

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: IRN32866
Country: Iran
Date: 22 February 2008

Keywords: Iran – Kermanshah – Shia Kurds

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Questions

- 1. Please provide an overview of the quality of life of the majority of Kurds in Kermanshah (in particular whether official discrimination occurs and how it typically manifests).**
- 2. Please obtain a suitable expert's views on whether Kurds who seek state protection from criminals in Kermanshah might be denied protection because of their race.**
- 3. How seriously might the authorities currently treat an allegation that an individual Kurd in Kermanshah was a supporter of a Kurdish group such as the Kurdish Democracy Party (KDP) or Komalah. Is it likely such a person would be questioned and/or treated harshly?**
- 4. Would the being a Shi'a make it significantly less likely an allegation of supporting a pro-Kurd group might be given credence?**

RESPONSE

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4. Would the being a Shi'a make it significantly less likely an allegation of supporting a pro-Kurd group might be given credence?

Requests for advice were forwarded to two academics with a known research interest in Kurdish issues: Dr Denise Natali of Exeter University (whose 2005 publication, *The Kurds and the State*, discusses the Shia Kurds of Kermanshah) and Dr Michael M. Gunter of Tennessee Tech University (whose 2004 *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds* also references Kermanshah). The requests supplied the background and questions.

THE RRT IS AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Information retrieved from publicly available sources by RRT Research & Information Services indicates that Kermanshah differs from other Kurdish areas of Iran in that it has a significant Shia Kurd population. These sources also note that Kermanshah's Shia Kurds have, historically, had little interest in Kurdish separatism or autonomy and have, for the most part, supported the Shia republic (see, for instance: McDowall 2000, pp.262, 270; and: Romano 2006, pp.235 n.43, 230); though David Romano's 2006 study does note that "many young Kurds from Kermanshah and neighbouring Shiite areas were active in the KDPI, Komala, and other leftist groups in Kurdistan" (pp.235 n.43). Romano's study also notes that his "own visits to Iranian Kurdistan in the summer of 1999 and the fall of 2000 failed to uncover much evidence of an active guerrilla insurgency in the area" (p.240). A survey of current reporting from the region would seem to suggest that there continues to be little in the way of militant activity attributed to the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) or Komala (the Revolutionary Organization of Kurdish Toilers); though both groups reportedly continue to attempt to organise the Kurdish vote and political thinking in Iran via broadcasts from Iraq and through the work of activists in Iran. Similarly, there are few reports to indicate that Iranian authorities have attacked or arrested suspected KDPI or Komala members in recent years; though arrests and attacks have taken place in the past and it is reported that the Iranian government continues to demand the expulsion of such groups from Iraq. Alternatively, reports indicate that the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) has undertaken significant militant activity in Iran in recent times and it has been reported that Iranian security forces have recently undertaken significant offensives against, and arrests of persons suspected belonging to, PJAK. Incidents of this kind have been reported from both the Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces. Finally, a number of Kurdish online discussion boards were located in which contributors expressed the view that the discrimination suffered by Iran's Sunni Kurds was not so prevalent in the Shia Kurd areas of Kermanshah city.

THE RRT IS IN NEED OF ADVICE ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. How would you assess the quality of life for the majority of Kurds in Kermanshah? Do Kurds suffer from official discrimination in Kermanshah, and if so, how does it typically manifest?
2. Is there any evidence to suggest that Kurds who seek state (ie police) protection from criminals in Kermanshah might be denied it because of their ethnicity?
3. How seriously might the authorities currently treat an allegation that an individual Kurd was a supporter of a Kurdish group such as the KDPI or Komala? Is it likely the accused would be questioned and, if so, is it likely that the accused would suffer mistreatment?
4. Would being a Shia Kurd make it significantly less likely that an allegation of supporting a pro-Kurd group might be given credence? (RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Dr Denise Natali: 'IRN32866 – Australian Refugee Review Tribunal – request for advice –

Kurds in Kermanshah, Iran', 21 January – Attachment 1; RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Dr Michael M. Gunter: 'IRN32866 – Australian Refugee Review Tribunal – request for advice – Kurds in Kermanshah, Iran', 21 January – Attachment 2).

Responses were received from Dr Natali and Dr Gunter both of whom offered their services at fee. Both Dr Natali and Dr Gunter were advised that there was no further need of country information in this instance. A note of thanks was extended to both academics.

List of Sources Consulted

Dr Denise Natali of Exeter University

Dr Michael M. Gunter of Tennessee Tech University

List of Attachments

1. RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Dr Denise Natali: 'IRN32866 – Australian Refugee Review Tribunal – request for advice – Kurds in Kermanshah, Iran', 21 January.
2. RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Dr Michael M. Gunter: 'IRN32866 – Australian Refugee Review Tribunal – request for advice – Kurds in Kermanshah, Iran', 21 January.
3. Natali, D. 2008, Email to RRT: 'Re: IRN32866 – Australian Refugee Review Tribunal – request for advice – Kurds in Kermanshah, Iran', 22 January.
4. Gunter, M.M. 2008, Email to RRT: 'Re: IRN32866 – Australian Refugee Review Tribunal – request for advice – Kurds in Kermanshah, Iran', 22 January.