



Home Office

## Country Bulletin

### Iran: Kurds and Kurdish political groups

**Reference:** IRN-003-05-26

**May 2026**

**Summary:** The situation of Kurds and Kurdish political groups in Iran between August 2025 and April 2026.

# Summary

In February 2026, several Kurdish opposition parties announced the formation of the Coalition of Political Forces in Iranian Kurdistan, stating objectives including regime change and Kurdish self-determination. Despite speculation that Kurdish groups would take up arms against Iran in the context of the US/Israel-Iran conflict, they had not done so at the time of publication.

In the context of the conflict, Iranian forces have carried out missile and drone strikes against Iranian Kurdish opposition groups based in northern Iraq, while Kurdish areas of Iran were subject to surveillance and raids.

While sources differed regarding the exact numbers of arrests and detentions, Kurds remained disproportionately represented in the numbers of those arrested for political reasons in 2025. One human rights organisation reported that at least 561 Kurds were arrested for political reasons. Another reported that approximately 47% of those arrested for political reasons were Kurds.

In the context of the mass protests of December 2025-January 2026, one organisation reported that over 2,000 Kurds had been arrested. Another organisation reported 53,777 arrests in total. On this basis, Kurds represented approximately 3.7% of detainees. The available information does not clearly indicate whether, and if so the extent to which, Kurdish ethnicity influenced the likelihood of arrest.

In March 2026, 1,700 people were reportedly arrested, of which 17.6% were Kurds.

In 2025, approximately 454 political, civil, and religious activists were tried by the judicial system. More than 49% of those sentenced to prison were Kurds, and approximately one third of those sentenced to death were Kurds.

Estimates of Kurds executed in Iran during 2025 vary. One NGO reported that Kurds accounted for 5% of all executions, including one political prisoner. Another reported that Kurdish prisoners represented approximately 14% of executions. A third source reported that 122 Kurds were executed, of whom approximately 7% were political prisoners. Between January to March 2026, approximately 11 Kurds were executed (around 7% of total executions), for unspecified charges.

During the December 2025-January 2026 protests, approximately 240 Kurds were confirmed to have been killed, representing approximately 3.5% of all deaths.

Fewer cross-border couriers (Kolbars) were killed in 2025 than 2024. However, in the context of the increased border security during the US/Israel-Iran conflict, they have been unable to operate.

Increased checkpoints and military presence in the Kurdish regions of Iran have impacted freedom of movement, particularly around the border region with Iraq. Some sources also reported that Iranian security forces have occupied local establishments such as schools.

Available information does not indicate that there has been a material change in the situation of Kurds or Kurdish political groups in Iran since August 2025. Decision makers should therefore refer to the guidance within the [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Kurds and Kurdish political groups](#).

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

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# Country information

## About this bulletin

This bulletin 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 basis for the summary.

The topic, structure and content are designed to provide a summary of the situation of Kurds and Kurdish political groups in Iran between August 2025 and April 2026.

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 **29 April 2026**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

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

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

**NOTE: The use of any maps are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views of any boundaries.**

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## 1. Recent events in Iran

### 1.1 Mass protests (December 2025 – January 2026)

1.1.1 For information on the mass protests in Iran, which took place between December 2025 and January 2026, and state treatment of protesters, see [Country Bulletin, Iran: Protests of December 2025 to January 2026](#).

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### 1.2 US/Israel-Iran conflict (28 February 2026 – present)

1.2.1 For information on the conflict within Iran, which began on 28 February 2026, and its impact on civilians between 28 February 2026 and 18 March 2026, see [Country Bulletin, Iran: Security situation, March 2026](#).

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## 2. Availability of information

2.1.1 For information on restrictions to communications in Iran, and the availability of information about events in Iran, see [Country Bulletin, Iran: Protests of December 2025 to January 2026](#).

2.1.2 A 20 April 2026 article in Al Jazeera reported that the situation is largely ongoing and stated: 'Iranian authorities have been slowly expanding a list of individuals and entities deemed eligible to have limited internet access. However, the action serves only to illustrate that most of the population of more than 90 million people remains disconnected during the war with the United States and Israel.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al Jazeera, [Iran expands limited internet access but restrictions remain for most](#), 20 April 2026

### 3. Kurds and Kurdish political groups in Iran

- 3.1.1 For information on Kurds and Kurdish political groups up to August 2025, see Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Kurds and Kurdish political groups.

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### 4. Activities of Kurdish political groups

#### 4.1 Coalition of Political Forces in Iranian Kurdistan

- 4.1.1 The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a non-profit research organisation providing analysis of military affairs<sup>2</sup>, stated on 25 February 2026 that:
- ‘Anti-regime Kurdish groups established the “Coalition of Political Forces in Iranian Kurdistan” on February 22 [2026] with the stated objective of achieving self-determination. The coalition includes the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), the Organization of Iranian Kurdistan Struggle, and the Komala of the Toilers of Kurdistan. PDKI leader Mostafa Hejri told Iranian diaspora media on February 23 [2026] that the coalition created a “joint plan for administering” Kurdish-majority areas of Iran during the “transition period,” in reference to the period between the collapse of the current Iranian regime and the establishment of a new central government.’<sup>3</sup>
- 4.1.2 Referring to the same coalition, a February 2026 article by the Washington Kurdish Institute, a non-profit research organisation aiming to ‘increase public awareness of Kurdish issues’<sup>4</sup>, noted its: ‘... three principal objectives. First, the overthrow of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Second, the Kurdish people’s right to self-determination. Third, the establishment of what they describe as a national and democratic entity in Eastern Kurdistan (Rojhelat) based on the political will of the Kurdish nation.’<sup>5</sup>
- 4.1.3 On 6 March 2026, the Atlantic Council, a non-partisan organisation that aims to promote ‘constructive leadership and engagement in international affairs’<sup>6</sup>, reported that ‘A sixth group, the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, joined [the Coalition] on March 4 [2026] after initially holding off.’<sup>7</sup>

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#### 4.2 Participation in conflict

- 4.2.1 On 6 March 2026, ISW reported that:
- ‘US President Donald Trump said on March 5 [2026] that he would support Kurdish forces conducting an offensive into Iran ... but did not commit to supporting the operation with airstrikes. Some Western media outlets have reported that Trump is in contact with Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish leaders to encourage them to foment an uprising in Iran. Senior Iraqi Kurdish officials have denied that Kurdish forces are deploying or planning to deploy into

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<sup>2</sup> ISW, [About ISW](#), no date

<sup>3</sup> ISW, [Iran Update, February 25, 2026](#), 25 February 2026

<sup>4</sup> Washington Kurdish Institute, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>5</sup> Washington Kurdish Institute, [Kurdistan Digest | February 2026](#), 27 February 2026

<sup>6</sup> Atlantic Council, [About the Atlantic Council](#), no date

<sup>7</sup> Atlantic Council, [How would a Kurdish offensive change the war in Iran?](#), 6 March 2026

Iran, however.’<sup>8</sup>

4.2.2 On 5 March 2026, the BBC reported:

‘Kurdish Iranian opposition parties in Iraq have denied reports that some of their forces have crossed into Iran.

“This is not true. Do not believe it,” said Hanna Hussein Yazdan Pana of the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK). “Not a single Peshmerga [fighter] has moved ...”

‘She said six Kurdish opposition groups - which recently formed a coalition - were co-ordinating their plans but needed the Americans to pave the way for a move ...

‘The White House has denied a report that the [US] president is considering arming them ...

‘A senior political leader of the KDPI [Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan] told the BBC he believed that the Kurds would be fighting in Iran soon - but did not give an exact timeline.’<sup>9</sup>

4.2.3 On 6 March 2025, the United States Congressional Research Service (US CRS) stated:

‘Following U.S. and Israeli military operations against the Islamic Republic of Iran that commenced on February 28, 2026, press reports citing unnamed sources have stated that the Trump Administration may be considering possible efforts to provide material support to Iranian Kurdish groups to further weaken Iran’s regime. President Donald Trump has said he would embrace action by Iranian Kurds, but the Administration to date has not confirmed any U.S. support.’<sup>10</sup>

4.2.4 On 2 April 2026, The National, an Abu Dhabi-based digital news outlet focussing on the Middle East<sup>11</sup>, reported:

“My sense is that there were some plans to use Kurdish groups and encourage them to move from Iraq to Iran, to divert some of the capabilities and attention of Iran’s security forces” to the country’s north-west, Raz Zimmt, an Iran specialist at the Tel Aviv based Institute for National Security Studies, and long-time Iran watcher in the Israeli military told The National. “Perhaps it would give some encouragement to other sectors inside Iran to rise up.”

‘But widespread push-back from Iran, as well as US allies such as the Iraqi Kurds and Turkey, meant the idea did not stick.’<sup>12</sup>

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## 5. State treatment

### 5.1 Military targeting

5.1.1 The Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) is an ‘an independent, non-

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<sup>8</sup> ISW, [Iran Update Evening Special Report, March 5, 2026](#), 6 March 2026

<sup>9</sup> BBC, [Iran targets headquarters of Iranian Kurdish forces in Iraq](#), 5 March 2026

<sup>10</sup> US CRS, [Iranian Kurds and Possible Support](#), 6 March 2026

<sup>11</sup> The National, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>12</sup> The National, [...offensive by Iranian Kurds against the regime never materialised...](#), 2 April 2026

profit, and nonpartisan organisation registered in France<sup>13</sup> which reports and documents ‘human rights violations in Kurdistan/Iran.’<sup>14</sup> KHRN’s 2025 annual report, published in April 2026 and covering events of 2025, stated: ‘At least 14 Kurdish civilians were killed by Iranian and Turkish military forces in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Ilam in 2025. Of these, 13 were shot by Iranian police, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and border forces, while one was shot by Turkish border forces in Maku, West Azerbaijan Province.’<sup>15</sup>

- 5.1.2 Hengaw Organization for Human Rights ‘is an independent organization that covers human rights violations in Kurdistan and across all of Iran.’<sup>16</sup> In a report published on 30 December 2025, covering events throughout 2025 (Hengaw 2025 report), Hengaw stated that:

‘Over the past year [2025], the killing of civilians by direct gunfire from Iranian government forces, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Basij, law enforcement forces, and the police, increased significantly compared to previous years. The highest number of these killings occurred amid the heightened security environment across Iran during the 12-day Iran–Israel war [which began on 13 June 2025<sup>17</sup>].

‘In 2025, at least 74 civilians were killed by direct gunfire from government forces ...

‘At least 15 Kurdish civilians, accounting for 20 percent [of the 74 civilians], were ... among those killed.’<sup>18</sup>

- 5.1.3 On 5 March 2026, the BBC reported:

‘Iran’s military has said it has targeted the headquarters of Iranian Kurdish forces in northern Iraq ...

‘One base was hit by a ballistic missile ... on Wednesday [4 March 2026], injuring four Kurdish Peshmerga fighters. One died later from his injuries ...

‘At another base - belonging to the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) - the BBC saw the aftermath of a double drone strike on Tuesday [3 March 2026], which was said to have injured one civilian ...’<sup>19</sup>

- 5.1.4 On 8 April 2026, Reuters reported:

‘In the early days of the Iran war, Iranian intelligence services flooded their country’s Kurdish citizens with text messages warning them against cooperating with mercenaries being dispatched by the U.S. and Israel. A second wave of messages threatened Iranian Kurds who had accessed foreign websites.

‘By late March [2026], government vehicles equipped with scanners roamed the streets, searching for signals from contraband satellite connections, residents said. These digital dragnets in ethnic Kurdish towns and cities were followed by house raids by officers of the Revolutionary Guards.

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<sup>13</sup> KHRN, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>14</sup> KHRN, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>15</sup> KHRN, [Kurdistan Human Rights Network’s Annual Report – 2025](#), 14 April 2026

<sup>16</sup> Hengaw, [Homepage](#), no date

<sup>17</sup> Al Jazeera, [Visualising 12 days of the Israel-Iran conflict](#), 26 June 2025

<sup>18</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

<sup>19</sup> BBC, [Iran targets headquarters of Iranian Kurdish forces in Iraq](#), 5 March 2026

'In neighbouring Iraq, the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] began a pressure campaign with a phone call to the autonomous Kurdish-ruled regional government, which both fields its own army and harbors Iranian Kurdish militias ...

'... IRGC drones and missiles picked off Iranian Kurdish fighters in Iraq, killing five and destroying bases thought to be safe, the militants said ...

'From the start of the war until the end of March [2026], Iran and its allies launched at least 388 missiles and drones against the Kurdish region of Iraq, according to a Reuters analysis of data by the conflict monitor ACLED<sup>[20]</sup>. Nearly half targeted Kurdish political groups and fighters ...

'The bombings by Iran and its allies were constant – more than 20 drones and missiles were fired at Kurdish groups on March 19 [2026] alone, according to the Reuters analysis.'<sup>21</sup>

- 5.1.5 A 17 April 2026 article in the Middle East Eye, 'an independently funded digital news organisation covering stories from the Middle East and North Africa'<sup>22</sup> reported:

'... Iran ... has increased its drone attacks on Iranian Kurdish parties since the announcement of the truce on 8 April [2026] ...

'Mustafa Mawlouidi, deputy secretary general of the opposition Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI), told Middle East Eye, that since the US-Iran ceasefire was implemented, Iranian bombardment targeting Kurdish opposition groups, including his party, has not stopped ...

'The PDKI posted on X that Iranian drones struck their camp in Koya on Thursday [16 April 2026] evening. Hours earlier, Komala's camp was hit again. On Wednesday [15 April 2026], a PDKI camp and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) were also struck ...

'Iranian Kurds have been heavily hit during the conflict. Since 28 February [2026], nearly 700 missile and drone attacks have been carried out by Iran and its allied forces targeting Iraqi Kurdistan, according to data gathered by Kurdish news outlet Rojhelat Info. At least 15 people have been killed. This includes around 170 strikes on Iranian Kurdish opposition parties, which have killed six of their fighters.'<sup>23</sup>

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## 5.2 Arrest and detention

- 5.2.1 KHRN's 2025 annual report stated 'In 2025, at least 561 Kurdish civilians and activists in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam, Kermanshah, Tehran, Isfahan, North Khorasan, Razavi Khorasan, Hamadan, Alborz and Gilan were arrested by security forces or judicial authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran for political reasons. The highest number of arrests occurred in the cities of Sanandaj in Kurdistan Province and Bukan and Mahabad in West Azerbaijan Province.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> ACLED, [About ACLED](#), no date

<sup>21</sup> Reuters, [Trump's mixed messages and Iran's bombs...](#), updated 9 April 2026

<sup>22</sup> Middle East Eye, [About](#), no date

<sup>23</sup> Middle East Eye, [No ceasefire for Iran's Kurdish opposition parties in exile](#), 17 April 2026

<sup>24</sup> KHRN, [Kurdistan Human Rights Network's Annual Report – 2025](#), 14 April 2026

5.2.2 The same source stated:

'In 2025, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) documented the death of at least one individual in prison custody ... The official cause of death was reported as suicide; however, sources familiar with the case indicated that he may have died as a result of torture sustained while in detention ...

'Mohsen Ghaderi, a member of the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), and Saeid Safaei, a civilian from Bukan, were arrested by security forces during the 12-day war between Iran and Israel and have been subjected to enforced disappearance. More than nine months on, no information has been obtained about their fate.'<sup>25</sup>

5.2.3 The Hengaw 2025 report stated: 'At least 59 prisoners died in Iranian prisons in 2025 ...

'At least seven prisoners, including three Kurds, died as a result of torture ...

'At least eight political prisoners, including three Kurds ... died in custody.

'According to Hengaw's statistics:

'At least 21 of the deceased prisoners, accounting for 35.5 percent of the total cases, were Kurdish prisoners.'<sup>26</sup>

5.2.4 The same report stated: 'In 2025, 1,552 people were arrested or abducted by government institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and their full identities have been verified by Hengaw. This figure includes only individuals detained for political, cultural, civil, and religious reasons whose full identities have been confirmed ... Of the 1,546 detainees whose full identities were verified, at least 727 cases - equivalent to 47% of all verified detentions - were Kurds.'<sup>27</sup>

5.2.5 Hana Human Rights Organization is 'an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organization committed to advancing human rights, with a particular focus on the Kurdistan region of Iran.'<sup>28</sup> In January 2026, Hana reported:

'In January 2026, the Hana Statistics Center recorded 272 cases of arbitrary arrest of Kurdish citizens in various cities and villages across Kurdistan by security forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

'Based on the recorded data, the number of arrests in January 2026 shows a significant increase compared to January 2025. In January 2025, a total of 122 arrests were documented ... This change represents an increase of approximately 123 percent in the number of arrests during the period under comparison ...

'Among those arrested are 16 women, 23 children, and 5 environmental activists.

'According to the conducted investigations, most of these arrests were carried out without summonses or judicial warrants and occurred primarily in the provinces of Kermanshah and illam. The charges raised mainly include

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<sup>25</sup> KHRN, [Kurdistan Human Rights Network's Annual Report – 2025](#), 14 April 2026

<sup>26</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

<sup>27</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

<sup>28</sup> Hana Human Rights Organization, [Who we are](#), no date

participation in recent protests, cooperation with Kurdish opposition parties, civil and labor activism, media activities, and the publication of content on social media platforms.<sup>29</sup>

5.2.6 On 3 January 2026, referring to arrests during the mass protests that began in December 2025, Hengaw reported that:

‘At least 77 additional individuals have been arrested in recent days amid the continuation of public protests and a widespread wave of detentions across multiple cities in Iran. According to information collected by Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, those detained include 45 Kurds ...

‘With the inclusion of these 77 arrests over the past six days, the total number of recent detainees whose identities have been verified by Hengaw has risen to 132.’<sup>30</sup>

5.2.7 The same source noted that, among the total number of detainees were ‘At least 64 Kurds [approximately 48% of the total].’<sup>31</sup>

5.2.8 On 20 February 2026, the KHRN reported, referring to the same protests:

‘Reports received from various cities across Iran indicate that more than 2,000 Kurdish citizens have been arrested. In many cases, arrests were carried out without judicial warrants and involved severe violence and beatings.

‘The Ministry of Intelligence, the Intelligence Organisation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the police have all played roles in the mass arrests ...

‘... the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) has, since the beginning of the protests, succeeded in registering and verifying the identities of 470 Kurdish citizens who have been arrested by various security bodies. The fate of most of them remains unknown ...

‘Families ... who were able to visit their loved ones ... stated that during arrest and after transfer to detention centres, they were subjected to severe torture by security interrogators to obtain forced confessions ...

‘According to the findings of the KHRN, media affiliated with the Ministry of Intelligence and IRGC’s Basij forces have published forced confessions of 13 Kurdish citizens ...

‘At least 10 of these citizens have also been verbally informed that they face the charge of “enmity against God” (moharebeh), an offence that can lead to heavy sentences including the death penalty. However, they have not been formally charged, and families’ efforts to obtain information about their cases have so far been unsuccessful.

‘Despite families’ insistence on introducing defence lawyers, public and revolutionary prosecutor’s offices have refused to accept privately chosen lawyers, stating that court-appointed counsel will be assigned later.

‘KHRN investigations indicate that although some of these citizens have been released in recent days on bail, the fate of most detainees remains unknown, and all of them have been denied access to lawyers and contact

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<sup>29</sup> Hana Human Rights Organization, [...Situation in Iranian Kurdistan - January 2026](#), 6 February 2026

<sup>30</sup> Hengaw, [December Protests: Hengaw reports 77 additional arrests...](#), 3 January 2026

<sup>31</sup> Hengaw, [December Protests: Hengaw reports 77 additional arrests...](#), 3 January 2026

with their families since the time of arrest.<sup>32</sup>

- 5.2.9 In terms of overall scale, the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), ‘a non-political and non-governmental organization comprised of advocates who defend human rights in Iran’<sup>33</sup>, reported on 23 February 2026 that the total number of arrests during the first 50 days of the protests reached 53,777<sup>34</sup>. On this basis, the KHRN’s above estimate of around 2,000 Kurdish individuals arrested during the protests would represent approximately 3.7% of all detainees.
- 5.2.10 On 26 March 2026, Hengaw reported that, between 28 February 2026 and 26 March 2026, ‘Iranian security forces have arrested at least 1,700 people across the country’<sup>35</sup>, and that during the same period, ‘at least 300 Kurdish people have been arrested [17.6% of the total] ...’<sup>36</sup>
- 5.2.11 On 29 April 2026, without specifying the scale or extent of the risk to Kurds, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) reported:
- ‘Since 28 February [2026], more than 4,000 individuals are estimated to have been arrested on national security related charges in Iran. Many detainees have been forcibly disappeared, tortured, or subjected to other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including coerced – and sometimes televised - confessions and mock executions. Individuals from ethnic and religious minorities, including ... Kurds ... have been at particular risk.’<sup>37</sup>

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### 5.3 Prosecution, conviction and sentencing

#### 5.3.1 KHRN’s 2025 annual report stated:

‘In 2025, at least 123 Kurdish civilians and activists faced charges of a political nature and were sentenced by Islamic Revolutionary Courts, Criminal Courts, Special Clerical Courts and Administrative Courts of Justice in various provinces. These sentences included executions, fixed and suspended prison terms, dismissal from work, monetary fines, and other penalties. Some of these sentences were upheld by appellate courts and the Supreme Court of Iran ...

‘At present, nine Kurdish political prisoners – Pakhshan Azizi, Hatem Ozdemir, Yousef Ahmadi, Mehrab Abdollahzadeh, Nasser Bakerzadeh, Rauf Sheikh-Maroufi, Mohammad Faraji, Ramin Zaleh and Karim Maroufpour – who have been sentenced to death on charges including “armed insurrection” (baghi) and “enmity against God” (moharebeh) following unfair proceedings by the Islamic Revolutionary Courts in the cities of Tehran, Mahabad, Orumiyeh and Sanandaj, are being held in Evin, Orumiyeh, Naqadeh, Sanandaj and Bukan prisons. According to available information, the death sentences of at least four of these prisoners have been upheld by

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<sup>32</sup> KHRN, [...Growing concern over fate of thousands of Kurdish detainees](#), 20 February 2026

<sup>33</sup> HRANA, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>34</sup> HRANA, [...A 50 Day Record of Iran's 2025–2026 Nationwide Protests](#), 23 February 2026

<sup>35</sup> Hengaw, [Iran arrests at least 1,700 people amid wartime crackdown...](#), 26 March 2026

<sup>36</sup> Hengaw, [Iran arrests at least 1,700 people amid wartime crackdown...](#), 26 March 2026

<sup>37</sup> UN OHCHR, [Iran: Türk deplores crackdown on dissent...](#), 29 April 2026

the Supreme Court and they are at risk of execution.

‘These prisoners have faced inhumane death sentences under unfair conditions, including denial of access to a lawyer of their choice, severe physical and psychological torture, and unfair trials ...

‘Additionally, the cases of Verisheh Moradi, Ali (Soran) Ghassemi, Pezhman Soltani, Kaveh Salehi and Rezgar Beigzadeh Babamiri have been referred back to the Islamic Revolutionary Courts for retrial after their death sentences were overturned by the Supreme Court. These individuals, who had previously been sentenced to death through unfair proceedings, remain in a state of legal uncertainty in Evin and Orumiyyeh Central prisons and face charges including “armed insurrection” (baghi), “spreading corruption on earth” (efsad-e fel-arz), and “enmity against God” (moharebeh).’<sup>38</sup>

### 5.3.2 The Hengaw 2025 report stated:

‘In 2025, at least 454 political, civil, and religious activists were tried by the judicial system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and sentenced to punishments including death, imprisonment, and flogging. More than 49% of those tried and sentenced to prison (219 cases) were Kurdish activists ...

‘Among the 26 individuals who still face the death penalty ... 5 [are] Kurdish [19%] ...

‘At least 219 Kurdish activists were sentenced in total to 580 years, 11 months, and 21 days of discretionary imprisonment, 29 years and 8 months of suspended imprisonment, and 188 lashes. In addition, 10 Kurdish activists [of 30 people in total<sup>39</sup>] were sentenced to death; the death sentences of five were overturned and they are awaiting new rulings.’<sup>40</sup>

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## 5.4 Executions

5.4.1 In its World Report 2026, covering events of 2025, Human Rights Watch reported that: ‘The death penalty disproportionately impacted marginalized communities and minorities, in particular ... Kurdish ... people ...’<sup>41</sup>

5.4.2 Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM), a French professional association that campaigns against the death penalty<sup>42</sup>, reported that in 2025, ‘At least 1,639 people were executed ...’<sup>43</sup>

5.4.3 ECPM noted in its 2025 annual report on the death penalty in Iran that it:

‘... documents the cases of 163 people executed in the 4 ethnic provinces of West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Sistan and Baluchistan, and Kurdistan in 2025, accounting for 10% of all recorded executions in 2025 ... The proportion of executions in ethnic regions compared to the total number of executions was lower in 2025 than in previous years ... As executions of ethnic minorities are not implemented exclusively in their home provinces, it is difficult to identify the exact number of executions of each ethnic minority group ... Furthermore, information about those executed does not always

<sup>38</sup> KHRN, [Kurdistan Human Rights Network’s Annual Report – 2025](#), 14 April 2026

<sup>39</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

<sup>40</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2026: Iran](#), 4 February 2026

<sup>42</sup> ECPM, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>43</sup> ECPM, [Iran : At least 1,639 executions in 2025, a deadly record](#), 13 April 2026

include their ethnicity.’<sup>44</sup>

5.4.4 The same report, discussing the execution of Kurds in Iran in 2025, stated:

‘Estimating the exact number of Kurdish individuals executed for ordinary crimes in Iran presents significant challenges due to several factors ... Kurdish people’s surnames do not always clearly reflect their ethnicity, making it difficult to identify and verify cases based solely on their names or official records. Additionally, Kurdish communities are spread across multiple provinces, including Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah, and Ilam, as well as other regions, further complicating efforts to provide precise figures ...

- At least 82 Kurdish minorities were executed, accounting for nearly 5% of all executions in 2025
- 93% of the recorded executions were for murder and drug-related offences
- One protester and one political prisoner were amongst those executed
- Only 6 of the executions were officially announced
- Executions took place in 18 different provinces
- Alborz/Tehran, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan were the provinces with the highest number of executed Kurdish individuals, with 27, 24, and 14 people, respectively.’<sup>45</sup>

5.4.5 Presenting different figures, KHRN’s 2025 annual report stated:

‘KHRN has documented and confirmed the execution of 122 [Kurdish] prisoners in various prisons across the country in 2025. The majority of these executions took place in Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj and Kermanshah Central Prison.

‘Of these, 63 individuals were executed for drug-related offences [approximately 51.6%], 46 for “premeditated murder” [approximately 37.7%], and four for “rape” or “rape and murder”.

‘Additionally, in 2025, nine Kurdish political prisoners were executed [approximately 7.37%]. These include Amir Reza Ghobadi, Majid Hatami, Sajjad Hatami, and Saman Mohammad Khiyareh on charges of “enmity against God” (moharebeh); Edris Ali, Azad Shojaei, and Rasoul Ahmad Rasoul for “collaboration and espionage for Israel”; and Hamid Hosseinnezhad Heidarlanlou and Mehdi Asgharzadeh for “armed insurrection” (baghi).’<sup>46</sup>

5.4.6 Also presenting differing figures, the Hengaw 2025 report stated:

‘Iranian authorities carried out the executions of at least 1,858 prisoners in prisons across the country in 2025 ...

‘The identities of 1,796 executed prisoners have been confirmed, while the identities of 62 prisoners remain under verification ...

‘Breakdown of executed prisoners by national and ethnic background:

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<sup>44</sup> ECPM, [Annual report on the death penalty in Iran - 2025](#) (page 96), April 2026

<sup>45</sup> ECPM, [Annual report on the death penalty in Iran - 2025](#) (page 98), April 2026

<sup>46</sup> KHRN, [Kurdistan Human Rights Network’s Annual Report – 2025](#), 14 April 2026

'Kurdish prisoners: 264 [approximately 14.2%] ...

'Ethnicity not confirmed by Hengaw: 271 [approximately 14.6%]'<sup>47</sup>

- 5.4.7 In January 2026, Hana Human Rights Organization reported: 'In January 2026, at least 10 Kurdish citizens were executed in various prisons across Iran. Among them, one individual was executed on charges related to drug offenses, and nine individuals were executed on charges of premeditated murder.

'It should be noted that over the past year [2025], a total of 205 Kurdish citizens have been executed in various prisons throughout Iran.'<sup>48</sup> The source did not provide further information on the charges leading to the 205 executions.

- 5.4.8 ECPM noted in its 2025 annual report on the death penalty in Iran that '... the absolute majority of those executed for their political affiliation belong to ethnic groups, Kurdish in particular. An overview of IHRNGO [Iran Human Rights<sup>49</sup>] reports between 2010-2025 shows that at least 182 people were executed for affiliation to banned political and armed groups. Of those, 87 (48%) were Kurdish ...'<sup>50</sup>

- 5.4.9 On 31 March 2026, Hengaw reported that 'At least 160 prisoners were executed in Iranian prisons during the first three months of 2026, according to data recorded by the Statistics and Documentation Center of Hengaw Organization for Human Rights. Hengaw has verified the identities of all 160 executed prisoners.'<sup>51</sup> Hengaw noted that 11 of these were Kurds (approx. 6.9% of the total), but also noted that ethnicity was not confirmed in 32 cases (20% of the total)<sup>52</sup>. Hengaw did not specify the charges of the executed Kurdish prisoners, although it noted that 12 of the 160 executions (7.5% of the total) were on political and ideological charges<sup>53</sup>.

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## 5.5 Extra-judicial killings

- 5.5.1 In January 2026, Hana Human Rights Organisation reported: 'During the protests this month [January 2026], security forces used live ammunition against protesters ... The Hana Human Rights Organization has so far verified the identities of 238 Kurdish citizens killed in various cities across Iran, among whom 24 were women and 23 were children ...'<sup>54</sup>

- 5.5.2 On 12 February 2026, referring to the protests of December 2025-January 2026, KHRN reported:

'Despite extensive communication difficulties with inside Iran and security pressure and threats by the authorities against families aimed at preventing news of their loved ones' deaths from being published, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) has so far been able, through interviews with informed sources, to confirm and record the names and details of 240

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<sup>47</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

<sup>48</sup> Hana Human Rights Organization, [...Situation in Iranian Kurdistan - January 2026](#), 6 February 2026

<sup>49</sup> Iran Human Rights, [Home](#), no date

<sup>50</sup> ECPM, [Annual report on the death penalty in Iran - 2025](#) (pages 96, 97), April 2026

<sup>51</sup> Hengaw, [At least 160 prisoners executed in Iran in the first quarter of 2026](#), 31 March 2026

<sup>52</sup> Hengaw, [At least 160 prisoners executed in Iran in the first quarter of 2026](#), 31 March 2026

<sup>53</sup> Hengaw, [At least 160 prisoners executed in Iran in the first quarter of 2026](#), 31 March 2026

<sup>54</sup> Hana Human Rights Organization, [...Situation in Iranian Kurdistan - January 2026](#), 6 February 2026

Kurdish citizens who lost their lives during the suppression of the recent protests in various cities across Iran ...

‘According to the information collected, 20 of those killed were children under the age of 18 ... Additionally, 31 of those killed were from the Yarsan community.’<sup>55</sup>

- 5.5.3 In a February 2026 report, covering the first 50 days of the protests which began on 28 December 2025, HRANA stated that:

‘Across the first fifty days covered by this report, consolidated documentation records:

‘Protesters killed: 6,488

‘Children killed, counted separately and not included among protesters: 23

‘Civilians killed, non-protester: 76

‘Military and government forces killed: 207

‘Total fatalities: 7,007.’<sup>56</sup>

- 5.5.4 In terms of overall scale, the KHRN’s above estimate of around 240 Kurdish individuals killed during the protests would represent approximately 3.5% of the 6,800 fatalities recorded by HRANA that were not military or government forces.

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## 5.6 Kolbars

- 5.6.1 For information on the situation of Kolbars in Iran up to July 2025, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Smugglers](#).

- 5.6.2 In its World Report 2026, Human Rights Watch reported that: ‘Security forces continued to use unlawful lethal force against Kurdish cross-border couriers ...’<sup>57</sup>

- 5.6.3 In its 2025 report, Hengaw stated that:

‘According to data recorded by the Statistics and Documentation Center of Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, at least 59 kolbars were killed or injured during 2025 in the border regions of Kermanshah (Kermashan), Kurdistan (Sanandaj), and West Azerbaijan (Urmia) provinces. This figure represents a decrease of at least 280 cases, or 82.5 percent, compared to the previous year ...

‘The report indicates that at least 25 kolbars were killed, accounting for 42.5 percent of the total cases, while at least 34 others were injured.

‘At least 49 cases, representing 83 percent of all recorded killings and injuries, resulted from direct gunfire by the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran ...

‘Kurdistan Province (Sanandaj) accounted for the largest share of casualties, with 43 cases, representing 73 percent of the total.’<sup>58</sup> Hengaw did not specify

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<sup>55</sup> KHRN, [KHRN documents 240 Kurdish deaths in 2026 protests in Iran](#), 12 February 2026

<sup>56</sup> HRANA, [...A 50 Day Record of Iran’s 2025–2026 Nationwide Protests](#), 23 February 2026

<sup>57</sup> Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2026: Iran](#), 4 February 2026

<sup>58</sup> Hengaw, [...special report on widespread human rights violations in Iran, 2025](#), 30 December 2025

which proportion of killed/injured kolbars were Kurdish.

5.6.4 KHRN's 2025 annual report stated:

'In 2025, at least 19 Kurdish kolbars lost their lives in the border regions of Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces. Among them, 15 were killed by direct gunfire from Iranian military forces ...

'Moreover, at least 21 kolbars sustained injuries in the border regions of Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, and Kermanshah provinces. Among these, 20 were injured due to direct gunfire or physical assaults by Iranian military forces, while one was injured from a landmine explosion.

'The border areas of Baneh and Marivan in Kurdistan Province, with nine and six recorded fatalities respectively, as well as the highest numbers of injuries, were among the most hazardous zones for kolbars over the past year.'<sup>59</sup>

5.6.5 On 30 March 2026, Associated Press (AP) reported:

'Known as kolbars ... porters carry goods — such as cigarettes, electronics, and clothing — across Iran's western provinces. They operate in a legal gray zone and risk death from border guards, harsh weather, and treacherous mountain terrain ...

“[Since the beginning of the US/Israel-Iran conflict<sup>60</sup>] The kolbars simply can't cross. We are always ready, but the borders are tightly controlled,” Osman [a Kolbar<sup>61</sup>] said ...

'A kolbar on the Iranian side, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of security concerns, told The Associated Press that business has all but stopped since the war began because of the increased security presence.'<sup>62</sup>

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## 6. Freedom of movement

6.1.1 In March 2026, the Washington Kurdish Institute noted:

'Throughout March [2026], Iranian regime forces redeployed personnel and equipment from established military bases into civilian locations, including schools, dormitories, mosques, sports halls, and parts of medical facilities ...

'... By mid-March [2026], authorities had issued warnings in border districts including Paveh, Marivan, Baneh, and Sardasht, cautioning residents against approaching frontier zones, with reports indicating that violators could be shot without warning. Overall, the region saw increased checkpoints, military movement, and the placement of security forces in close proximity to civilian areas.'<sup>63</sup>

6.1.2 On 30 March 2026, Associated Press (AP) reported:

'The border between Iran and northern Iraq's Kurdish region has long been porous, alive with family ties, trade and smuggling. Now families are cut off from loved ones, and traders - even smugglers - hesitate to cross. Iranian

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<sup>59</sup> KHRN, [Kurdistan Human Rights Network's Annual Report – 2025](#), 14 April 2026

<sup>60</sup> Associated Press, [War disrupts life on the Iraq-Iran border...](#), 30 March 2026

<sup>61</sup> Associated Press, [War disrupts life on the Iraq-Iran border...](#), 30 March 2026

<sup>62</sup> Associated Press, [War disrupts life on the Iraq-Iran border...](#), 30 March 2026

<sup>63</sup> Washington Kurdish Institute, [Kurdistan Digest | March 2026](#), 24 March 2026

forces have built up their presence to prevent incursions by Iranian Kurdish militant groups.

'Those who travel close to the border to pick up Iraqi cell signals risk being shot, activists said ...

'... Iranian police and security forces are operating outside their bases because many of them have been destroyed by airstrikes. AP cannot independently confirm these accounts.

'They have been occupying schools and gyms against the wishes of local residents, they say ...

'Shiwa Hassanpour, an activist with the human rights monitor Hengaw Organization, based in Iraq's Kurdish region, said people have been shot for approaching the border, because Iranian forces suspect them of being spies or informants ...

'She said that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard has deployed large numbers of troops across cities in Iran's Kurdish region. These measures intensified after Iranian Kurdish opposition groups announced a coalition.

'Since then, Hengaw has documented a sharp rise in mobile checkpoints, vehicle searches, and violence against civilians.'<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Associated Press, [War disrupts life on the Iraq-Iran border...](#), 30 March 2026

# 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](#).

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- valid from **28 May 2026**

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### **Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section**

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

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