains unclear whether this part of her original sentence, subsequently converted to a cash fine, has been reinstated. "The sentences imposed on Nasrin Sotoudeh and Shiva Nazar Ahari are outrageous and make a mockery of justice," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa. "Both women have been sentenced on account of their courageous defence of human rights and the very standards and values which the Iranian government is bound by international treaties to uphold," said Malcolm Smart. "It is truly a sorry state of affairs when such actions can be branded a threat to national security or the peddling of propaganda."

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

“Nasrin Sotoudeh is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally. Shiva Nazar Ahari should not be made to serve her sentence - it should be immediately withdrawn.” Nasrin Sotoudeh was mostly held in solitary confinement at Tehran's notorious Evin Prison from her arrest last September until the end of her trial two months later. She too is reported to have been banned from working as a lawyer for 20 years and barred from leaving Iran for 20 years. Her lawyers are planning to appeal the verdict issued by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran and say she has never belonged to the Centre for Human Rights Defenders. The Centre was co-founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi, for whom Nasrin Sotoudeh has acted as defence lawyer. It was closed down by the Iranian authorities in December 2008. Shiva Nazar Ahari, who was arrested in June 2009, was released on bail in September 2010. Her lawyers are said not to be planning to seek a judicial review of the case. Amnesty International has campaigned on behalf of both women since their arrest. In November 2010 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for Nasrin Sotoudeh's case to be reviewed and for the Iranian authorities to expedite her release. Shiva Nazar Ahari is a member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters, a now banned organization. Other members of the human rights group have fled Iran, fearing for their safety, while other members continue to be held in Iran. These sentences are part of an ongoing clampdown on human rights lawyers and activists in Iran, and include a range of other cases. On 30 October 2010, lawyer Mohammad Seyfzadeh was sentenced to nine years in prison and a 10 year ban from practicing law. Trials in such cases are uniformly unfair with defendants being denied access to lawyers of their choice and convicted on the basis of vague and broadly-drawn charges by courts and judges that are not independent.

➤ [World Organisation Against Torture \(OMCT\) / International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\), Arbitrary arrest of five human rights lawyers, 19/11/2010](#)

[...] The Observatory has been informed by the Iranian League for the Defense of Human Rights of the arbitrary arrest of five human rights lawyers. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Description of the situation: According to the information received, Ms. Sara (Hajar) Sabaghian, Ms. Maryam Karbasi and Ms. Maryam Kianersi, three women lawyers active in the defense of journalists, bloggers, young people and in the defense of women sentenced to death, were arrested on November 13 at Tehran airport as they were coming back from a trip to Turkey. Their arrest for “activities against State security” was confirmed by the Tehran Revolutionary Prosecutor, who added that two other lawyers had also been arrested “in relation with the three women”, without giving further details. Their names were later revealed (Ms. Rosa Gharatchorlou and Mr. Mohamad Hossein Hayeri). On November 18, Ms. Rosa Gharatchorlou and Ms. Maryam Karbasi were released and no information could be obtained as to whether charges were pending against them. The three others reportedly remained detained in Evin prison as of issuing this urgent appeal. [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Lawyers' defence work repaid with loss of freedom, 01/10/2010](#)

[...] Nobel Peace Laureate and Iranian lawyer, Dr Shirin Ebadi, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Federation for Human Rights, the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI), the Union Internationale des Avocats, and the World Organisation Against Torture, today condemned the continued detention without charge or trial of human rights lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh** in Iran and called for her immediate and unconditional release as she is held solely in connection with her work defending others. They warned that her arrest is the latest step in a series of measures intended to prevent Iranians - particularly those critical of the authorities - from being able to access appropriate, competent legal representation, a basic right and important fair trial guarantee. Nasrin Sotoudeh, the mother of two young children, has defended many high profile human rights campaigners and political activists, including journalist Isa Saharkhiz and Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, leader of the banned Democratic Front of Iran. The former was sentenced and the latter tried after Nasrin Sotoudeh's arrest. She has also represented juvenile offenders facing the death penalty and is acting as the lawyer for Shirin Ebadi in several cases. She has been held in Tehran's Evin Prison since 4 September 2010 after she presented herself in compliance

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

with a court summons. Since then she has only been allowed to make three telephone calls - two to her home and one to her lawyer, but so far has not been allowed visits by her family or her lawyer. The precise reasons for her arrest are still unclear, but the summons listed "propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding with the aim of harming state security". These vaguely worded charges are among several articles in the Islamic Penal Code in Iran relating to "national security" which criminalize activities that are nothing more than the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Such provisions have previously been used to prosecute lawyers for statements and activities in defence of their clients. Nasrin Sotoudeh had previously been warned to stop representing Shirin Ebadi, or face reprisals. In turn, since her arrest, her husband Reza Khandan and her lawyer **Nasim Ghanavi** have been warned against speaking up publicly about her ordeal. Reza Khandan has even been summoned for interrogation in Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court, which he has described as a "series of threats". Recent months have seen increased persecution of defence lawyers. **Mohammad Oliyaeifard**, a lawyer and board member of the Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Iran, a human rights organization, is serving a one-year prison sentence imposed for speaking out against the execution of one of his clients during interviews with international media. His client, juvenile offender Behnoud Shojaee, had been hanged for a murder he committed when he was 17 years old. Mohammad Olyaeifard has defended many prisoners of conscience, including independent trade unionists, as well as juvenile offenders. His lawyer is Nasrin Sotoudeh. Two other lawyers, both colleagues of Shirin Ebadi in the NGO Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), which they all helped to found, are also at risk of prosecution for their human rights work. **Abdolfattah Soltani** and **Mohammad Ali Dadkhah** were both arrested after the disputed presidential election of June 2009. Though both were later released on bail, they have court cases pending against them on similarly vaguely worded charges which could lead to their imprisonment and eventual disbarment. Prominent lawyer, **Mohammad Seyfzadeh**, who is also a founder member of the CHRD, is facing trial for "forming an association ... whose aim is to harm national security" and "being a member of an association whose aim is to harm national security" in relation to the CHRD. He was banned from leaving the country in 2009, as has **Dr Hadi Esmailzadeh**, another member of the CHRD. The authorities are also resorting to other methods to prevent lawyers from practising their profession freely. Such measures include unwarranted tax investigations under which the authorities freeze the lawyers' bank accounts and other financial assets and which could lead to the disbarment of a lawyer. **Shirin Ebadi** has herself been placed under such a financial stranglehold, when the authorities froze a bank account containing her Nobel Prize winnings, in violation of the law. Before her arrest, another victim of this tactic, **Nasrin Sotoudeh** discovered that not only were her financial affairs being investigated but that 30 other lawyers had cases of tax irregularities being prepared against them. In concert with this, the authorities have for years been attempting to limit the independence of the Iranian Bar Association by barring candidates from standing for election to senior positions on discriminatory grounds, including their imputed political opinions and their peaceful human rights activities. For example, in 2008, **Mohammad Dadkhah**, **Dr Hadi Esmailzadeh**, **Fatemeh Gheyrat** and **Abdolfattah Soltani** - all members of the CHRD - were disqualified from standing for the Central Board of the Bar Association because of their activities as human rights defenders. In June 2009, less than a week after the disputed presidential election, new by-laws to the 1955 law establishing the independence of the Iranian Bar Association were adopted which would give the Judiciary the power to approve membership of the Bar and lawyers' licensing applications, thereby undermining the independence of the Bar. Following opposition by the Bar and individual lawyers, in July 2009, it was reported that implementation of the by-laws had been suspended for six months. They are believed to remain suspended, but could be implemented at any time. Shirin Ebadi has not returned to Iran since the presidential election, as she would be unable to continue her human rights work. Other lawyers have been forced into exile for their own safety. **Shadi Sadr** left the country after she was detained for 11 days in July 2009. **Mohammad Mostafaei** was also forced to flee in July 2010, after his involvement in the case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian woman sentenced to stoning, led the authorities to seek his arrest, arresting of his wife and her brother in his place. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Iranian journalist and human rights defender set to face trial, 02/09/2010](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] An Iranian journalist and human rights defender set to face trial tomorrow on a series of charges must be released immediately and unconditionally, Amnesty International said today. Shiva Nazar Ahari, a member of the Iranian organization, the Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR), has been detained since 20 December 2009. Shiva Nazar Ahari appears to be facing three vaguely worded charges of "assembly and collusion to commit a crime", "propaganda against the state" and mohabereh (enmity against God) for her reporting and activism. No formal written charges have been presented to her lawyer. "Such vague charges do not amount to a recognizable criminal offence. The Iranian authorities must immediately release Shiva Nazar Ahari and drop any charges brought against her solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association," said Philip Luther, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme. "This trial seems to be more about the Iranian security forces seeking to justify the continuation of the clampdown on dissent and human rights defenders than about a genuine process towards obtaining justice." Shiva Nazar Ahari's lawyer, Mohammad Sharif, told Amnesty International today that he was not permitted to challenge her continued detention and had only been permitted one face-to-face meeting with her to help prepare her case. "Not granting Shiva Nazar Ahari regular access to her lawyer, or her family, not only dramatically increases the potential for her to be exposed to torture and other ill-treatment, but has also undermined the integrity and fairness of the whole trial," said Philip Luther. Shiva Nazar Ahari's mother told Amnesty International today that she was concerned that the hearing on Saturday would not be fair, adding that both she and her husband hoped to attend, as the judge said that it would be an open trial. [...]

3.12 Kurds and supporters of Kurdish political parties (KDPI, Komala, or PJAK)

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

3.12.3 Kurds are vulnerable as a minority population in Iran for two main reasons: some Kurds have a long history of struggle for national autonomy in Iran and they are mostly Sunni Muslims (a minority in Shi'a Iran). The border areas they inhabit are relatively underdeveloped and they have suffered from violent repression before and since the 1979 revolution. Iran is a strong centralised state that is intolerant of ethnic dissidents. [76] Although there are no specific anti-Kurdish laws in the constitution, the authorities find pretexts for persecuting Kurds who openly and non-violently profess their group identity. Once arrested many have experienced violations of due process that contravene Iranian law and fall far below international standards. [77] In the north western provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, the government restricts cultural and political activities, including the organizations that focus on social issues. The government also restricts these minorities from promoting their cultures and languages. [78] Kurds also face discrimination with respect to housing, public education and employment. [79] [...]

3.12.17 Conclusion. There is no evidence to suggest that an applicant of Kurdish ethnic origin, in the absence of any other risk factor, would on return face a real risk of serious mistreatment simply on account of his or her ethnic origin alone. [...]

The OGN concludes as highlighted above that Kurds per se are not at risk in Iran. It is considered that this position fails to take into account the available COI on this issue, particularly the fact that Kurds may be perceived as having a separatist agenda due to their ethnicity alone, and the fact that the Kurdish minority and Sunni Muslims (who are mainly Kurds) have been specifically targeted in the context of the post-June 2009 election unrest as follows:

- [Amnesty International, Annual Report 2010 The State of the World's Human Rights, 13/05/2011](#)
[...] Discrimination – ethnic minorities
Iran's ethnic minority communities, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijanis, Baluch, Kurds and Turkmen, suffered ongoing systematic discrimination in law and practice. The use of minority languages in schools and government offices continued to be prohibited. Those who campaigned for greater political participation or recognition of minorities' economic, social and cultural rights faced systematic threats, arrest and imprisonment. [...]
- [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2011: Iran, 28/04/2011](#)
[...] Sunni Muslims
Muslim minorities continue to face repression. Several of the country's ethnic minorities – Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, and Turkmen – practice Sunni Islam. This means these groups are doubly affected, and subject to discriminatory policies based on both their ethnic identity and their faith. Sunni Muslim leaders regularly are intimidated and harassed by intelligence and security services and report widespread official discrimination. In addition, the Iranian government discriminates against the Sunni community in government employment, particularly in leadership positions in the executive and judicial branches. [...]
- [US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2010, 08/04/2011](#)
[...] National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities
The constitution grants equal rights to all ethnic minorities and allows for minority languages to be used in the media and in schools; in practice minorities did not have equal rights, and the government consistently denied their right to use their language in school. The government disproportionately targeted minority groups, including Kurds, Arabs, Azeris, and Baluch, for arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention, and physical abuse. These groups reported political and economic discrimination, particularly in

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

their access to economic aid, business licenses, university admissions, permission to publish books, and housing and land rights. The government blamed foreign entities, including a number of governments, for instigating some of the ethnic unrest. In January 2009 HRW released a report documenting government persecution of the 4.5 million Kurds in the country, who have frequently campaigned for greater regional autonomy. The report documented the government's use of security laws, media laws, and other legislation to arrest and persecute Kurds solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association (see section 1.e., Political Prisoners and Detainees). According to the report, the government consistently banned Kurdish-language newspapers, journals, and books and punished publishers, journalists, and writers for opposing and criticizing government policies. Although the Kurdish language is not banned, schools did not teach it. Authorities suppressed legitimate activities of Kurdish NGOs by denying registration permits or bringing spurious charges of security offenses against individuals working with such organizations. Kurds were not allowed to register certain names for their children in official registries. IHRV reported that two Kurdish students who passed entrance exams for graduate school in 2009 were denied admission based on their ethnicity. There were no developments in the case of Jebraeil Khosravi, sentenced in January 2009 to a 20-year prison term for membership in an illegal organization. At year's end he was believed to remain in Bandar-Abbas Prison. In November authorities reportedly released Kurdish writer Abbass Jalilian, who goes by the name "AKO," upon completion of his 15-month sentence for espionage. On May 9, the government executed by hanging Farrad Karmangar, fellow Kurdish activists Ali Heydarian and Farhad Vakili, and two other political prisoners at Evin Prison (see section 1.a.). Authorities originally arrested the three men in 2006 because of their human rights activism.

➤ [Minority Rights Group International, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, 16/02/2011](#)

[...] Violations of minority rights in Iran take place within a wider, well-documented context of human rights violations, and intolerance of dissent and difference. [...]

As of the beginning of 2011, up to 20 Kurdish prisoners are believed to be awaiting execution in Iran, including several political prisoners.³⁸ [...]

Violations of international and national law

The disregard for national and international law and the severe violations of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of Iranians belonging to minorities are best understood within the broader context of widespread human rights violations. To be sure, the country's prisons have long contained political prisoners and prisoners of conscience who have been subject to abuse, torture and organized killing.⁴⁹

What distinguishes the Kurdish, Azeri, Arab or Baluch majority regions is that these abuses are more widespread, more violent and carried out with greater impunity. The stark denial of even low-level minority demands for some linguistic, publishing and educational freedoms have combined with heavy-handed and outright economic and political repression to make Iranian minorities disproportionately vulnerable to human rights abuses. [...]

➤ [Kurdish Human Rights Project SUBMISSION AND LIST OF ISSUES TO BE TAKEN UP IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSIDERATION OF IRAN'S THIRD PERIODIC REPORT CONCERNING THE RIGHTS COVERED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR THE PRE SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP TO THE 101st SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, 01/12/2010](#)

[...] 2.4 In a context defined by institutionalised disregard for international human rights standards and entrenched patterns of human rights violations, members of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities – including Kurds, Arabs, Azeris, Baluch and Baha'is – are especially at risk. This risk is heightened by the fact that the Iranian authorities are inclined to treat any minority activism as a separatist threat to the State. Therefore, whilst most of the human rights issues highlighted in this submission affect Iranians from all backgrounds, this submission focuses on their implications for members of minority groups, especially Kurds, in light of their particular vulnerability. [...]

3.4 Iran continues to execute a disproportionately high number of Kurdish people within its territory, which, coupled with other rights violations, suggests that individuals from this minority group are being targeted on the basis of their ethnicity.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

3.5 Further, in such cases, the death penalty has often been imposed in connection to crimes covered by articles related to “national security” in the Iranian Penal Code; such articles are extremely loosely worded and there is an urgent need for more clarification in order to provide appropriate protection against the death penalty for those not directly involved with terrorist activities.⁸ [...]

3.6 Taking armed action is a punishable crime by death sentence pursuant to Article 186 of the Islamic Penal Code.⁹ Under Articles 186-188, all members of groups or organisations ‘waging armed insurrection against the Islamic government’ may receive the death sentence, even if they were not personally involved in military action.¹⁰ Article 186 of the Islamic Penal Code also states that when any group or organisation attempts armed confrontation against the Islamic Republic of Iran, so long as its leadership is intact, each of its members and supporters who are aware of the organisation's positions and take steps to further its objectives will be considered to be a mohareb (an ‘enemy of God’), even if they are not involved in the organisation’s military branch.¹¹

3.7 The vaguely worded provisions of such Penal Code provisions allow such assertions to operate as a catch-all term, giving rise to convictions in connection with all forms of political dissent, violent and non-violent. On many occasions little evidence has been required to ensure conviction under these provisions; this is most evident when the State links civilian political activists to bombings and violent acts, often based on very scant evidence. [...]

4.2 Torture and other forms of ill-treatment in custody are commonplace and Iran’s statute books also allow for various forms of corporal punishment. While all in Iran are vulnerable to such abuses, the situation is particularly alarming for Kurds and members of other cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.²⁹ [...]

People in Kurdish regions being deprived of their right to liberty and security of person and as a result, being subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention

5.2 Shortcomings in the rule of law and weaknesses in the judicial system in Iran help pave the way for a culture of impunity and lack of accountability among State officials, vastly increasing the possibilities of arbitrary arrest and detention. Whilst this issue affects many Iranians, activists, journalists, students and teachers have been particularly targeted, particularly where they are associated with a particular minority group, such as the Kurds, and therefore often identified by the State as presenting a broadly-defined ‘separatist’ or ‘security threat’.⁴⁸

6.2 According to information received by KHRP, Iran has failed to ensure fair and public hearings by competent, independent and impartial tribunals, and to guarantee minimum trial standards in accordance with human rights standards. [...]

People in Kurdish regions facing severe restrictions of freedom of expression and association

7.2 Article 23 of Iranian Constitution states: ‘The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden’ and that ‘no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief’.⁶⁶ Article 24 provides for freedom of expression in press and publications.

7.3 However, it is apparent that Iranian authorities use security laws, press laws and other legislation to arrest and prosecute Iranian Kurds solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.⁶⁷ In particular, restrictive, contradictory and vaguely worded provisions contained in the Penal Code and other Iranian legislation undermine the full exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

7.4 Particular targets of the use of arbitrary detention and prosecutions as a means of restricting or preventing the expression of views seen as a threat to the status quo include journalists, human rights defenders, political and social activists, students, teachers and union leaders. The Iranian government has ordered the closure of Kurdish-language newspapers and journals, banned books and punished publishers, journalists and writers for actual or perceived opposition and criticism of government policies. Authorities repress legitimate activities of nongovernmental organisations by denying registration permits or charging employees of such organisations with false security offences.⁶⁸

7.5 A large number of journalists and rights defenders have fled Iran during the past year and live as refugees in neighbouring Turkey.⁶⁹ [...]

➤ [United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 29/10/2010](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] The General Assembly, Guided by the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, Recalling its previous resolutions on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the most recent of which is resolution 64/176 of 18 December 2009,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to resolution 64/176, which highlights further negative developments in the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including an intensified crackdown on human rights defenders and reports of excessive use of force, arbitrary detentions, unfair trials and allegations of torture;

2. Expresses deep concern at serious ongoing and recurring human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran relating to, inter alia: [...]

(g) Continued discrimination and other human rights violations, at times amounting to persecution, against persons belonging to ethnic, linguistic, recognized religious or other minorities, including, inter alia, Arabs, Azeris, Baluchis, Kurds, Christians, Jews, Sufis and Sunni Muslims and their defenders; [...]

➤ [International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\) Iran: "The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities", October 2010](#)

[...] Kurds

The Kurds also suffer from discrimination for being both Sunni Muslims as well as an ethnic group. The plight of the Kurds has not improved since the 1979 revolution, but they have instead suffered harsh political oppression and casualties throughout their struggle for their rights. Kurds have been denied, both before and after the 1979 revolution, their political, economic and cultural rights, including their right to use their own language. Since 1979, their right to freedom of religion has also been violated (See "Sunni Muslims"). The Kurdish regions are extremely poor with little government investment. Dr. Bayazid Mardukhi, a former high ranking expert of the Plan and Budget Organisation, says the poverty index is 31.7 per cent in Kurdistan in comparison with 18 per cent nationally, and the rate of unemployment is rising especially among university graduates. The denial of the right to learn and practise the mother tongue is prevalent also in the Kurdish regions. Before 2005, Kurdish MPs obtained former President Khatami's approval to have the Kurdish language and literature taught in Kurdistan University. However, with the completion of the term of parliament as well as the ascent to power of President Ahmadinejad in 2005, the issue was shelved. The Selection Law has been frequently used to deny employment to Kurds in particular in the state sector, including in the Education Ministry as teachers; whereas many Kurds do not conform to the obligatory "belief in and practical adherence" to the principle of Velayat-e Faqih, they are barred from standing for parliamentary elections. The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing "observed disproportionately poor living conditions that may point to a significant degree of neglect in relation to the housing necessities of ethnic minorities," and found that "the living conditions in Khuzestan and Kermanshah in poor neighbourhoods mainly inhabited by Kurds, Arabs and Muslim Sufis were extremely unsatisfactory." She wrote: "Testimonies received about the housing situation in Ilam province, with a large Kurdish population, were equally [as compared with Arabs] disturbing and indicated that post-war reconstruction efforts had been disproportionately slow and insufficient in this area." [...]

➤ [Kurdish Human Rights Project, Impact Report 2009, 22/06/2010](#)

[...] Kurdish cultural identity

Kurds continued to be systematically targeted by state authorities, with the expression of their identity being perceived as a threat to the stability and unity of the state. Kurdish activism for social, cultural and political rights is generally treated as separatism, and political activity on the basis of Kurdish identity is banned. The situation of Kurds is further complicated by the fact that most subscribe to Sunni Islam rather than the Shi'ism endorsed by the state. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election, 09/06/2010](#)

[...] 2. WHO ARE THE PRISONERS? [...]

All those arrested, detained and imprisoned in the fallout after the election have one thing in common: they are perceived as challenging the authorities' legitimacy and in some way offering an alternative view of events to that presented by the authorities. The vast majority of the well-over 5,000 arrested since June 2009 have been ordinary citizens – women and men, workers and the unemployed, students and

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

professionals – who went out into the streets to protest against the announced election result, or against human rights violations that occurred. Most were released after days or weeks, but some were held for months. Some still languish in the harsh conditions prevalent in most of Iran’s prisons, particularly in the provinces. These are the “nameless” prisoners (gomnam) – the lesser-known people whose cases have not garnered much media attention.⁸ In addition to these prisoners, there have been sweeping arrests before and after demonstrations which since July have taken place only on days of national importance when public demonstrations are generally held, such as Qods Day, the last Friday of Ramadan, the anniversary of the seizure of the US Embassy on 4 November 1979, National Students’ Day on 7 December, and the religious festival of Ashoura (the 10th day of the Islamic month of Moharram which fell on 27 December in 2009). Those targeted for arrest have included political and human rights activists, journalists, women’s right defenders and students. As time has progressed, new groups have been brought into the fold of suspicion, including clerics, academics, former political prisoners and their relatives, people with family links to banned groups, members of Iran’s ethnic and religious minorities – particularly the Baha’is, but also other minorities such as Christians, Dervishes, Azerbaijanis, Sunni Muslims (who are mostly Baluch and Kurds), and lawyers who have defended political detainees. [...]

MEMBERS OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Although members of Iran’s ethnic minorities did not participate to the same extent in the post-election demonstrations, they have long been regarded with suspicion by the Iranian authorities and remain so. Members of the Kurdish minority, such as Kaveh Ghasemi Kermanshahi (see above), have continued to be arrested. In January 2010, Farzad Soltani, a Kurdish lawyer and supporter of Mehdi Karroubi, was arrested. In May 2010, four Kurdish political prisoners were among five people executed in an apparent warning to future demonstrators (see Chapter 5, Politically motivated use of the death penalty). The executions were widely condemned and a general strike was called in Kurdish areas. People arrested following the strike included at least five Kurdish students in Marivan, close to the border with northern Iraq – Aram Veysi, Fu’ad Moradi, Tofigh Partovi, Dana Lanjava’i and Saman Zandi. Spokesperson for the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan, Ajlal Qavami, was also arrested in Sanandaj, the capital of Kordestan province in west Iran, and held for several days. [...]

- [UN Human Rights Council, Iran: Written statement submitted by International Educational Development, Inc., a non-governmental organization on the roster \[A/HRC/14/NGO/7\], 28/05/2010](#)

[...] The Kurdish people have been subjected to a severe political repression, serious discrimination and ethnic cleansing since the declaration of the “Holy War” in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini. The following is a brief review of some of the methods used by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to suppress the Kurdish people. [...]

The Iranian authorities have carried out both “dekurdistanisation”¹ and “white genocide”² since it came to power:

“Dekurdistanisation”:

Because of the economic looting of the regions resources, and because the authorities do not invest in developing enterprises or infrastructures, Kurdish youth must leave Kurdistan with their families to find employment. Non-Kurdish Iranis relocate in the Kurdish areas to manage the exploitation of the resources, and increasing control the economy in the region. This becomes a type of ethnic cleansing, with the Kurdish population scattering and fragmentizing and the numbers of Persian settlers into Kurdish areas increasing.

“White Genocide”:

The term “white genocide” is applied to the practice of distribution of addictive drugs like cocaine and opium to Kurdish youth. According to Mahdi Badri, the phenomenon of drug addiction affects one out of five families in Kurdistan and is spreading to Kurdish villages that were previously drug-free.³ In this region, the Iranian authorities do not arrest dealers; rather, they recruit them and provide them with drugs.

The goal of such practices is twofold: keeping the Kurdish youth away from Kurdish political movements and creating a spy system inside the families. Indeed Ittela’at (the Iranian Intelligence Services) uses this method to obtain information about the active members of Kurdish political and civil movements: it is easier to obtain information from people under addiction – even more when they are provided with

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

drugs. Kurdish political leaders have practically no political space to address this and other pressing problems the Kurdish people face as they are labelled “terrorists” or “traitorist” by the authorities and essentially live in fear for their lives. [...]

- [United Nations Human Rights Council, Written statement* submitted by Amnesty International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, 27/05/2010](#)

[...] Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Amnesty International has documented the systematic use of incommunicado detention which heightens the risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Detainees are subjected to torture or other ill-treatment to extract “confessions”. Methods reported include beatings, rape, death threats, and prolonged solitary confinement. Publicly-aired “confessions” made by detainees deprived of access to a lawyer or their family for weeks or months are far too common. Most recently, Farzad Kamangar, a teacher and Kurdish rights activist was executed on 9 May 2010. His conviction followed repeated acts of torture. In a 2008 letter he described how, when being interrogated in Tehran, he was asked of his origins. He wrote, “...[A]s soon as I said ‘Kurd’, they flogged me all over my body with a hose- like whip.” He added that his hands and feet were tied to a bed and his feet, thighs and back were whipped and that he was electrocuted. [...]

- [Amnesty International, Election Contested, Repression Compounded, 07/12/2009](#)

[...] Members of Iran’s ethnic and religious minorities also continue to be targeted for arbitrary arrest and other repressive measures – a pattern of abuse seen for decades. Among those targeted are Ahwazi Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds and members of the Azerbaijani minority. [...]

- [Danish Immigration Service, Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc., 30/04/2009](#)

[...] 2.2 The human rights situation amongst Kurds in general

A western embassy (1) considered the human rights situation in Iran, in general, to be deteriorating over the past few years. This tendency is also reflected in the situation of Kurds in Iran. It was added that while it is difficult to obtain reliable information in Iran on the situation of Kurds, it is obvious that even Kurds who are not politically active face increasing difficulties with the Iranian authorities, such as discrimination and harassment solely on the grounds of their ethnicity. [...]

- [Foreign Policy Centre \(UK\), A revolution without rights? Women, Kurds and Baha'is searching for equality in Iran, 25/11/2008](#)

[...] The geography of Kurdish communities, many of them near borders, contributes to the perception that they are both an internal and external threat to the integrity of the state.²¹⁵

Most of their villages are found in the west and northwest in areas neighbouring Kurdish communities in Iraq and Turkey. Without documentation or evidence, the authorities often claim that Kurdish cultural activities or human rights advocacy are fuelled by partisan agendas that threaten national security. Such accusations contribute to a dangerous culture of suspicion. [...]

Popular and state-level suspicion of Iranian Kurds is not new to Iran, particularly given Kurdish history of nationalism and campaigns for greater autonomy. The question is, however, whether the Iranian government is doing anything to help stop discrimination against Kurds, whether it actually encourages the stereotyping of Kurds as hostile dissenters.

Anti-Sunni propaganda by the state adds to the social marginalisation of Kurds. According to a 2004 State Department report, Sunnis claim the state broadcasting company Voice and Vision airs programmes that are insulting to Sunnis.²¹⁶ In April 2004 it was reported that Sunni members of Parliament had petitioned the Supreme Leader to issue an order bringing an end to ‘anti-Sunni propaganda in the mass media, books, and publications; the measure would include the state-run media . . .’²¹⁷

[...] Kurds suffer not only from state-level discrimination and harassment, but also from neglect. [...]

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

3.12.9 Kurdish opposition groups suspected of separatist aspirations are brutally suppressed [86] and those suspected of being members of these groups are arrested and imprisoned and some sentenced to death. [87]

3.12.10 Politically active groups and individuals are considered a threat to national security by the Iranian government. If the Iranian authorities consider a person to be working against national security, (the person may for example be accused of being a spy or of cooperating with an oppositional religious, ethnic or political group), they may face severe punishment ranging from ten years imprisonment to execution. For instance, being in possession of a CD, a pamphlet or something similar made by the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Komala or other Kurdish organisations, may be considered as an act against national security. This form of persecution for political activities is a problem all over Iran. However, the authorities are watching Kurdish areas and Tehran more carefully than other areas. [88] [...]

3.12.17 Conclusion [...] Applicants who are able to demonstrate that they are members or supporters of the KDPI, Komala, or active members of PJAK, and who are known to the authorities as such, will be at real risk of persecution and a grant of asylum will be appropriate unless there are case-specific reasons why it would not be.

It appears that the excerpt of the Conclusion at 3.12.17 highlighted above is not fully consistent with the COI presented in the OGN, nor with that available in the public domain. As the COI included at paragraphs 3.12.9 and 3.12.10 document, persons *suspected* of being members of separatist groups are at risk of persecution, and not only members or supporters of the KDPI, Komala. Indeed the available COI on this issue also suggests that family members of suspected Kurdish oppositionists are also at risk. Furthermore, the OGN concludes that only 'active members' of PJAK are at risk, which is again more restrictive than the COI available on this issue would suggest. Further COI to support this position includes:

Treatment of suspected KDPI or Komala members

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kurdish Journalist On Hunger Strike In Iranian Prison, 07/07/2011](#)

[...] Jailed Kurdish journalist Kamal Sharifi is on a hunger strike to protest the poor prison conditions and the violation of his rights, RFE/RL's Radio Farda reports.

[...] In 2009, Sharifi was convicted by a Revolutionary Court in Saghez, located in Kurdistan Province, of cooperation with the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and "sedition against God."

He was sentenced to 30 years in prison in internal exile and a ban on prison visits during his sentence.

Mahnaz Sharifi said Kamal is being kept with dangerous criminals and is the only political activist in that prison ward.

[...] Kamal Sharifi's sister added that due to the harsh sentence issued against her brother his family has not visited him since his arrest three years ago.

➤ [Amnesty International, DOCUMENT - IRAN: FURTHER INFORMATION: IRANIAN KURD REMAINS AT RISK OF EXECUTION, 13/05/2011](#)

[...] Sherko Moarefi, a member of Iran's Kurdish minority, was not executed on 1 May, as had been widely expected. However, his sentence has now been sent for implementation, the final stage of the process, and he could be executed at any time. Sherko Moarefi had been informally told by prison officials that he would be executed on 1 May 2011, but never received official confirmation of this. He went on hunger strike on 28 April 2011 to protest his "unknown and unspecified" legal circumstances, though he has since ended his hunger strike. On 27 April 2011, Sherko Moarefi's file was sent to the Office for the Implementation of Sentences (OIS) in Saqqez, in the north-western province of Kordestan after Branch 27 of the Supreme Court had upheld Sherko Moarefi's death sentence for a second time. His lawyer has said that steps have been taken to bring procedural irregularities to the attention of the court, but that as the case has passed to the OIS, the sentence could be implemented at any time. Sherko Moarefi was arrested

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

in October 2008 in the village of Dowlat Ghaleh near Saqqez, after which he was sentenced to death by a Revolutionary Court. Amnesty International has for many years raised concerns about the fairness of trials before Revolutionary Courts in Iran. Sherko Moarefi was sentenced to death for "acting against national security" and "enmity against God" for his alleged links to Komala, a banned Kurdish opposition group. The sentence was upheld on appeal and confirmed by the Supreme Court. Another Kurdish political prisoner, Habibollah Latifi, remains at risk of execution after his execution scheduled for 26 December 2010 was called off at the last minute after domestic and international pressure (see UA 271/09, AI Index: MDE 13/102/2009 and follow ups). He is an industrial engineering student at Ilam University in western Iran convicted of membership of and alleged activities on behalf of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), another proscribed armed group. At least 14 other Kurdish political prisoners are known to be on death row. [...]

The scope of capital crimes in Iran is broad. The death penalty is one of four possible punishments for those convicted of moharebeh, a charge often brought against those accused of armed opposition to the state. Other capital crimes include other national security offences such as espionage. At least 13 other Kurdish men and one Kurdish woman are believed to be on death row in connection with their alleged membership of and activities for proscribed Kurdish organizations. They are Sami Hosseini, Jamal Mohammadi, Rashid Akhkandi, Rostam Arkia, Anvar Rostami, Mostafa Salimi, Mohammad Amin Abdollahi, Ghader (or Aziz) Mohammadzadeh, Hassan Talai, Habibollah Golparipour, Abdollah Sorouri, Loghman (or Loqman) Moradi, Zaniar Moradi (who was only 17 when arrested) and Zeynab Jalalian. Some have had initial prison sentences increased to death sentences. Ehsan Fattahian, a member of Komala, was executed on 11 November 2009 in Sanandaj, the capital of Kordestan province. [...]

➤ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011, 12/05/2011](#)

[...] In May 2010, Iranian authorities executed four Kurdish prisoners who were accused of belonging to separatist groups, a charge their lawyer denied. Their bodies were not released to their families, bolstering claims that their confessions had been coerced through torture and sexual violence. [...]

➤ [UN Human Rights Council Written statement* submitted by the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples \(MRAP\), a nongovernmental organization on the roster, Fundamental freedom and rights of the Kurdish people in the Islamic Republic of Iran must be protected and promoted, 22/02/2011](#)

[...] Independence of judges and lawyers

Far from media coverage, arbitrary arrests and summary judgements against Kurdish human rights defenders and protesters are common practice. The lawyers of Kurdish prisoners are under threat². Since the disputed presidential elections of last year, a number of lawyers has left the country or has been arrested in a severe campaign of crackdown on political activists by the country's authorities because of taking up politically sensitive cases. [...]

Death penalty

The last Kurds executed are: Farhad Tarom, Kurdish political prisoner, who was executed on January 27, 2011 in the Orumieh central prison charged with association and membership in Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan and Hussein Khezri, a Kurdish student who was executed on December 26, 2010 for "waging war against God" because he was supporting an anti-government group, his lawyer was quoted to say. [...]

According to different sources³, the following Kurdish activists have been sentenced to death:

- Anvar Rostami, imprisoned in Kermanshah prison, sentenced to death for membership in a Kurdish political opposition group threatening "national security" and for participation in a demonstration held after the death of Shwana Ghadri a Kurdish activist killed under torture in 2005.
- Abdollah Sarvarian, was arrested after a visit to his family in Iraqi Kurdistan and serves his sentence in Sanandaj prison, is accused of spying.
- Loghman Moradi, held in Rajaiishahr prison, is accused of waging «war against God» and being "seditious on earth". According to Iranian state media, he has been accused of assassination of Friday preacher (Imam) of Mariwan town and for having collaborated with Komalah (a Kurdish political Organisation). The verdict has been issued by the Judge Abu- Alghasem Salawati, president of Section 15 of Revolutionary Court.

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

- Iraj Mohammadi (Miandoab - 30 years old), Mohammad Amen Agoshi (Piranshar - 50 years old) and Ahmad Poladkhani (Piranshahr - 40 years old) are held in Uromieh Prison, accused of being a threat to “national security” for spying for the United States of America and giving information to Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK).
- Zeinab Jalalian, from Makou is held in -Kermanshah Prison, she was arrested in 2007 and subsequently accused of “war against God” through membership with Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK). She was sentenced to death in 2009 and the verdict was later confirmed by the Iranian High Court.
- Shirko Moarefi (Baneh - 30 years old) is held in Saghez Prison. He was arrested in 2008 and accused of being a threat to “national security” and “war against God”.
- Habibullah Latifi (Sanandaj) an engineering student from Ilam University is held in Sanandaj Prison and accused of collaboration with Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK).
- Jamal Mohammadi and Sami Hosseini (Salmas) are held in Uroumieh Prison, both of them are accused of waging “war against God” through collaboration with Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK).
- Rostam Arkia (Mako) is held in Mako prison, he is accused of having political relations with Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) .
- Rashid Akhkandi (Saghez) is held in Saghez Prison . Arrested in Asfahan, he was accused of staging «war against God» and collaboration with a Kurdish antigovernmental organisation.
- Mostafa Salimi, son of Abdullah, from Tilako area is held in Saghez Prison. He was arrested in 2001 for membership with a Kurdish political organisation and threatening through that organisation, the “national security” and waging “war against God”.
- Hassan Taleie is from Makou. In 2008, he was accused of collaboration with Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK).
- Mohammad Amin Abdullahi is from Mirabad of Boukan region . He is accused of being a threat to “national security” and “war against God”.
- Ghader Mohammadzadeh is from Mirabad Boukan region . In 2009, he was accused of being a threat “national security” and “war against God”.
- Aziz Mohamadzadeh, 26 years old is from Baneh ,is held in Saghez Prison. He was accused of being a threat to “national security” and “war against God”. He was sentenced to death by the Court of Saghez town.
- Habibollah Golparipour, from Sanandaj is held in Uromieh prison, was accused in 2010, of “war against God”, through propaganda and membership in an antigovernmental organisation.
- Zaniyar Moradi, from Mariwan is held in Karaj Rajaiishahr prison. He is accused of “war against God” and “seditious on earth”. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election, 09/06/2010](#)

[...] MEMBERS OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Although members of Iran’s ethnic minorities did not participate to the same extent in the post-election demonstrations, they have long been regarded with suspicion by the Iranian authorities and remain so.

Members of the Kurdish minority, such as Kaveh Ghasemi Kermanshahi (see above), have continued to be arrested. In January 2010, Farzad Soltani, a Kurdish lawyer and supporter of Mehdi Karroubi, was arrested. In May 2010, four Kurdish political prisoners were among five people executed in an apparent warning to future demonstrators (see Chapter 5, Politically motivated use of the death penalty). The executions were widely condemned and a general strike was called in Kurdish areas. People arrested following the strike included at least five Kurdish students in Marivan, close to the border with northern Iraq – Aram Veysi, Fu’ad Moradi, Tofigh Partovi, Dana Lanjava’i and Saman Zandi. Spokesperson for the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan, Ajlal Qavami, was also arrested in Sanandaj, the capital of Kordestan province in west Iran, and held for several days. [...]

POLITICALLY MOTIVATED USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY

On 28 January, Tehran’s Prosecutor announced that Mohammad Reza Ali-Zamani and Arash Rahmanipour had been hanged that morning. Their executions took place without warning – their lawyers had not been informed 48 hours in advance, as is required under Iranian law. Mohammad Reza Ali-Zamani and Arash Rahmanipour were tried unfairly in the mass “show trials” of August 2009. They were convicted of moharebeh by Tehran’s Revolutionary Court in October 2009 in connection with their alleged membership of Anjoman-e Padeshahi-e Iran (API), a banned group which advocates the restoration of an Iranian

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

monarchy. They were also convicted of “harming national internal security”. Mohammad Reza Ali-Zamani was accused of illegally visiting Iraq where he was alleged to have met US military officials. [...]

This was not the last time that the Iranian authorities were to use executions as a political tool. On 9 May 2010, a similar announcement was carried on the Islamic Republic News Agency, a state-run news organization, that four men and one woman had been executed that morning. Four of them – Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heydarian, Farhad Vakili and Shirin Alam-Holi – were members of Iran’s Kurdish minority and were hanged along with Mehdi Eslamian. All five had been convicted of moharebeh for “terrorist attacks” in connection with their alleged membership of, or activities on behalf of, banned groups. “The sudden execution of five of the citizens of this country without giving any clear explanations regarding their charges, prosecution procedure and trials to the people, is just similar to the unjust trend that in the recent months have led to the surprising sentences for many caring women, men and citizens of our country. When the Judiciary shifts its position from supporting the oppressed toward supporting authorities and those in power, it is hard to stop people from judging that the Judiciary sentences are unjust. Mir Hossein Mousavi, May 2010103 Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heydarian and Farhad Vakili were arrested in 2006 and later sentenced to death for alleged membership and activities for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) a Turkish armed opposition group that has been fighting the Turkish government. Shirin Alam-Holi, the woman who was executed, was accused of belonging to another Kurdish group, the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (known by its Kurdish acronym PJAK), an Iranian armed group that is banned in Iran. The fifth person executed, Mehdi Eslamian, was accused of providing financial assistance to his brother, who was executed in early 2009 for allegedly bombing a mosque in Shiraz in April 2008. At least three of them – and probably all – had been tortured while in detention, apparently to extract forced “confessions”. Mehdi Eslamian is reported to have been flogged and beaten; he was denied medical attention for injuries sustained in custody and forced to “confess”. Farzad Kamangar, a teacher, had been held for seven months prior to being allowed to meet his family. According to a letter he wrote, circulated on the internet in April 2008, he was repeatedly tortured following his arrest in May 2006. He was whipped, held in a freezing room and guards played “football” with his body, pummelling him as he was “passed” between guards. [...]

Following the executions, the authorities refused to give the bodies of the four executed Kurds back to their families, who went to Tehran to protest. Shirin Alam-Holi’s mother, sister, uncle, nephew and grandfather were all briefly arrested and released on bail, and the authorities banned mourners from their house in Maku. Farzad Kamangar’s family in Kamyaran were warned not to talk to the media, and their phone line was cut. Khalil Bahramin, the lawyer for Farzad Kamangar and Shirin Alam-Holi was summoned for questioning after he strenuously criticized the executions. Others were arrested in the aftermath of the executions. A general strike was called in Kurdish areas on 13 May to protest against the executions; on the same day, Ajlal Qavami, the spokesperson for the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan, was arrested and detained for several days, possibly in connection with interviews he gave regarding the strike. At least six other people – all accused of links to the PMOI – are facing execution in connection with the post-election unrest at the time of writing. In addition to Ahmad and Mohsen Daneshpour Moghaddam and Abdolreza Ghanbari, who appeared in “show trials” in January and February 2010 (see above), Ja’far Kazemi, Mohammad Ali Haj Aghaei and Ali Saremi were all sentenced in unfair trials held in camera. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Election Contested, Repression Compounded, 07/12/2009](#)

[...] Since the election, many members of minority communities have been arrested, some in connection with the election protests, some for other reasons. For example, Ammar Goli, a Kurd, was among dozens of Kurds reportedly arrested in Sanandaj on 12 November during protests at the execution the previous day of Ehsan Fattahian. Also a Kurd, Ehsan Fattahian had initially been sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment for membership of Komala, a leftwing Kurdish opposition group, but this had been increased to the death penalty on appeal. He had been given no chance to appeal against the death sentence. Ehsan Fattahian’s execution may have been scheduled in reprisal for a spate of attacks against judges and elected officials in Kordestan province in September, which left three people dead. Amnesty International condemned these attacks. [...]

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

➤ [Amnesty International, Urgent Action 271/09 – Iran: Halt executions of Kurdish prisoners, 08/10/2009](#)

[...] Three men, members of Iran’s Kurdish minority, are at risk of imminent execution. This may be in reprisal for a spate of assassinations and attempted assassinations of officials which took place during September 2009, in the northwestern province of Kordestan. Habibollah Latifi, Ehsan (Esma’il) Fattahian and Sherko Moarefi have all been sentenced to death for “enmity against God” in unconnected cases over the last two years. They are believed to be on death row in a prison in Sanandaj, the provincial capital of Kordestan. [...] The Iranian authorities have a history of executing political prisoners when the authorities believe that crimes have been committed by people from the same group. [...]

➤ [Danish Immigration Service, Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc., 30/04/2009](#)

[...] 2.3 Punishment for imputed political activity

The 5th book of the Penal Code deals with political offences. However, there is no definition of what constitutes a political offence according to the Penal Code, but the punishment for being a political opponent, according to sections 498 and 499 of the Penal Code, is severe¹⁸. Article 498 criminalises the formation of groups aimed at perturbing the security of the country and states that two individuals, engaging in political activities without defining themselves as a group, may be considered as a group by the authorities. Hence, two collaborating individuals may be seen as a threat to national security for which they can then be prosecuted and subjected to a prison sentence from two to ten years. Individuals who join a group and have knowledge of the group’s objectives can be sentenced three months to five years of imprisonment under the Penal Code, section 499. An international organisation in Turkey explained that politically active groups and individuals are considered a threat to national security by the Iranian government. If the Iranian authorities consider a person to be working against national security, (the person may for example be accused of being a spy or of cooperating with an oppositional religious, ethnic or political group), they may face severe punishment ranging from ten years imprisonment to execution. For instance, being in possession of a CD, a pamphlet or something similar made by the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Komala or other Kurdish organisations, may be considered as an act against national security. This form of persecution for political activities is a problem all over Iran. However, the authorities are watching Kurdish areas and Tehran more carefully than other areas. It was explained that political propaganda activities of the Kurdish movements have changed character over the past few years. While just a few years ago the most common way to communicate their messages was the use of pamphlets, the methods today has advanced to include emails and web logs¹⁹. The organisation explained that laws are applied arbitrarily and often no strong evidence is required in court cases concerning political activities. Sharia Law is pervasive in the Penal Code and will always be considered the superior law. While some judges will apply the Penal Code others may choose to apply Sharia Law and this makes the system of justice unpredictable and arbitrary. Hence, a person accused of having committed a political offence risks arbitrary treatment as one judge may choose to apply Sharia Law, while another judge may apply the Iranian Penal Code. There may be acts for which no punishment has been set in law. In that case, the judge is responsible to search the law and practice for an applicable punishment. The Attorney at Law also explained that rulings following Sharia are in general stricter. The severity of sentences in general has increased over the past few years. Authorities showed more tolerance during Khatami’s presidency than the present government that shows no tolerance for organised activities of any kind that may be seen as oppositional to the system. It was added that there has been stricter rulings by the judiciary in relation to organised political activities after Ahmadinejad came into power. Before his presidency, carrying a leaflet or just a piece of paper in Kurdish language, which might be seen as an indicative of political activity, would often “only” be punished with up to one year in prison. Under the present government of Ahmadinejad, the practice in punishment has changed and the same offence may now lead to ten years imprisonment. Amnesty International confirmed that in the current political and human rights climate, accusations leading to trial for what may be seen as political activities have appeared to increase. Carrying, for example, leaflets in Kurdish which contain material that could be seen by state officials as opposing the government or other aspects of state policy could be grounds for being criminally charged under provisions relating to insult, criticism or even national security, depending on the subject matter. Whereas under the government of President Khatami such “offences” may have resulted

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

in a one year prison sentence, depending on the case, such charges often appear now to attract the maximum penalty available to judges. [...]

2.4 Ways of political involvement

An international organisation in Turkey emphasised that a person opposing the government does not need to be high profile to be persecuted. A person may not necessarily know the historic background or political goal of the movement or organisation he/she is imputed to be affiliated with. Hence, knowledge about the movement may be sparse and limited to knowing that it is working for a cause. As an example, a person may have been told by his uncle to carry a parcel from one place to another. The person may not know what he or she is carrying and may not even be in a position to question or refuse the demand from his uncle. If the authorities catch the person, and it turns out that the parcel contains for instance pamphlets or CDs with political views opposing the government, the person carrying the information will be treated as a political opponent, even though the person in question has never been involved in the movement and hardly knows anything about it. This indicates that high level profiles as well as low profile people may risk persecution. Whether a person is harassed or not does not depend on the person being a high or low profile opponent of the government. While a high profile person is sure to be persecuted when arrested by the authorities, even a low profile person, who has been in possession of documents with a political message, may face persecution even if the person does not know anything about the movement in question. [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Freedom of Expression and Association in the Kurdish Regions, 09/01/2009](#)

[...] The government is highly sensitive to any local coverage about factions of the Komala/Kurdistan Democratic Party because of their past involvement in separatist campaigns, or developments concerning the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) of Turkey. Saman Rasoulpour, a human rights activist and journalist, documented many cases where the government harassed local publications for covering such news and the government prosecuted him for his peaceful activities. [35] On January 30, 2006, authorities arrested Rasoulpour under a warrant issued by the judge of Branch Two of the Revolutionary Court in Mahabad. In March 2006, the court convicted him on charges of "publishing lies" and "acting against national security," and sentenced him to two years in prison in Ardibil, a city 174 miles away from Mahabad. After he had served seven months, the Supreme Court suspended the remainder of his sentence on appeal. Since his release in September of 2007, Rasoulpour resumed his human rights work and his journalism with Persian-language internet publications. [36] According to Rasoulpour, authorities have continued to harass him by periodically summoning him for questioning or making threatening phone calls to his home. [37] In November 2007, Rasoulpour wrote to Human Rights Watch, "In the last two years, hundreds of Kurdish citizens have been detained and convicted for working with various Kurdish parties. If "acting against national security" has become a threadbare accusation in Tehran, in Kurdish areas activists usually face the accusation of "working with opposition groups." These accusations are frequently exaggerated and mostly merely intended for building cases against people. At the current time, most Kurdish publications have been banned and the media environment in this area is stagnant. A quiet like that of a cemetery rules over the media space. [38] As a result of Rasoulpour's activities, specifically his work on behalf another detained Kurdish activist, Farzad Kamangar (see below), Ministry of Information agents again arrested him on or about July 27, 2008, on charges of "distributing propaganda against the state"; he was released on August 13 after posting bail of 100 million toman (US\$10,500). [39] [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority, 30/07/2008](#)

[...] In September 2007, the KDPI reported that more than 300 people were in detention in Iran either accused or convicted of charges rooted in their support of Kurdish political groups. According to the KDPI, at least 200 were serving prison terms of between six months and 20 years, including scores of cases about which Amnesty International had little or no confirmed information. According to the KDPI for example, Jahandar Mohammadi, an NGO activist from Sanandaj was sentenced in January 2007 to 15 years' imprisonment for a 'link to Kurdish political oppositions groups'; Simko Ghaderpour, a 'political detainee' from Bokan was sentenced in December 2006 to 11 years' imprisonment on similar grounds; and Mikha'il Gholami, an NGO activist from Sanandaj, who was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in February 2007. Amnesty International believes that scores if not hundreds of political prisoners affiliated

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

to the KDPI and other proscribed political parties are serving prison sentences, convicted after unfair trials. Others face prosecution for membership of or sympathy with the KDPI. [...]

- [Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Treatment of supporters of opposition groups or parties since 2003; whether ordinary supporters of political causes or groups distribute pamphlets by hand; whether persons perceived as political opponents can work for state companies, 28/06/2006](#)

[...] The following information was provided by a representative of the NCRI [National Council of Resistance or Iran] in correspondence dated 16 June 2006. When asked whether ordinary supporters of any political cause or group distribute pamphlets, and what the authorities' reaction to such an activity might be, the representative stated: This is rather a frequent occurrence. On a number of occasions, such individuals have been arrested and in some cases, even shot on the spot. Others have been sentenced to long-term prison terms. The government has demonstrated zero tolerance toward such activity (NCRI 16 June 2006). [...]

- [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions \(ICFTU\), Iran \(Kurdistan\): First hearing in Mahmoud Salehi's trial held behind closed doors in Saqez, 01/02/2005](#)

[...] 941. Finally, in its communication dated 7 July 2004, the ICFTU informed that summons were served on or around 30 June 2004 to four labour leaders, Mahmoud Salehi, Jalal Hosseini, Borhan Divangar and Mohammad Abdipoor, on charges of collaboration with the banned leftist political organization "Komala" based in the Islamic Republic of Iran's Kurdistan. They were to appear in court on 24 August.

942. These four leaders were among the around 50 workers arrested while celebrating Labour Day in the city of Saqez. Most were quickly released, but the four of them and three more labour leaders and activists (Mohsen Hakimi, Esmail Khodgam and Hadi Tanom) were only released on bail on 12 May after heavy international pressure, including that of the ILO.

943. At the time of their arrest, they were mainly accused of illegal assembly, but at the time of their release, no known charges had been brought against them. The fact that they were only released on bail would seem to suggest that some kind of charges had been brought against them and had been upheld after their release. The current charges of illegal political activity are different from the initial reasons for their arrest and it would therefore seem that they are merely an indirect way of victimizing the leaders for their labour rights activism and in particular their attempt to celebrate Labour Day.

[...] 945. In a communication dated 7 February 2005, the complainant provided additional information concerning the arrests following Labour Day celebrations in Saqez. In addition to the four arrested labour leaders referred to in its earlier communication, the complainant stated that it had since learned that Mohsen Hakimi, Esmail Khodkam and Hadi Tanoumand, who were also arrested while celebrating Labour Day, were subsequently also served summons on charges of collaboration with the "infidel" and the banned political organization "Komala".

[...] 949. Mahmoud Salehi was put on trial on 1 February 2005, also behind closed doors. ...While the prosecution brought up Mr. Salehi's past arrests and periods of detention, the complainant insisted that all of these arrests were directly related to his independent trade union activities, such as his involvement with the Saqez Bakery Workers' Association and organizing independent Labour Day demonstrations. Nevertheless, he was charged in each case with sympathizing with "Komala", an accusation routinely used by the Iranian judiciary against progressive labour, social and human rights activists.

[...] 950. Mohammad Abdipoor's hearing was held on 6 February 2005. The judge announced that the trial was open to

the public, but only his lawyers, Ms. Mahshid Hadad and Ms. Mohammadi were allowed to enter the courtroom along with their client. In addition to the two charges brought against the seven labour leaders, Mr. Abdipoor faced the charge of contacting members of the central committee of "Komala" and participating in "Komala's" Anniversary Day and the gathering of information for "Komala". He denied these allegations, stating that they were fabrications to justify the authorities' arrests of people before the start of Labour Day celebrations in May 2004. His lawyers pleaded that all charges be withdrawn.

[...] 986. However, according to the Government, a long time before the approach of 1 May, a number of members and advocates of the two non-elected and non-democratically banned political groups (the "Komala" Party and the Communist Party, both located in the Islamic Republic of Iran's Kurdistan and

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

having a long history in opposing the Islamic Republic), had misused the International Labour Day and provoked workers' sentiments in order to fan the flame and create tension.

987. On 1 May, the members affiliated to these two groups mentioned above, joined the marchers in public gathering and disrupted the ceremony. In so doing, the public rally turned into a political movement rather than a labour one.

[...] 1005. Intelligence also revealed the involvement of many of the Workers Council members in the banned "Komala" Party and the Communist Party, which have a long history of opposition with the Islamic Republic and have been trying to fan the flame of discord throughout post-revolutionary times. By tapping into public concern over social difficulties, the key figures of the Workers Council were busy convincing people, including the working strata, to attend its politically motivated demonstrations.

[...] 1012. According to the judiciary, the pre-trial investigation indicated that these individuals were suspected to be part of the politically banned group of "Komala", a proscribed sect of ultra-leftists violent groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran who had instigated a number of social unrests and incidents in the past. The "Komala" is at present affiliated to a banned Communist Party.

1013. The investigating body was convinced, by investigating past cases concerning "Komala", that the seven suspects of this case were at the rally as a pretext for their continued political agenda. They held an assembly in Saqez on 1 May 2004 under the pretext of the Labour Day merely to protest against the regime in an effort to discredit the ruling establishment. The body responsible for investigation reiterated that the politically motivated demonstration had been carried out in violation of the law, as prior permission should have been obtained. [...]

Treatment of family members of Kurdish oppositionists (see page 2 above for information regarding treatment of family members of perceived oppositionists in general)

➤ [Amnesty International, URGENT ACTION Supporters of Kurd Sentenced to Death Held, 04/03/2011](#)

[...] Two Iranian Kurdish men, who were arrested while celebrating the postponement of a fellow activist's execution in December, remain in detention. They are both prisoners of conscience. Habibollah Latifi is still at risk of execution, but no new date for his execution has been scheduled. The execution of Habibollah Latifi, an industrial engineering student at Ilam University, was not carried out on 26 December 2010, as scheduled. While he remains at risk of execution, no date is known to have been set for his execution. Amnesty International will carefully monitor developments in his case. Following the postponement of the execution, family members and activists gathered at the Latifi household. The house was raided and around 24 people were arrested, including Habibollah Latifi's relatives. Most have now been released but civil society activist, journalist and poet, Sa'id Sa'edi and Yahya Qavami continue to be held. On 5 February 2011, their detention was reportedly extended by one month. [...]

➤ [Guardian, Iran arrests family of Kurdish activist due to be executed, 27/12/2010](#)

[...] Iran has arrested the family of a Kurdish student whose execution, scheduled to take place on Boxing Day, was delayed because of protests outside the prison in which he has been held for three years. A source close to the family of Habibollah Latifi, a 29-year-old student activist, said his parents and his three brothers and three sisters were arrested last night. [...]

➤ [Iran Focus, Relatives of Kurds executed in Iran are denied the remains, and 2 are arrested, 12/05/2010](#)

[...] The authorities in Iran have refused to allow the families of five Kurdish activists hanged on Sunday to bury them, and have arrested the sister and mother of the only woman among the executed, one of the activists' lawyers said Tuesday. The sister and mother of the woman, Shirin Alamhooee, 28, were arrested at their home in the city of Makoo, in northwestern Iran, said the lawyer, Khalil Bahramian, in a telephone interview from Tehran. He also said the family was not even aware of the execution until Monday afternoon. The government's refusal to hand over the bodies to the families appears to stem from a fear of antigovernment demonstrations during burial ceremonies in Kurdish areas. Ethnic Kurds have come under increasing pressure since the large-scale protests last summer against the nation's disputed

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

elections, and at least two other Kurdish activists were executed late last year. At least 16 other Kurdish activists remain on death row, according to human rights groups. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Election Contested, Repression Compounded, 07/12/2009](#)

[...] Ammar Goli is the brother of Yaser Goli, the Secretary of the Kurdish Students Democratic Union who was arrested on 17 October 2007. In February 2009 Yaser Goli's sentence of 15 years' imprisonment to be served in internal exile for "enmity against God" and "propaganda against the system" for his alleged involvement with a banned Kurdish opposition group was upheld on appeal. His lawyer said afterwards no evidence for such serious charges had been presented. His family has also been harassed for raising concerns publicly about Yaser Goli's arrest and situation in detention.⁹⁹ [...]

➤ [Danish Immigration Service, Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc., 30/04/2009](#)

[...] 2.4 Ways of political involvement

[...] Deputy Director Rachel Bernu and Legal Director Catriona Vine of Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) explained that it is of no relevance to the Iranian authorities at what level a person is politically active in acts that are considered to be in opposition to the government. As for the conditions of Kurds in Iran, there has been a change in attitude amongst authorities since Ahmadinejad came into power. The level of discrimination has risen and the level of tolerance has decreased. As an example of government harassment, KHRP explained that if a person has any kind of controversy with the authorities, the authorities may produce a list with names of individuals affiliated with that person, even if their relationship is distant. This is a way of intimidating ordinary people. Any individual on the list may be considered a potential threat to the government and may, at some point, face problems with the authorities. The severity of the problem varies depending on the motive of the authorities to include the people on the list. KHRP concluded that the making of such lists by the authorities, is something that has been repeatedly reported on by the majority of the sources that they are in contact with in Iran. [...]

Treatment of alleged PJAK members

➤ [Amnesty International, IRAN: FURTHER INFORMATION: KURDISH POLITICAL PRISONERS FACE EXECUTION, 19/05/2011](#)

[...] The death sentence against Habibollah Latifi, a member of Iran's Kurdish minority, has been upheld. He could now be executed at any time. Sherko Moarefi, another Kurdish political prisoner, is also at risk of imminent execution. The death sentence against Kurdish political prisoner, Habibollah Latifi, was upheld for a second time. His file has now been sent for implementation, the final stage of the legal process. Habibollah Latifi, an industrial engineering student at Ilam University, was arrested on 23 October 2007 in Sanandaj and sentenced to death on 3 July 2008 following trial by the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court. He was convicted of moharebeh (enmity against God), a vaguely-worded charge which can carry the death penalty, in connection with his membership of and alleged activities on behalf of the Kurdish Independent Life Party (PJAK), a proscribed armed group. Habibollah Latifi's trial was held behind closed doors and his lawyer was not allowed to be present to defend him, nor was his family allowed to attend the trial. He could now be executed at any time. Another Kurdish political prisoner, Sherko Moarefi, remains at risk of execution. On 27 April 2011 his file was sent to the Office for the Implementation of Sentences in Saqqez, in the north-western province of Kordestan, after Branch 27 of the Supreme Court had upheld his death sentence for a second time. His sentence could be implemented at any time. [...]

➤ [Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] Minorities and other discriminated groups

In 2010, there were a number of executions of members of minorities who the authorities alleged were involved with terrorist factions. On 9 May, authorities executed Kurds Ali Heydarian, Farhad Vakili, Mehdi Eslamian, Shirin Alam Hooli and Farzad Kamangar. There were severe flaws in their trial. They were executed without notifying the families or lawyers of the condemned. Amnesty International called the executions "a blatant attempt to intimidate members of the Kurdish minority". The Iranian authorities

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

have used their fight against the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan to suppress the rights of the Kurdish minority, including cultural and linguistic rights, with the ostensible aim of ending the Kurdish call for an independent Kurdistan region. [...]

- [Amnesty International, Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women regarding concerns about the harassment and imprisonment of women, including rights defenders and members of minorities, in Iran, 08/03/2011](#)

[...] On 16 December 2007, the state-owned Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) quoted an unnamed judge as having said Ronak Safarzadeh and a colleague, Hana Abdi, had been "arrested for acting against national security by taking part in attacks in Sanandaj and for being members of PJAK". PJAK, The Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan, with links to the Turkish organization, the PKK, is an armed Kurdish opposition group which carries out attacks against Iranian security forces from bases inside northern Iraq. At the time of this report, neither woman had been formally charged with any offence.

Ronak Safarzadeh was later charged with "being at enmity with god" (moharebeh), a term in the Penal Code which is usually applied to those accused of waging armed rebellion against the state. Her trial, which began in mid-March 2008, ended in April 2009 with her being acquitted of moharebeh, but sentenced to six years' imprisonment. This consisted of five years' imprisonment for membership of PJAK and to one year in prison for "propaganda against the state". With regard to the charge of membership of PJAK, her lawyer stated that "the activities of my client were limited to activities within the Azar Mehr Women's NGO, and so her activities in PJAK were carried out toward this end as well. My client aimed to research 'the reasons for women's participation in PJAK under difficult conditions'." In a separate trial which had concluded earlier, she had been sentenced to nine months in prison and a fine for leaving the country illegally and possessing a satellite dish. [...]

- [Combating Terrorism Center at West Point \(United States Military Academy\), The Factors Behind Rebellion in Iranian Kurdistan, 01/03/2011](#)

[...] The territories comprising Iranian Kurdistan are among Iran's poorest and least developed.[21] Iranian Kurds are the frequent victims of human rights abuses. Accused of engaging in terrorist activities, Kurdish activists, including individuals with no ties to PJAK or other militants, are often detained and executed by the regime on terrorism and sedition charges.[22] As a result, many Kurds in Iran see themselves as victims of a genocidal campaign directed by the ethnic Persian-dominated Shi'a Islamist state. [...]

- [Human Rights Watch, Zeynab Jalalian, Held Incommunicado, Among 17 Kurds on Death Row, 29/06/2010](#)

[...] The Iranian judiciary should immediately halt plans to execute Zeynab Jalalian and other Kurdish dissidents, Human Rights Watch said today. Jalalian is one of 17 such dissidents currently on death row in Iranian prisons. Jalalian may be in imminent danger of execution. Her precise status is unknown because authorities have held her incommunicado and prevented her from retaining a lawyer. Khalil Bahramian, a lawyer who represented Farzad Kamangar, one of four Kurdish dissidents executed without warning in May, told the Persian-language website Roozonline that his efforts to represent Jalalian have been rebuffed by the government and that he is not certain where she is being held. Some media reports say she may be in Section 209 of Evin Prison, administered by the Intelligence Ministry. "It is absolutely inconceivable that a woman who has been in detention for more than a year and is in danger of imminent execution has still not been granted access to a lawyer," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Facing death, she is denied even her most basic rights." [...]

Iran's Supreme Court confirmed Jalalian's death sentence in November 2009. The government charged Jalalian with the crime of moharebeh, or "enmity against God," in connection with her alleged membership in the outlawed Free Life Party of Kurdistan, or PJAK. The party is widely regarded by analysts to be an Iranian affiliate of the banned Turkish Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK. In May 2010, Human Rights Watch called for a moratorium on all executions and noted that Jalalian was among 17 Kurdish dissidents awaiting execution. [...]

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Executed Dissidents 'Tortured to Confess', 11/05/2010](#)

[...] Iranian authorities executed five prisoners, four of them ethnic Kurds, without warning their families, and have so far refused to release their bodies, Human Rights Watch said today. These executions follow convictions that appear to have relied on the use of torture. The Kurdish prisoners – Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heidarian, Farhad Vakili, and Shirin Alam Holi – were executed by hanging on the morning of May 9, 2010, in Tehran's Evin prison, said a statement released by the Tehran Public Prosecutor's office. The government also executed a fifth prisoner, Mehdi Eslamian, an alleged member of a banned pro-monarchist group. Authorities maintain that all five were engaged in "terrorist operations, including involvement in the bombing of government and public centers in various Iranian cities." "These hangings of four Kurdish prisoners are the latest example of the government's unfair use of the death penalty against ethnic minority dissidents," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "The judiciary routinely accuses Kurdish dissidents, including civil society activists, of belonging to armed separatist groups and sentences them to death in an effort to crush dissent." The Tehran prosecutor's statement alleged that Kamangar, Heidarian, Vakili, and Alam Holi had confessed to being members of the outlawed Free Life Party of Kurdistan, or PJAK, and were involved in a series of bomb plots in northwestern Iran as well as Tehran. PJAK is widely regarded by analysts to be an Iranian affiliate of the banned Turkish Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK. [...]

3.13 Smugglers

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

3.13.3 The death penalty is provided for crimes covered in the Anti-Narcotics Law. These crimes include smuggling or distribution of more than 5kg of hashish or opium, or more than 30g of heroin, codeine, methadone or morphine. People who commit a fourth offence of cultivation of narcotic plants, recidivist (repeated) possession of opium and hashish, and the manufacture or supply of various chemicals that can be used in the manufacture of drugs can also receive the death penalty. [92] Some sources estimate that Iran has executed 10,000 drug traffickers since the revolution of 1979, although a number of these are alleged to have been political dissidents who were charged with drug crimes. [93] [...]

3.13.10 Conclusion. Persons fleeing from prosecution or punishment for an offence are not normally refugees. Prosecution, however, can be considered persecution if it involves victimisation in its application by the authorities. Punishment which is cruel, inhuman or degrading (including punishment which is out of all proportion to the offence committed) may also constitute persecution. Few applicants will be able to demonstrate that they would be subject to a disproportionate punishment as a result of their criminal activities. However, for individuals who are able to demonstrate that they face the death penalty or a real risk of suffering severe punishment which is meted out to some smugglers in Iran a grant of Humanitarian Protection may be appropriate.

The above highlighted sentence in the conclusion for this main category of claim at paragraph 3.13.10 may be read to imply that awarding the death penalty to smugglers is not a common occurrence in Iran. In addition to this being internally inconsistent with the COI highlighted above at paragraph 3.13.3 of the OGN, such a reading would also be inconsistent with the available COI on this issue as follows:

- [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iran Hangs Man On Drug-Smuggling Charges, 31/07/2011](#)
[...] Iranian newspapers report that a man has been hanged in the southern Iranian town of Minab on charges of drug smuggling.
The man, who was executed on July 30, was identified only by the initials H.D.
The report in the "Kayhan" newspaper did not say whether the execution was carried out in public.
The latest hanging brings to 173 the number of executions reported in Iran so far this year, according to media and official reports [...]
- [The Guardian, Iran's judicial killing spree, 07/07/2011](#)
[...] Hard facts are hard to come by in a country where independent reporting is all but a fond memory. But Iranian human rights groups, international watchdogs and country experts all suggest the regime is embarked on what in effect is a judicial killing spree. Ostensibly, it is cracking down on drug trafficking and other criminal activity. In truth, campaigners say, Tehran is pursuing a campaign of public intimidation and covert killing to subdue political opposition and quell turbulence caused by the Arab spring revolts.
[...] Iran Human Rights, an independent monitoring organisation, claims the true picture is much worse. It says 25 people were hanged in one day – 3 July – in Ghezel Hesar prison in Karaj, west of Tehran. The hangings, supposedly all drug-related, were not reported by official media. The same report said another seven people were hanged the same day in Evin prison in Tehran. It alluded to further uncorroborated mass executions in prisons in Khorasan province in 2010.
[...] The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, another independent pressure group, reported last month that 26 inmates of Vakilabad prison in Mashhad were hanged on 15 June. It quoted the Mashhad prosecutor, Mahmoud Zoghi, as admitting "high numbers of executions" over the past two-and-

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

a-half years. Zoghi said the rise was due to a high volume of drug trafficking cases. "The execution statistics are proportionate and foreign media unjustifiably exaggerate in this subject," he said [...]

- [Amnesty International, IRAN: THREE MOTHERS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN IRAN, 16/06/2011](#)
[...] Three women and two men are facing execution for drug trafficking in Iran , possibly as soon as 26 June , after unfair trials. They have not had the opportunity to appeal against their convictions and sentences. Their requests for pardon have been rejected on two occasions. Amnesty International is calling for the immediate commutation of their death sentences. Hourieh Sabahi, Leila Hayati and Roghieh Khalaji were arrested on 30 January 2009 along with two men whose names are not known to Amnesty International. All five are believed to be low-ranking members of a larger drug-trafficking operation. During their interrogation, they had no access to a lawyer. They were tried before Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court in Hamedan, Iran, and sentenced to death. The death penalty is a mandatory sentence for those convicted of trafficking more than specified amounts of certain drugs. They had no right to appeal, as their sentences were only confirmed by the Prosecutor-General, as permitted under the Anti-Narcotics Law. There are reports that they may be executed as soon as 26 June. [...]
- [US Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 08/04/2011](#)
[...] e. Denial of Fair Public Trial
[...] At year's end the ICHRI [the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran] reported that approximately 600 inmates remained on death row in Vakilabad, with the majority convicted for narcotics-related crimes. Some inmates reported that they had been tortured and forced to make confessions but that judges ignored their claims of physical coercion. [...]
- [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\), Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions: Summary of information, including individual cases, transmitted to Governments and replies received \(Iran excerpt\), 27/05/2011](#)
[...] According to the information received
a) Over the last few months from October 2010 until now in January 2011, a high number of executions has reportedly been carried out across the country, many of which have been conducted at Mashad's Vakilabad Prison on charges related to drug trafficking. This includes the following alleged cases of executions:
 - 23 executions by hanging took place in early October 2010 at Mashad's Vakilabad Prison,
 - 10 executions on 26 October 2010 in the same prison,
 - 11 executions on 9 November 2010,
 - 9 executions on 30 November 2010,
 - 2 at Saveh Prison on 4 December 2010,
 - 22 executions on 19 December 2010,
 - 1 in Sari Prison on 25 December 2010, -8 in Qom Prison on 1 January 2011,
 - 7 in Kermanshah Prison on 3 January 2011,
 - 16 in Ahvaz Prison on 5 January 2011,
 - 2 in Boroujerd Prison on 7 January 2011,
 - 4 in Isfahan Prison on 8 January 2011,
 - 1 in Esfarayen on 8 January 2011,
 - 7 in Tehran on 12 January 2011,
 - 5 in Khorramabad on 13 January 2011,
 - 1 in Kerman's Zarand Prison on 18 January 2011 and,
 - 10 in Karaj's Rajaei Shahr Prison on 19 January 2011.The following cases of executions of foreign citizens have in particular been brought to my attention: On 17 November 2010, Mr. Ernie Tamonde, a citizen of the Philippines, has reportedly been executed at Vakilabad Prison. The Philippine embassy was reportedly informed of the execution of Mr. Ernie Tamonde. However, it was alleged that embassy officials had been unable to visit Vakilabad Prison since January 2010. It is further alleged that Mr. Paul Chindo, a Nigerian citizen, and Mr. Aquasi Aquabe of Ghana have

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

respectively been executed on 26 October and on 18 August 2010 at Vakilabad Prison. Representatives of their embassies have allegedly stated that they had only been informed of the execution of their respective citizens, after the executions had been carried out and that they were still waiting for the official confirmation. In Ahwaz Prison in, on 31 December 2010, three detainees, referred to as A.A., H.M. and J.J., were reportedly executed. They were allegedly sentenced to death on charges of carrying and possessing narcotics by the Khuzestan Penal Court. It is further alleged that the sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court. It is further alleged that about 600 individuals detained in this prison are on death row. [...]

➤ [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iran 'Carries Out More Secret Executions' At Site Listed In UN Report, 18/03/2011](#)

A U.S.-based rights group says Iran has carried out 10 secret executions this month at a prison where the practice was criticized in a recent UN report.

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran said the 10 prisoners were executed at Vakilabad prison in Mashhad in early March without their families or lawyers being informed.

In a report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 14, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon voiced concern about the human rights situation in Iran, including the executions of drug traffickers.

"In July 2010, a large number of prisoners were reportedly executed at one time in Mashhad prison," Ban's report said.

"When OHCHR [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights] staff sought further information from Iranian counterparts during a visit to Tehran in December 2010, they confirmed that 60 persons had been executed in Mashhad in pending cases mostly linked to drug trafficking."

Hadi Ghaemi, the director of the New York-based group, told RFE/RL's Radio Farda, "The significant point regarding these [60] executions is that they have been documented in the latest report of the Secretary-General of the UN."

But he added, "Despite the concerns of the Secretary-General, these executions were continued on March 2, when 10 more prisoners were executed."

Ghaemi said his group understands that the latest group of executed prisoners included Afghans and Africans.

He said that such prisoners typically are unaware of the date of their execution until the last moment.

➤ [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\), Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011](#)

[...] B. Death penalty including public executions

10. A dramatic surge in the number of executions has been recorded since the beginning of 2011. According to Iranian press reports, at least 66 people were executed in the month of January, with some sources indicating the figure to be as high as 83 executions. The majority of executions were reportedly carried out in relation to drug offences, but at least three political prisoners were among those hanged. [...]

12. A new Anti-Narcotics law was passed in December 2010 and came into force on 4 January 2011. Article 18 provides for the death penalty for drug traffickers and major traders and also foresees punishment ranging from one to fifteen years travel ban for carrying or smuggling any quantity of drugs. The new law classes drug addicted persons as criminals unless they are in possession of a certificate of treatment. On 27 December 2010, the Deputy Prosecutor General for Legal Affairs warned of a stricter approach in dealing with drug trafficking and stressed that drug traffickers and major drug traders will face execution under the new anti-narcotics law. [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Iran: Human Rights Crisis Requires International Scrutiny, 28/10/2010](#)

[...] The Iranian authorities have continued to execute more prisoners - mostly by hanging - than any country other than China. [...] Many of those executed have been convicted of murder or drug smuggling after deeply flawed trials. [...]

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

➤ [International Harm Reduction Association \(IHRA\), The Death Penalty for Drug Offences Global Overview 2010: Iran excerpt, 16/06/2010](#)

[...] Using media reports, as well as data compiled by government monitors and the Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights, it is possible to arrive at an informed estimate of the number of people executed for drug offences in Iran in recent years. It is clear that drug offenders represent a significant proportion of all annual executions in the country. As the table shows, of the 317 people estimated by Amnesty International to have been executed in Iran in 2007, at least 115 – over one-third – were executed for drug offences. Of the 346 executions documented by Amnesty International in 2008, 96 of were convicted for drug offences. In 2009 the total number of number of people executed for drug offences doubled to 172, almost half of all executions that year. The number of people on death row in Iran is difficult to surmise, although past reporting indicates that drug offenders account for a large portion of those awaiting execution. It has been reported, for example, that 60 per cent of prisoners in Iran are incarcerated for drug offences. [144] The International Federation for Human Rights reports that in late 2008 there were 500 people on death row for drug-related offences in the north-eastern city of Mashhad alone. [145] In many instances it is doubtful that fair trial standards were met in the passing of death sentences for drugs. Drug smuggling cases are often handled by revolutionary courts; one report estimates that 99 per cent of the cases handled by these courts involve drugs. [146] The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has called for the revolutionary courts to be abolished because of their failure to provide adequate due process protections. [147] [...]

4.3 Minors claiming in their own right

Excerpt from March 2011 Iran OGN

4.3.1 Minors claiming in their own right who have not been granted asylum or HP can only be returned where (a) they have family to return to; or (b) there are adequate reception and care arrangements. Those who cannot be returned should, if they do not qualify for leave on any more favourable grounds, be granted Discretionary Leave for a period as set out in the relevant Asylum Instructions.

The OGN fails to highlight the available COI, which demonstrates that children are at risk of the following human rights violations in Iran:

- [Detention](#)
- [Executions of juveniles](#)
- [Trafficking](#)
- [Recruitment into the Basij/security forces](#)
- [Street children](#)

Core sources have been included under each sub-heading. Unless specifically mentioned it can be inferred that the documented human rights abuses occur throughout Iran, are directed against both girls and boys and occur whether or not the child lives with his/her family or community. It is imperative that additional COI research is conducted with the specific profile of claimant in mind when representing a minor facing return to Iran.

Detention

- [UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Section VII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Iran, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] Juvenile offenders continued to suffer because of the low legal ages of maturity in Iran in 2010. Iranian law continued to view girls as young as nine as adults and answerable for their actions in a court of law, with the age of maturity for boys set at 15. [...]

- [UN Human Rights Council, Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011](#)

[...] 18. [...] The age for criminal liability still remains at 8 years and 9 months for girls and 14 years and 7 months for boys, which is not only discriminatory but also low by international standards. The Iranian authorities note however that priority is given to the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and the return of children to normalcy and society. [...]

- [Child Rights Information Network, Inhuman sentencing of children in Iran, July 2010](#)

[...] There is no separate juvenile justice law in Iran. Sentencing of children and young people convicted of an offence is provided for primarily in the Islamic Penal Code (1991). The Child Protection Law (2002) prohibits abuse of all persons below the age of 18, but does not address children in conflict with the law. According to the Islamic Penal Code, minors are exempt from criminal responsibility, where a minor is defined as "a person who has not reached the age of maturity as stipulated by Islamic Jurisprudence". The Civil Code defines puberty as 15 lunar years for boys, 9 lunar years for girls (i.e. age 14 years and 7 months for boys and 8 years and 9 months for girls), meaning that girls are liable to be sentenced to cruel and inhuman punishments six years earlier than boys. However, the Islamic Penal Code confirms that "bodily punishment" may be required even to correct the behaviour of minors and specifically provides

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

for cruel punishments for minors in some circumstances. The Penal Code distinguishes between hadd punishments (specified in Shari'a law and not liable to be altered), Ghesa punishments (based on retaliation/retribution), and Ta'azirat punishments (not specified in Shari'a and able to be altered at the judge's discretion). All involve cruel and inhuman punishments. The Ta'azirat punishments were added to the Code in 1996. Various other laws also provide for the death penalty and corporal punishment. As at April 2009 a number of draft laws, including a draft Penal Code, were under discussion. [...]

Executions of juveniles

➤ [European Union, Statement by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton on the execution of juvenile offenders in Iran, 29/04/2011](#)

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made today the following statement:

"I deplore the public execution of four young men in Bandar Abbas, Iran, last week. At least two of the men were under 18 at the time of their alleged offences. This stands in clear contravention to Iran's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The EU has already expressed its concern over the alarming rate of executions in Iran this year and condemns the practice of carrying them out in public or by suspension hanging. I reiterate the EU's call on Iran to declare a moratorium on the death penalty in line with the growing global trend towards abolition of this punishment."

➤ [Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011: Iran, 12/05/2011](#)

[...] Contrary to Iran's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the judiciary continues to execute juvenile offenders. In 2010, at least one such inmate was executed, and 141 others remained on death row. The government had announced in 2008 that it would no longer execute juveniles, but it later clarified that the death penalty remained an option under the parallel "retribution" system, in which the sentence is imposed by the victim's family rather than the state. This would be allowed for male offenders over the age of 15 and female offenders as young as nine. [...]

➤ [UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Section VII: Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Iran, 31/03/2011](#)

[...] A non-binding moratorium on the use of the death penalty for crimes committed as a minor issued in 2008 indicated unease about the practice within the Iranian system. Despite this, Iran carried out at least two "juvenile executions" in 2010 [...]

➤ [UN Human Rights Council, Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011](#)

[...] 18. Execution of juvenile offenders remains an ongoing concern, as highlighted in previous reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the situation of human rights in Iran.²⁶ The age for criminal liability still remains at 8 years and 9 months for girls and 14 years and 7 months for boys, which is not only discriminatory but also low by international standards. The Iranian authorities note however that priority is given to the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and the return of children to normalcy and society. Although fewer juvenile offenders were executed in 2010 than in previous years, death sentences against juvenile offenders continue to be reported. ²⁷ In June 2010, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions noted with concern the cases of at least nine juvenile offenders who were at risk of imminent execution for crimes committed when they were minors. The Convention on the Rights of Child²⁸ and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to both of which Iran is a State party, prohibit the imposition of the death penalty on those who are under the age of 18 years at the time of their crime.

19. The judiciary decreed a non-binding moratorium on juvenile execution in 2005 and has often taken active steps to mediate between the families in such cases, even assisting the convicted person financially to pay the diyah settlement. When cases involving juvenile offenders are prolonged until the accused reach 18 years, however, the risk of execution becomes higher. [...]

➤ [Amnesty International, Urgent Action: Two juveniles at risk of execution in Iran, 08/02/2011](#)

[...] Fatemeh Salbehi, now aged 19, is at risk of imminent execution for allegedly murdering her husband almost three years ago, when she was only a 16-year-old schoolgirl. 19-year-old “Ehsan” (last name known to Amnesty International) also faces imminent execution after being convicted of “sodomy” for an alleged male rape, despite his accuser withdrawing the allegation. Fatemeh Salbehi’s husband, Hamed Sadeghi, said to be an employee of the Public Relations Office of the local judiciary, was found dead in their home in Shiraz in May 2008, when Fatemeh was at school. Fatemeh Salbehi was arrested and interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. Fatemeh Salbehi first “confessed” to murder, but then stated that two others broke into the home she shared with her husband and killed him. Fatemeh Salbehi was convicted of murder by Branch Five of the Fars Criminal Court and sentenced to death. This sentence was later upheld by the Supreme Court. “Ehsan” was arrested at the age of 17 after a man brought a complaint against him and two other youths, alleging that the three had attempted to rape him. Reportedly tortured for almost a month, “Ehsan” “confessed” to the charges during interrogations, but later in court withdrew his “confession” and denied all the allegations. Fars General Court convicted “Ehsan” of “sodomy” (lavat), and sentenced him to death. Of the court’s five judges, one deemed “Ehsan” not guilty and asked for his release. The man who initially pressed charges took back his allegations against all three accused youths prior to the first trial. The death sentence was confirmed by Branch 13 of the Supreme Court in Tehran and once “Ehsan” turned 18, he was transferred from a juvenile detention centre to Adel Abad Prison in Shiraz. It is not clear to Amnesty International whether the Head of the Judiciary has given his approval for the execution, but if so, “Ehsan” could be executed at any moment. [...]

➤ [Project on Extra-Legal Executions in Iran, Submission to the UN Human Rights Council: Death Penalty Concerns \(Article 6, and Articles 7 and 15 in conjunction with Article 6\) Questions recommended for inclusion in the list of issues for the consideration of the 3rd Periodic Report of the Islamic Republic of IRAN, 31/12/2010](#)

[...] The Iranian government denies that it executes child offenders. Since 2005 the government has also claimed that a ‘legal ban on under-aged capital punishment’ is pending ratification by the parliament.³⁹ In their third periodic report, the State party responds in similar terms by misleadingly conflating the age of criminal responsibility with the age of special civil protection for children which is up to eighteen and by presenting unfounded claims that in new proposed legislation ‘[d]eath sentence for all age groups of children and juveniles under 18 has been omitted’. (CCPR/C/IRN/3, ¶¶ 297-98) The facts of the matter are very different. Current law explicitly allows the imposition of the death penalty on juvenile offenders. Pending legislation also includes provisions that implicitly permit the imposition of the death penalty on juvenile offenders. These provisions are, firstly, the age of criminal responsibility, which the State party deems to be the ‘age of religious puberty’ [15 and 9 lunar years for boys and girls respectively], and secondly, the exhortation that huddud and qisas punishments are not revocable or changeable. By retaining these provisions, the draft Juvenile Crimes Investigation Act which has been pending before the Islamic Consultative Assembly since 2005, and the new Bill of Islamic Criminal Code currently under vetting for compatibility with Islamic law by the Guardian Councils, retain the juvenile death penalty for huddud and qisas crimes. [see Appendix II- Table of Juvenile Death Penalty Provisions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, current and pending legislation] In practice also, juveniles continue to receive death sentences and are being executed in significant numbers. The Islamic Republic of Iran is, in fact, the only country in the world from which the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions continues to receive significant numbers of credible reports of such sentences being imposed and, in some cases, carried out, on juveniles.⁴⁰ The State party has rarely responded to the Special Rapporteur’s communication and the responses forwarded by the State party misrepresent the true situation. On 14 February 2008, in one of the rare instances that the State party responded to the Special Rapporteur in the case of Behnam Zare, it was not denied that the person in question was 16 at the time of the alleged murder. Moreover, the State party said that the judicial system, on the basis of humanitarian considerations, had entered the case into conciliation process and was seriously following it in the hope of a final settlement. The State party assured the Special Rapporteur that ‘carrying out the penalty was not in its programme of work’.⁴¹ Behnam Zare was executed in Shiraz six months later, on 26

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

August 2008. The execution took place clandestinely without Zare's parents or lawyer being notified.⁴² On 28 February 2008, the State party submitted an identical response to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in the case of Delara Darabi who was convicted of murdering a relative when she was 17, in 2003. In that case too the State party did not deny that the person in question was 17 at the time of the alleged crime and again assured the Working Group that 'carrying out the penalty was not in its programme of work'.⁴³ In May 2008, the Working Group adopted a decision (No. 4/2008), declaring the detention of Ms. Delara Darabi by the Iranian authorities arbitrary and in contravention of the Covenant and asked the Iranian Government to remedy the situation of Ms. Darabi.⁴⁴ A year later Delara Darabi was executed secretly in Rasht on 1 May 2009 despite a two-month stay of execution issued by the Judiciary Head on 19 April 2009 for the purpose of 'conciliation'.⁴⁵ [...]

➤ [Human Rights Watch, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan: End Juvenile Death Penalty, 08/10/2010](#)

[...] Iran executed at least one juvenile offender in 2010, and five in 2009. January 21, 2009: Molla Gol Hassan, a 21 year-old Afghan citizen who at age 17 killed a fellow Afghan, Fakhr al'din, in Iran while trying to steal money from him. May 1, 2009: Delara Darabi, 22, for a murder she allegedly committed at age 17. Darabi had initially confessed, but later retracted her confession, saying she had hoped to protect her boyfriend from execution, because her boyfriend believed that Darabi would not be sentenced to death because she was under 18. May 20, 2009: Ali Jafari was executed for a crime committed before age 18. The execution was reported by several Farsi news sources, but no further details on the case are available. October 12, 2009: Behnoud Shojai, 21, hanged for a killing committed in 2005, when he was 17. December 17, 2009: Mosleh Zamani, 23, who had been arrested at 17 in Sanandaj, Kordestan province, on charges of abducting and raping a woman several years older with whom he was allegedly having a relationship. The appeals court judge affirmed that the sex had in fact been consensual, but still insisted that Zamani be executed to "set an example" to other young Iranians. July 10, 2010: a person identified as Mohammad was secretly hanged in Marvdasht prison, Shiraz, in connection with the rape and murder of two young boys, Hamed Shiri and Karim Tajik, in 2007, when Mohammad was 17. More than 100 juvenile offenders remain under sentence of death. The Iranian Judiciary continues to harass, prosecute, and detain human rights lawyers critical of the government's execution of juvenile offenders. Mohammad Olyaeifard is currently serving a one-year prison sentence imposed for speaking out against the execution of his client, Behnoud Shojai, during interviews with international media. Mohammad Mostafaei, a lawyer who represented numerous juvenile offenders on death row, was forced to flee Iran in July. Under Iranian law, majority is attained at puberty (*bulugh*), as stipulated by its interpretation of Shari'a and as specified in Iran's 1991 Civil Code as 15 lunar years (14 years and 5 months) for boys and 9 lunar years (8 years and 8 months) for girls. Moreover, article 82 of the Iranian Penal Code establishes capital punishment as the penalty for adultery crimes (*hodud*), "regardless of the age or marital status of the culprit." Further, since *hodud* crimes are seen as crimes against God, the Supreme Leader of Iran has no power to grant pardons in such cases. Punishment is fixed by the Quran and Sunna, and, in principle cannot be altered by any authority. In cases of murder, Iran implements "*qesas*" punishment, under which the family of the victim holds the sole power to determine whether the accused should be executed. Iranian jurisprudence considers *qesas* a personal right of the victim's family that neither the judge nor any other authority can overrule, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a juvenile. A sentence of execution is also available for the following crimes, among others: adultery, same-sex relations, apostasy, and certain drug-related offenses. During its Universal Periodic Review before the United Nations Human Rights Council in February, Iran rejected requests from member states to abolish the juvenile death penalty. Despite the absolute ban on execution of individuals charged with crimes that occurred while they were under age 18, government officials continue to insist Iran is in compliance with international law because it does not execute juvenile offenders until after they turn 18. [...]

➤ [Child Rights Information Network, Inhuman sentencing of children in Iran, July 2010](#)

[...] The death penalty is common in Iran, including for persons under 18 at the time of the offence. [...] Executions have reportedly been carried out despite announcements of a moratorium in 2002 and 2008. More than 240 executions of juveniles were recorded between 1979 and 1999. About 200 of these allegedly occurred during 1981-83, mostly school students aged 13 to 17, who reportedly faced death by firing squads for their involvement in opposition activities. Between 1999 and March 2009, at least 42

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

executions of juvenile offenders were recorded, including 12 in 2007, 8 in 2008 and one early in 2009. Juveniles are commonly imprisoned and executed when they reach 18. According to the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, in 2009 the Government executed at least five minors despite a directive in October 2008 against such practice. At least 138 juvenile offenders are believed to be on death row. Persons have reportedly been executed for offences committed when they were even younger than Iran's minimum age of criminal responsibility, including men who had allegedly committed offences at the ages of 12, 13 and 14. [...]

Trafficking

➤ [Congressional Research Service, Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses, 07/04/2011](#)

[...] The June 14, 2010, (latest), State Department "Trafficking in Persons" report continued to place Iran in Tier 3 (worst level) for failing to take significant action to prevent trafficking in persons. Girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation within Iran and from it to other countries. [...]

➤ [U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2010: Iran, 14/06/2011](#)

[...] IRAN (Tier 3)

Iran is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution and forced labor. Iranian women are trafficked internally for forced prostitution and forced marriage. Iranian and Afghan children living in Iran are trafficked internally for commercial sexual exploitation – sometimes through forced marriages, in which their new "husbands" force them into prostitution and involuntary servitude as beggars or laborers to pay debts, provide income, or support drug addiction of their families. Young men and Afghan boys are forced into prostitution in male brothels in southern Iran. Iranian women and girls are also subjected to forced prostitution in Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. There are reports of women and girls being sold for marriage to men in Pakistan for the purpose of sexual servitude. Men and women from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iraq migrate voluntarily or are smuggled to Iran, or through Iran, to other Gulf states, Greece, and Turkey seeking employment. Some subsequently are subjected to conditions of forced labor or debt bondage, including through the use of such practices as restriction of movement, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse. In Iran, reports indicate victims primarily work in the construction and agricultural sectors, although this type of forced labor may have declined over the past year due to the economic crisis. There are reports that women from Azerbaijan and Tajikistan travel to Iran to find employment and subsequently fall victim to forced prostitution. Tajik women transit Iran and are forced into prostitution in the UAE. Press reports indicate criminal organizations, sometimes politically connected, play a significant role in human trafficking to and from Iran, particularly across the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan in connection with smuggling of migrants, drugs, and arms. There are nearly one million Afghans living in Iran, some as refugees and others as economic migrants, who are vulnerable to conditions of human trafficking. The Government of Iran does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, and is not making significant efforts to do so. Lack of access to Iran by U.S. government officials impedes the collection of information on the country's human trafficking problem and the government's efforts to curb it. The government did not share information on its anti-trafficking efforts with the international community during the reporting period. Publicly available information from NGOs, the press, international organizations, and other governments nonetheless support two fundamental conclusions: first, trafficking within, to, and from Iran is extensive; and second, the authorities' response is not sufficient to penalize offenders, protect victims, and eliminate trafficking. Indeed, some aspects of Iranian law and policy hinder efforts to combat trafficking. These include punishment of victims and legal obstacles to punishing offenders. In international fora, the Iranian government has objected to the principle that victims of trafficking should not be punished for crimes committed as a result of being trafficked. Recommendations for Iran: Share with the international community efforts made to investigate trafficking offenses and prosecute and punish trafficking offenders; investigate trafficking offenses and prosecute and punish trafficking offenders, including officials who are complicit in trafficking; institute a victim identification procedure to systematically identify and protect victims of trafficking, particularly among groups such as

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

women arrested for prostitution; and cease the punishment of victims of trafficking for unlawful acts committed as a result of being trafficked.

Prosecution

No reliable information was available on human trafficking investigations, prosecutions, convictions or punishments during the past year. A 2004 law prohibits trafficking in persons by means of the threat or use of force, coercion, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability of the victim for purposes of prostitution, removal of organs, slavery or forced marriage. Reports indicate, however, the law remains unenforced. The Constitution and Labor Code both prohibit forced labor and debt bondage; the prescribed penalty of a fine and up to one year's imprisonment is not sufficient to deter these crimes and is not commensurate with prescribed penalties for serious crimes, such as rape. In addition, the Labor Code does not apply to work in households. The law permits temporary marriage for a fixed term (sigheh), after which the marriage is terminated. Some persons abuse this legal process to coerce women into prostitution; there are reports of Iranian women subjected to forced prostitution through fixed-term marriages to men from Pakistan and Gulf states. Law enforcement data is unknown; there were reports of some prosecutions for traffickers who forced Iranian girls into prostitution in the Gulf. Investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of trafficking offenders were not priorities in the country. It was extremely difficult for women forcibly held in commercial sexual exploitation to obtain justice; first, because the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man, and second, because women who are victims of sexual abuse are vulnerable to being executed for adultery, defined as sexual relations outside of marriage. Official complicity may be a problem; human traffickers were reported to have very close links to some authorities and security agencies.

Protection

There were no reported efforts by the Government of Iran to improve its protection of trafficking victims this year. Iran did not have a process to identify trafficking victims from the vulnerable populations found in the country, and officials did not differentiate between victims of trafficking and undocumented migrants. The government reportedly punishes victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, for example, adultery and prostitution. There were reports that the government arrested, prosecuted, and punished several trafficking victims on charges of prostitution or adultery. It is unknown how many victims may have been subjected to punishment during the reporting period for such acts committed as a result of being trafficked. In the February 2010 Trafficking in Persons Working Group in Vienna, the government stated it would not accept any recommendations calling for the absolution of trafficking victims for their crimes; the Iranian delegate said while the victim status of a woman in prostitution might be taken into account by the judge, he opposed the idea that such a woman should not be prosecuted. Most foreign trafficking victims are detained for a short period of time and then deported. Some welfare organizations may help Iranian trafficking victims. Foreign victims of trafficking do not have a legal alternative to removal to countries in which they may face hardship or retribution. According to a March 2009 report citing UNICEF and provincial authorities in Herat, Afghanistan, more than 1,000 Afghan children deported from Iran in 2008 faced poverty and were at risk for abuse, including human trafficking; there were no known efforts to identify trafficking victims among this group. In the reporting period, Iran deported very large numbers of undocumented Afghans without screening them for victimization. Previous reports indicate the government does not encourage victims to assist law enforcement authorities as they investigate and prosecute trafficking cases.

Prevention

There were no reports of efforts by the Government of Iran to prevent trafficking during the past year, such as campaigns to raise public awareness of trafficking, to reduce demand for commercial sex acts, or to reduce demand for child sex tourism by Iranians traveling abroad. Iran is not a party to the 2000 UN TIP Protocol

[...] THE TIERS

[...] TIER 3

Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so [...]

Recruitment into the Basij/security forces

- [U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

[...] In November 2009 according to the Mehr news agency, the leader of the student Basij organization, Mohammad Saleh Jokar, announced that 6,000 Basij units would be created in the country's elementary schools. Jokar said the action aimed to expand and promote Basij and revolutionary ideals among young persons. He added that approximately 4.5 million students and 320,000 teachers were members of the Basij. An RFE report noted that the Basij also began a program to register baby girls for later training in the Basji Hossein Haj Mousae Basij unit. The report also discussed "resource centers" being built at elementary schools to prepare children to join the units [...]

➤ [The Guardian, Iran 'using child soldiers' to suppress Tehran protests, 13/03/2011](#)

[...] Iran's Islamic regime is using "child soldiers" to suppress anti-government demonstrations, a tactic that could breach international law forbidding the use of underage combatants, human rights activists have told the Observer. The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran says troops aged between 14 and 16 have been armed with batons, clubs and air guns and ordered to attack demonstrators who have tried to gather in Tehran. The youths – apparently recruited from rural areas – are being deployed in regular riot police roles and comprise up to one-third of the total force, according to witnesses. One middle-aged woman, who said she was attacked by the youths, reported that some were as young as 12 and were possibly prepubescent. They had rural accents, which indicated they had been brought in from villages far from Tehran, she said. Some told her they had been attracted by the promise of chelo kebab dinners, one of Iran's national dishes. "It's really a violation of international law. It's no different than child soldiers, which is the custom in many zones of conflict," said Hadi Ghaemi, the campaign's executive director. "They are being recruited into being part of the conflict and armed for it." The UN convention on the rights of the child requires states to take "all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take a direct part in hostilities". The allegation comes amid efforts by Iran's opposition Green movement to revive the mass protests that challenged President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009, which opponents say was rigged. Drawing encouragement from the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, organisers have vowed to stage demonstrations every Tuesday. Protesters who gathered on 1 March and a week later were met by a blanket security presence, which activists say refined the tactics used to crush the post-election revolt, when smaller detachments of youths were used informally by the hardline Basij militia. Last Tuesday youthful riot squads formed along Valiasr Street, Tehran's central thoroughfare, and forced pedestrians to run an intimidating gauntlet. Protesters chanting anti-government slogans were attacked. Multiple arrests were reported. "They are very keen to display violence. Teenage boys are notorious for that," said Ghaemi. "They are being used to ensure there is a good ratio of government forces to protesters and because the average policeman in Tehran could have some kind of family connection to the people they have to beat up. It's a classic tactic to bring people from outside, because they have no sense of sympathy for city dwellers." The renewed clampdown coincides with concern over the whereabouts of the Green movement's nominal leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi. Both were apparently placed under house arrest last month and then reported to have been taken into detention, despite official denials. [...]

➤ [Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Teenage Paramilitaries in Iran, 30/06/2010](#)

[...] On a cold February morning, primary-age schoolchildren are lined up for a ceremony in which they will shout "Death to America" and hurl old shoes at effigies of Uncle Sam, the Great Satan. The event, part of annual celebrations of the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, is the work of the Student Basij, a subdivision of Iran's powerful paramilitary movement which is seen as a bulwark of the regime. The Basij force made its name in the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, as an army of fearless volunteers who acted as auxiliaries to the regular troops, marching across minefields and through concerted Iraqi fire to clear a way through. The movement fielded at least 550,000 under-18s in the course of the eight-year war. Thirty-six thousand were killed or were reported missing in action. More recently, the Basij has acquired a reputation as a domestic security force loyal to the Iranian regime, and was deployed on the streets of Tehran to counter the widespread protests that followed last year's disputed presidential election. The Basij is the largest organisation in Iran and has a presence in schools, universities, factories, government offices and the private sector. Structurally, it sits under the powerful Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and its leader is appointed directly by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The Student Basij has

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

specific responsibility for work in the schools and recruiting younger members. Under a 1996 law, the education ministry is required to supporting the Student Basij's activity.

CATCH THEM YOUNG

The Student Basij has a presence in 54,000 of the country's 150,000 and is expanding fast. One major new development is that its attention has broadened to take in young children as well as adolescents. Since last November, 6,000 "Basij centres" have opened in primary schools across the country. The commander of the Student Basij, Mohammad Saleh Jokar, has said the primary schools are being targeted so as to familiarise youngsters with the "Basij culture, so that they will be fully prepared when they go on to join its ranks in a few years' time". Jokar asserts that 4.6 million of the 14 million schoolchildren in Iran have signed up to the Basij, although such figures are hard to corroborate. Children join different groups according to what class they are in – the Omidan or "Hope Resistance" for seven to 11 year olds, the Puyandegan or "Dynamic Resistance" for those aged 11 to 13, and the Pishgaman or "Pioneer Resistance" for older adolescents up to the age of 18. Military prowess with a strong ideological slant is an important part of the Basij's image, and forms an important part of the training the organisation provides in the schools. Student Basij Day on October 30 commemorates the death of Hossein Fahmideh, a 13-year-old who strapped grenades to himself and threw himself under an Iraqi tank in 1980. At the time, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini said the teenager was Iran's real leader. Since 1984, the Basij have run military training for middle and high school pupils, aged 11 upwards. Girls as well as boys are taught how to use Kalashnikov rifles. Officially, the Basij recruiting drive in Iranian schools is to help build a 20-million-strong army, an idea conceived by the late Ayatollah Khomeini in the early years of the war with Iraq. Twenty years after the end of the war, Basij and Revolutionary Guards commanders are still carrying out that order. But in reality, the Basij's raison d'être has shifted from external to domestic security, nurturing a generation of young people loyal to the regime, devoted to defending it, and equipped with all the skills they need to do so. As the movement's website puts it, the aim now is "raising and deepening the religious awareness and political understanding" of young Basijis to enable them to steer the country's schoolchildren as a whole towards the state's objectives. Supreme Leader Khamenei made the same point in 2008 when he told Student Basij members that "the teenage years play a crucial and decisive part in determining the future of every individual.... It is therefore important to teach and train this segment of society."

POLITICALLY CORRECT ENTERTAINMENT

To make recruitment easier, the Basij now offers a lot more than weapons training in the schools. Competitions for science and inventions provide another way of scouting for new talent, and a range of sporting, artistic and cultural competitions are held – all with a strong injection of official ideology. Last November, for example primary schools across the country marked the 1979 takeover of the American embassy in the Iranian revolution by holding drawing competitions. The theme? "Death to America." Aware of the importance of the internet, and its use by the opposition, the Basij has been busy training its own bloggers. Ten thousand were supposed to have been trained in a programme ending this spring. The movement also held a blog competition, which Student Basij commander Jokar said was intended to encourage "effective use of using cyberspace to promote the values of the Islamic Revolution" and – significantly – to counter "soft threats". The term "soft threat" was coined by Supreme Leader Khamenei to describe what he saw as corrosive western influences designed to undermine the politics and Islamic culture of Iran. IRGC commander Brigadier-General Mohammad Ali Jafari has made it clear that Khamenei has entrusted the Basij with the task of combating "soft threats" and "confronting those who would strike at the strong relationship between the Supreme Leader and the people". As part of this virtual war, the Basij has designed its own politically correct computer games. "Devil Den", launched in July 2009 by the Basij's then overall commander Hossein Taeb, is based around a scenario where Iranian students on a pilgrimage to Karbala in Iraq are captured by American soldiers. The Americans turn them over to Israel, which plans to perform experiments on them so that they will mutate into Israeli soldiers. An escape attempt results in a pitched battle with Israeli soldiers, which the Iranians win before returning home. Other Student Basij activities involve summer camps mixing recreation with ideological content. The most famous programme, the "Velayat Project", involves one-week camps in every province of Iran. The purpose, according to Jokar, is once again religious and political awareness-raising, and also "learning strategies to counter soft threats". The "One Way to Heaven" camp scheme is designed for underprivileged schoolchildren. Last year, 20,000 attended these camps and were taken to visit the holy

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

city of Mashhad. “Rahian-e Nour” or “Seekers of Light” is yet another summer scheme; in this case to take schoolchildren on tours of Iran-Iraq war battlefields in the west and south of the country. This year, there are plans to take half a million children on these trips.

TEENAGE DEMONSTRATORS – AND RIOT POLICE TOO?

While the Basij undoubtedly had a strong presence on the streets during last year’s anti-government protests, acting as auxiliary security forces, allegations that it deployed minors in this role as well are much more controversial. Isa Saharkhiz, formerly head of the domestic media department at the culture ministry, was a lone voice when he made this claim, and was arrested and jailed in early July 2009, almost immediately after doing so. Saharkhiz claimed that the Basij had been training underprivileged children and orphans in urban counter-insurgency techniques at special camps for a number of years. These youngsters aged 13 to 16 were armed and deployed on the streets as shock troops against the protests, he claimed. Such allegations aside, the main way in which the Basij deploys its youth members is as participants in pro-government demonstrations. When Basiji schoolgirls mounted a nationwide march in May this year to urge the authorities to take action against women who flouted the Islamic dress code, police began arresting young people on the streets for “bad hejab” or immodest behaviour. At the start of the Israeli offensive in Gaza last year, the Basij began a campaign to sign up squads of school-age martyrs to go and fight. A website was even launched to register names of volunteer fighters. As schoolchildren went on marches across the country, one 15-year-old girl spoke for many when she told reporters, “Should it be necessary we will go and fight Israel, so as to defend the Palestinians”. It turned out not to be necessary. The future martyrs were ready to go, but would have needed approval from the Supreme Leader before doing so. Nevertheless, the campaign was a demonstration of the Basij’s capacity to mobilise large numbers of young people to serve the regime, and even die if need be.

Street children

- [U.S. Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 08/04/2011](#)
[...] There were reportedly significant numbers of children working as street vendors in Tehran and other cities and not attending school. International media sources reported there were as many as 250,000 street children in the country [...]

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Index of sources

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Baha'is In Iran 'Summoned' To Intelligence Ministry, 09/08/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/bahais_in_iran_summoned_to_intelligence_ministry/24291867.html

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Baha'is arrested in several Iranian cities, 02/08/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/bahai_arrests_several_iran_cities/24284790.html

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iran Hangs Man On Drug-Smuggling Charges, 31/07/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_hangs_drug_smuggler/24282236.html

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Blogger Expected At Women's World Cup Reported Missing, 14/07/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/iranian_blogger_expected_at_womens_world_cup_reported_missing/24265670.html

Amnesty International, The life of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani remains in the balance, 11/07/2011
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=19570

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kurdish Journalist On Hunger Strike In Iranian Prison, 07/07/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/kurdish_journalist_hunger_strike_iran_prison/24258915.html

The Guardian, Iran's judicial killing spree, 07/07/2011
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/07/iran-rise-executions>

Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Iran, 06/07/2011
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e16d36f1b.html>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Female Photojournalist Missing, 22/06/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/iranian_female_photojournalist_missing/24243177.html

Amnesty International, IRAN: THREE MOTHERS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN IRAN, 16/06/2011
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/059/2011/en/bbb62751-d56d-47e9-8097-d072cc3a60ea/mde130592011en.html>

U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2010: Iran, 14/06/2011
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/142983.pdf>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions: Summary of information, including individual cases, transmitted to Governments and replies received (Iran excerpt), 27/05/2011
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/17session/A-HRC-17-28-Add1.pdf>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Baha'is Deplore Arrests Of Academics In Iran, 24/05/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/bahais_deplore_arrests_of_academics_in_iran/24185664.html

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Amnesty International/International Commission of Jurists, Rights organizations condemn continued persecution campaign against lawyers in Iran, 23/05/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/052/2011/en/ced2dd51-4c5b-4112-a4b4-f053313949dc/mde130522011en.pdf>

Amnesty International, Iran: "Arbitrary arrests, torture and executions continue, 20/05/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/051/2011/en/dc1cd526-75b2-464d-91c0-271d08d92590/mde130512011en.pdf>

Amnesty International, IRAN: FURTHER INFORMATION: KURDISH POLITICAL PRISONERS FACE EXECUTION, 19/05/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/050/2011/en/70fdc54b-e8fe-439e-b855-31f10b745624/mde130502011en.html>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Lawyer For Iranian Sufi Dervishes Detained, 19/05/2011

http://www.rferl.org/content/lawyer_for_iranian_sufi_dervishes_detained/24179726.html

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Iran: eleven Christians walk free from court, 19/05/2011

<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1172&search=>

Word Organisation Against Torture, Iran: Arbitrary detention of Ms. Maryam Bahreman and Ms. Mahbubeh Karami, 17/05/2011

<http://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/iran/2011/05/d21263/>

Israel National News, Jewish Woman Executed in Iran, 17/05/2011

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/144238>

Amnesty International, DOCUMENT - IRAN: FURTHER INFORMATION: IRANIAN KURD REMAINS AT RISK OF EXECUTION, 13/05/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/048/2011/en/dbf581fe-412e-4572-b5a5-8f895e231bb8/mde130482011en.html>

Amnesty International, Annual Report 2010 The State of the World's Human Rights, 13/05/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/iran/report-2011>

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2011, 12/05/2011

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2011&country=8057>

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Report 2011: Iran excerpt, May 2011

<http://www.uscirtf.gov/images/book%20with%20cover%20for%20web.pdf>

European Union, Statement by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton on the execution of juvenile offenders in Iran, 29/04/2011

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/121682.pdf

Human Rights Watch, Investigate Reported Killings of Demonstrators, 29/04/2011

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/04/29/iran-investigate-reported-killings-demonstrators>

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2011: Iran, 28/04/2011

<http://www.uscirtf.gov/images/ar2011/iran2011.pdf>

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Eight Dervishes Arrested In Iran, 14/04/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_dervishes_sufi/3557710.html

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Journalist Charged Over 'Unauthorized Blog', 13/04/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_journalist_charged_unauthorized_blog/3556103.html

US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2010, 08/04/2011
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154461.htm>

Congressional Research Service, Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses, 07/04/2011
<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/161325.pdf>

UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Human Rights and Democracy: The 2010 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report, 31/03/2011
<http://fcohrdreport.readandcomment.com/read-and-download-the-report/>

Amnesty International, IRANIAN BAHAI LEADERS HIT BY 'VINDICTIVE' SENTENCE EXTENSION, 31/03/2011
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/iranian-bahai-leaders-hit-vindictive-sentence-extension-2011-03-31>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, More Than 1,000 Political Arrests' In Iran In Past Year, 23/03/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/more_than_1000_political_arrests_iran/2347174.html

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iran 'Carries Out More Secret Executions' At Site Listed In UN Report, 18/03/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_secret_executions/2342862.html

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Iranian news website suspended after reporting burning of New Testaments, 16/03/2011
<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1135&search=>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, New Crackdown On Iran Students Alleged Following Protest Deaths, 16/03/2011
http://www.rferl.org/content/new_crackdown_iran_students_after_protest_deaths/2339991.html

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14/03/2011
http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/16session/A.HRC.16.75_AUV.pdf

The Guardian, Iran 'using child soldiers' to suppress Tehran protests, 13/03/2011
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/13/iran-child-soldiers-tehran-protests>

Amnesty International, Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women regarding concerns about the harassment and imprisonment of women, including rights defenders and members of minorities, in Iran, 08/03/2011
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/027/2011/en/4e655121-6d6c-4b1f-ba0b-4d88ec4dc8e1/mde130272011en.pdf>

Amnesty International, Iran: International Women's Day celebration marred by continued detention of dozens of women, 08/03/2011

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/028/2011/en/90819b8c-3204-4717-99df-9e338eee099d/mde130282011en.pdf>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Iranian Revolutionary Court Charges Sufi Dervishes, 08/03/2011
<http://www.rferl.org/content/dervishes/2331828.html>

Amnesty International, URGENT ACTION Supporters of Kurd Sentenced to Death Held, 04/03/2011
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/026/2011/en/f6507a9a-4152-4d76-a026-2e42023806b0/mde130262011en.pdf>

Human Rights Watch, Free Opposition Leaders and Their Families, 02/03/2011
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/03/02/iran-free-opposition-leaders-and-their-families>

Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (United States Military Academy), The Factors Behind Rebellion in Iranian Kurdistan, 01/03/2011
<http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-factors-behind-rebellion-in-iranian-kurdistan>

Iran Focus, Clinton: Iran crackdown has killed protesters, abused human rights, 24/02/2011
http://www.iranfocus.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22836:clinton-iran-crackdown-has-killed-protesters-abused-human-rights&catid=5:human-rights&Itemid=27

UN Human Rights Council Written statement submitted by the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP), a nongovernmental organization on the roster, Fundamental freedom and rights of the Kurdish people in the Islamic Republic of Iran must be protected and promoted, 22/02/2011
http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1301316489_g1111110.pdf

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Iranian government detains more Christians in another wave of arrests, 18/02/2011
<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1112&search=>

UN Human Rights Council, Written statement* submitted by the Bahá'í International Community, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status, 17/02/2011
[ODS HOME PAGE](#)

Reporters Without Borders, Journalists arrested, relatives held hostage in new crackdown, 17/02/2011
<http://en.rsf.org/iran-journalists-arrested-relatives-17-02-2011,39572.html>

Minority Rights Group International, Seeking justice and an end to neglect: Iran's minorities today, 16/02/2011
<http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=939>

Amnesty International, Urgent Action: Two juveniles at risk of execution in Iran, 08/02/2011
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/014/2011/en/cf3eed26-736c-4c8e-90aa-5b2f624b8ba7/mde130142011en.pdf>

Human Rights Watch, World Report 2011: Iran, 24/01/2011
<http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/iran>

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Amnesty International, Iran urged to drop prison sentences against human rights activists, 10/01/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/iran-urged-drop-prison-sentences-against-human-rights-activists-2011-01-10>

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 70 Christians arrested and detained over Christmas in Iran, 05/01/2011

<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1077&search=>

Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Issues Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran Submitted by Human Rights Watch to the UN Human Rights Committee on the occasion of its Pre-Sessional Review of Iran, December 2010

https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1305724095_hrwh-iran-ccpr101.pdf

The Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office, The compliance of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as concerns the situation of the Baha'is, December 2010

www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngo/BIC_Iran_CCPR101.doc

Amnesty International, Iran: Executions by Stoning, December 2010

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/095/2010/en/968814e1-f48e-43ea-bee3-462d153fb5af/mde130952010en.pdf>

Project on Extra-Legal Executions in Iran, Submission to the UN Human Rights Council: Death Penalty Concerns (Article 6, and Articles 7 and 15 in conjunction with Article 6) Questions recommended for inclusion in the list of issues for the consideration of the 3rd Periodic Report of the Islamic Republic of IRAN, 31/12/2010

http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1305756994_ngo-submission-elei.pdf

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Hanged Iranian Political Prisoner's Relatives, Friends 'Detained', 29/12/2010

http://www.rferl.org/content/hanged_prisoners_relatives_detained/2262136.html

Guardian, Iran arrests family of Kurdish activist due to be executed, 27/12/2010

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/27/iran-arrests-family-kurdish-activist>

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, CSW gravely concerned for two Iranian pastors charged with apostasy, 21/12/2010

<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=1073&search=>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Jailed Iranian Filmmaker Hospitalized, Family Members Detained, 16/12/2010

http://www.rferl.org/content/jailed_filmmaker_hospital_family/2250688.html

Kurdish Human Rights Project SUBMISSION AND LIST OF ISSUES TO BE TAKEN UP IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSIDERATION OF IRAN'S THIRD PERIODIC REPORT CONCERNING THE RIGHTS COVERED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR THE PRE SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP TO THE 101st SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE, 01/12/2010

http://www.khrp.org/khrp-news/human-rights-documents/doc_download/273-khrp-submission-in-consideration-of-irans-third-periodic-review-by-the-human-righs-committee.html

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) / International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Arbitrary arrest of five human rights lawyers, 19/11/2010
<http://www.fidh.org/Arbitrary-arrest-of-five-human-rights-lawyers>

U.S. Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2010, 17/11/2010
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/149643/250879_en.html

United Nations General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 29/10/2010
http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1295952595_n1061124.pdf

Human Rights Watch, Iran: Human Rights Crisis Requires International Scrutiny, 28/10/2010
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/10/28/iran-human-rights-crisis-requires-international-scrutiny>

Human Rights Watch, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan: End Juvenile Death Penalty, 08/10/2010
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/10/09/iran-saudi-arabia-sudan-end-juvenile-death-penalty>

Human Rights Watch, Iran: Lawyers' defence work repaid with loss of freedom, 01/10/2010
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/10/01/iran-lawyers-defence-work-repaid-loss-freedom>

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) Iran: "The Hidden Side of Iran: Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities", October 2010
<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/IrandiscrimLDDHI545a.pdf>

Mianeh (Institute for War and Peace Reporting (UK)), Quiet Intimidation in Iran, 17/09/2010
<http://iwpr.net/report-news/quiet-intimidation-iran>

Amnesty International, Iranian journalist and human rights defender set to face trial, 02/09/2010
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/iranian-journalist-and-human-rights-defender-set-face-trial-2010-09-03>

Human Rights Watch, Iran: Stop Abuse of Political Prisoners, 06/08/2010
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/08/06/iran-stop-abuse-political-prisoners>

Child Rights Information Network, Inhuman sentencing of children in Iran, July 2010
http://www.crin.org/docs/Iran_Inhuman_Sentencing.docx

Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Teenage Paramilitaries in Iran, 30/06/2010
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/141645/242201_en.html

Human Rights Watch, Zeynab Jalalian, Held Incommunicado, Among 17 Kurds on Death Row, 29/06/2010
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/29/iran-stop-imminent-execution-kurdish-dissident>

Kurdish Human Rights Project, Impact Report 2009, 22/06/2010
http://www.khrp.org/khrp-news/human-rights-documents/doc_download/263-impact-report-2009.html

International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA), The Death Penalty for Drug Offences Global Overview 2010: Iran excerpt, 16/06/2010
http://www.ihra.net/files/2010/06/16/IHRA_DeathPenaltyReport_Web.pdf

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Amnesty International, From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election, 09/06/2010
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/062/2010/en/a009a855-788b-4ed4-8aa9-3e535ea9606a/mde130622010en.pdf>

UN Human Rights Council, Iran: Written statement submitted by International Educational Development, Inc., a non-governmental organization on the roster [A/HRC/14/NGO/7], 28/05/2010
http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/470_1281608746_g1013713.pdf

Amnesty International, Urgent Action Further information on Urgent Action 102/10 [MDE 13/056/2010], 21/05/2010
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/056/2010/en/3d6fb1e5-1839-4651-bab1-23c18019ccfe/mde130562010en.pdf>

Iran Focus, Relatives of Kurds executed in Iran are denied the remains, and 2 are arrested, 12/05/2010
http://www.iranfocus.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20367:relatives-of-kurds-executed-in-iran-are-denied-the-remains-and-2-are-arrested&catid=5:human-rights&Itemid=22

Human Rights Watch, Iran: Executed Dissidents 'Tortured to Confess', 11/05/2010
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/05/11/iran-executed-dissidents-tortured-confess>

Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, Violent Aftermath: The 2009 Election and Suppression of Dissent in Iran, February 2010
http://www.iranhrdc.org/files.php?force&file=reports_en/Violent_Aftermath_135276729.pdf

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Iran: Treatment by Iranian authorities of relatives of persons who have left Iran and claimed refugee status, including former members of the Bureau of National Security (SAVAK), of a Fedayeen organization, or opposition protestors, 04/01/2010
http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca:8080/RIR_RDI/RIR_RDI.aspx?id=452707&l=e

The Christian Science Monitor, "Mousavi supporters say Iran ordered murder of his nephew," 28/12/2009
<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2009/1228/Mousavi-supporters-say-Iran-ordered-murder-of-his-nephew>

The Star-Ledger (Newark, New Jersey), "In Iran, Secret Prisons and Hidden Horrors Political detainees detail torture, beatings at detention centers," 17/12/2009
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/middle-east/091214/iran-prison-torture>

Amnesty International, Election Contested, Repression Compounded, 07/12/2009
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/123/2009/en/1e69a8fb-dcf1-4165-a7fc-a94369e364bf/mde131232009en.pdf>

Iran Focus, Families of detained Iran reformists arrested: report, 25/10/2009
<http://www.iranfocus.com/en/human-rights/families-of-detained-iran-reformists-arrested-report-18917.html>

Amnesty International, Urgent Action 271/09 – Iran: Halt executions of Kurdish prisoners, 08/10/2009
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/102/2009/en/a4056737-ef5d-4af2-aebb-fc85c489e11b/mde131022009en.html>

THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE USED AS A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING RELEVANT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION. IT SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE TO THE UK BORDER AGENCY, THE TRIBUNAL OR OTHER DECISION MAKERS IN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS OR APPEALS.

Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS), Rights-Iran: Groups Call for Special U.N. Probe, 22/09/2009
<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=48542>

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Grandchildren Of Dissident Iranian Ayatollah Arrested, 15/09/2009
http://www.rferl.org/content/Grandchildren_Of_Dissident_Iranian_Ayatollah_Arrested/1822963.html

Danish Immigration Service, Human Rights Situation for Minorities, Women and Converts, and Entry and Exit Procedures, ID Cards, Summons and Reporting, etc., 30/04/2009
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49fff6102.html>

Human Rights Watch, Iran: Freedom of Expression and Association in the Kurdish Regions, 09/01/2009
<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/01/08/iran-freedom-expression-and-association-kurdish-regions>

Foreign Policy Centre (UK), A revolution without rights? Women, Kurds and Baha'is searching for equality in Iran, 25/11/2008
<http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1006.pdf>

Amnesty International, Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority, 30/07/2008
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/088/2008/en/f45865e9-5e3e-11dd-a592-c739f9b70de8/mde130882008eng.html>

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Treatment of supporters of opposition groups or parties since 2003; whether ordinary supporters of political causes or groups distribute pamphlets by hand; whether persons perceived as political opponents can work for state companies, 28/06/2006
http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca:8080/RIR_RDI/RIR_RDI.aspx?id=450325&l=e

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Iran (Kurdistan): First hearing in Mahmoud Salehi's trial held behind closed doors in Saqez, 01/02/2005
<http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/libsynd/LSGetParasByCase.cfm?PARA=7654&FILE=2335&hdroff=1&DISPLAY=BACKGROUND>