



**Iran - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 9 November 2009**

**Most recent information on treatment of Kurds in Iran.**

A 2008 *Amnesty International* report on the Kurdish minority in Iran states:

“The effective autonomy of the Kurdish region of Iraq, dating from 1991, through to the establishment in 2005 of the autonomous Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, may have fired the aspirations of Kurdish rights activists in Iran to seek an analogous situation in Iran. It may also have reinforced longstanding fears among Iran’s leaders that minority communities bordering the same ethnic group in a neighbouring country may want to secede from Iran. Such fears go some way towards explaining the government’s treatment of these minorities, although numerous other factors are relevant. Arabs, Azerbaijanis, Baluchis and Turkmen, all concentrated in border areas, face discrimination similar to that suffered by Kurds. About half of Iran’s population are believed to belong to ethnic or religious minorities. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and Iran’s international legal commitments, discrimination and repression of minority communities, who have been demanding greater respect for their cultural and political rights, has intensified in recent years, notably since the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005.” (*Amnesty International* (30 July 2008) *Iran: "Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority [MDE 13/088/2008]"*)

A report from the *Danish Immigration Service* on a September 2008 fact finding mission to Iran states:

“A western embassy 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. A western embassy explained that Kurdish human rights activists, including women’s rights groups, are under increasing and strict observation by the Iranian authorities.” (*Danish Immigration Service* (30 April 2009) *Iran: "Fact finding mission to Iran 24 August - 2 September 2008"*)

The report continues:

“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." (ibid.)

Section 2 of an *International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)* report, titled 'Crackdown against religious and ethnic minorities' states:

"Over the past year, the repression against persons belonging to the Kurdish minority has been severe. Several political activists have been condemned to death and six of them are currently on death row: Farzad Kamangar (teacher and member of the Kamyaran teacher's association, was also an active member of a local human rights organization banned by the government), Anvar Hossein-Panahi, Farhad Vakili, Ali Heydarian, Arsalan Olyayi and Habibullah Latifi. Accused of belonging to a Kurdish armed group PJAK, those persons are considered as "fighting God" (mohareb). The repression against activists belonging to ethnic and religious minorities is dramatically on the rise in Iran. Sometimes, they are accused of terrorism, attacks against national security, treason even if there is no concrete evidence against them. The authorities do not seem to make any distinction between peaceful advocacy for the right of minorities and terrorist attacks by armed groups." (International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (18 March 2009) *Iran: "Human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran"*)

A *United Kingdom Home Office* 2009 Operational Guidance Note for Iran states:

"It was reported by the Kurdish press in March 2004 that demonstrations were triggered by events within the Kurdish area of Iraq when as a result of the signing of the Iraqi Constitution it transpired that Iraqi Kurdistan had gained considerable status within the Iraqi federal plan. The demonstrations followed as a result of Iranian Kurds showing solidarity and support with the Iraqi Kurds. The security forces reportedly reacted vigorously to the demonstrators. Iranian troops are permanently stationed in Kurdish areas." (UK Border Agency (Home Office) (28 January 2009) *Iran: "Operational Guidance Note: Iran"*)

## References

Amnesty International (30 July 2008) *Iran: "Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority [MDE 13/088/2008]"*

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

## Sources Consulted:

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Human Rights Watch  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada  
Online newspapers  
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Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
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