



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note **Iran: 'Zina' (sex outside of marriage** **and adultery)**

Version 5.0

April 2026

Executive summary

Zina – sexual intercourse of a man and a woman who are not married to each other - is a criminal offence under the Islamic Penal Code. Zina is punishable by flogging or death, depending on the specific circumstances of the act and the parties to the act.

Women who commit 'zina' acts form a PSG in Iran, however, men who commit 'zina' acts do not form a PSG in Iran, within the meaning of the Refugee Convention.

Where a prosecution for zina is pursued by the authorities and the high requisite evidential threshold is met, a man is unlikely to face criminal conviction unless he has committed adultery with a married woman; an unmarried woman is unlikely to face criminal conviction; and a married woman is likely to face criminal conviction.

If a person can show there is a real risk they will face criminal conviction for zina, this would amount to persecution or serious harm due to the disproportionate punishments involved.

In general, a person involved in, or suspected of, zina acts will not be at real risk of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors. However, honour-based violence against people, most commonly women and girls, who have committed, or who are suspected of, zina acts do occur.

If a person can show there is a real risk they have been, or will be, subject to honour-based violence for zina-related reasons, this would amount to persecution or serious harm.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection or internally relocate.

A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor is unlikely to be able to obtain state protection.

Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state or rogue state actor, whether they are likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk will depend on their individual circumstances.

A man fearing non-state actors will, in general, be able to relocate. For information on whether women are likely to be able to relocate, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#).

Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

[Back to Contents](#)

Contents

Executive summary	2
Assessment	5
About the assessment	5
Points to note	5
1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals	5
1.1 Credibility.....	5
1.2 Exclusion	6
2. Convention reason(s)	6
3. Risk	8
3.1 Risk from the state	8
3.2 Risk from non-state actors.....	10
4. Protection	11
5. Internal relocation	11
6. Certification	12
Country information	13
About the country information	13
7. Legal context	13
7.1 Islamic law (Sharia) and the penal code: general	13
7.2 Penal code: definitions and penalties.....	15
7.3 Penal code: evidential standards.....	18
8. Adultery.....	19
8.1 Application of the law in practice	19
8.2 Death sentences and executions	21
8.3 Treatment by society and family	24
9. Pre-marital relationships.....	25
9.1 White marriage/cohabitation	25
9.2 Temporary marriage	27
9.3 Application of the law in practice	30
9.4 Attitudes and treatment by society and family	31
10. Children born outside of marriage.....	34
10.1 Offence of zina	34
10.2 Birth registration	35
10.3 Parental and child rights	37
10.4 Children born within temporary marriages	38
11. Access to justice	38
12. Internal relocation	41

Research methodology	42
Terms of Reference	43
Bibliography	44
Sources cited	44
Sources consulted but not cited	49
Version control and feedback	51
Feedback to the Home Office.....	51
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	51

Assessment

Section updated: 10 March 2026

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by state or non-state actors because the person has committed, or is perceived to have committed, ‘zina’ acts
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

This CPIN has been developed with assistance from Artificial Intelligence (AI). Where AI has been used, it has been reviewed by a human editor.

Points to note

Zina is defined in Iranian law as ‘sexual intercourse of a man and a woman who are not married to each other’. This includes:

- a man and a woman engaging in sexual relations where at least one of them is married to another person (adultery); and
- an unmarried man and woman engaging in sexual relations (sex outside of marriage)

It should be noted that some sources cited within this document refer to ‘zina’ while others refer to ‘zena’. They are, respectively, the Arabic and Persian versions of the same term and should therefore be read interchangeably. Additionally, some sources use the term ‘adultery’ interchangeably with ‘zina’ or ‘zena’. In other words, some sources use the term ‘adultery’ to refer both to sex between two people when at least one of them is married to another person, and to sex outside of marriage. The term ‘adultery’ should therefore be read and considered within its wider context.

The [country information](#) and the assessment below were finalised before the conflict in Iran that began on 28 February 2026. However, we do not assess that the situation for the people within scope of this CPIN or the conclusions within it are materially affected. Should the evidence indicate a material change in the relevant country situation, the assessment will be revisited in line with our normal practice.

[Back to Contents](#)

1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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[Back to Contents](#)

2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Women who have committed zina acts form a particular social group (PSG). However, in general men who have committed, or who are believed to have committed, zina acts do not fall within the scope of one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds.
- 2.1.2 Women who commit 'zina' acts form a particular social group (PSG) in Iran within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate

characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed - the fact that they have, or are alleged to have, partaken in the act of sex outside of marriage - (or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it) **and** have a distinct identity in Iran because the group is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.

- 2.1.3 Although relating to forced marriage and not ‘zina’ acts, in the reported case [TB \(PSG, women\) Iran \[2005\] UKIAT 00065 \(09 March 2005\)](#), heard on 30 November 2004 and promulgated on 9 March 2005, the IAT noted, in relation to having fled her father’s attempts to forcibly marry her:

‘The real risk of this appellant suffering serious harm on return to Iran is primarily for non-Convention reasons (the vindictiveness and retribution of the appellant's father and the Mullah). However, as we consider there would also be a failure of state protection against that serious harm, we find that there is a causal nexus between the persecution (accepting that: Persecution = failure of state protection + serious harm) and her membership of a particular social group namely: “Young Iranian Women who refuse to enter into arranged marriages”.’ (paragraph 69 iv). See also paragraphs 67 to 69 of [TB](#) in which the IAT’s full reasoning was explained.

- 2.1.4 Men in Iran who commit ‘zina’ acts do not form a PSG within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because while they share an innate characteristic or a common background that cannot be changed - the fact that they have, or are alleged to have, partaken in the act of sex outside of marriage - they do not have a distinct identity in Iran because they are not perceived as being different by the surrounding society.

- 2.1.5 In the country guidance case of [ME \(Male Adulterer – Convention Reason? - Risk\) Iran CG \[2003\] UKIAT 00166](#), heard on 22 September 2003 and promulgated on 9 December 2003, the IAT noted, in respect of “the group being men in Iran who have committed adultery which has been witnessed by at least three others”:

‘... [I]t may well be that a woman in the same position as the claimant would be able to raise an argument that she was a member of a particular social group since her position as a woman in Iran subjects her to discriminatory laws, e.g. those governing the number of witnesses required to prove adultery, setting her apart from society. However, in the case of the claimant, neither his nationality nor his sex was a basis for any discriminatory treatment that he received. Thus, the principal factors relied upon to identify him as a particular social group amounted to no more than those which defined his persecution. He was persecuted because he was an adulterer who had transgressed Iranian law. The argument for a particular social group in this case is wholly circular.’ (paragraph 11).

- 2.1.6 Although women who commit ‘zina’ acts form a PSG in Iran, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.

- 2.1.7 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention reasons necessary for the grant of asylum for men who have committed ‘zina’ acts, the question is whether the man will face a real risk of serious harm to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).

2.1.8 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Risk

3.1 Risk from the state

3.1.1 Whether a person involved, or suspected of being involved, in pre-marital or extramarital sexual relations (zina) is likely to be at real risk of persecution or serious harm by the state will depend on the likelihood of a prosecution resulting in a criminal conviction.

3.1.2 The authorities are unlikely to pursue a prosecution for zina in the absence of a private complainant. Decision makers must consider whether the high evidential threshold required in zina cases is likely to be met for a case to be brought to court and/or for a criminal conviction to be made (see 3.1.6).

3.1.3 Where a prosecution for zina is pursued by the authorities (and the requisite evidential threshold is likely to be met):

- a man, whether married or unmarried, who is accused of committing zina with an unmarried woman is unlikely to face criminal conviction
- a man, whether married or unmarried, who is accused of committing zina with a married woman is likely to face criminal conviction
- an unmarried woman accused of zina is unlikely to face criminal conviction, irrespective of the marital status of her sexual partner
- a married woman accused of zina is likely to face criminal conviction irrespective of the marital status of her sexual partner

3.1.4 If a person can show there is a real risk they will face criminal conviction for zina, this would amount to persecution or serious harm due to the disproportionate punishments involved. The onus will be on the person to demonstrate such a risk. Each case must be considered on its facts.

3.1.5 Zina, defined as sexual intercourse of a man and a woman who are not married to each other, is a criminal offence under the Islamic Penal Code (IPC). Zina is punishable by flogging or death, depending on the nature of the act, the religious and familial status of the people involved, the standard of evidence upon which a conviction has been made, and whether a person is convicted of zina for a fourth time. The law allows for married men and women who commit zina to be sentenced to death by stoning or hanging (see [Legal context](#) and [Adultery: Application of the law in practice](#)).

3.1.6 While extramarital affairs have reportedly become more widespread, particularly in Iran's cities, the Iranian authorities rarely initiate criminal prosecutions. A criminal case is usually only formed where there is a private complainant involved. High evidential standards are required to prove that zina has occurred, namely the confession of the accused (required 4 times for the death penalty), the eye-witness testimony of 4 males (or the equivalent, with a woman's testimony being worth half that of a man's and the eye witness testimony of at least 2 males required (i.e. 2 men plus 4 women)), or circumstantial evidence resulting in the 'judge's knowledge' of guilt. The high evidential threshold, together with a sense of dishonour surrounding the families involved, means that cases are rarely brought to

court (see [Adultery: Application of the law in practice](#) and [Penal code: evidential standards](#)).

- 3.1.7 Temporary marriage, a contract between a man and unmarried woman lasting for a specified duration, from hours to years, is recognised within Shia Islam in Iran. Temporary marriage allows men, who are permitted up to 4 permanent and unlimited temporary wives simultaneously, to religiously and legally legitimise their extramarital sexual relations and avoid adultery charges. The same solution is not available to married women, or to men who commit adultery with married women, who are not permitted to enter temporary marriages (see [Temporary marriage](#)).
- 3.1.8 Information about the recent scale and extent of prosecutions and punishments is limited. The Iranian authorities have halted the practice of execution by stoning, replacing it with execution by hanging. Sources report that no death sentences by stoning have been carried out since 2010. However, in April 2023, a man was reportedly executed after he was convicted of having sexual relations with a married woman. This was reported to be the first execution for adultery in several years and was the most recent at the time of writing. The death sentence for adultery is still very occasionally handed down; most recently in August 2023, when a couple were convicted of adultery and sentenced to be hanged to death. It is not known, in this most recent sentencing, whether it was the man or the woman who was married, or both of them. As of March 2024, at least 5 people were reportedly on death row having been previously convicted of adultery. However, no information could be found on whether these sentences have since been carried out. Authorities do not publish statistics, and it therefore remains unclear how many people are at risk of execution for extra-marital relations in Iran (see [Adultery: Application of the law in practice](#) and [Death sentences and executions](#)).
- 3.1.9 In a case from 2022, which saw a married woman sentenced to death for adultery after her husband filed a complaint, the man involved was reportedly sentenced to lashes. It is not known whether the sentence was carried out, nor could any further information be found on whether any sentences other than the death penalty have recently been handed down for adultery. The UN Human Rights Council used the 2022 case to highlight that women, in general, are more harshly punished for zina offences (see [Death sentences and executions](#) and [Other sentences imposed](#)).
- 3.1.10 It is illegal for unmarried couples to live together. Despite this, sources indicate that the practice is becoming increasingly common among young people in Tehran and other large cities, in what is known as a 'white marriage'. Due to its secretive nature, official statistics to quantify the scale of the practice are unavailable. Surveys carried out by a sociology professor found that between 7% and 14% of all couples in cities such as Tehran, Arak, Isfahan and Mashhad were cohabiting in 'white marriages'. Generally, the authorities do not arrest or prosecute people for cohabiting, unless someone reports the relationship. Unmarried couples may be stopped and questioned by the religious police and, in rare cases, couples are arrested. Attempts may also be made by the authorities to carry out virginity tests on young women who they arrest for unrelated reasons. However, there is no evidence to indicate that this is a prevalent practice. Men and unmarried women may use temporary marriage to legitimise pre-marital sexual

relations and/or cohabitation to avoid legal consequences. No recent examples of prosecutions against cohabiting couples and/or those involved in other kinds of pre-marital relationships could be found (see [Pre-marital relationships](#)).

- 3.1.11 Children born to unmarried parents will be considered illegitimate and the parents will be deemed as having committed zina and may be subject to punishments prescribed by law. Exceptions to this include when a child is born to an unmarried mother who can show that she became medically pregnant without having engaged in sexual activity. Children born to parents who are in a temporary marriage will be considered legitimate providing the couple officially register their temporary marriage (see [Children born outside of marriage](#)).
- 3.1.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3.2 Risk from non-state actors

- 3.2.1 In general, a person involved, or suspected of being involved, in adultery or pre-marital sexual relations (zina) will not be at real risk of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors.
- 3.2.2 However, honour-based violence does occur, most commonly against women and girls who have committed, or who are suspected of having committed, zina. Whether a person is likely to be at risk will depend on their particular circumstances, including their:
- sex
 - family background
 - ethnicity
 - place of residence
 - education; and
 - socio-economic status
- 3.2.3 If a person can show there is a real risk they have been, or will be, subject to honour-based violence for committing, or being suspected of committing, zina, this would amount to persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to show this. For further information on honour-based violence in relation to women, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#).
- 3.2.4 Adultery and sexual relationships outside of marriage are generally considered shameful for the family and can be a motive for 'honour'-based violence. The IPC permits a man to kill his wife and 'the other man' if he catches them in the act of committing adultery. At least 3 reports were made in 2024 of women being killed by family members, 2 of which were by their husbands, the third by the woman's father, due to suspicions they had committed adultery (see [Pre-marital relationships: Attitudes and treatment by society and family](#), [Penal code: definitions and penalties](#) and [Adultery: Treatment by society and family](#) and, for more information about honour-related violence, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women](#)

[fearing 'honour'-based violence](#)).

- 3.2.5 Societal and family acceptance of cohabitation or 'white marriage', and other forms of pre-marital relationship, varies. Engaging in sexual relationships outside of marriage, including cohabitation, has generally been considered a moral and social offence. While attitudes are gradually changing, particularly in urban and more liberal areas where it is becoming more common for men and women to enter romantic relationships prior to marriage, the practice of pre-marital sexual relationships is still generally considered taboo and discouraged by Iranian society. Available evidence indicates that 2 of 118 honour killings recorded over a six-month period in 2025 were specifically attributed to pre-marital relationships. However, actual numbers are likely higher due to many honour killings being misclassified or unreported. Few landlords are willing to rent properties to couples who openly cohabit outside of marriage. It is common for young Iranians, particularly men, including those from traditional families, to enter temporary marriages, which are recognised within Shia Islam, to legitimise pre-marital sexual relations (see [White marriage/cohabitation](#) and [Pre-marital relationships: Attitudes and treatment by society and family](#)).
- 3.2.6 For more information about honour-related violence, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#)).
- 3.2.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

4. Protection

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 A person who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor is unlikely to be able to obtain protection from the state. This is because in general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection. The situation may be different for a person who is accused of an offence they did not commit. Each case will need to be considered on its individual facts.
- 4.1.3 The zina acts that would lead to someone seeking protection are considered illegal and subject to prosecution. Iran's legislation provides leniency towards most perpetrators of honour killings of women and girls and, while the authorities arrest perpetrators of honour crimes, no evidence could be found that the perpetrators are subsequently held accountable for the crimes they have committed (see [Legal context](#) and [Access to justice](#)).
- 4.1.4 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm

from a non-state or rogue state actor, whether they are likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk will depend on their individual circumstances.

- 5.1.3 A man fearing non-state actors will, in general, be able to relocate. For information on whether women are likely to be able to relocate, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#).
- 5.1.4 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **31 December 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included. As such, the [assessment](#) and the country information below were finalised before the conflict in Iran that began on 28 February 2026. However, we do not assess that the situation for the people within scope of this CPIN or the conclusions within it are materially affected. Should the evidence indicate a material change in the relevant country situation, the assessment will be revisited in line with our normal practice.

Some country information quoted in this CPIN was originally published in languages other than English and has been translated using free online translation tools. Translated information is clearly signposted throughout.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

[Back to Contents](#)

7. Legal context

7.1 Islamic law (Sharia) and the penal code: general

- 7.1.1 An article published on 1 August 2015 by The Iran Primer, which provides a collection of essays by 50 of the world's top scholars on Iran¹, stated: 'The 1979 revolution erased six decades of modernization of Iran's judicial system. Theocrats moved swiftly to overhaul the legal system to incorporate Islamic Sharia law. Criminal and civil codes were modified; family laws ... faced the biggest changes.'²
- 7.1.2 According to an entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, '[u]nder the 1979 constitution all judges must base their decisions on the sharia (Islamic law).'³
- 7.1.3 In February 2025, Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO), a Norway-based 'non-profit, human rights organization'⁴, and ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty), a French professional association that campaigns against the death penalty^{5 6}, jointly published an 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2024' (the IHRNGO and ECPM 2024 report). The report, which cited

¹ TWI, [The Iran Primer: Power, Politics, and US Policy](#), 3 June 2013

² The Iran Primer, [The Islamic Judiciary](#), 1 August 2015

³ Avery, P.W. and Afary, J., Encyclopaedia Britannica, [Justice of Iran](#), 23 December 2025

⁴ IHRNGO, [About Us](#), no date

⁵ ECPM, [Discover ECPM: About Us](#), no date

⁶ ECPM, [Discover ECPM: History](#), no date

various sources, stated: 'The current Islamic Penal Code (IPC) came into force in 2013. Section Two [of Book One] sets out four types of punishments ...'⁷

- 7.1.4 On 4 April 2014, the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (IHRDC), a non-profit organisation of human rights scholars and lawyers, which focuses on human rights in Iran⁸, published English translations of the 2013 IPC including Book One, which covers preliminary provisions and definitions, stating:

'Article 14 – Punishments provided in this law are divided into four categories:

'(a) Hadd [an Islamic crime for which the Quran specifies the punishment⁹]

'(b) Qisas [retribution in kind¹⁰]

'(c) Diya [blood money¹¹]

'(d) Ta'zir [crimes with discretionary punishments¹²]¹³

- 7.1.5 The IHRNGO and ECPM 2024 report noted that hadd crimes, attracted 'fixed punishments for which Sharia or Islamic law has fixed the measure, degree and method.'¹⁴

- 7.1.6 In June 2024, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published a report entitled 'Iran - Country Focus'. The report, which cited various sources, stated: 'Hadd (plural hudud, fixed corporal punishments) is "a punishment fixed in the Quran and hadith [the sayings or traditions of the Prophet Muhammad¹⁵] for crimes considered to be against the rights of God" ... As the nature of hadd crimes is determined by Sharia, these offences cannot be commuted or pardoned. Hadd punishments require strict application of evidence, including testimonies by eyewitnesses. Hadd crimes are covered in the Book Two of the Penal Code.'¹⁶

- 7.1.7 The IHRNGO and ECPM 2024 report noted that hadd crimes can be split into 3 subcategories, one of which being sexual offences, including 'zina' (adultery), and another being repeat offences on the fourth occasion, also including adultery¹⁷.

- 7.1.8 The EUAA Iran Country Focus report stated: 'Hadd punishments imply death penalty and other severe punishments, such as ... stoning for adultery ... hadd punishments included sexual intercourse outside marriage/adultery (zina, zina) ...'¹⁸

[Back to Contents](#)

⁷ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2024](#) (page 32), February 2025

⁸ IHRDC, [Mission](#), no date

⁹ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (footnote 55), 12 March 2025

¹⁰ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 16), 12 March 2025

¹¹ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 19), 12 March 2025

¹² Khodadadi, Dr Bahman, [On Theocratic Criminal Law ...](#) (Abstract of Chapter 3), September 2024

¹³ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

¹⁴ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2024](#) (page 32), February 2025

¹⁵ Britannica AI and fact-checked by Briannica Editors, [Hadith](#), no date

¹⁶ EUAA, [Iran - Country Focus](#) (section 3.2.1.), June 2024

¹⁷ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2024](#) (page 32), February 2025

¹⁸ EUAA, [Iran - Country Focus](#) (section 3.2.1.), June 2024

7.2 Penal code: definitions and penalties

- 7.2.1 On 6 January 2025, The Daily Jagran, an Indian English-language digital news outlet¹⁹, published an article which stated: ‘Sharia law in Iran forbids any kind of relationship between unmarried couples. If found guilty or caught, severe punishment awaits which includes imprisonment, fines, and lashes can apply to violators. The law also prohibits acts of affection in public.’²⁰
- 7.2.2 On 26 February 2025, Freedom House published its annual ‘Freedom in the World’ report, covering events of 2024, which stated: ‘The penal code criminalizes all sexual relations outside of traditional marriage ...’²¹
- 7.2.3 Article 221 of the IPC (Part One of Book Two) defines zina as ‘... sexual intercourse of a man and a woman who are not married to each other, and also provided that the intercourse is not done by mistake.’²²

For a precise description of which sexual activities are considered to constitute ‘intercourse’, see [Note 1 to Article 221 of the IHRDC’s English translation of the IPC](#).

- 7.2.4 Article 224 of the Penal Code states that ‘[i]n the following cases the hadd punishment for zina is the death penalty:
- ‘(a) Zina with blood relatives who are prohibited to marry.
 - ‘(b) Zina with a step-mother; in which case, the man who committed zina shall be sentenced to the death penalty.
 - ‘(c) Zina of a non-Muslim man with a Muslim woman; in which case, the man who committed zina shall be sentenced to the death penalty.
 - ‘(d) Zina committed by coercion or force (i.e. rape); in which case, the man who committed zina by coercion or force shall be sentenced to the death penalty.

‘Note 1 - Punishment of the woman who has committed zina in paragraphs (b) and (c) shall be in accordance with other provisions of zina.’²³

- 7.2.5 Adultery, described as the act of zina by someone meeting the conditions of ‘ihsan’ – defined as being married to a permanent and pubescent spouse with whom they can have, and have had, intercourse while sane and pubescent²⁴ - falls under the definition of zina, as set out by Articles 225 and 226 of the IPC. Article 225 prescribes the punishments for adultery:

‘Article 225 – The hadd punishment for zina of a man and a woman who meet the conditions of ihsan shall be stoning to death. Where the execution of stoning is not possible, upon proposal of the court of final judgment and approval of the Head of Judiciary, if the offense is proved by testimony of witnesses, the man and a woman who have committed zina and meet the conditions of ihsan shall be sentenced to the death penalty (hanging); otherwise, each one of them shall be given one hundred lashes.’²⁵

¹⁹ The Daily Jagran, [About](#), no date

²⁰ The Daily Jagran, [... Countries That Have Laws Against Unmarried Couples ...](#), 6 January 2025

²¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025](#) (section F4), 26 February 2025

²² IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

²³ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

²⁴ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Article 226), 4 April 2014

²⁵ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

See [Article 226 of the IHRDC's English translation of the IPC](#) for a precise description of who is considered to meet the conditions of 'ihsan'.

7.2.6 In March 2024, IHRNGO and ECPM jointly published their 'Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran – 2023' (the IHRNGO and ECPM 2023 report). The report, which covered executions in 2024 and cited various sources, stated:

'Article 221 of the IPC defines zena as extramarital sex (defined as vaginal and anal sex between a man and a woman in Note 1 to the Article). Zena is punishable by death in the following cases: zena with a mahram (blood relative), zena with the wife of a father (step-mother), zena between a non-Muslim man and a Muslim woman, rape or force (Article 224). Article 225 sets the punishment for zenaye mohseneh (adultery) for both men and women as stoning, but provides the courts with the option to impose the death sentence by alternative means upon the approval from the Head of Judiciary "if it is not possible to perform stoning."²⁶

7.2.7 Article 227 of the IPC sets out circumstances under which married people are considered to not meet the conditions of 'ihsan' while Article 230 prescribes the punishment in such circumstances:

'Article 227 – The parties to a marriage shall not meet the conditions of ihsan (mentioned in article 226) during periods such as travel, imprisonment, menstruation, lochia, any illness that prevents sexual intercourse, or any illness that puts the other party at risk such as AIDS and syphilis.

'... Article 230 – In cases where the offender does not meet the conditions of ihsan (mentioned in article 227), the hadd punishment for zina shall be one hundred lashes.'²⁷

7.2.8 Articles 228 and 229 of the IPC set out other specific circumstances under which zina shall be punished with 100 lashes. Namely, where the woman is pubescent and the man is non-pubescent in cases of zina between blood relatives who are prohibited to marry and zina where the offender meets the conditions of 'ihsan' (Article 228), and where a man is married to his permanent wife but commits zina prior to having had sexual intercourse with his wife (Article 229). Under Article 229, the man, in addition to the 100 lashes, '... shall be sentenced to the hadd punishment of ... shaving his head, and banishment for one year.'²⁸

7.2.9 From Book One of the Penal Code, the IHRDC English translation states: 'Article 136 – Where anyone commits the same offense punishable by hadd [but where it does not attract the death penalty] three times, and each time the hadd punishment is executed upon him/her, the hadd punishment on the fourth occasion shall be the death penalty.'²⁹

7.2.10 In respect of zina committed by coercion or force (i.e. rape, covered by Article 224(d) of the IPC, see paragraph 7.2.4 for details) for a precise description of the circumstances under which sexual intercourse is considered rape, see [Note 2 to Article 224 of the IHRDC's English translation of the IPC](#).

7.2.11 On 19 March 2024, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) published

²⁶ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty ... 2023](#) (page 28), March 2024

²⁷ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

²⁸ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

²⁹ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

detailed findings of its Iran fact-finding mission (the UNHRC detailed findings report). The mission was mandated ‘to investigate alleged human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran “related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022”³⁰, which became known as the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement (in response to the death of Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish woman, in police custody for “improper hijab”³¹). The detailed findings report, which was updated on 8 July 2024, and cited various sources, stated: ‘The punishment for zena ye be onf [“fornication by force”, i.e. rape] is not uniform and is subject to the judge’s discretion (article 68). The perpetrator may be sentenced to death (article 224) but if he repents, he can receive a prison sentence or lashes or both (article 114).’³²

7.2.12 In April 2024, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report which cited various sources and stated:

‘... [P]enalties in criminal law for members of religious minorities (both recognized and unrecognized) differ from those enjoyed by the Muslim majority for certain crimes. Iran’s penal code states that non-Muslims will be subjected to more severe penalties than Muslims for the crimes of adultery ... For adultery ... a non-Muslim male will be punished by the death penalty, according to Iran’s penal code, while a Muslim male will be punished by floggings.’³³

7.2.13 In April 2024, Amnesty International (AI) published a report on executions in Iran since the 2022 uprising which stated: ‘Under Iran’s Islamic Penal Code, the punishment for engaging in consensual extra-marital sexual relations is punishable by sanctions ranging from a flogging sentence of between 31 and 100 lashes up to the death penalty, applicable to adults and children including boys over 15 lunar years [14.6 years³⁴] and girls over 9 lunar years [8.7 years³⁵].’³⁶

7.2.14 With regard to sexual intercourse outside of marriage involving boys under 15 lunar years and girls under 9 lunar years (referred to in the IPC as ‘the age of maturity’³⁷), note 2 to Article 221 of the IPC states: ‘If both parties or one of them are non-pubescent, zina occurs but for the non-pubescent (party(parties)) the hadd punishment shall not be given, but instead they shall be sentenced to security and correctional measures mentioned in the first book of this law.’ For information regarding the minimum age of marriage in Iran, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women - Early and forced marriage](#).

7.2.15 On 28 April 2025, AI published its 2025 annual human rights reports, covering events of 2024, in which it stated: “Adultery” (sexual relationships outside marriage) remained punishable by stoning to death.’³⁸

7.2.16 Article 637, from Book Five of the IPC, refers to acts that are considered indecent but that do not involve sexual intercourse. It states: ‘When a man

³⁰ UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ... mission](#) (paragraph 16), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

³¹ BBC News, [Iran: A really simple guide to the protests](#), 15 September 2023

³² UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ... mission](#) (footnote 1343), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

³³ HRW, [“The Boot on My Neck” ... Crime of Persecution Against Baha’is ...](#), April 2024

³⁴ HRW, [Iran: Child Protection Law Positive, but Insufficient](#), 23 June 2020

³⁵ HRW, [Iran: Child Protection Law Positive, but Insufficient](#), 23 June 2020

³⁶ AI, [“Don’t let them kill us”: Iran’s relentless execution crisis since the 2022 uprising ...](#), April 2024

³⁷ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Article 147), 4 April 2014

³⁸ AI, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

and a woman who are not married to each other, commit indecent acts other than zina, such as kissing or sleeping next to one another, they shall be sentenced to up to ninety-nine lashes; and if the act is committed by force only the one who has used force shall be punished as ta'zir.³⁹

- 7.2.17 In addition to the judicial penalties for zina, Article 630, from Book Five of the IPC states: 'Article 630 – When a man sees her [sic] wife committing zina with another man, provided that he is certain that his wife is willing (to have sex), he can kill both of them in the same position; however if he knows that his wife acts under coercion, he may only kill the man (i.e. her rapist).'⁴⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

7.3 Penal code: evidential standards

- 7.3.1 The evidential standard for a criminal conviction for zina requires a confession made 4 times (which can be made during one or more sessions)⁴¹ or the eye-witness testimony of 4 male witnesses⁴², unless it is '... to prove a zina punishable by the hadd punishment of flogging, shaving (of head) and/or banishment, [in which case the] testimony of two just men and four just women shall be sufficient. If the punishment provided is other than the above, testimony of at least three men and two women shall be required. In such cases, if two just men and four just women testify for the offense, only the hadd punishment of flogging shall be given. Bodily offenses punishable by diya shall also be proved by one male witness and two female witnesses.'⁴³
- 7.3.2 The IHRDC English translation of the IPC states: 'Article 232 - Where a man or woman confesses to zina less than four times, s/he shall be sentenced to thirty-one to seventy-four lashes of ta'zir punishment of the sixth grade.'⁴⁴
- 7.3.3 The translated IPC additionally states: 'Article 223 - Where a person who is charged with zina, claims that s/he has been married to the other party or he has engaged in intercourse as a result of a mistake, his/her claim shall be accepted without (resorting to) testimonies and oaths, unless it is proved otherwise by an ultimate proof that meets the requirements under Shari'a.'⁴⁵
- 7.3.4 The UNHRC detailed findings report stated: 'The crime of zena can be proved by confession or testimony or the judge's knowledge (articles 199 and 160).'⁴⁶ Article 211 of the IPC addresses what constitutes the 'judge's knowledge': 'Knowledge of the judge is defined as a certainty resulting from manifest evidence in a matter brought before him. In cases where a judgment is based on the knowledge of the judge (as the proof of the offense), he is obliged to stipulate in the judgment the manifest circumstantial and hearsay evidence that has been the source of his knowledge.'⁴⁷ A note to Article 211 states: '... a mere perceptive knowledge that typically does not result in the knowledge of the judge cannot be

³⁹ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book Five](#), 15 July 2013

⁴⁰ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book Five](#), 15 July 2013

⁴¹ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Article 172), 4 April 2014

⁴² IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Article 199), 4 April 2014

⁴³ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Article 199), 4 April 2014

⁴⁴ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

⁴⁵ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

⁴⁶ UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ... mission](#) (footnote 1343), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

⁴⁷ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Article 211), 4 April 2014

regarded as a deciding factor in delivering a judgment.¹⁴⁸

- 7.3.5 A joint submission in advance of the 139th session of the UNHRC was made by Equality Now, an international human rights organization⁴⁹, the Centre for Supporters of Human Rights (CSHR), a non-governmental organization established in the UK⁵⁰, and Femena, an organisation which ‘aims to support women human rights defenders ... their organizations and feminist movements in the [Middle East and North Africa] MENA and Asia regions’⁵¹. The submission, which cited various sources, stated: ‘Articles 199 and 209 of Iran’s Islamic Penal Code provide that in cases of adultery and other sexual activity and where diya is involved, the testimony of a woman is worth half that of a man.’⁵²
- 7.3.6 In September 2023, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ, Dutch abbreviation) published the General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran (the BZ 2023 report), which cited various sources and covered the period between April 2022 and August 2023⁵³. The report stated: ‘... [I]n certain crimes, such as adultery, a man’s testimony in a court of law can only be refuted by the testimony of two women ... [therefore] a woman who was a victim of sexual assault or rape risks being prosecuted for adultery. Women seldom dare to report such crimes because the stigma attached to sexual violence runs very deep in the Iranian context.’⁵⁴
- 7.3.7 The UNHRC detailed findings report noted, in respect of cases of zina committed by coercion or force (i.e. rape) that, ‘[t]he victim may be punished if they fail to substantiate their claim, which deters victims from lodging complaints ... Given that sexual violence is a violation usually perpetrated in isolation, rape victims may not be able to locate the required number of witnesses post release, who also need to testify within a short period of time once a trial begins. (Witnesses should give their accounts subsequently one after another.)’⁵⁵

[Back to Contents](#)

8. Adultery

8.1 Application of the law in practice

- 8.1.1 Landinfo (the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre) published a briefing note on 5 August 2022 about family and marriage which cited various sources. Citing a [February 2018 joint report by the Danish Immigration Service \(DIS\) and the Danish Refugee Council \(DRC\)](#), the briefing note stated:

‘Iranian society is changing. Infidelity and extramarital relationships have become more widespread, especially in urban areas. There is a trend towards criminal prosecution being rarely initiated; judges do not want such cases on their docket. According to information collected by the Danish immigration authorities, the police are also not proactive in ensuring that

⁴⁸ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code ... Book One and Book Two](#) (Note to Article 211), 4 April 2014

⁴⁹ Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Information on ... Iran ...](#) (paragraph 3), 12 September 2023

⁵⁰ Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Information on ... Iran ...](#) (paragraph 4), 12 September 2023

⁵¹ Femena, [About Us](#), no date

⁵² Equality Now, CSHR and Femena, [Information on ... Iran ...](#) (paragraph 33), 12 September 2023

⁵³ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Introduction), September 2023

⁵⁴ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information ...](#) (sections 3.1.5.1 and 3.1.5.9), September 2023

⁵⁵ UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ... mission](#) (footnote 1343), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

such cases are brought to court. Normally, it is a report from a private individual that forms the basis for such a criminal case. But the threshold is high – infidelity is a disgrace for the families involved. Most therefore prefer to resolve the matter outside the judicial system.’⁵⁶

N.B. the information quoted above, and all other COI quoted from this source throughout the rest of this CPIN was originally published in Norwegian. See [About the country information](#) for further information about the method of translation.

- 8.1.2 The Landinfo briefing note, translated into English, went on to state: ‘Despite this, some cases are brought to court. These are likely symbolic cases intended to act as a deterrent and reinforce general morality.’⁵⁷ By way of an example of a case that was brought to court, Landinfo cited a [November 2021 article by Middle East Eye](#) (MEE), ‘an independently funded digital news organisation covering stories from the Middle East and North Africa’⁵⁸. The article reported that a man and woman were arrested after the man’s wife filed a complaint against them and who were subsequently sentenced to death having pleaded guilty of adultery after the court was shown videos of their affair⁵⁹. See also paragraph 8.2.6.
- 8.1.3 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) published its ‘Iran Country Information Report’ on 24 July 2023 (the most recent report at the time of writing) which stated: ‘Stoning is uncommon but can be applied as a punishment for adultery ... The method of execution may be changed to hanging instead of stoning for these offences. DFAT understands some hard-line judges still impose the punishment on offenders but is not aware of recent examples.’⁶⁰
- 8.1.4 An article published by the IHRNGO on 2 November 2023 stated: ‘No implemented stoning punishments have been reported since 2010. This is mainly due to the increasing international pressure in the decade prior ...’⁶¹
- 8.1.5 An article published on 3 November 2023 by the Associated Press (AP), ‘an independent global news organization’⁶², stated: ‘Iranian courts sometimes sentence people to death by stoning for adultery, which can be reduced to lighter punishments upon appeal.’⁶³
- 8.1.6 The UNHRC detailed findings report stated: ‘... [S]ome morality-related offences such as adultery, sexual misconduct, or prostitution penalize women disproportionately. Punishments ... such as flogging and stoning disproportionately affect women ...’⁶⁴
- 8.1.7 The IHRNGO and ECPM 2024 report stated: ‘Experience over the past two decades has shown that the international community and Iranian civil society are the main driving forces behind any reform aimed at limiting the use of the death penalty in Iran. Halting the implementation of stoning punishments,

⁵⁶ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 18), 5 August 2022

⁵⁷ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 18), 5 August 2022

⁵⁸ MEE, [About us](#), no date

⁵⁹ MEE, [... Married couple sentenced to death for extramarital sex](#), 11 November 2021

⁶⁰ DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.183), 24 July 2023

⁶¹ IHRNGO, [... Sentenced to Death for Adultery](#), 2 November 2023

⁶² AP News, [Purpose](#) (Frequently Asked Questions: What is The Associated Press?), no date

⁶³ AP News, [Iran sentences a woman to death for adultery, state media say](#), 3 November 2023

⁶⁴ UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ...](#) (paragraphs 285 to 286), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

which were carried out for adultery ... [was a] significant step ... taken by the Iranian authorities to restrict the death penalty's scope.'⁶⁵

- 8.1.8 On 12 August 2025, the USSD published its '2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices', covering events of 2024, which stated: 'Adultery remained punishable by stoning to death, although the head of the judiciary instructed judges to impose a moratorium on stoning in 2002 and no stoning sentences were carried out since 2010.'⁶⁶
- 8.1.9 A briefing note about the death penalty in Iran, published by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), 'an umbrella organization of human rights NGOs'⁶⁷ and its member organisation, the League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI) (the FIDH briefing note on the death penalty), in November 2023, stated:
- 'Women have been more frequently subjected to stoning ... than men, because married women involved in extramarital relations can be charged with adultery, but married and unmarried men can be charged with adultery only if they are involved in extramarital relations with married women. Otherwise, they would be charged with fornication, which is punishable with 100 lashes for the first three convictions and with death on the fourth conviction.'⁶⁸
- 8.1.10 On 12 March 2025, the UNHRC published a report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran. The report, which cited various sources, stated that, 'a male-dominated judiciary lacking gender-sensitive procedures often disregards women's claims, particularly in ... adultery and sex work-related offences. Qisas and diya laws further result in unequal penalties, disproportionately affecting women prosecuted under morality laws, who face harsher legal consequences, with limited access to justice.'⁶⁹
- 8.1.11 The USSD 2024 and 2025 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports, published on 24 June 2024 and 30 September 2025, and covering the periods from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, respectively, both stated: 'Female victims of sex crimes, including sex trafficking, faced prosecution for adultery ...'^{70 71}

[Back to Contents](#)

8.2 Death sentences and executions

- 8.2.1 One man was recorded as having been executed for adultery in 2023^{72 73}. The IHRNGO and ECPM 2023 report, which reported a total of 834 executions in Iran in 2023, noted the case to be the first execution for adultery charges to have taken place in Iran for 10 years⁷⁴. The execution was reported in greater detail in an IHRNGO article⁷⁵, see paragraph 8.2.6.

⁶⁵ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty ... 2024](#) (page 101), February 2025

⁶⁶ USSD, [2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (section 1a), 12 August 2025

⁶⁷ Ecolnet, [Source description: International Federation for Human Rights ...](#), updated 16 July 2020

⁶⁸ FIDH and LDDHI, [The Iran Notes on death penalty ...](#) (page 3), November 2023

⁶⁹ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (paragraph 60), 12 March 2025

⁷⁰ USSD, [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) (Protection), 24 June 2024

⁷¹ USSD, [2025 Trafficking in Persons Report](#) (Protection), 30 September 2025

⁷² IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty ... 2023](#) (pages 11 and 45), March 2024

⁷³ AI, ["Don't let them kill us": Iran's relentless execution crisis since the 2022 uprising ...](#), April 2024

⁷⁴ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty ... 2023](#) (page 12), March 2024

⁷⁵ IHRNGO, [Ahmad Nikouyi Executed for Adultery in Karaj](#), 29 April 2023

The IHRNGO noted that the stoning punishment was last carried out in 2010⁷⁶ (though it did not specify what the individual who was stoned to death was charged with), while the IHRNGO and ECPM 2023 report noted that the above mentioned 2023 execution was the first execution for adultery since 2009⁷⁷. It is also noted, however, that in February 2017, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which describes itself as the democratic alternative to Iran's ruling regime⁷⁸, reported that a man and a woman were both sentenced to death by stoning in the Lorestan province (the charges were not specified, nor could any information be found about whether the sentences were carried out)⁷⁹.

- 8.2.2 The April 2024 Amnesty International report stated: 'It is unclear how many people are under sentence of death and at risk of execution for extra-marital relations in Iran, as authorities refuse to reveal such information.'⁸⁰
- 8.2.3 The IHRNGO and ECPM 2024 report showed that of the 975 executions it reported to have taken place in 2024, none were recorded on charges of zina⁸¹.
- 8.2.4 The report of the Special Rapporteur, published on 12 March 2025, stated: 'The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] restricts the application of the death penalty to the most serious crimes, interpreted as intentional killing ... [O]ffences ... subject to the death penalty in [Iran] ... including adultery ... [are] in violation of the Covenant, although no executions for those offences are known to have occurred in 2024.'⁸²
- 8.2.5 Citing a submission from the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN), 'a France-based independent, non-profit and non-partisan organisation promoting human rights and documentation of violations in Iran's Kurdish region'⁸³, which CPIT was unable to directly access, the Special Rapporteur's report also stated: 'Although no executions for adultery were formally identified during the period, a review of official announcements between January 2022 and January 2024 showed two death sentences for adultery.'⁸⁴
- 8.2.6 Some reports of people being sentenced to death, executed, or in prison under a death sentence, for adultery, include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):
- a case that began in 2022 in which a woman was sentenced to death on adultery charges after her husband filed a complaint against her based on video recordings^{85 86 87} from surveillance cameras^{88 89}. Radio Free

⁷⁶ IHRNGO, [Ahmad Nikouyi Executed for Adultery in Karaj](#), 29 April 2023

⁷⁷ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty ... 2023](#) (page 56), March 2024

⁷⁸ NCRI Foreign Affairs Committee, [... NCRI's Role as Iran's Democratic Alternative](#), 9 March 2024

⁷⁹ NCRI, [... Stoning Sentence for a Woman and a Man ...](#), 5 February 2017

⁸⁰ AI, ["Don't let them kill us": Iran's relentless execution crisis since the 2022 uprising ...](#), April 2024

⁸¹ IHRNGO and ECPM, [Annual Report on the Death Penalty ... 2024](#) (page 50), February 2025

⁸² UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ...](#) (paragraph 16), 12 March 2025

⁸³ KHRN, [About us](#), no date

⁸⁴ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ...](#) (paragraph 27), 12 March 2025

⁸⁵ IHRNGO, [... Sentenced to Death for Adultery](#), 2 November 2023

⁸⁶ AP News, [Iran sentences a woman to death for adultery, state media say](#), 3 November 2023

⁸⁷ RFE/RL, [Iranian Woman Sentenced To Death For Having Affair](#), 3 November 2023

⁸⁸ AP News, [Iran sentences a woman to death for adultery, state media say](#), 3 November 2023

⁸⁹ RFE/RL, [Iranian Woman Sentenced To Death For Having Affair](#), 3 November 2023

Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), an organisation which aims ‘to promote democratic values by providing accurate, uncensored news’⁹⁰, reported on 3 November 2023 that the verdict was subject to appeal⁹¹. The March 2024 IHRNGO article referred to the woman remaining on death row⁹². The man involved in the same case was sentenced to lashes^{93 94}. The UNHRC detailed findings report commented that the sentencing, ‘... was a stark reminder that women continue to face punishment for adultery’⁹⁵, adding that, ‘[t]he case also highlighted the harsher punishment of women ...’⁹⁶ CPIT was unable to find any further information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) about any potential further developments since March 2024, and therefore it is not known whether the punishments handed down were implemented

- the [article published on 29 April 2023 by IHRNGO](#) which reported that a 37-year-old man, who had been sentenced to death for having sexual relations with a married woman, was executed on 24 April 2023. The article noted that at the time of writing the execution had not been reported by domestic media or officials in Iran, nor that any information was available about the married woman in the same case. CPIT was also unable to find any information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) about the married woman in the case, who was not named in the IHRNGO article. See also paragraph 8.2.1
- the [IHRNGO article of 2 November 2023](#) which reported the August 2023 sentencing to death by hanging, under multiple articles of the IPC, by the Tehran Criminal Court of a man and a woman for adultery. While it was clear from the article that at least one of the couple was married, it did not state whether it was the woman or the man who was married, or both of them. The article noted that the woman had been arrested on 1 January 2023. While the article also noted that their sentences had been appealed, another IHRNGO article, published on 12 March 2024, indicated that both individuals remained on death row⁹⁷. CPIT was unable to find any information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) about whether there have been any further developments in the case since March 2024
- the [March 2024 IHRNGO article](#) referred to 2 additional individuals on death row, making a total of ‘[a]t least five people ... currently [as of March 2024] at risk of execution for adultery charges’⁹⁸ The 2 additional individuals referred to were a man and woman who were both given the death penalty in 2021 following a complaint by the man’s wife^{99 100}. They were both reportedly handed the death penalty by stoning, but these

⁹⁰ RFE/RL, [About RFE/RL](#), no date

⁹¹ RFE/RL, [Iranian Woman Sentenced To Death For Having Affair](#), 3 November 2023

⁹² IHRNGO, [Executions for Adultery and Blasphemy in 2023](#), 12 March 2024

⁹³ IHRNGO, [... Sentenced to Death for Adultery](#), 2 November 2023

⁹⁴ RFE/RL, [Iranian Woman Sentenced To Death For Having Affair](#), 3 November 2023

⁹⁵ UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ... mission](#) (paragraph 287), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

⁹⁶ UNHRC, [Detailed findings of ... mission](#) (paragraph 287), 19 March 2024, updated 8 July 2024

⁹⁷ IHRNGO, [Executions for Adultery and Blasphemy in 2023](#), 12 March 2024

⁹⁸ IHRNGO, [Executions for Adultery and Blasphemy in 2023](#), 12 March 2024

⁹⁹ IHRNGO, [Death Sentence of Man and Woman Upheld for Adultery](#), 6 November 2021

¹⁰⁰ MEE, [... Married couple sentenced to death for extramarital sex](#), 11 November 2021

were later converted to the death penalty by hanging¹⁰¹. See also paragraph 8.1.2.

- the [AP News article of 3 November 2023](#) also referred to the case of a woman who was reportedly sentenced to death by the court for adultery in 2017, stating there was no report of her execution since

[Back to Contents](#)

8.3 Treatment by society and family

8.3.1 See paragraph 7.2.17 for details of Article 630 of the IPC, which states that a man may kill his wife and the other man if he discovers them committing zina, unless he is aware that his wife is being subjected to zina under coercion (i.e. rape), in which case he may kill only the man.

8.3.2 Some reports of the murder by family members of individuals who committed, or who were believed to have committed, adultery, include (Note: while this is not intended to be an exhaustive list, CPIT was unable to find any other recent examples in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))):

- a [CHRI article published on 6 January 2025](#) which reported the strangling to death of a 22-year-old mother of two from the village of Kozeh-Rash in Salmas County, northwest Iran, on 27 July 2024 by her father due to suspicion that she had committed adultery. While CPIT, by way of corroborating the event, found reports of her murder by several other sources, some details varied between reports, and it is noted that most reports simply stated the killing was for ‘honour’ related reasons^{102 103 104 105} without specifying that adultery was suspected. Nor did most reports refer to the victim having been married at the time of her murder^{106 107 108}
- the [CHRI article published on 6 January 2025](#) also reported that in September 2024, in Shahre Rey, south of Tehran, a man admitted to murdering his wife due to the suspicion that she was ‘having a relationship with another man’. No further details, including the name of the victim, were reported in the article, and CPIT was unable to find any corroborating information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- the [CHRI article published on 6 January 2025](#) also reported that on 10 October 2024 a man surrendered to the police in Mashhad, northeastern Iran, for murdering his wife of 10 years due to believing that she was committing adultery with her cousin. No further details, including the name of the victim and the date of the claimed murder, were reported in the article, and CPIT was unable to find any corroborating information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))

8.3.3 See also the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing ‘honour’-based violence](#).

¹⁰¹ IHRNGO, [Death Sentence of Man and Woman Upheld for Adultery](#), 6 November 2021

¹⁰² IranWire, [Iranian Woman Murdered by Father in ‘Honor Killing’](#), 30 July 2024

¹⁰³ HANA, [A 25-year-old woman was murdered by her father in Salmas](#), 29 July 2024

¹⁰⁴ KHRN, [Young woman killed by father over ‘honour’ in Salmas](#), 31 July 2024

¹⁰⁵ No Honor In Killing, [Honor Killing in Salmas, Iran: Young woman killed by her father](#), no date

¹⁰⁶ HANA, [A 25-year-old woman was murdered by her father in Salmas](#), 29 July 2024

¹⁰⁷ KHRN, [Young woman killed by father over ‘honour’ in Salmas](#), 31 July 2024

¹⁰⁸ No Honor In Killing, [Honor Killing in Salmas, Iran: Young woman killed by her father](#), no date

9. Pre-marital relationships

9.1 White marriage/cohabitation

9.1.1 An undated webpage about 'white marriages' in Iran, published by the Association for Iranian Studies (AIS), a 'private, not-for-profit, non-political organization of persons interested in Iranian Studies'¹⁰⁹, stated that white marriage is '... where men and women voluntarily choose to cohabit without formal commitment or fear of social and religious stigma, or its political consequences. It is known as a "White Marriage" since there is no marriage involved and individual birth certificates in which marriages are registered remain a clean slate.'¹¹⁰

9.1.2 An undated article by Kameel Ahmady stated:

'In cohabitations, the information about the agreement of the parties is not registered in any official document or legal office. While white marriage is not new in the world, it is reported to be a growing trend in the major cities of Iran.

'White marriage is a sociological term and from the standpoint of customs, religion, and laws governing Iran, it is considered criminal and illegal behavior. Nonetheless, despite this and due to the growth of individual awareness and economic problems, it is expanding. the secretive nature of the government and its ideological and political sensitivities prevent reporting on the subject, and no statistics are available on this subject.

'... According to unofficial statistics, white marriage is proliferating in the big cities of Iran, but the secretive nature of this type of cohabitation has made it difficult to reach statistics.

'... [W]hite marriage in Iran is regarded as an approach to facilitate an official marriage and a way for getting to know each other before the official marriage.

'... According to Iranian and Islamic law, sexual relationships outside of marriage are considered unlawful and can be subject to legal penalties and consequences. This includes cohabitation or "white marriage," which refers to living together as a couple without being formally and islamically [sic] married ... Cohabitation outside of marriage does not have legal recognition or protection under Iranian law.'¹¹¹

9.1.3 On 26 April 2024, Raseef22, a regional digital media outlet focused on underrepresented communities¹¹², published an article entitled 'Love beyond the law: Iran's white marriages' which stated:

'White marriage (from the French term, mariage blanc) describes a marriage that is not officially registered, allowing the couple to start their life together without a ceremony and without registering the marriage legally.

'... In Iran, white marriage is a relatively new phenomenon, and allows couples to live together amidst a culture and religious restrictions that

¹⁰⁹ AIS, [About AIS](#), no date

¹¹⁰ AIS, [Beyond the Shari'a: "White Marriages" in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), no date

¹¹¹ Ahmady, Kameel, [Cohabitations in Iran](#), no date

¹¹² Raseef22, [Who are we](#), no date

prohibit cohabitation before marriage.

‘... In Iran, marriage must adhere to the principles of Sharia law, therefore, couples in a white marriage could face punishment and be subject to legal repercussions. The punishment varies depending on the degree of the illicit relationship, which may include penalties and discretionary punishment (ta'zir). The severity of the punishment depends on whether the relationship is described as adultery.

‘... In Iran, white marriage can mean one of two things: the first refers to a situation where a couple lives together without being officially married, but abstain from engaging in sexual relations. This contradicts Sharia law and Islamic principles and goes against Iranian societal norms.

‘The second concept of white marriage is when a couple lives together and have no interest in formal, or legal, marriage.’¹¹³

9.1.4 An article published by the Financial Times on 4 September 2024 stated:

‘While formal marriage is declining in popularity, some couples are opting for cohabitation or what Iranians call “white marriage”. Unlike the temporary marriages long accepted by the Shia faith and entered into by some religious Iranian couples, “white marriage” involves couples simply living together despite it being forbidden by both religion and law.

“White marriage rates range from 7 to 14 per cent [of all couples] in cities like Tehran, Arak, Isfahan and Mashhad,” [Taghi] Azad Armaki, the sociology professor [at Tehran University], said, citing the findings of his own surveys [of unspecified dates].

‘... Religious authorities often blame the “westoxification” of the society for such lifestyle changes, which they deem incompatible with Islam.’¹¹⁴

9.1.5 On 8 October 2025, the Finnish Immigration Service (FIS) published a report about violence against women in Iran between 2023 and 2025. The report, which cited various sources, stated: ‘Cohabitation among Iranians without marriage (so-called white marriage, ezdevaj-e sefid) has become more common, especially among the younger generation living in major cities. However, there are no official statistics on unmarried couples living together due to the recent nature of the phenomenon and its illegality.’¹¹⁵

N.B. the information quoted above, and all other COI quoted from this source throughout the rest of this CPIN was originally published in Finnish. See [About the country information](#) for further information about the method of translation.

9.1.6 An undated article written by Maral Sahebame, a PhD candidate in the Interdisciplinary Near and Middle Eastern Studies program at the University of Washington¹¹⁶, was published by Frontiers, a journal of women studies¹¹⁷, and cited in the FIS report¹¹⁸. The article, which cited various sources, stated:

¹¹³ Raseef22, [Love beyond the law: Iran's white marriages](#), 26 April 2024

¹¹⁴ Financial Times, [Iran's urban youth falling out of love with marriage](#), 6 September 2024

¹¹⁵ FIS, [... Violence against women ... 2023 – 2025 update ...](#) (page 7), 8 October 2025

¹¹⁶ Sahebame, Maral, [... How Cohabitation comes to embody the Affair between Law and ...](#), no date

¹¹⁷ Frontiers, [Homepage](#), no date

¹¹⁸ FIS, [... Violence against women ... 2023 – 2025 update ...](#), 8 October 2025

'When asked about the legal consequences of a white marriage, Bahar [an Attorney in Iran] responded, "When you deceive the judge there is no punishment." If a couple faces charges of engaging in a namashroo (illegitimate) relationship, they are counseled by their attorneys to admit to being in a siqeh [a temporary marriage, see [Temporary marriage](#)], which absolves them of a legal violation. Furthermore, a siqeh with a woman who has never been married will not be registered, but a verbal acknowledgement is sufficient for the court. Legal experts including Bahar reiterate that in intimate relationships cases, the court is required to avoid probing for details and hard evidence. While white marriages may be categorized as punishable namashroo relationships, the legal approach to transgressions of this nature is far more nuanced and in fact, creates opportunities for avoiding legal consequences.'¹¹⁹

9.1.7 The same article also stated:

'State agencies have published articles warning of the dangers of white marriage. In a speech targeting young people, Supreme Leader Khamene'i called white marriage the "darkest kinds of marriages" and "a plot by the west to bring the end of humanity, by destroying modesty, sexual reserve, and the family unit." ... When asked about white marriage, influential cleric Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi condemned the practice, but further stated that such illegitimate relationships can be retroactively sanctioned. That is, the moment a couple is conscious of their unsanctioned intimate relations, and recites the siqeh phrase, their former interactions are religiously sanctioned. This is telling of the extent to which marriage debates are redefined by the very clerics that control official discourses that condemn white marriage.'¹²⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

9.2 Temporary marriage

9.2.1 The Landinfo briefing note, translated into English and citing various sources, stated:

'Temporary marriage is between a man, married or unmarried, and a woman who is unmarried, divorced, or widowed. It involves contracts that can last from one hour to 99 years. The duration of the marriage and the size of the dowry must be agreed upon for the marriage to be valid. There is no requirement for witnesses, and there is also no requirement for the contract to be written. While a permanent marriage is intended to last a lifetime, temporary marriages have an end date. Scholars within Shia Islam are said to have used the analogy of renting versus owning. It is also described as a "pleasure marriage".'¹²¹

9.2.2 Citing the 2018 DIS and DRC report, the Landinfo briefing note also stated: 'The possibility of entering temporary marriages makes it relatively easy for a sexual relationship to appear legitimate.'¹²² The briefing note went on to state: 'The exception is women who are already married, and men who enter a relationship with a married woman.'¹²³

¹¹⁹ Sahebjame, Maral, [... How Cohabitation comes to embody the Affair between Law and ...](#), no date

¹²⁰ Sahebjame, Maral, [... How Cohabitation comes to embody the Affair between Law and ...](#), no date

¹²¹ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 16), 5 August 2022

¹²² Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 17), 5 August 2022

¹²³ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 17), 5 August 2022

- 9.2.3 The DFAT Iran Country Information Report 2023 stated: ‘Some Iranians have their marriages arranged by parents. Many other young Iranians organise romances and marriages through dating, including online. Some upper-class women will cohabit with their partner with a temporary marriage licence.’¹²⁴
- 9.2.4 The Borgen Project, a US-based nonprofit organisation^{125 126}, published an article on 20 February 2024 which stated:
 ‘... [T]he Iranian government recognizes so-called “temporary” marriages, allowing couples to legally participate in sex without the formality of a lifelong union. A temporary marriage or sigheh, as it’s called in the country – allows a man to marry a woman for a predetermined period, ranging from an hour to several months or even years. By design, these arrangements absolve men of any financial responsibility to their partners, functioning instead as legalized casual sex.’¹²⁷
- 9.2.5 On 6 March 2025, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI), a US-based organisation of journalists, researchers and human rights advocates focused on human rights conditions in Iran¹²⁸, published an article which stated: ‘... [F]logging and death sentences for certain adultery offenses disproportionately affect women, because only men can claim “temporary marriages” (thus evading adultery charges), while women have no similar right.’¹²⁹
- 9.2.6 An article published on 21 August 2025 by IranWire, an Iranian news website¹³⁰, stated:
 ‘Iran’s temporary marriage law, under Article 1075 of the Civil Code, places women at greater legal risk while enabling men to maintain extramarital relationships without consequences ... Iranian society simultaneously recognizes temporary marriage as religiously legitimate while viewing it as morally suspect, especially for women. Legal experts say that temporary marriage functions primarily as a mechanism for male polygamy, without the financial obligations typically associated with marriage.’¹³¹
- 9.2.7 The same IranWire article also stated that ‘Hundreds of Telegram channels now operate as informal matchmaking services for temporary marriages, charging fees for postings and additional sums for contact information.’¹³²
- 9.2.8 An article published by Iran International, a privately-owned, London-based media outlet that provides news for Iranians both in and outside of Iran¹³³, on 21 September 2025 stated:
 ‘Iran’s Shi’ite establishment promotes temporary marriage as a way to prevent illicit relationships. Yet even devout families often disapprove, associating the practice with prostitution and social shame.

¹²⁴ DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.135), 24 July 2023

¹²⁵ The Borgen Project, [About Us](#), no date

¹²⁶ The Borgen Project, [Contact](#), no date

¹²⁷ The Borgen Project, [The Reality of Child Prostitution in Iran](#), 20 February 2024

¹²⁸ CHRI, [Who We Are](#), no date

¹²⁹ CHRI, [Gender Apartheid in Iran is Crushing Women’s Lives and Futures](#), 6 March 2025

¹³⁰ IranWire, [About IranWire](#), no date

¹³¹ IranWire, [Iran’s Temporary Marriage Law Traps Women in Legal Limbo](#), 21 August 2025

¹³² IranWire, [Iran’s Temporary Marriage Law Traps Women in Legal Limbo](#), 21 August 2025

¹³³ Iran International, [About Us](#), no date

'Under Shi'ite law, a man can have four permanent wives simultaneously and any number of temporary wives. He needs his first wife's consent for additional permanent marriages, but not for temporary ones.

'Women, by contrast, can only enter one temporary marriage at a time and, after termination, must wait at least 45 days before remarrying to establish paternity if pregnant.

"I don't know a single woman around me who would agree to a temporary marriage, unless she is involved with a married man and wants to protect herself from being charged with adultery if discovered," said Taraneh, an art teacher in Tehran.

"In these cases, it's more a formality than religiosity. Just like an affair, they hide it from everyone, even their family and friends."

'... Under Shi'ite Islamic law, temporary marriage, known in Persian as sigheh or mut'ah, is a marriage contract with a set duration. The term may last from a few hours to several years, depending on the agreement.

'The contract is usually verbal and consists of the man and woman (or their representatives) reciting a formula (sigheh) that specifies the agreed duration and a predetermined dowry (mahr). Witnesses are not required for it to be valid.

'... Widows and divorced women may enter temporary marriage without paternal consent. Unmarried girls, however, need their father's approval ...

'... Sunni Islam does not recognize temporary marriage.

'... Islamic jurists describe temporary marriage as a legitimate solution to sexual needs and a safeguard against prostitution.

'... Since its legal recognition, numerous social media channels have openly advertised temporary marriage, offering arrangements from "one-hour to longer terms," for fixed fees.

'Even clerics who accept the principle of sigheh criticize this trend. They argue that it normalizes polygamy ...¹³⁴

It should be noted that there have been concerns raised regarding Iran International's editorial independence, including reports of it being Saudi-funded and pushing a pro-Saudi, anti-Iran, line^{135 136}.

9.2.9 A 2023 article by Kameel Ahmady, a Social Anthropology researcher¹³⁷, stated:

'Temporary marriage, which is often recommended to children and young people to prevent sin, has various problems, including a lack of legal protection and a lack of clear definitions and regulations ...

'... [T]emporary marriage is typically sought out by men for cohabitation and to satisfy their desires for variety and freedom, as well as their sexual needs. Additionally, in traditional and religious families, temporary marriage is often chosen as a legal and religious solution for regulating the sexual behaviours

¹³⁴ Iran International, [Temporary marriage in Iran ...](#), 21 September 2025

¹³⁵ The Guardian, [Concern over UK-based Iranian TV channel's links ...](#), 31 October 2018

¹³⁶ The Wall Street Journal, [Saudi Arabia Sought ... Help to Build a Media Empire](#), 8 February 2019

¹³⁷ Ahmady, Kameel, [Biography](#), no date

of young children and adolescents.

'In addition to these drivers, based on field observations and specific interviews, some young people who do not have financial independence use temporary marriage/concubinage to solve legal issues with girls and boys being in illegal relationships in public spaces in Iranian society.

'... Some Iranian politicians and religious figures ... have suggested that temporary marriage (sigheh or mut'ah) can help prevent promiscuity ... in young people. These individuals, along with others ... have publicly argued that temporary marriage is a necessary measure to maintain chastity within society. On the other hand, some high-ranking experts ... consider mut'ah to be permissible only during war times and during the early days of Islam.'¹³⁸

9.2.10 An undated article by Kameel Ahmady stated:

'For men, sigheh often satisfies a desire for sexual variety and freedom to pursue relations with multiple partners. Conservative norms in Iran prohibit extramarital affairs, so married men use temporary marriage to religiously legitimize their polygamous impulses. Single men also exploit sigheh for casual sexual experimentation in a loose "Halal dating" framework.

'Some young, traditional couples use sigheh as a way to explore intimacy before permanent commitment. But often their families pressure them into the arrangement, transgressing personal consent ...

'... [D]iverse motivations reveal how drivers of sigheh have strayed far from its idealized religious origins. It now serves as a vehicle for male promiscuity, female economic survival, and violation of youth autonomy.'¹³⁹

9.2.11 An undated 'Iran' webpage published by Girls Not Brides, 'a global network of more than 1,400 civil society organisations from nearly 100 countries committed to ending child marriage'¹⁴⁰, stated: 'Temporary marriages (Sigheh), used to get around Islamic restrictions on sex outside wedlock involving minors, are ... common.'¹⁴¹ Girls Not Brides did not quantify or provide any further information regarding what it meant by 'common'.

[Back to Contents](#)

9.3 Application of the law in practice

9.3.1 The undated AIS webpage stated: 'While the government is well aware of "illegal co-habitations," it has been unable to turn the growing trend, and no serious action has been taken to prevent co-habitation other than condemnation.'¹⁴²

9.3.2 The Landinfo briefing note, translated into English, stated:

'Blogger and writer Marta Rajkova (2018) has conducted an unofficial survey on dating among Iranians. The survey cannot be said to be based on a representative sample, and it only describes liberal environments in the cities. The survey shows that the pattern closely resembles how Western youth meet each other: at university, workplaces, through social networks or

¹³⁸ Ahmady, Kameel, [Pathological Analysis ... Temporary Marriage ...](#) (pages 94, 100 and 104), 2023

¹³⁹ Ahmady, Kameel, [What is Nikah Mutah in Islam and Iran](#), no date

¹⁴⁰ Girls Not Brides, [About us](#), no date

¹⁴¹ Girls Not Brides, [Iran](#) (What drives child marriage in Iran?), no date

¹⁴² AIS, [Beyond the Shari'a: "White Marriages" in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), no date

at social gatherings. However, it is not easy to be a couple in public. Young, unmarried couples can be stopped and questioned by the religious police. In rare cases, couples are arrested. It is forbidden to hold hands, and consequently it is also forbidden to kiss or hug in public.¹⁴³

- 9.3.3 The Landinfo briefing note also stated: ‘According to information obtained by the Danish immigration authorities, cohabitation is not prosecuted by the authorities unless someone reports the relationship. The sources who commented on this during an information-gathering trip in 2017 explained that they were not aware of any cases where Iranians had been prosecuted on this basis in recent times.’¹⁴⁴
- 9.3.4 Citing various sources, the Landinfo briefing note also stated: ‘... [T]here are reports of forced [virginity] testing when young women are arrested. A 21-year-old university student was arrested while participating in mass demonstrations against the regime. She was ordered to take a virginity test, but refused. She was not allowed to complain about the practice, but instead has published an open letter on the matter.’¹⁴⁵
- 9.3.5 The FIS report, translated into English, stated: ‘In Iran’s patriarchal society, the social pressures and legal obstacles of living together affect women more than men. Women who suffer from domestic violence while cohabiting, for example, cannot turn to the police for help because they could be accused of having an extramarital relationship.’¹⁴⁶
- 9.3.6 The FIS report also stated: ‘Although living together as an unmarried couple is frowned upon and Iran’s state and religious leaders have strongly expressed their opposition, authorities have so far not taken concrete measures to address the phenomenon.’¹⁴⁷
- 9.3.7 CPIT was unable to find any recent examples of people having been arrested, charged, or prosecuted for being in a pre-marital relationship in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)).
- 9.3.8 See also [Adultery: Application of the law in practice](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

9.4 Attitudes and treatment by society and family

- 9.4.1 An undated article by Kameel Ahmady stated: ‘Engaging in sexual relationships outside of marriage, including cohabitation, is generally considered a moral and social offence in Iranian society. While there may not be specific legal provisions targeting cohabitation, societal and cultural norms discourage such relationships.’¹⁴⁸
- 9.4.2 The Landinfo briefing note, translated into English and citing various sources, stated:
- ‘Virginity is important for the value a woman has in the marriage market. Young and unmarried women are assigned the highest value. Women who have been in a marriage or relationship are seen as “damaged goods”. It is

¹⁴³ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 14), 5 August 2022

¹⁴⁴ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 30), 5 August 2022

¹⁴⁵ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 14), 5 August 2022

¹⁴⁶ FIS, [... Violence against women ... 2023 – 2025 update ...](#) (page 7), 8 October 2025

¹⁴⁷ FIS, [... Violence against women ... 2023 – 2025 update ...](#) (page 7), 8 October 2025

¹⁴⁸ Ahmady, Kameel, [Cohabitations in Iran](#), no date

assumed that a girl marrying for the first time is a virgin. In certain areas, particularly in rural regions, virginity tests are used prior to entering marriage.

‘... Social pressure leads women to resort to surgery and “hymen reconstruction” to conceal the fact that they are not virgins. Another method used is a pill placed in the vagina before intercourse, which releases a red liquid during penetration with the intent to deceive the man.

‘At the same time, views on virginity are gradually changing. In urban and more liberal environments, women often wait to get married and encounter acceptance for their choice. It has become common to have romantic relationships for both women and men. For Iranian men in these environments, virginity is not necessarily decisive when choosing a spouse.’¹⁴⁹

- 9.4.3 The Landinfo briefing note also stated: ‘... [C]ohabiting couples ... face practical obstacles; there are almost no landlords willing to rent to cohabiters. They therefore have to lie and say they live alone but can be “exposed” by curious neighbours. A woman booking a hotel room must provide proof that she is married ...’¹⁵⁰
- 9.4.4 The Youth Foundation (formerly called the Nada Foundation), ‘a UK-registered human rights organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of girls and young women’¹⁵¹, published an article on 16 September 2023. The article, which was focused on child marriage, stated: ‘Iran has a deeply ingrained traditional culture, where marriage is seen as a way to ensure the preservation of family honor and social standing. These cultural beliefs often prioritize the perceived benefits of early marriage, such as protection of the girl’s virginity and ensuring she does not engage in premarital sexual relations.’¹⁵²
- 9.4.5 The April 2024 Raseef22 article stated: ‘Shifting attitudes towards sex, marriage, gender and family can ... be seen in Iran. Nonetheless, these topics are still taboo in Iranian society, and many Iranians avoid engaging in premarital sexual relationships.’¹⁵³
- 9.4.6 On 3 January 2025, an independent body called Stop Honor Killings, which campaigns to change the law and culture in Iran with the aim of ending honour killings¹⁵⁴, published its fourth quarterly report of 2024 on honor killings. The report stated:
- “Honor killings” are a severe form of femicide and one of the most violent expressions of gender-based violence. They typically involve a family member, often a woman or a transgender individual, being murdered by relatives who claim the victim has brought shame or dishonor upon the family, tribe, or community. These killings are often motivated by cultural, social, or religious beliefs that prioritize “family honor” over individual rights, including the fundamental right to life.
- ‘Triggers for such murders may include ... engaging in a romantic

¹⁴⁹ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family ...](#) (translated into English) (pages 15 to 16), 5 August 2022

¹⁵⁰ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 30), 5 August 2022

¹⁵¹ Youth Foundation, [About Us](#), no date

¹⁵² Youth Foundation, [Childhood Marriage in Iran ...](#), 16 September 2023

¹⁵³ Raseef22, [Love beyond the law: Iran’s white marriages](#), 26 April 2024

¹⁵⁴ Stop Honor Killings, [About Us](#), no date

relationship disapproved by the family ... or even becoming a victim of sexual assault. Many such killings are based on mere suspicion, with no evidence to justify the accusations.¹⁵⁵ While the report did provide some analysis of the statistics it recorded regarding the numbers of honour killings in 2024 (a total of 186 in 2024), it did not provide a breakdown of the numbers of honour killings by motive.

- 9.4.7 The most recent report published by Stop Honor Killings was published on 18 December 2025, and covered the first six months of the year 1404 in the Iranian calendar (March to September 2025 in the Gregorian calendar). The report noted that of 118 honour killings of women it recorded during the reporting period, 2 of those (1.69%) were 'boyfriend-related', with the same number recorded as having been motivated by rape (but the report did not provide further explanation). A further 94 (79.65%) of the recorded honour killings, combined, were recorded as having been due to 'family disputes', 'suspicion', or for 'honor-related', 'unknown', or 'other' reasons¹⁵⁶. In the absence of definitions of these terms or further breakdowns within the report, CPIT notes that some of these honour killings may have been motivated by zina acts by the victims. It is not possible, however, to estimate how many, if any, of the cases this may apply to.
- 9.4.8 The December 2025 Stop Honor Killings report also stated: 'It is crucial to note that many honor killings remain unreported or deliberately misclassified as suicide, accident, or family dispute. Therefore, these 118 cases represent only the tip of a much larger iceberg overshadowing the lives of millions of women in Iran.'¹⁵⁷ CPIT therefore considers that the numbers of women killed due to zina-related motives between March and September 2025 was likely higher than the 4 that were explicitly recorded. It should also be noted that the report focused on women only.
- 9.4.9 An article published on 26 August 2021 by the Middle East Institute (MEI), a Washington DC-based institution focused on the Middle East¹⁵⁸, noted that '... being the victim of rape ... having sexual relationships, or engaging in adultery' were all potential causes of '[h]onor killings [to] punish women for bringing "disgrace" upon their families ...'¹⁵⁹ The article did not provide any numbers regarding how many women were the victims of honour killings for these reasons.
- 9.4.10 Some examples of individuals who have been killed by family members for reasons related to pre-marital relationships include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):
- a 17-year-old girl from the Ilam province who was killed by her father in August 2024, reportedly due to her relationship with a teenage boy^{160 161 162 163}. Most of the reports noted the motive for the killing to have related to disputes between the families of the young male and female

¹⁵⁵ Stop Honor Killings, [Fourth Quarterly Report on "Honor Killings" in 2024 ...](#), 3 January 2025

¹⁵⁶ Stop Honor Killings, [Honor Killings In Iran \(first Half Of 1404\)](#), 18 December 2025

¹⁵⁷ Stop Honor Killings, [Honor Killings In Iran \(first Half Of 1404\)](#), 18 December 2025

¹⁵⁸ MEI, [About Us](#), no date

¹⁵⁹ MEI, [Iranian women campaign to stop the rise in "honor killings"](#), 26 August 2021

¹⁶⁰ SFI, [Honor Killing in Darrehshahr: 17-Year-Old Girl Murdered by Her Father](#), 27 August 2024

¹⁶¹ HANA, ["A 17-year-old girl was killed by her father for honor motive"](#), 28 August 2024

¹⁶² Iran Focus, [Femicide in Iran: 17-Year-Old Girl Killed By Father](#), 28 August 2024

¹⁶³ Iran International, [Young Iranian girl murdered by father in honor killing](#), 28 August 2024

involved^{164 165}, with one report attributing the cause specifically to a history of tribal conflict between the families¹⁶⁶

- a 17-year-old girl, from Piranshahr, in the West Azerbaijan province^{167 168}¹⁶⁹, who was reportedly killed by her father on 25 or 26 January 2025 after he discovered she was in a relationship with a male^{170 171 172 173}
- a 20-year-old woman who was reportedly killed by her 4 brothers in Taybad, in the Razavi Khorasan province, on 12 July 2025 due to suspicions that she was engaging in a relationship over the phone with a boyfriend^{174 175}

9.4.11 The FIS report, translated into English, stated: ‘Cohabitation involves several problems, such as keeping the relationship secret from close circles.’¹⁷⁶

9.4.12 See also [Adultery: Application of the law in practice](#) and, for more information about honour killings of women, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing ‘honour’ based violence](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

10. Children born outside of marriage

10.1 Offence of zina

10.1.1 An article about the legal status of the children of unmarried parents in Iran was written by Ladan Rahbari of the Department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam and was published by publisher¹⁷⁷, MDPI, on 9 March 2022. The article, which cited various sources, noted that the notion of zina is relevant when it comes to clarifying when and why a child is considered illegitimate¹⁷⁸.

10.1.2 Citing a 2009 empirical study, the article written by Ladan Rahbari stated that, ‘... if it is established that a child is born to unmarried parents, the parents will be considered adulterous by law and will be subjected to punishment based on the Islamic Penal Code (often in the form of whipping ...). The parents can submit an application for a birth certificate for their child to the court or get married, but none would exempt them from the punishment.’¹⁷⁹

10.1.3 The Landinfo briefing note, translated into English, citing an online meeting with an Iranian jurist in February 2021, stated:

¹⁶⁴ SFI, [Honor Killing in Darrehshahr: 17-Year-Old Girl Murdered by Her Father](#), 27 August 2024

¹⁶⁵ Iran Focus, [Femicide in Iran: 17-Year-Old Girl Killed By Father](#), 28 August 2024

¹⁶⁶ Iran International, [Young Iranian girl murdered by father in honor killing](#), 28 August 2024

¹⁶⁷ Stop Honor Killings, [The Killing of 17-Year-Old ... by Her Father Over “honor”](#), 28 January 2025

¹⁶⁸ IranWire, [Iranian Father Arrested for Stabbing Daughter to Death](#), 29 January 2025

¹⁶⁹ KHRN, [Father kills 17-year-old daughter in Piranshahr](#), 29 January 2025

¹⁷⁰ Stop Honor Killings, [The Killing of 17-Year-Old ... by Her Father Over “honor”](#), 28 January 2025

¹⁷¹ IranWire, [Iranian Father Arrested for Stabbing Daughter to Death](#), 29 January 2025

¹⁷² KHRN, [Father kills 17-year-old daughter in Piranshahr](#), 29 January 2025

¹⁷³ RFE/RL, [Inside Iran’s Epidemic Of ‘Honor’ Killings ...](#), 3 February 2025

¹⁷⁴ IranWire, [Brothers Kill Sister Over Phone Relationship in Iran ...](#), 22 July 2025

¹⁷⁵ SFI, [Honor killing in Taybad ...](#), 4 August 2025

¹⁷⁶ FIS, [... Violence against women ... 2023 – 2025 update ...](#) (page 7), 8 October 2025

¹⁷⁷ MDPI, [About Us](#), no date

¹⁷⁸ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

¹⁷⁹ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

'The fact that an unmarried woman is pregnant does not necessarily mean that she can be punished for zina. According to an Iranian jurist ... pregnancy in itself is not proof that the woman has committed zina. Medically, it is possible to become pregnant without having engaged in sexual activity. The jurist further referred to the strict evidence requirements in such cases. The same applies to unmarried Iranian women who have become pregnant and had children abroad. Such actions committed outside Iran are not covered by Iranian jurisdiction. The woman will therefore not be arrested upon returning to Iran, according to the jurist ...'¹⁸⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

10.2 Birth registration

10.2.1 Ladan Rahbari's article stated:

'In the contemporary legal system in Iran, child registration is closely tied to Islamic marriage. The Civil Registration Law foresees a process for registering a child born to Islamically married parents.

'... [The Islamic Republic of Iran's] IRI's National Organization for Civil Registrations (hereafter abbreviated as NOCR) is responsible for registering birth ... events and issuing certificates ...

'... [A]s long as the child is born into parents who have conducted an Islamic marriage, they can be registered. If the parents only conducted an Islamic marriage and did not register their marriage, they broke the law by evading registration. Therefore, they will be punished for failing to register their marriage, but their child is still considered "legitimate" and can be registered.'¹⁸¹

For information about the 'conventional route' to birth registration, which is compulsory^{182 183}, and the issuance of a birth certificate, see section 2.1 of Ladan Rahbari's [article](#).

10.2.2 Chapter 3 of Iran's Civil Registration Law covers birth registration¹⁸⁴.

According to an English translation of the Civil Registration Law, published by UN Statistics Wiki, part of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), a note to Article 16 states: '... [I]f the parent's marriage has not been registered, the parents shall jointly notify the birth and sign the relevant documents. If [the] parent[s] cannot jointly notify childbirth, the relevant document shall be drawn up by notification of one of the parents, while mentioning the first name of the absent party. If birth is notified by the mother, the mother's surname is given to the child.'¹⁸⁵

10.2.3 Ladan Rahbari's article stated: '... [W]hen the parents do not conduct an Islamic marriage, their child will be considered "illegitimate" and cannot be registered at the civil registry through the conventional route.'¹⁸⁶

10.2.4 However, the same article also indicated that where parents of a child are married but not Islamically, a birth may still be officially registered providing

¹⁸⁰ Landinfo, [Iran Briefing Note: Family and ...](#) (translated into English) (page 18), 5 August 2022

¹⁸¹ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child ...](#) (Abstract, sections 2.1 and 2.2), 9 March 2022

¹⁸² IRI, [Civil Registration Law](#) (English translation) (Article 12), no date

¹⁸³ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.1), 9 March 2022

¹⁸⁴ IRI, [Civil Registration Law](#) (English translation) (pages 5-8), no date

¹⁸⁵ IRI, [Civil Registration Law](#) (English translation) (Article 16), no date

¹⁸⁶ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

the parents have been married according to the religious laws of one of the religious minorities recognised by the Iranian Constitution - Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians - and the marriage is registered:

'... [O]nly one type of marriage is accepted by the law: religious marriage, which predominantly constitutes Islamic marriage. This means that minorities such as Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians, who are recognized in the constitution of 1979 as official religious "minorities," can conduct marriages [sic] services according to their own religious traditions. Besides these three officially recognized religions, all other marriages should be Islamic and officiated by the Muslim clergy. In addition to the compulsory religious ceremony, all marriages must be registered to become official. This means that while Islamic marriages "legitimize" relationships from a religious perspective, marriages become legal only after the official registration of a religious marriage.'¹⁸⁷

10.2.5 Ladan Rahbari's article also stated:

'... [O]n 16 September 2020 ... the National Organization for Civil Registrations spokesperson publicly announce[d] that children born to unmarried parents will be given birth certificates after court approval ...

'The registration process also covers cases where the child's father is unknown. In these cases, the mother can file a request to the court, and after the approval of the attorney general, the child will receive a birth certificate ... This birth certificate will contain the mother's last name. This is the only situation where the law allows the mother's last name to be assigned to their child [see also paragraphs 10.2.2 and 10.3.2]. However, the birth certificate cannot be issued only with the mother's name and last name and will also include a "hypothetical" father's name to avoid leaving the father's name section empty. It is vaguely discussed by the authorities that adding a "hypothetical" name to the birth certificate is for the child's benefit, as it can protect them against problems at school and later in life.'¹⁸⁸ See also [Parental and child rights](#).

10.2.6 Regarding the scale of birth registration issues for children born outside of marriage, Ladan Rahbari's article stated:

'In 2018, the Social Welfare Deputy of the Iranian Ministry of Cooperative Labour and Social Welfare stated that in Iran, overall and across all ages, forty-nine thousand children born to Iranian mothers do not have a birth certificate ... However, other non-official news sources have estimated the number to be around a million ... None of these sources have substantiated their reported numbers, and the exact number of unregistered children remains unknown.

'... Since it is practically impossible to estimate the number of children born to unmarried parents in Iran, this paper has not intended to make any claims about how widespread the problems related to child registration are.'¹⁸⁹

10.2.7 For more information about marriage laws and religion in Iran, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women - Early and forced marriage](#).

¹⁸⁷ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

¹⁸⁸ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

¹⁸⁹ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration ...](#) (sections 1 and 4), 9 March 2022

10.3 Parental and child rights

- 10.3.1 Book 8, Chapter 1 of Iran's Civil Code, originally published on 23 May 1928, outlines the provisions relating to parentage, and states: 'Article 1167 - A child born of adultery shall not belong to the adulterer.'¹⁹⁰

It should be noted that the source cited above is an unofficial English translation and that while the Code was last amended on 31 July 2006, the last amendment included in this translation was dated 29 December 1985.

- 10.3.2 A BBC News article, published in October 2021 article stated that Article 1167 of the Civil Code, '... means that unmarried parents have no custody rights as a couple and only the mother can request for her name alone to be listed on the child's birth certificate [see [Birth registration](#)]. As for the child, the authorities keep a confidential record of those born in such circumstances - information which can prevent them from obtaining certain jobs in the future.'¹⁹¹

- 10.3.3 Ladan Rahbari's article referred to the term 'natural child', like 'illegitimate', as describing a child born to an unmarried couple (i.e. a couple who does not meet the criteria of being legally married in Iran, see [Birth registration](#)).¹⁹²

- 10.3.4 Rahbari's article stated that:

'... [O]nly children born to Islamic marriages are considered "legitimate," which has consequences for parentage rights and the legal status of children born to unmarried parents.

'... The difference between a legal and a "natural" child derives from parentage. There is disagreement among Shi'i legal scholars about the parentage of a child born to a couple who are not "Islamically" married. Still, the dominant view in Shi'a Islam is that if a child is born to a couple committing zena, then parentage ties between the biological parents and the child cannot be established. Meaning that the child is not "legitimately" or "legally" ascribed to any of the parents and is denied any kind of legal filiation ...

'... While the difference between natural and legal parentage does not impact the laws and rights to custody, guardianship, and alimony rights, it impacts inheritance rights. According to Article 884 of Iranian Civil Law, a "natural child" does not inherit from their parents ... The child thus enjoys other rights, but not the right to legacy. This legislation is based on a combination of Articles 1167 and 861, which together establish that inheritance is limited to when parentage is established, and according to encoded Shi'i rulings, parentage is not established when a child is born to unmarried parents ...

'... Besides the child's rights in the family setting, there are other social rights that a child born to unmarried parents does not enjoy. Studies in Iran and other countries have shown that unregistered children are deprived of education, health care, and other social, financial, and welfare services ... exclusively accessible to people who can present a birth certificate. In 2020,

¹⁹⁰ IRI, [Civil Code of ... the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (Book 8, Chapter 1), 23 May 1928

¹⁹¹ BBC News, [Iran: The painful choices of being pregnant and unmarried](#), 24 October 2021

¹⁹² Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

parallel to the facilitation of registering children born to unmarried parents [see paragraph 10.2.5], the Iranian government also took steps to enable access to education for unregistered children ... It is not yet clear how this change of attitude and law has been practically implemented into the education system. Access to many other services, including receiving social security benefits, opening bank accounts, and getting insured, is still difficult, if not entirely impossible without a birth certificate ...¹⁹³

10.3.5 An EUAA query response on Iran, published on 3 November 2025, stated: 'Information on [the] situation of children from unregistered marriages was scarce.'¹⁹⁴

10.3.6 See also [Birth registration](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

10.4 Children born within temporary marriages

10.4.1 Ladan Rahbari's article stated: 'Children born to any of the two forms of marriage - permanent and temporary - are considered legitimate and may be registered by their parents at the civil registry.'¹⁹⁵

10.4.2 The 2023 article by Kameel Ahmady stated: 'Temporary marriage can be registered in the case of a pregnancy or if it is specified in the contract, as stated in Article 21 of the Family Protection Law of 2013.'¹⁹⁶

10.4.3 The September 2025 Iran International article stated: 'Since 2013, temporary marriage has been legally recognized in Iran, though registration is only required if a child is conceived. If registered or witnessed, temporary marriage allows recognition of children ... Children are legally recognized, with inheritance and custody rights, though complications often arise if the marriage is not officially registered.'¹⁹⁷

[Back to Contents](#)

11. Access to justice

11.1.1 The IHRDC noted 'Book Three and Book Four [of the IPC] address qisas (retaliation) and diyat (monetary compensation for deaths and bodily injuries)'.¹⁹⁸ CPIT was unable to source a comprehensive, current English translation of Book Three and Book Four of the IPC at the time of writing.

11.1.2 The FIDH briefing note on the death penalty stated:

'Honor killings have always targeted women as a result of the application of Article 301 of the IPC, which provides a reprieve from [the] death penalty for "fathers and paternal grandfathers" for the killing of their female children or grandchildren. Article 302(e) of the IPC allows men to kill their wives without fearing the death penalty, as it stipulates: "A husband who catches his wife and her lover in the act of adultery and kills them, shall not be sentenced to retribution (qisas) and payment of blood money."¹⁹⁹ See also Country Policy

¹⁹³ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child ...](#) (sections 2, 2.2 and 3), 9 March 2022

¹⁹⁴ EUAA, [... treatment of ... children in unregistered marriages ...](#) (page 7), 3 November 2025

¹⁹⁵ Rahbari, Ladan, [Marriage, Parentage and Child Registration in Iran ...](#) (section 2.2), 9 March 2022

¹⁹⁶ Ahmady, Kameel, [Pathological Analysis ... Temporary Marriage ...](#) (page 104), 2023

¹⁹⁷ Iran International, [Temporary marriage in Iran ...](#), 21 September 2025

¹⁹⁸ IHRDC, [Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Book One and Book Two](#), 4 April 2014

¹⁹⁹ FIDH and LDDHI, [The Iran Notes on death penalty ...](#) (page 3), November 2023

and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing 'honour' based violence](#).

- 11.1.3 A report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, published on 9 February 2024, referred to, '... the persistence of laws and practice that continue to support and encourage violence against women and girls.'²⁰⁰ It went on to state that: 'Misogynistic legislation and discriminatory practices and behaviour have continued to permeate many aspects of public and private life. The criminal justice system continues to exonerate perpetrators of violence against women and girls, or reduce their punishments, as well as exempting them from criminal liability and qisas, for example for a man witnessing his wife committing adultery, who kills or assaults either or both parties.'²⁰¹
- 11.1.4 The January 2025 CHRI article, which cited various sources, stated:
- 'Article 630 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code states: "Whenever a man sees his wife committing adultery with a man and knows that the wife has consented to it, he can kill both of them." In an earlier interview with Deutsche Welle, Dehghan [Saeid Dehghan, a prominent human rights lawyer in Iran], explained, "According to this article, this kind of "honor killing" is not punishable and the presiding judges usually use the phrase "the existence of an honorable motive to preserve honor" during trial of such murders."
- 'Article 302 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code states that a man can legally kill a person for committing a crime that is punishable by death under Sharia (Islamic) law, such as adultery. (A woman in Iran, however, could never walk free after killing her adulterous husband and could be executed.)'²⁰²
- 11.1.5 The report of the Special Rapporteur, published on 12 March 2025, noted that where the conditions are not met of a husband bearing witness to the adultery of his wife, and being certain of his wife's consent, '... the husband may be punished, including with qisas.'²⁰³
- 11.1.6 CPIT found limited information about what happened to the perpetrators in the below examples of individuals who were killed by family members for zina-related reasons (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list. These examples relate to those, provided earlier in this note, of individuals who have been killed by family members either because they committed, or were believed to have committed, adultery, or for reasons related to pre-marital relationships (see paragraphs 8.3.2 and 9.4.10)):
- regarding the 22-year-old mother of two from northwest Iran who was reportedly killed by her father due to suspicion that she had committed adultery, according to CHRI²⁰⁴, KHRN reported: 'Authorities have reportedly arrested the father on charges of "premeditated murder" in a border region of Orumiyeh, West Azerbaijan Province.'²⁰⁵ CPIT was unable to find any further information about whether he was charged, prosecuted, or sentenced, in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
 - regarding the woman whose husband reportedly admitted to having killed

²⁰⁰ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ... human rights ...](#) (paragraph 72), 9 February 2024

²⁰¹ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur ... human rights ...](#) (paragraph 72), 9 February 2024

²⁰² CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

²⁰³ UNHRC, [... Report of the Special Rapporteur on ... human rights](#) (footnote 54), 12 March 2025

²⁰⁴ CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

²⁰⁵ KHRN, [Young woman killed by father over 'honour' in Salmas](#), 31 July 2024

her due to the suspicion that she was she was 'having a relationship with another man', while the CHRI report noted that he was arrested on 24 September 2024, it did not provide any further information regarding whether he was subsequently charged or prosecuted²⁰⁶. CPIT was also unable to find any further information regarding this in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))

- regarding the woman who was reportedly murdered in Mashhad in October 2024 by her husband of 10 years due to his belief that she committed adultery with her cousin, while the CHRI report noted that he surrendered himself to the police, it did not provide any further information regarding whether he was subsequently arrested, charged, or prosecuted²⁰⁷. Similarly, CPIT was unable to find any further information about this in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- regarding the 17-year-old girl from the Ilam province who was reportedly killed by her father for an alleged relationship with a teenage boy, IranWire stated: 'Iranian media have reported that the father was arrested hours after committing the crime.'²⁰⁸ However, CPIT was unable to find any further information about whether he was charged, prosecuted, or sentenced, in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- regarding the 17-year old girl from the West Azerbaijan province who was reportedly killed by her father after he discovered she was in a relationship with a male, multiple sources reported that her father was arrested and detained shortly after her murder^{209 210 211 212}, with IranWire reporting that the father had surrendered himself to the police²¹³. However, CPIT was unable to find any further information about whether he was charged, prosecuted, or sentenced, in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- regarding the 20-year-old woman who was reportedly killed by her 4 brothers due to engaging in a relationship over the phone with her boyfriend, sources reported that while the brothers were arrested after her murder, the parents granted forgiveness and therefore their release was being considered^{214 215}. IranWire added that due to Iranian Law, with the parents' forgiveness, the release of the brothers was likely²¹⁶. However, CPIT was unable to find any further information about whether the brothers were released in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))

11.1.7 For further information on access to justice for women, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing 'honour'-based violence](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

²⁰⁶ CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

²⁰⁷ CHRI, [Killed Because You Are a Woman ...](#), 6 January 2025

²⁰⁸ IranWire, [Father Shoots Teenage Daughter in Alleged Honor Killing](#), 28 August 2024

²⁰⁹ Hengaw, [Father kills 17-year-old daughter in Piranshahr ...](#), 26 January 2025

²¹⁰ Stop Honor Killings, [The Killing of 17-Year-Old ... by Her Father Over "honor"](#), 28 January 2025

²¹¹ IranWire, [Iranian Father Arrested for Stabbing Daughter to Death](#), 29 January 2025

²¹² KHRN, [Father kills 17-year-old daughter in Piranshahr](#), 29 January 2025

²¹³ IranWire, [Iranian Father Arrested for Stabbing Daughter to Death](#), 29 January 2025

²¹⁴ IranWire, [Brothers Kill Sister Over Phone Relationship in Iran ...](#), 22 July 2025

²¹⁵ SFI, [Honor killing in Taybad ...](#), 4 August 2025

²¹⁶ IranWire, [Brothers Kill Sister Over Phone Relationship in Iran ...](#), 22 July 2025

12. Internal relocation

- 12.1.1 The DFAT Iran Country Information Report 2023 stated: ‘... Iranians [who do not belong to certain groups, including individuals subject to security monitoring²¹⁷] can and do relocate internally, particularly for economic reasons. It is common for Iranians from less-developed provincial areas to move to major cities in search of employment.’²¹⁸
- 12.1.2 On 22 April 2024, the USSD published its ‘2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices’, covering events of 2023, which stated: ‘The law provided for freedom of internal movement ... and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights, with some exceptions, particularly concerning released prisoners, women, and migrants.’²¹⁹
- 12.1.3 For information on internal relocation for women, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Women fearing ‘honour’-based violence](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

²¹⁷ DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.201), 24 July 2023

²¹⁸ DFAT, [Iran Country Information Report](#) (paragraph 2.201), 24 July 2023

²¹⁹ USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#) (section 2d), 22 April 2024

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
 - Penal code – offence of zina
- Adultery
 - Application of law in practice
 - Punishments, including the death penalty
 - Family and societal treatment
 - Temporary marriage
- Pre-marital relationships
 - White marriage
 - Application of law in practice
 - Family and societal treatment
 - Temporary marriage
- Children born outside of marriage
 - Birth registration
 - Parental and child rights
 - Children born within temporary marriage

[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

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[Back to Contents](#)

Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **5.0**
- valid from **30 April 2026**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

[Back to Contents](#)

Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI and assessment, including an updated policy position on whether men who commit ‘zina’ acts form a PSG.

[Back to Contents](#)

Feedback to the Home Office

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support them in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

[Back to Contents](#)