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# Responses to Information Requests

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9 March 2021

### IRN200458.E

Iran: Situation and treatment of Christians by society and the authorities (2017–February 2021)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

## 1. Overview

According to Minority Rights Group International (MRG), Christians in Iran are divided into two groups: "ethnic Christians"—the Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans [Assyro-Chaldeans, Chaldo-Assyrians]—who constitute over 90 percent of Iran's Christian population, and "non-ethnic Christians", such as Protestants and Evangelicals (MRG Dec. 2017). According to a joint report by the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (Ceasefire) [1], the Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR) [2] and MRG, Armenians represent the largest Christian group in Iran (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 10).

Estimates of the number of Christians in Iran range from around 117,700 according to the 2011 Iran government's census, which only included ethnic Christians (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 10), to nearly 300,000 including Protestants and Evangelicals (MRG Dec. 2017; US

28 Apr. 2020, 25). A 2020 UK Home Office report on Christians in Iran cited estimates of the number of Christian converts ranging from 400,000 to 3 million (UK Feb. 2020, para. 5.1.3). According to the US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2019*, the US government estimates that the three largest non-Muslim minorities in Iran are Baha'is, Christians and Yarsanis, and that, together with other religious minorities, they make up less than 1 percent of the population (US 10 June 2020, 4). However, a June 2020 survey by the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN), a Netherlands-based non-profit research foundation, found that, from a sample size of 50,000 total respondents and an "effective sample size of 1,911," 1.5 percent of Iranians self-identified as Christians (GAMAAN Aug. 2020, [i], [ii], 3, 6, 16). Tehran is home to a ["substantial" (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 10)] Christian population (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 10; Surflran n.d.; Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021) and Christians are also present in Isfahan (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 10; Surflran n.d.), Urmia, Hamedan, Abadan and other cities as well (Surflran n.d.).

## 2. Legislation and Rules

Article 12 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran provides that "[t]he official religion of Iran shall be Islam and faith Jafari Athna Ashari ..." (Iran 1979). Article 13 also provides that "Iranian Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians shall be the only recognized religious minorities who, within the limits of the law, shall be free to carry out their religious rites and practice their religion in personal status and religious education" (Iran 1979). Sources indicate that the government recognizes only the following groups as Christian: Armenians, Assyrians (Article 18, et al. Jan. 2021, 5; US 10 June 2020, 6) and citizens who can prove that they or their family adhered to Christianity before the 1979 revolution (US 10 June 2020, 6). The US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2019* explains the following with regard to [article 13 of] the constitution:

"Within the limits of the law" [Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians] have permission to perform religious rites and ceremonies and to form religious societies. They are also free to address personal affairs and religious education according to their own religious canon. Any citizen who is not a registered member of one of these three groups, or who cannot prove his or her family was Christian prior to 1979, is considered Muslim.

Since the law prohibits citizens from converting from Islam to another religion, the government only recognizes the Christianity of citizens who are Armenian or Assyrian Christians because the presence of these groups in the country predates Islam, or of citizens who can prove they or their families were Christian prior to the 1979 revolution. (US 10 June 2020, 6)

According to sources, Armenians and Assyrians [and Chaldeans (MRG Dec. 2017)] are allowed to run their own schools (MRG Dec. 2017; US 10 June 2020, 7) and churches (MRG Dec. 2017). However, sources indicate that Christians are not allowed to conduct religious

services in Persian [Farsi] (Al Bawaba 26 Nov. 2018; Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 5; MRG Dec. 2017). Promoting the Christian faith is also prohibited (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021; Representative 15 Feb. 2021; Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 7).

According to sources, Christian converts are not recognized by the law (US 10 June 2020, 7; UN 18 July 2019, para. 34; Amnesty International 23 Aug. 2018). Moreover, apostasy from Islam is a capital crime (US 10 June 2020, 32; Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021; UK Feb. 2020, para. 2.4.6). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a research fellow at a university in Melbourne, whose research interests include religious identity in Iran, indicated that arrests and executions for apostasy are applied "unevenly" (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). According to sources, the only "official[]" execution of a Christian on charges of apostasy in Iran took place in 1990 (Article18 9 Jan. 2020; ICC 1 Dec. 2019). The UK report on Christians indicates that religious affiliation cannot be changed on identification documents (UK Feb. 2020, para. 2.4.6). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Research Fellow, recognized Christians have "legal autonomy in family law matters that only concern members of their community" (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). Sources indicate that non-Muslims cannot inherit property from Muslims in Iran (UN 18 July 2019, para. 40; Arseh Sevom 15 Feb. 2021). A representative of Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRAI) [3] indicated, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, that the law provides that the "blood money" for a non-Muslim is half that of a Muslim (Representative 15 Feb. 2021). However, the Research Fellow stated that

some ... laws have been subject to reform in the past two decades, providing Muslims and non-Muslims, along with men and women, equal standing in laws such as *qesas* (retribution) and *diyeh* (blood money), both common forms of compensation in cases of property damage, injury and death, usually involving financial remuneration. (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021)

The constitution also provides, [in article 64 (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 12)], that five seats in parliament are reserved for recognized religious minorities, including two for Armenian Christians and one for Chaldean and Assyrian Christians (US 10 June 2020, 8; Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 27).

### 3. Treatment by the Authorities

MRG indicates that Armenians "insist on their good relations with the Iranian government," and provides the example of an Armenian Christian Member of Parliament in Iran who has reportedly claimed that religious minorities face "less" difficulty in Iran than they do in Europe (MRG Dec. 2017). The Research Fellow stated that Armenian and Assyrian Christians do not face barriers in practicing and teaching their faith (Research Fellow 22 Feb.

2021). The same source also stated that, even though they are not a recognized religious minority, "Christians of non-Iranian origin living in Iran, sometimes for several generations (mostly Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox and various Protestant sects)" are not subject to "much interference" from the authorities (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). However, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) [4] indicated that "the protections enshrined in article 13 are not enforced or carried out in practice" (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021).

With regard to the treatment of Christians by the police, the CHRI representative indicated that "[w]hile physical violence during interrogation is virtually the norm for all detainees, there have been no reports of systematic violence against Christians" (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021). The Research Fellow stated that "many" Iranians fear the police, and that while "[r]ecognized and foreign Christians would turn to the police," Iranian Christians ["Christians of Iranian origin who either converted, or whose parents (or other ancestors) converted to Christianity, almost always from Islam"] might be "running a risk" if they did so (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). The HRAI representative similarly indicated the following:

[A]s Christianity is accepted by the constitution, those born into Christianity do not face issues in submitting complaints to police, and generally police do not have any issues with them and follow up on their complaints similar to other citizens.

However, when it comes to [Christian converts], the security forces such as the intelligence services and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) do create issues. (Representative 15 Feb. 2021)

With regard to the judicial authorities, the CHRI representative indicated that

[w]hile in civil cases, Christians can expect to get the same reaction from the police and judiciary as any other citizen, the Iranian judiciary is not independent—it effectively acts as an arm of state security and intelligence services. As such, it is not an effective guarantor of the rule of law, and in cases where individuals are issued national-security related charges such as "propaganda against the state" or "acting as a foreign agent" or any number of national security-related charges that are routinely used against individuals who run afoul of state dictates—including Christian converts and Protestants who are seen as threats due to their proselytizing activities—the judiciary carries out the prosecutions regardless of evidentiary problems or due process denials. (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021)

The HRAI representative stated that when Christians submit complaints, the judiciary "does not particularly discriminate in following up" (Representative 15 Feb. 2021). However, according to the Research Fellow, Iranian authorities demonstrate "reluctance" to punish those who have attacked non-Muslims (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). The same source added

that, while Christianity is "increasingly" considered "equal under the law," the judiciary is "arbitrary," and that, "in theory," crimes against Iranian Christians are viewed as crimes against apostates, which "likely" impacts court "responses" (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021).

Sources indicate that Iran's [official (Al Bawaba 26 Nov. 2018)] Christian churches are preserved by the authorities (Al Bawaba 26 Nov. 2018; Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). The US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2019* states that, in 2019, the government made efforts to preserve Armenian holy sites and "allowed nationals of Armenian descent and Armenian visitors to observe religious and cultural traditions within their churches and dedicated clubs" (US 10 June 2020, 19). However, a joint report by various organizations, including [the religious freedom charity (UK Feb. 2020, para. 9.4.5)] Article18, indicates that, in 2020, Christian communities' heritage and property "continued" to be at risk of confiscation or demolition (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 16). According to the Research Fellow, the demolition of churches "in recent years" has "more to do with corruption in city planning" than with "persecution" of Christians (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### 3.1 Non-Ethnic Christians

According to sources, Christian converts are subject to "severe persecution" (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021) or "periodic persecution" (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021) or are "at risk of persecution" (UN 18 July 2019, para. 35). The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran indicates that non-recognized religious minority groups, including Christians converts, are "targets of discriminatory legislation and practices," since they are excluded from the national legal framework (UN 18 July 2019, para. 34). According to MRG, the Christians facing "the most difficulties" from the authorities in Iran are the Protestants, "particularly" the Evangelicals (MRG Dec. 2017), [many of whom are converts (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 10)].

A 2019 article by Radio Farda, the Persian-language broadcaster of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) (Radio Farda n.d.), reports that Iran's Intelligence Minister "expressed concern over Iranian Muslims converting [to] Christianity" and stated, without giving more details, that "individuals and institutions active in 'countering the advocates of Christianity'," had been deployed to regions where there is "potential" for people to be "influenced" by Christian missionary campaigns (Radio Farda 4 May 2019). Open Doors, an organization that "[s]erv[es] persecuted Christians worldwide" (Open Doors Nov. 2020, [i]), further indicates that

[t]he Iranian government sees the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as an attempt by Western countries to undermine the Islamic rule of Iran. Christians from a Muslim background are persecuted the most, primarily by the government, but also by their families and communities. Secret churches are often raided, and their leaders and members have been arrested and given long prison sentences for "crimes against national security." (Open Doors [13 Jan. 2021])

MRG similarly indicates that Evangelical Christians "often" face accusations of being a "threat to national security, under the influence of foreign powers" (MRG Dec. 2017). The same source reports the following on the situation of non-ethnic Christians in Iran: "[c]hurches have been closed down, ... with previous converts from Islam being put under particular surveillance" (MRG Dec. 2017). Sources indicate that there are reports of Christian converts that have been subjected to sexual abuse in detention (UN 18 July 2019, para. 61) or during interrogation (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 10). According to sources, Christian converts experience arrests, detentions, harassment, surveillance (US 10 June 2020, 19; UK Feb. 2020, para. 2.4.6) and "torture and ill-treatment in detention" (UK Feb. 2020, para. 2.4.6). However, the UK report adds the following:

While there are reports of Christian converts being arrested by the Iranian authorities, the number of arrests are statistically very low when comparing them to the overall number of Christians and converts in Iran. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the Iranian authorities appear to target the leaders and organisers of house churches rather than "ordinary" converts (i.e. those who are not active evangelisers). This suggests that the Iranian authorities are primarily concerned with stopping the spread of the Christianity and do not have the resources to monitor all Christian converts. (UK Feb. 2020, para. 2.4.7)

Open Doors similarly indicates that it is "especially" the Christian converts' leaders that are arrested and sentenced, but adds that "since 2014 an increasing number" of ordinary members have faced national security charges as well (Open Doors Nov. 2020, 30).

According to Open Doors, "[g]overnment control is highest in urban areas, while rural areas are less monitored"; at the same time, cities offer greater anonymity, giving Christians "more freedom to organize meetings and activities than in rural areas, in which social control is higher" (Open Doors [13 Jan. 2021]). The joint report by Article18 and other organizations indicates that the State reportedly monitors "communication" between Iranian citizens and international Christian media broadcasts (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 9).

According to the Research Fellow, state-sanctioned groups, such as the Basij [Basidj] and the Ansar-e Hezbollah [Ansar Hezbollah] [5], are also involved in "harassing" Iranian Christians at their places of worship (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 3.2 House Churches

Sources indicate that house churches in Iran have spread because of church closures (DRC and DIS of Denmark Feb. 2018, 5; Arseh Sevom 15 Feb. 2021), a lack of state licenses to build new churches (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021) or because access to official churches has been restricted to Armenian and Assyrian Christians (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 16). Christian converts have formed informal networks of communities where private homes are used to host prayer gatherings (Church Times 7 Aug. 2020; Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 26). According to the joint report by Article18 and other organizations, house churches "are regularly targeted by the security services" (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 16). The CHRI representative stated that house churches "are promptly shut down by Iran's security establishment," and shutdowns are "often" followed by arrests (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of Arseh Sevom [6] similarly indicated that house churches generate "a situation where religious gatherings can be easily criminalized. This can show up [as] charges of conspiracy and have dangerous legal consequences for practicing Christians" (Arseh Sevom 15 Feb. 2021). A joint report by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), based on interviews conducted in Tehran, Ankara, and London in 2017, indicates the following on house churches:

The closure of churches affiliated with the "Assembly of God" in 2013 has resulted in the spread of house churches ... One source noted that house churches are quite common in Iran and their numbers are growing. ...

The authorities use informers to infiltrate the house churches. The infiltrators are identified and selected by the authorities. To prevent infiltration and intervention, house churches organise themselves as a mobile group consisting of a small number of people. ... One source explained that it would be a strategy for the authorities to either monitor or arrest and release members of a house church to make an informant out of them. The authorities could use information on the person's background to put pressure on them.

... Whether the authorities will intervene depends on the activities of the house church and the size of the group. (DRC and DIS of Denmark Feb. 2018, 5)

## 3.3 Examples of Cases

The following are a examples of cases involving Christians and the authorities in Iran:

- In January 2018, an Assyrian Christian woman was sentenced to ten years in prison for practising her faith: five years for "'membership [in] a group with the purpose of disrupting national security'" (Amnesty International 23 Aug. 2018) or "'acting against national security and against the regime by organising small groups, attending a seminary abroad and training church leaders and pastors to act as spies'" (Church in Chains 7 May 2020) and another five years for

"gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security"(Amnesty International 23 Aug. 2018; Church in Chains 7 May 2020). An appeal hearing was pending as of May 2020 (Church in Chains 7 May 2020).

- In an appeal hearing on 15 January 2019 in Tehran on charges of "spreading propaganda against the regime", two Iranian Christians were asked by the presiding judges to renounce their faith, which they refused (CSW 18 Jan. 2019; Article18 18 Jan. 2019). On 18 May 2019, the two individuals were informed that the verdict was upheld (Church in Chains 15 Apr. 2020).
- Sources report that Iran ["forcibly" (Article18 18 June 2019)] closed an Assyrian church in Tabriz in May 2019 (US 10 June 2020, 24; Article18 18 June 2019). However, according to Article18, the church's cross had also been removed, but "after a national and international outcry, the cross was restored" (Article18 3 Nov. 2020). The same source reports that a 9 July 2019 article by a "pro-government news agency" in Iran "claimed" that the church had not been shut down and that the cross that had not been removed from the building but rather "fell down" and was put back "after being repaired" (Article18 18 June 2019).
- In December 2019 in the city of Mashhad, Iranian authorities demolished the grave of the only Christian (Article18 9 Jan. 2020) or the only Christian pastor (US 28 Apr. 2020, 24) to have been executed for apostasy in Iran (US 28 Apr. 2020, 24; Article18 9 Jan. 2020); his execution took place in 1990 (Article18 9 Jan. 2020).
- Two Christian converts received 80 lashes in October and November 2020 for drinking communion wine, and one of the two men was serving a six-year sentence in Tehran's Evin Prison for organizing house churches and "promoting 'Zionist' Christianity", which will be followed by two years in internal exile (Article18 16 Nov. 2020).

Article18 et al also report that "at least" 115 Iranian Christians were arrested in 2020 because of their faith (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 10). By the end of 2020, "at least" 15 Iranian Christians remained in prison on account of their faith, while 2 others were living in internal exile and another was imprisoned on a "disputed criminal charge" (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 26).

### 3.4 COVID-19

The Research Fellow stated that, in 2020, the government used the COVID-19 "as a means to crack down on Christian activity" by closing churches and increasing the number of arrests of pastors and members of congregations (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). However, according to the joint report by Article18 and other organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic "had little impact on the repressive measures taken against Christians" (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 2). The same report adds that "[a]t least" seven Christians were released from prison because of the pandemic in March 2020, although "many" other were not released "despite severe overcrowding" (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 3, 13).

## 4. Access to Employment, Education, Housing and Health Care



According to the joint report by Ceasefire and other organizations, Iran's High Council for Human Rights reported in 2016 that there were 284 Christian churches and 50 Christian schools in Iran; the report adds that the school curriculum and textbooks must be approved by the Ministry of Education (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 25). According to sources, Christian converts "face serious discrimination" in education (Representative 15 Feb. 2021) or are "deprived of educational opportunities" (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 13). According to the joint report by Article18 and other organizations, a Christian convert and activist was expelled from university in December 2019 (Article18, et al. Jan. 2021, 13). Sources indicate that Christian converts who refuse to be designated as Muslim (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021) or who do not claim to be Muslim when they apply (Open Doors Nov. 2020, 33) cannot be accepted in universities (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021; Open Doors Nov. 2020, 33). The Arseh Sevom representative stated that Christian children are "often prevented from" attending Christian schools (Arseh Sevom 15 Feb. 2021). Open Doors reports that the children of Christian converts are "automatically" registered as Muslims and have to attend Islamic schools (Open Doors Nov. 2020, 32). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Article18 indicates that "many" government agencies do not hire religious minorities (Article18 29 Nov. 2019). The CHRI representative stated that "[t]he practice of requiring job applicants to state their religion also embeds discrimination against religious minorities in hiring and employment practices" (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021). The US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2019* states that "[n]on-Muslims may not be elected to a representative body or hold senior government, intelligence, or military positions, with the exception of five of the 290 parliament seats[, which are] reserved by the constitution for recognized religious minorities" (US 10 June 2020, 8). The Research Fellow similarly stated that Christians cannot hold "important" positions in the government or the military (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). The same source added the following:

The public service, for example, is in theory denied to non-Muslims, yet a number of Christians are nevertheless employed in such jobs. Senior roles in banks are also technically denied to non-Muslims, although there are several [non-Muslims] employed as senior managers and auditors. However, Iranian Christians are more likely to be stigmatised than other Christian groups and are more likely to find barriers to employment. One key issue is Iranian identity documents – the *kart-e melli* (ID card) and *shenas-nameh* (identity booklet). These indicate religion, and for Iranian Christians who refuse to be categorized as Muslims (their official designation), this can be a barrier to employment ... In recent years, there was an attempt to mitigate this by providing an "other" category on identity documents, but this was withdrawn in early 2020 and even when it was in place, the "other" category would usually indicate that the person was of an "undesirable" religion ... (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021)

The HRAI representative further indicated that

while [Christians] do not face difficulty accessing employment at basic levels, they face difficulty in reaching high management levels and we do not have high level managers that are Christian unless it is within their own societies. ... Those who have converted to Christianity ... face serious discrimination [in employment]. (Representative 15 Feb. 2021)

Article18 reports that in June 2020, seven Christian converts in Bushehr were convicted of "propaganda against the state" and received sentences that included employment restrictions: one was banned for life from working at any national institution while others were banned from working in their profession for the length of their exile sentence (Article18 29 June 2020).

Sources indicate that Christians do not, "in general," face difficulty accessing housing or healthcare (Representative 15 Feb. 2021), or that they have not heard of cases of discrimination in this regard (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021).

## 5. Treatment by Society

Sources indicated that societal attitudes towards Christians in Iran are not negative (Representative 15 Feb. 2021; Arseh Sevom 15 Feb. 2021).

Open Doors indicates, however, that in "stricter" Muslim families, Christian converts "face more persecution at home" (Open Doors [13 Jan. 2021]). According to the joint report by the DIS and the DRC, citing "many" Christians hide their conversion from their family, and those who do tell their family about it "risk exclusion and threats" if family members fear the conversion could "create a problem for them" (DRC and DIS of Denmark Feb. 2018, 8). The HRAI representative indicated that social attitudes may vary "from place to place" (Representative 15 Feb. 2021). The Research Fellow stated that, "[o]verall," Christianity is "well-regarded" by urban Iranians, while "most" rural or "conservative" Iranians, view it as a "legitimate religion" but one that is "erroneous, and in some cases such people feel motivated to try to convince Christians to convert to Islam (a non-violent practice of persuasion known as *da'awa* [invitation])" (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021, brackets in original). The same source added that Iranian Christians

tend to be regarded with greater suspicion by the general population [than] foreign and recognized Christians. The government disseminates the view that they are associated with Baha'is (another non-recognized and persecuted segment of Iranian society), that they are associated with foreign interference and are anti-Iranian ... [T]he general danger associated with the community leads many ... Iranians to avoid Iranian Christians ... (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021)

The CHRI representative indicated that "[t]here have been random acts of violence or vandalism, as well as publication of anti-Christian literature, but the vast majority [of violent acts] have been orchestrated and carried out by the security establishment" (CHRI 11 Feb. 2021). According to the Research Fellow, since the outbreak of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020, threats, violence and property damage targeting Armenians have increased, especially in the city of Tabriz and "parts of" Tehran (Research Fellow 22 Feb. 2021). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 6. Christian Women

According to a 2020 report by Open Doors, women constitute the "majority" of house church members, and they are at risk of arrest and sexual harassment during interrogation and imprisonment (Open Doors Nov. 2020, 40). The same source adds that single Christian women face discrimination in employment, and that some Christian women, converts in particular, are "forced" to marry Muslim men (Open Doors Nov. 2020, 40). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### Notes

[1] The Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (Ceasefire) is a charity that seeks "to develop 'civilian-led monitoring' of violations of international humanitarian law or human rights, to pursue legal and political accountability for those responsible for such violations, and to develop the practice of civilian rights" (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 2).

[2] The Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR) is a UK NGO that aims to "advance human rights in the Middle East," particularly in Iran (Ceasefire, et al. Mar. 2018, 2).

[3] The NGO Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRAI) seeks "to protect the human rights of all Iranian citizens regardless of their religion, political views, social status, gender or ethnicity" through education, reporting, legal assistance, international engagements and protests (HRAI n.d.).

[4] The Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) is a non-profit organization headquartered in New York aiming to "protect and promote human rights in Iran" (CHRI n.d.).

[5] According to an article by a sociology professor at the Paris Diderot university, Ansar Hezbollah is one of the largest vigilante groups in Iran, and the Basij is a military force that became part of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in 2009 (Kian Aug. 2019).

[6] Arseh Sevom is an Amsterdam-based NGO promoting democracy, human rights and civil society in Iran "for people of all beliefs, genders, ethnicities, and non-violent political affiliations" (Arseh Sevom n.d.).

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