



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note **Iran: Christians and Christian converts**

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Executive summary

The Constitution recognises 'ethnic' Christians (Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans) and the government generally allows them to practice and teach their religion without interference, though some restrictions apply.

However, the Iranian authorities continue to arrest and detain Christian converts, mainly leaders and organisers, but also sometimes 'ordinary' Christians. The authorities also continue to arrest and detain small numbers of recognised Christians who are found by them to be actively proselytising.

Christian converts and proselytisers are prosecuted on vaguely worded charges such as 'propaganda against the state', the 'promotion of evangelical Zionist Christianity' and for national security offences. Penalties, which are reportedly becoming increasingly harsh, include lengthy prison sentences, fines, and the imposition of social deprivations.

Recognised Christians generally refrain from proselytising. While they face official discrimination, it is unlikely to be sufficiently serious by its nature or repetition, or an accumulation of various measures, to amount to persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.

Christians who are known, or believed, by the Iranian authorities to have converted from Islam to Christianity and who seek to openly practice their faith in Iran, are likely to be subject to treatment or discrimination by the state that is sufficiently serious, by its nature or repetition, to amount to persecution.

Christians, whether recognised or unrecognised, who the authorities find to be actively seeking to convert Muslims to Christianity are also likely to be subject to treatment or discrimination by the state that is sufficiently serious by its nature or repetition, to amount to persecution.

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.

In general, a person with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state is unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.

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.

Each case must be considered on its individual facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 24 June 2026

About the assessment

This section considers relevant evidence – including [country information](#), refugee and human rights law and policy, and case law – to assess whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because of their Christianity, their conversion to Christianity, and/or because they actively seek to convert others to Christianity
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if refused, a claim is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

For details on how CPIT makes its assessments, and information on disclaimers (including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in developing CPINs), see [About country policy and information notes](#).

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Points to note

Though not all sources distinguish between these groups, Christians in this note generally comprise of:

- recognised, ‘ethnic’, Christians (Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans, the majority of whom are Orthodox or Catholic)
- ‘non-ethnic’ Christians, who can prove that their families were Christian before the 1979 Iranian revolution. They are predominantly Farsi-(Persian-)speaking and/or evangelical. Those with no ethnic association but who belong to recognised and traditional churches in Iran are recognised. Evangelical Protestants are not recognised
- non-recognised, ‘Christian converts’, those who have converted from Islam to Christianity after the 1979 Iranian revolution (see [Legal context: Religion](#))

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1.1 Decision makers must:

- assess credibility (see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)).
- 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](#)).
- consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).

- consider language analysis testing, where available, in cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin (see the Asylum Instruction on [Language Analysis](#)).

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.

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

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Actual or imputed religion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

- 3.1 'Ethnic' and 'non-ethnic' Christians – inside Iran

- 3.1.1 Recognised Christians generally refrain from proselytising. While they face official discrimination, it is unlikely to be sufficiently serious by its nature or repetition, or an accumulation of various measures, to amount to persecution or serious harm. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.1.2 See [Risk: Christian converts – inside Iran](#) for information about recognised Christians who actively seek to convert Muslims inside Iran to Christianity.
- 3.1.3 The Constitution recognises ‘ethnic’ Christians (Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans) and the government generally allows them to practice and teach their religion without interference, though some restrictions apply. Services in their churches cannot be held in Farsi (Persian), but only in their local language (see [Legal context: Religion](#) and [State attitudes and treatment: Towards ‘ethnic’ Christians](#)).
- 3.1.4 Christians and Christian churches must be registered with the authorities, and only recognised Christians can attend church and must not proselytise. Churches are monitored by the authorities to ensure Christians of a Muslim background do not attend and those that do not comply with these restrictions have been closed down (see [State attitudes and treatment: Towards ‘ethnic’ Christians](#) and [Towards Christian converts](#), and [House churches: Evolution and organisation](#)).
- 3.1.5 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3.2 Christian converts and proselytisers

- 3.2.1 Christians who are known, or believed, by the Iranian authorities to have converted from Islam to Christianity and who seek to openly practice their faith in Iran are likely to be subject to treatment by the state that is sufficiently serious, by its nature or repetition, to amount to persecution.
- 3.2.2 Christians, whether recognised or unrecognised, who the authorities find to be actively seeking to convert Muslims to Christianity are also likely to be subject to treatment or discrimination by the state that is sufficiently serious by its nature or repetition, to amount to persecution.
- 3.2.3 The Iranian authorities’ interest, monitoring and punitive efforts against Christian converts and proselytisers is likely to intensify during, or immediately after, periods of international conflict with Western entities in Iran (providing the authorities retain the capacity to do so).
- 3.2.4 The country guidance case of [PS \(Christianity – risk\) Iran CG \[2020\] UKUT 00046 \(IAC\)](#), promulgated on 20 February 2020, heard 13 to 14 November 2019 (PS Iran), ‘... applies to protection claims from Iranians who claim to have converted from Islam to Christianity’ (paragraph 141).
- 3.2.5 The Upper Tribunal (UT) in [PS Iran](#) held that ‘Insofar as they relate to non-ethnic Christians, this decision replaces the country guidance decisions in [FS and Others \(Iran - Christian Converts\) Iran CG \[2004\] UKIAT 00303](#) and [SZ and JM \(Christians - FS confirmed\) Iran CG \[2008\] UKAIT 00082](#) which are no longer to be followed’ (paragraph 142).
- 3.2.6 The UT in [PS Iran](#) found that, ‘... the situation for Christians in Iran has deteriorated drastically since the last country guidance was published. The

most marked change has been that the Persian-language churches then permitted to operate openly (albeit with restrictions) have now almost all closed down. Those few that remain do so under the direct control of the Ministry of Intelligence. That means that all remaining Christian worship must be conducted “underground” (paragraph 119).

- 3.2.7 The UT in [PS Iran](#) agreed with the finding in [SZ and JM](#), in that ‘those who are perceived to be church leaders or activists face a real risk of harm’ (paragraph 85).
- 3.2.8 In contrast to [SZ and JM](#), which found that ordinary converts would not be at real risk of serious harm if returned to Iran, subject to other risk factors (paragraph 148), the UT in [PS Iran](#) held:
- ‘We do not however find it safe to assume that “ordinary” Christians, that is to say individuals with no role beyond attending collective worship at house churches, escape the attention of the authorities. On a general level the language used by the sources indicates that to the contrary, simply being a Christian is enough to get you arrested: “authorities continued to arrest members of unrecognized churches”, “many arrests reportedly took place during police raids on religious gatherings”, “Christians, particularly evangelicals and converts from Islam, continued to experience disproportionate levels of arrests and detention” (paragraph 86).
- 3.2.9 The UT in [PS Iran](#) held that ‘Decision makers should begin by determining whether the claimant has demonstrated [to the required standard of proof] that he or she is a Christian. If that burden is discharged the following considerations apply:
- ‘i) A convert to Christianity seeking to openly practice that faith in Iran would face a real risk of persecution.
 - ‘ii) If the claimant would in fact conceal his faith, decision-makers should consider why. If any part of the claimant’s motivation is a fear of such persecution, the appeal should be allowed.
 - ‘iii) If the claimant would choose to conceal his faith purely for other reasons (family pressure, social constraints, personal preference etc) then protection should be refused. The evidence demonstrates that private and solitary worship, within the confines of the home, is possible and would not in general entail a real risk of persecution (paragraph 143).
- 3.2.10 In respect of ‘written and oral evidence given by “church witnesses”’, in the reported case of [TF & MA v SSHD \[2018\] CSIH 58](#), promulgated on 30 August 2018, the Court of Session held that:
- ‘It was suggested in *Dorodian (Ali) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* (supra) at paragraph 8(a) that no one should be regarded as a committed Christian who is not vouched for as such “by a minister of some church established in this country”. We would respectfully disagree. While it would no doubt be desirable that the individual concerned be vouched for by someone in a position of leadership within the relevant church, it is more important that the evidence be given by someone who has knowledge of the individual whose commitment is in question. We are conscious that churches in Scotland follow a number of different traditions. In those circumstances it would be wrong for this court to insist that any relevant evidence be given

from someone at a particular level within the hierarchy (if any) of any particular church. What matters is that they have sufficient knowledge of the practices of the church of which they are a member; sufficient experience of observing and interacting with those seeking to become members of the church; sufficient knowledge and experience of others who have gone through similar processes of engagement in church activities with a view to becoming members of the church; and, in cases such as these, sufficient knowledge of the individuals concerned and of the manner in which they have thrown themselves into church activities ...

‘... [I]t may be that all the expert can do is give his opinion based upon his long and varied experience. That, in our opinion, is the type of evidence that we are concerned with in cases such as this. The witnesses have observed many people undertaking courses with a view to baptism and becoming members of the church. They have seen some succeed and some fail. They will have been able to assess individuals over time as a result of those individuals taking part in activities within the church. They will have seen the intensity of their participation and will have heard the questions they ask and the interest in understanding that they show as matters are explained. Their evidence will be of the impression that that individual has made on them. They will be able to say that, in their opinion, based on their experience of this individual and many others, the individual in question is or appears to be genuine (or in other cases they are not satisfied, or not yet satisfied, of the genuineness of their self-proclaimed faith). This, in our opinion, is admissible opinion evidence which is entitled to respect. Of course it remains for the court or tribunal to make the final decision, and nothing in the expert evidence can take that away from the court or tribunal. To this extent it is legitimate to question the experts on their opinions and as to the basis upon which they have reached those opinions. In some cases it may be appropriate to question the objectivity of the assessment made by the witness, or to suggest that there may be an element of wishful thinking given the evangelical mission of the particular church. But, as we have already made clear, that exercise should not start with any predisposition to reject the evidence because it does not fit in with some a priori view formed as to the credibility of the appellant. The evidence should be considered on its merits and without any preconception, based upon an assessment of the individual appellants, that it is suspect or otherwise falls to be disregarded.’ (paragraphs 58 and 59)

- 3.2.11 In the reported case of [MH \(review; slip rule; church witnesses\) Iran \[2020\] UKUT 125 \(IAC\)](#), heard on 28 January 2020 and promulgated on 11 March 2020, the UT held that: “Respect” is not the same as weight. Judicial fact finders commonly decline to ascribe significant weight to expert evidence for a wide range of entirely legitimate reasons.’ (paragraph 43)
- 3.2.12 The UT in [MH Iran](#) summarised that: ‘Written and oral evidence given by “church witnesses” is potentially significant in cases of Christian conversion (see [TF & MA v SSHD \[2018\] CSIH 58](#)). Such evidence is not aptly characterised as expert evidence, nor is it necessarily deserving of particular weight, and the weight to be attached to such evidence is for the judicial fact-finder.’ (headnote iv)
- 3.2.13 In summary, whilst the ‘Dorodian precedent’ made it extremely difficult for a person to establish their conversion to Christianity in the absence of a

supporting witness of a ministerial, or similar standing, this approach is no longer followed in light of TF & MA, which struck down the Dorodian precedent. The case of [MH Iran](#) has since clarified that such evidence is important but not determinative, and should be considered holistically.

3.2.14 The UT in [PS Iran](#) also held that:

‘In cases where the claimant is found to be insincere in his or her claimed conversion, there is not a real risk of persecution “in-country”. There being no reason for such an individual to associate himself with Christians, there is not a real risk that he would come to the adverse attention of the Iranian authorities. Decision-makers must nevertheless consider the possible risks arising at the “pinch point” of arrival:

- ‘i) All returning failed asylum seekers are subject to questioning on arrival, and this will include questions about why they claimed asylum;
- ‘ii) A returnee who divulges that he claimed to be a Christian is reasonably likely to be transferred for further questioning;
- ‘iii) The returnee can be expected to sign an undertaking renouncing his claimed Christianity. The questioning will therefore in general be short and will not entail a real risk of ill-treatment;
- ‘iv) If there are any reasons why the detention becomes prolonged, the risk of ill-treatment will correspondingly rise. Factors that could result in prolonged detention must be determined on a case by case basis. They could include but are not limited to:
 - ‘a) Previous adverse contact with the Iranian security services;
 - ‘b) Connection to persons of interest to the Iranian authorities;
 - ‘c) Attendance at a church with perceived connection to Iranian house churches;
 - ‘d) Overt social media content indicating that the individual concerned has actively promoted Christianity’ (paragraph 144).

3.2.15 The information in this note does not indicate that there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to depart from these findings.

3.2.16 Each case must be considered on its own merits with the onus on the person to show that they would be at real risk of serious harm or persecution on account of their actual or perceived religion.

3.2.17 For more information about the treatment of returnees, including procedures on arrival in Iran, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Illegal exit](#). For more information about sur place activities more generally, including sur place social media activities and the monitoring of such by the Iranian authorities, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).

3.2.18 Multiple Christian advocacy groups, including Article 18, Open Doors, Middle East Concern and Christian Solidarity Worldwide, continue to report the arrest and detention of Christian converts, mainly of leaders and organisers, but also, albeit to a lesser extent, of ‘ordinary’ Christians. Sources also report the arrest and detention of small numbers of recognised Christians who are found by the authorities to be actively proselytising. These arrests often, though not always, occur after house-church raids by the security forces.

Sources noted an increase in the number of Christian arrests during the in the immediate aftermath of the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June 2025, often on allegations of collaborating with Israel (see [House churches](#), [Monitoring of, and raids on, house churches](#) and [Arrests, detentions and criminal charges](#)).

- 3.2.19 Sources also continue to report the criminal prosecutions of Christian converts and proselytisers on vaguely worded charges such as ‘propaganda against the state’, the ‘promotion of evangelical Zionist Christianity’ and national security offences. Many convictions are made under articles of the penal code that were amended in 2021. Penalties include lengthy prison sentences, fines, enforced participation in Islamic ‘re-education’, and the imposition of social deprivations such as bans on membership of groups or from some forms of employment, internal exile, and travel bans. Sentences are reportedly becoming increasingly harsh, with the total length of faith-related prison sentences handed down to Christians in 2024 being six times that in 2023 and increasing again in 2025 despite involving fewer individuals. While other ill-defined charges including ‘corruption on earth’ and ‘waging war against God’, which carry the potential for a death penalty, have also been invoked against Christian converts and proselytisers, CPIT has not found any recent examples of Christians being sentenced to death (see [Legal context: Apostasy and proselytising](#), [State attitudes and treatment: Towards Christian converts](#), and [Convictions and prison sentences](#)).
- 3.2.20 Sources report that, in line with the experience of the general detained population in Iran, many detained Christians have faced mistreatment at the hands of the authorities. This includes, but is not limited to, physical and psychological torture, the denial of or restricted access to healthcare, a lack of due process, the sexual assault or harassment of women during their interrogations, and the use of solitary confinement (see [Treatment of detainees](#)).
- 3.2.21 Sources indicate that where a returning Christian does not have a pre-existing profile with the Iranian authorities, they are unlikely to come to their attention on return providing they keep a low profile, in part because the authorities on arrival do not ask about religious beliefs. The authorities’ interest in a person is likely to be increased when the authorities become aware that person has either converted to Christianity or has applied for asylum abroad based on conversion. There are some, though few, recent examples of Christian converts having been summonsed or sentenced on return to Iran. However, the Iranian government resources do not allow for the pursuit of every known or perceived Christian convert and the authorities are likely to focus on those who are particularly vocal about their conversion, organise Christian gatherings, or try to convert others, including on social media. Some Christian converts have been forced by the authorities to make confessions, including publicly. There is very limited evidence of the Iranian authorities monitoring the Christian activities of Iranians abroad and/or targeting families inside Iran as a result (see [Sur place Christian activities](#), [Arrests, detentions and criminal charges](#), [Treatment of detainees](#), [Convictions and prison sentences](#), [State attitudes and treatment: Towards Christian converts](#)).
- 3.2.22 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 In general, a person with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state is unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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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 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

For details on how CPIT gathers and presents country information, including the research methodology, see [About country policy and information notes](#).

The COI included in this note was published or made publicly available on or before **1 May 2026**. Any event that took place or reports published after this date are not included.

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.

Maps, where included, are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views on any boundaries.

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

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7. Legal context

7.1 Religion

7.1.1 The Iran Data Portal, an online portal which hosts social science data on Iran in both English and Farsi¹, published an English translation of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which states:

‘Article 12 (Official Religion) The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja’fari school, and this principle will remain eternally immutable. Other Islamic schools are to be accorded full respect, and their followers are free to act in accordance with their own jurisprudence in performing their religious rites ...

‘Article 13 (Recognized Religious Minorities) Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.

‘Article 14 (Non-Muslims' Rights) In accordance with the sacred verse “God does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who have not fought against you because of your religion and who have not expelled you from your homes” ... the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all Muslims are duty-bound to treat non-Muslims in conformity with ethical norms and the principles of Islamic justice and equity, and to respect their human rights. This principle applies to all who refrain from engaging in conspiracy or activity against Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

‘... Article 23 (Freedom of Belief) The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief.

‘... Article 26 (Freedom of Association) The formation of ... religious societies, whether Islamic or pertaining to one of the recognized religious

¹ Iran Data Portal, [About Us](#), no date

minorities, is permitted provided they do not violate the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, the criteria of Islam, or the basis of the Islamic Republic. No one may be prevented from participating in the aforementioned groups, or be compelled to participate in them.

‘... The Islamic Consultative Assembly

‘... Article 64 (270 Members, Religious Representatives)

‘... (2) ... Assyrian and Chaldean Christians will jointly elect one representative; and Armenian Christians in the north and those in the south of the country will each elect one representative.’²

7.1.2 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 2023³. The source stated:

‘Only a minority of Iranian Christians are thought to belong to one of the constitutionally recognised religious groups. These groups are made up of people who are born Christian and who mostly belong to one of the ethnic churches. These include Armenians, Chaldeans [descendants of ancient occupants of land in southern Babylonia (modern southern Iraq)⁴] and Assyrians [‘an ethnic group primarily in parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey that traces its roots to the Assyrian Empire ...’⁵]. In addition, Iran recognises Christians who can prove that their families were Christian before the 1979 Iranian revolution. They mostly belong to recognised and traditional churches in Iran which have no ethnic association, are Persian-speaking and/or evangelical. The recognised churches include the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Assyrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, the Chaldean Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church.

‘... Most Christians in Iran are thought to belong to a Christian minority that is not recognised by the constitution. These non-recognised Christians mostly belong to one of the new Persian-speaking churches. They generally converted from Islam to Christianity after the Iranian revolution.’⁶

7.1.3 On 26 June 2024, the US Department of State (USSD) published its 2023 annual report on international religious freedom. The report, which was the most recent annual report on international religious freedom to have been published by the USSD at the time of writing, and which cited various sources, stated:

‘... [T]he government only recognizes the Christianity of citizens who are Armenian or Assyrian Christians, because the presence of these groups in the country predates Islam, or of citizens who can prove they or their families were Christian prior to the 1979 revolution. The government also recognizes Sabean-Mandaeans [one of the world’s oldest and smallest religious communities ... [that has] lived in Southern Iraq and Iran (Khuzestan

² Iran Data Portal, [The Constitution ...](#) (page 9,10,11,16), 2/3 December 1979, amended 28 July 1989

³ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Introduction), September 2023

⁴ Britannica AI and fact-checked by Britannica Editors, [Chaldea](#), no date

⁵ Hermiz, Joseph and fact-checked by Britannica Editors, [Assyrian](#), no date

⁶ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Sections 3.2.3.3 and 3.2.3.4), September 2023

province) for over 1000 years^{7]} as Christian, even though adherents to that faith state they do not consider themselves as such ... The government does not recognize evangelical Protestants as Christian.⁸

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7.2 Apostasy and proselytising

7.2.1 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated: ‘The law prohibits Muslims from changing or renouncing their religious beliefs. The only recognized conversions are from other religions to Islam. Under the law, a child born to a Muslim father is Muslim.’⁹

7.2.2 The same USSD report also stated:

‘Prevailing fatwas prescribe the death penalty for apostasy ... Sharia as interpreted by the government considers conversion from Islam to be apostasy, a crime punishable by death. Although apostasy is not codified in the penal code, the code instructs judges to rely on the constitution and fatwas in cases of apostasy, and the constitution instructs judges in general to pass judgments based on “authoritative Islamic sources and authentic fatwas,” rather than dismissing a case for lack of a codified crime or sentence. A judge may issue the death penalty to someone accused of apostasy under other charges, such as “enmity against God,” “corruption on earth,” “insulting the Prophet Muhammad,” and “outrage against high-ranking officials.” [However, t]he only known execution of an Iranian Christian specifically on the charge of apostasy occurred in 1990.’¹⁰

7.2.3 The BZ 2023 report stated:

‘There is no official statement as to what the Iranian authorities mean by apostasy. This concept is not included as such in the Islamic Penal Code. There is no agreement among clerics and Islamic scholars on the definition of apostasy, and whether or how it should be punished. Section 167 of the Iranian constitution states that when a law does not provide for a particular issue, a judge can turn to Islamic jurisprudence as a basis for his own verdict. This enables a judge to punish a person for apostasy based on his own interpretation of Islamic legal sources and fatwas. In practice, however, it is rare for someone to be charged with apostasy.’¹¹

7.2.4 In a joint submission on Iran to the 48th session of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) (a ‘mechanism of the Human Rights Council that calls for each UN Member State to undergo a peer review of its human rights records every 4.5 years’¹²), on 18 July 2024, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), a research and advocacy organisation that supports global rights to freedom of religion or belief¹³, and CSW-Nigeria stated:

‘Apostasy (in this instance, renouncing Islam) is not permitted under Islamic Law and is punishable by death; however, the legal position of converts from Islam remains unclear, as Iran has never codified apostasy as a crime. The

⁷ University of Exeter, [The Worlds of Mandaean Priests](#) (The Mandaeans), no date

⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

¹⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Exec. Summary, Section II), 26 June 2024

¹¹ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.9), September 2023

¹² OHCHR, [Universal Periodic Review](#), no date

¹³ CSW, [About CSW](#), no date

Shi'a theocracy relies on charges such as blasphemy, or on broadly defined crime[s] encompassing anything deemed undesirable by the state such as mofsed-e-filarz ("spreading corruption on earth") or Moharebeh (waging war against God). With no set penalty for these wide-ranging crimes, punishments can range from a few months in jail to execution ...'¹⁴

- 7.2.5 On 20 January 2025, Article 18 'a non-profit organisation based in London, dedicated to the protection and promotion of religious freedom in Iran and advocating on behalf of its persecuted Christians'¹⁵ published a joint annual report on human rights violations against Christians in Iran with CSW, Open Doors, and Middle East Concern (MEC), organisations which aim to promote religious freedom and/or to otherwise support Christians who experience faith-based persecution and discrimination^{16 17} (Article 18 et al). It should be noted that Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center¹⁸, in a translated update report on the conditions for Christian converts in Iran, published on 28 July 2025, stated: 'The[se 4] organisations cannot be characterised as religiously neutral actors, and the information they provide can often not be verified against other more neutral sources. Nevertheless ... they have good contacts within the Christian convert communities in Iran. They possess first-hand knowledge of the conditions under which Christians and Christian converts live. There are no other independent sources with the same amount of information.'¹⁹ The report, entitled 'Tip of the Iceberg', covering events of 2024, and which cited various sources, stated: '... "[A]postasy" charges ... could theoretically lead to a death sentence. Although apostasy is not codified in the IPC [Islamic Penal Code], judges can refer to Article 167 of the Iranian Constitution, which states: "The judge is bound to endeavour to judge each case on the basis of the codified law. In case of the absence of any such law, he has to deliver his judgment on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic fatwa."²⁰

N.B. the Landinfo 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.

- 7.2.6 On 14 October 2025, Barnabas Aid, an international Christian ministry that supports persecuted Christians²¹, published an article entitled 'Growing through persecution: What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?'. The article stated: 'When 12 Christians from Nowshahr, northern Iran, appeared in court in November 2024 to answer charges of "propagating a religion contrary to Islam" and "collaborating with foreign governments", the prosecutor described the converts as "Shia Muslims" who had "identified themselves as Christians". The implication seems to be that Shia Muslims can never legally leave the religion of their birth.'²²

¹⁴ CSW and CSW-Nigeria, [Iran: submission to the 48th session ...](#) (paragraph 7), 18 July 2024

¹⁵ Article 18, [Who we are](#), no date

¹⁶ Open Doors, [How we support](#), no date

¹⁷ MEC, [About MEC](#), no date

¹⁸ Ecoi.net, [Source description: Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre ...](#), 11 March 2021

¹⁹ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.1), 28 July 2025

²⁰ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 24), 20 January 2025

²¹ Barnabas Aid, [About us](#), no date

²² Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

7.2.7 In January 2026²³, Open Doors published its annual 'World Watch List' for 2026, covering the situation of religious freedom for Christians during the period between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025²⁴. The report stated: 'Ethnic Persians are automatically considered Muslim, making converts to Christianity apostates under Islamic law. This classification renders virtually all Christian activities illegal, particularly those conducted in Persian.'²⁵

7.2.8 On 21 April 2026, Amnesty International published its annual human rights reports, covering events of 2025 (the 2026 human rights report), which stated: 'People born to parents registered as Muslim risked arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and the death penalty for "apostasy" if they adopted other religions ...'²⁶ The Amnesty International 2025 human rights report, published on 28 April 2025, made the same assertion²⁷.

7.2.9 The BZ 2023 report stated:

'In the case of evangelising Muslims and preaching evangelical Christianity, converts may face criminal charges, although there is no law prohibiting the use of Persian in a church or the possession of a Persian-language Bible. The authorities usually punish such offences on the grounds of propaganda against the [Islamic Republic of Iran] IRI through the promotion of evangelical Zionist Christianity (Section 500 of the Penal Code). A charge under Section 500 of the Penal Code can be punishable by three months or up to a year in prison. Converts themselves also risk fines, imprisonment and/or flogging ... In addition to Section 500 of the Penal Code, punishment can also take place on any of the following grounds:

- Founding or leading an illegal organisation (Section 498 of the Penal Code). This is punishable by two to ten years in prison.
- Membership of an illegal organisation (Section 499 of the Penal Code). This is punishable by three months to five years in prison.
- Insulting ethnic groups, religions or Islamic schools of law (Section 499b of the Penal Code). This carries a maximum jail term of five years or a fine. In cases involving financial or organisational assistance from abroad, the maximum jail term is ten years.
- Propaganda that educates in a deviant way contrary to Islam, through mind control or psychological indoctrination, or making false claims (Section 500b of the Penal Code). This is punishable by two to five years' imprisonment and/or a fine and/or the denial of certain civil rights, such as the right to vote and practise certain professions, for up to fifteen years. In cases involving financial or organisational assistance from abroad, the maximum jail term is ten years.
- Insulting the sanctities of Islam (Section 513 of the Penal Code). This is punishable by one to five years in prison or the death penalty.

²³ Open Doors, [Impossible faith](#), no date

²⁴ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 10), January 2026

²⁵ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 4), January 2026

²⁶ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2026](#) (page 205), 21 April 2026

²⁷ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

- Threatening national security (Section 610 of the Penal Code). This is punishable by two to five years in prison.²⁸

7.2.10 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated: ‘The penal code criminalizes insulting “divine religions or Islamic schools of thought” and committing “any deviant educational or proselytizing activity that contradicts or interferes with the sacred law of Islam.” Proselytization of religions other than Islam carries a punishment of up to 10 years in prison.’²⁹

7.2.11 In February 2026, Article 18 et al published its joint 2026 annual report, entitled ‘Scapegoats’. The report, which covered events of 2025 and cited various sources, stated:

‘In 2021, Iran’s parliament amended Articles 499 and 500 of the penal code to increase penalties and broaden the scope against those who could be charged respectively with membership of a group “aiming to perturb the security of the country” or of engaging in “propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran”.³⁰ The same report noted that the penalties under Article 499 and 500 of the IPC increased from up to 5 years, to a maximum of 10 years, “if they received financial or organisational help from outside the country”³¹. For more information about the amendments, see Articles 499b and 500b in paragraph 7.2.9 above.

7.2.12 The Landinfo translated report noted that, ‘[s]everal sources believed that the wording [of the amended Articles 499 and 500 of the penal code] was specifically designed to prosecute unrecognised religious minorities [for information regarding which Christians are recognised and unrecognised in Iran, see [Religion](#)].’³²

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7.3 Documentation

7.3.1 For historic information on this topic, see the previous version of this CPIN ([Version 7.0](#)), published in September 2022.

7.3.2 Sources published in 2023 note that a person’s religion is not stated on their national identity card³³ ³⁴, nor on their passport³⁵.

7.3.3 On 4 February 2025, Pishkhan24, an ‘online citizen service platform’³⁶, published a webpage entitled ‘Smart National ID Card Registration Guide in 3 Steps’ (translated into English), which stated:

‘1. Visiting the National ID Card Registration and Appointment System

‘By visiting the Smart National ID Card registration system, you can carry out the necessary steps for your initial registration. Everyone can use this platform to register for a national ID card using their mobile phone or laptop.

‘2. Entering Personal Information

²⁸ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.5), September 2023

²⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Executive Summary), 26 June 2024

³⁰ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 9), February 2026

³¹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 10), February 2026

³² Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 3.2), 28 July 2025

³³ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.214), 24 July 2023

³⁴ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.1), September 2023

³⁵ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.1), September 2023

³⁶ Pishkhan24, [The online citizen service platform](#) (translated into English), no date

'At this stage, you need to enter details such as your date of birth, gender, mother's name, religion, etc. ...'³⁷

N.B. the information quoted above was originally published in Farsi. See [About the country information](#) for further information about the method of translation.

- 7.3.4 On 7 June 2025, Zoomit, a 'Persian-language online magazine in the field of technology ... and is active in the fields of new information and communication technologies under the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance'³⁸, published a webpage entitled 'Complete Guide to Getting a Smart National ID Card in 1404 [20 March 2025 to 19 March 2026 converted to the Gregorian calendar³⁹]' (translated into English), which stated:

'Electronic registration process

'... Enter your national ID and birth certificate serial number along with the displayed security code. If the information is correct, you will be taken to the identity details entry page.

'You need to carefully fill out the requested information here based on your identification documents, including your date of birth in both the Persian and lunar calendars, gender, mother's name, and mobile phone number. Also, if you belong to a religious minority, including Christian, Jewish, or Zoroastrian, you should enter it in the relevant field.'⁴⁰

- 7.3.5 CPIT was unable to find any further information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) about whether a person is required to declare their religion when applying for a national identity card or passport.

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8. Religious demography

8.1 General

- 8.1.1 A 'Country Focus' report, published by the European Union Asylum Agency (EUAA) in June 2024, cited the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook, which has since been discontinued⁴¹, as having estimated in 2020 that 0.7% of Iran's population was Christian⁴². With an estimated population of approximately 87.72 million people in 2020⁴³, this represented approximately 614,000 Christians in absolute numbers.
- 8.1.2 In January 2025 and February 2026, the Swiss Refugee Council (SRC), 'an NGO umbrella organisation for refugee assisting and human rights organisations'⁴⁴, published Iran factsheets which both noted the 2020 estimate of the Christian population of Iran, as a percentage of the total population, to be 0.7%^{45 46}.

³⁷ Pishkhan24, [Smart National ID Card Registration Guide ...](#) (English translation), 4 February 2025

³⁸ Zoomit, [About Us](#) (translated into English), no date

³⁹ Iran Chamber Society, [Iranian Calendar Converter](#), no date, accessed 24 June 2026

⁴⁰ Zoomit, [... Guide to Getting a Smart National ID Card ...](#) (translated into English), 7 June 2025

⁴¹ CIA, [Spotlighting The World Factbook as We Bid a Fond Farewell](#), 4 February 2026

⁴² EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.8), June 2024

⁴³ PopulationPyramid.net, [Iran \(Islamic Republic of\) 2020](#), no date

⁴⁴ Ecol.net, [Source description: Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe \(SFH\)](#), 3 December 2021

⁴⁵ SRC, [Factsheet Iran](#) (page 1), January 2025

⁴⁶ SRC, [Factsheet Iran](#) (page 2), February 2026

N.B. the information quoted above was originally published in German. See [About the country information](#) for further information about the method of translation.

- 8.1.3 In August 2020, the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in IRAN (GAMAAN), ‘an independent, non-profit research foundation registered in the Netherlands’⁴⁷, published a report of its findings from a survey it conducted of ‘Iranians’ attitudes toward religion’, in June 2020, with over 50,000 Iranian respondents, 90% of whom lived in Iran⁴⁸. The report showed that, when asked ‘Which of the following is closer to your beliefs and faith?’, fewer than 40% of respondents identified as Muslim (32.2% Shi’ite Muslim, 5% Sunni Muslim), while 1.5% identified as Christian⁴⁹.
- 8.1.4 Commenting on the GAMAAN survey results, an article published by Article 18 on 27 August 2020 stated that GAMAAN ‘... researchers told Article18 [that the 1.5% of respondents having identified as Christians] would lead to an estimated total number of between 750,000-950,000 Christians.’⁵⁰ Similarly, the ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: ‘Based on this [the 1.5% finding], and taking into account possible skewing from the type of people who chose to respond, researchers estimated there could be as many as 800,000 Christians in Iran overall.’⁵¹
- 8.1.5 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated:
‘According to Boston University’s 2020 World Religion Database [which CPIT was unable to access⁵²], there are approximately 579,000 Christians. The Christian advocacy NGO Article 18 estimates there are 500,000 to 800,000 Christians in the country [CPIT was unable to locate an Article 18 source that provided the lower estimate of 500,000], while the Christian advocacy NGO Open Doors International estimates the number is 1.24 million [CPIT was unable to locate the primary source].’⁵³
- 8.1.6 The same USSD report also stated:
‘The U.S. government estimates the population at 87.6 million (midyear 2023). According to Iranian government estimates, Muslims constitute 99.4 percent of the population, of whom 90 to 95 percent are Shia, and 5 to 10 percent are Sunni ... According to U.S. government estimates, groups constituting the remaining less than 1 percent of the population include Baha’is, Christians, Yarsanis, Jews, Sabean-Mandaeans, and Zoroastrians. The three largest non-Muslim minorities are Baha’is, Christians, and Yarsanis.’⁵⁴
- 8.1.7 In March 2025 and March 2026, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) published its 2025 and 2026 annual reports on international religious freedom, covering, respectively, events of 2024 and 2025. Both reports stated: ‘Around 90 to 95 percent of Iran’s population of nearly 88.4 million is Shi’a Muslim, while Sunni Muslims account for five to

⁴⁷ GAMAAN, [About Us](#), no date

⁴⁸ GAMAAN, [Iranians’ Attitudes Toward Religion: A 2020 Survey Report](#) (page 1), August 2020

⁴⁹ GAMAAN, [Iranians’ Attitudes Toward Religion: A 2020 Survey Report](#) (page 6), August 2020

⁵⁰ Article 18, [Survey supports claims of nearly 1 million Christians in Iran](#), 27 August 2020

⁵¹ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 ...](#) (footnote 2 on page 21), 20 January 2025

⁵² World Religion Database, [Access The World Religion Database](#), no date

⁵³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section I), 26 June 2024

⁵⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section I), 26 June 2024

10 percent. Approximately 0.3 percent of the population [approximately 265,200 in absolute numbers, CPIT's calculation] identifies as non-Muslim, including adherents of the Baha'i faith, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Judaism.^{55 56}

- 8.1.8 In its 2026 World Watch List, Open Doors noted that its estimate of the number of Christians in Iran was 800,000 (which it said represented 0.9% of a total population of 90,411,000)⁵⁷.

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8.2 'Ethnic' Christians

- 8.2.1 On 24 July 2023, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) published its most recent country information report on Iran. The report noted that according to Christian groups there were up to 1 million recognised Christians in Iran⁵⁸. The same report stated: 'The majority of [recognised] Christians are ethnic Armenian and Assyrian. Chaldean and Roman Catholic communities also exist in small numbers.'⁵⁹

- 8.2.2 The BZ 2023 report stated:

'Estimates of the number of recognised Christians in Iran vary widely. The English-language Iranian state-run newspaper Tehran Times puts the number [in December 2022⁶⁰] at 150,000. Estimates of the number of Armenians [between November 2022⁶¹ and an unspecified date⁶²] range from 40,000 to 100,000. The estimated number of Assyrians [between November 2022⁶³ and an unspecified date⁶⁴] ranges from 20,000 to 50,000. In addition, about 2,000 people belong to the Roman Catholic Church in Iran [between February 2021⁶⁵ and July 2023⁶⁶].'⁶⁷

- 8.2.3 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated:

'The government-run Statistical Center of Iran reports there are 117,700 Christians of recognized denominations in the country as of the 2016 census [CPIT noted that reporting of the same census figures were varied, with the UN Statistics Division noting the figure to have been 130,158⁶⁸]. Some estimates suggest there may be many more than reported.

'... Estimates by the Assyrian Church of the total Assyrian and Chaldean Christian population put their combined number at 7,000. The Assyrian Policy Institute estimates [on an undated webpage⁶⁹] there are fewer than 50,000 Assyrian Christians in the country, the majority residing in Tehran,

⁵⁵ USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2025 Annual Report](#) (page 25), March 2025

⁵⁶ USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2026 Annual Report](#) (page 31), 4 March 2026

⁵⁷ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 2), January 2026

⁵⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.79), 24 July 2023

⁵⁹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.79), 24 July 2023

⁶⁰ Tehran Times, [Christmas celebrations being held in Iran](#), 25 December 2022

⁶¹ Article 18, [Iran's Assyrian Christians warned against ... involvement in protests](#), 10 November 2022

⁶² Diaspora.gov, [Iran](#), no date

⁶³ Article 18, [Iran's Assyrian Christians warned against ... involvement in protests](#), 10 November 2022

⁶⁴ Assyrian Policy Institute, [Iran](#), no date

⁶⁵ Catholic World Report, [... Tehran's new Catholic archbishop is ordained](#), 18 February 2021

⁶⁶ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Footnote 580 on page 24), September 2023

⁶⁷ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.3), September 2023

⁶⁸ UNSD, [Population by religion ...](#) (published by UN Data), last updated 26 February 2026

⁶⁹ Assyrian Policy Institute, [Iran](#), no date

with 15,000 residing in the northern city of Urmia ... According to recent estimates from Armenian Christians who maintain contact with the Christian community in the country, their current numbers range from 20,000 to 50,000. Article 18 estimates [in an article of 26 February 2021⁷⁰] there are 2,000-6,000 Roman Catholics in the country.

'... Government media report the population includes 14,000 Sabean-Mandaeans [it should be noted that Sabean-Mandaeans do not identify themselves as Christians, however, the Iranian government recognises them as Christians, see paragraph 7.1.3].'⁷¹

- 8.2.4 A query response on the situation of Christian converts during 2023 to 2024, published by the Finnish Immigration Service (FIS) on 3 February 2025, which cited various sources, noted that the 117,700 figure of 'native Christians' in Iran, from the 2016 census was, '[t]he most up-to-date official information on representatives of different religions in Iran ... which indicates that the number of officially recognised Christians has remained at the same level since the late 1980s.'⁷²

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

- 8.2.5 The 'Tip of the Iceberg' annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: 'Ethnic Assyrian and Armenian Christians account for approximately 50,000-80,000 ...'⁷³
- 8.2.6 On 12 August 2025, Article 18 published an article entitled 'Ministry of Intelligence admits arresting over 50 Christians' which stated: 'Armenian and Assyrian Christians in Iran ... today number less than 100,000 in total ...'⁷⁴
- 8.2.7 An article published by Article 18 on 20 October 2025 stated: 'As different sources have reported previously, the Armenian population has dropped to one-fifth of what it was before the revolution of 1979, even as Iran's overall population has doubled.'⁷⁵
- 8.2.8 In March 2026, the Armenian Assembly of America, a Washington DC-based Washington, DC, non-partisan Armenian-American advocacy organisation in the US⁷⁶, stated in a factsheet entitled 'Armenian Community in Iran':

'Armenians currently constitute the country's largest Christian religious minority. The present-day Armenian population in the country is approximately 150,000. Although some sources mention figures as high as 500,000, this discrepancy can be explained by the complexities of Iranian legislation, which makes relinquishing citizenship an extremely difficult process. An estimated 250,000 Iranian Armenians left the country following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and approximately 80,000 resettled in Armenia after the collapse of the USSR.

⁷⁰ Article 18, [Iran's Catholics welcome new archbishop after six-year hiatus](#), 26 February 2021

⁷¹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section I), 26 June 2024

⁷² FIS, [Iran / 2023-24 update on the situation of Christian converts ...](#) (page 1), 3 February 2025

⁷³ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 ...](#) (footnote 2 on page 21), 20 January 2025

⁷⁴ Article 18, [Ministry of Intelligence admits arresting over 50 Christians](#), 12 August 2025

⁷⁵ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

⁷⁶ Armenian Assembly of America, [About Us](#), no date

‘... The majority of Iranian Armenians – around 80,000 – reside in Tehran and in the surrounding areas. Approximately 31,000 live in Isfahan and the neighboring city of Shahin Shahr, while fewer than 1,000 live in Tabriz. Other cities with notable dense Armenian communities include Urmia, Arak, Rasht, and Bandar-e Anzali.’⁷⁷

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8.3 Christian converts and other unrecognised Christians

8.3.1 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated:

‘The Joshua Project, an Evangelical ministry from the United States that publishes information for missionaries, estimates 0.52 per cent of the population is Evangelical Christian. In 2019, UN Special Rapporteur Rehman estimated that there were between 300,000 and 350,000 Muslim converts to Christianity. In-country sources told DFAT in 2019 that the number of underground Christians was growing, and Christians may travel to Turkey (with which Iran has visa-free arrangements) to be baptised then continue to practise their religion in secret ... DFAT has been unable to source more recent figures on Christian conversions.’⁷⁸

8.3.2 An article published by Article 18 on 7 May 2024 referred to ‘... a huge rise in conversions to Christianity – with the number of converts now estimated to be 10 times the number of ethnic Armenian and Assyrian Christians ...’⁷⁹

8.3.3 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated: ‘Christian NGOs report many Christians are converts from Islam or other recognized faiths ... There are also Protestant denominations, including evangelical groups, but there is no authoritative data on their numbers. Christian groups outside the country disagree on the size of the Protestant community, with several estimates citing figures lower than 10,000. Many Protestants and converts to Christianity from Islam practice in secret.’⁸⁰

8.3.4 An undated article which compared the combined length of prison sentences handed down to Christians in 2024 with those handed down in 2023, published by Stefanus Alliance USA, the US branch of an organisation that was founded in Norway and which seeks to raise awareness, advocate and provide direct assistance for persecuted Christians globally⁸¹, stated: ‘The large and growing community of Christians from a Muslim background ... [is now] possibly nearing one million people ...’⁸²

8.3.5 The translated FIS query response, published on 3 February 2025, stated: ‘... [T]hose who have converted from Islam to Christianity have been left out of the ... figures, with only rough estimates available regarding their numbers.’⁸³

8.3.6 The Article 18 et al ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ report noted that most of the up to 800,000 Christians in Iran as of 2020 were Christian converts, minus the

⁷⁷ Armenian Assembly of America, [Armenian Community in Iran](#), March 2026

⁷⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.83), 24 July 2023

⁷⁹ Article 18, [Why do most Iranian Christians worship in house-churches?](#), 7 May 2024

⁸⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section I), 26 June 2024

⁸¹ Stefanus Alliance USA, [About Us](#), no date

⁸² Stefanus Alliance USA, [Iranian Christians: Sixfold Increase in Prison Sentences ...](#), no date

⁸³ FIS, [Iran / 2023-24 update on the situation of Christian converts ...](#) (page 1), 3 February 2025

approximately 50,000 to 80,000 ethnic Assyrian and Armenian Christians⁸⁴, therefore leaving approximately 720,000 to 750,000 Christian converts.

- 8.3.7 The translated Landinfo update report, translated into English, and citing various sources, stated:

‘There are no official and reliable figures on the number of converts in Iran. Converts from Islam to Christianity are not considered part of the recognised Christian minority. Converts are recorded as Muslims in public records.

‘Estimates of the number of converts vary widely, ranging from a few hundred thousand to over one million. Christian sources have for several years claimed that the number of converts is increasing in Iran. The head of an Iranian organisation (... [in] May 2025) stated that the growth in the number of converts and house churches is accelerating faster now than before. Christian communities are emerging in all parts of the country and across all social strata. A number of leaders of house churches and pastors report that new members are constantly joining. The leader emphasised that no one knows for certain how strong the growth is, as house churches operate in secret. All figures are only estimates, but he had heard estimates of both one and two million converts in Iran.’⁸⁵

- 8.3.8 Citing Global Christian Relief (GCR), an organisation ‘supporting persecuted Christians around the world’⁸⁶, the translated Landinfo update report also added: ‘At the same time, a significant number of Christians and Christian converts leave Iran, estimated at 10,000 people annually.’⁸⁷

- 8.3.9 The article published by Article 18 on 12 August 2025 noted that there were an estimated 800,000 Christian converts in Iran⁸⁸.

- 8.3.10 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report stated: ‘Christian converts from a Muslim background are numerically the largest Christian community in Iran ...’⁸⁹

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9. House churches

9.1 Evolution and organisation

- 9.1.1 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated:

‘Iranian Christians who are not members of recognised churches generally practise in underground “house churches” ... House churches vary in size, style and structure. Most are small and informal, and consist of close family and friends gathering on a regular or semi-regular basis to pray, worship, read the Bible and/or watch Farsi Christian television programs broadcast via satellite or discs smuggled from abroad ... Local Christian leaders and adherents may be foreign trained while overseas.’⁹⁰

- 9.1.2 The BZ 2023 report stated:

‘Christian converts are not allowed to attend religious services in recognised

⁸⁴ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 ...](#) (footnote 2 on page 21), 20 January 2025

⁸⁵ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.2), 28 July 2025

⁸⁶ GCR, [About Us](#), no date

⁸⁷ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.2), 28 July 2025

⁸⁸ Article 18, [Ministry of Intelligence admits arresting over 50 Christians](#), 12 August 2025

⁸⁹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 30), February 2026

⁹⁰ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraphs 2.83 and 2.84), 24 July 2023

Christian churches. Moreover, these services are not held in Persian. If converts were to attend services in recognised Christian churches, there could be far-reaching consequences for these churches and/or their pastors. The churches would risk closure and the pastors would risk having their work permit revoked and being expelled from Iran. Converts therefore gather in their own homes to pray and worship together, to engage in Bible study or to celebrate Christian holidays.’⁹¹

9.1.3 An article published by Article 18 on 14 September 2023 stated:

‘Iranians from Armenian and Assyrian families are permitted a degree of freedom to worship – in their own languages – but churches that offered services in the Persian language have been systematically closed over the past 15 years.

‘As a result, Iranians who wish to worship in the national language of Persian – whether converts, Armenians, or Assyrians – have no place to worship.

‘This led to the rise of the so-called “house-churches” – private worship meetings in homes ... But these have been outlawed by the Iranian authorities, and referred to as “enemy groups”, and members systematically arrested and imprisoned on charges of “acting against national security”.’⁹²

9.1.4 The EUAA Country Focus report stated: ‘Iranian house-churches refer to apartments, where 10 to 15 believers gather for their rituals.’⁹³

9.1.5 The translated FIS response, published on 3 February 2025, stated: ‘Those who have converted to Christianity still do not have the opportunity to participate in worship in official churches and must meet unofficially in private homes.’⁹⁴

9.1.6 Citing information provided by an Iranian Christian organisation in March 2023, the translated Landinfo update report stated that house churches, ‘... are usually small communities, rarely more than ten people. If the group grows, it is split for security reasons. Several house churches can be linked together in networks, and some of them have connections abroad.’⁹⁵

9.1.7 It went on to state:

‘Many of Landinfo's sources distinguish between leaders and ordinary members in house churches. The leaders bring the believers together, have a pastoral role, conduct Bible teaching and preaching for the members of the house church. Ordinary members attend the house church gatherings but do not have responsibilities of either a theological or practical nature. They also do not spread the Christian message.

‘Most house churches have a leader; without one, the activity stops. The leader's background, knowledge and qualifications vary, but there are more women than men in leadership roles. It is not uncommon for leaders to be responsible for a network of house churches. These networks can consist of several hundred members in total.’⁹⁶

⁹¹ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.4), September 2023

⁹² Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor ‘pardoned’, released from prison](#), 14 September 2023

⁹³ EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.8.2), June 2024

⁹⁴ FIS, [Iran / 2023-24 update on the situation of Christian converts ...](#) (page 2), 3 February 2025

⁹⁵ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.3), 28 July 2025

⁹⁶ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 3.3.1), 28 July 2025

9.1.8 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated: ‘Considerable discretion is necessary in planning meetings for such churches, and it is impossible to guarantee protection from informers. House churches have had to vary their venues regularly, but this does not always prevent the authorities locating such gatherings and arresting attendees [see [Monitoring of, and raids on, house churches](#)]. In some cases, Christians meet discreetly in twos and threes, going for walks or drives together.’⁹⁷

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9.2 Number and locations

9.2.1 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated: ‘House churches are usually Evangelical Protestant and are found throughout the country, but especially in more affluent and cosmopolitan areas. Numbers of house church adherents are not known because these churches are secret and illegal.’⁹⁸

9.2.2 The translated Landinfo update report, stated: ‘According to an Iranian Christian organisation, more than 90 percent of converts in Iran are connected to a house church.’⁹⁹ While estimates of the numbers of Christian converts in Iran vary, recent estimates mostly indicate there to be between 720,000 and 1 million Christian converts in Iran (see [Religious demography: Christian converts](#)). Based on these figures, between approximately 648,000 and 900,000 Christian converts in absolute numbers (CPIT’s calculations) were connected to a house church, according to the mentioned Iranian Christian organisation.

9.2.3 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated: ‘... [T]here are small networks of underground “house churches” operating throughout the country ... There are estimated to be between 500,000 and 800,000 Christians in Iran. Some estimates put the figure above one million. With the secrecy required of house churches it is hard to be definite, but Barnabas Aid contacts confirm that there is Christian witness in many parts of this vast country.’¹⁰⁰

9.2.4 While the Open Doors 2026 World Watch List did not comment on the number of house churches in Iran, it did state that: ‘Thousands of Christian converts meet secretly in small house groups ...’¹⁰¹

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10. State attitudes and treatment

10.1 Towards ‘ethnic’ Christians

10.1.1 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated:

‘The activities of recognised Christian communities are closely regulated, to guard against proselytisation. Recognised Christian groups refuse to proselytise as a result, and in-country sources told DFAT this resolve is tested regularly by authorities. All Christians and Christian churches must be registered with the authorities, and only recognised Christians can attend

⁹⁷ Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

⁹⁸ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.83), 24 July 2023

⁹⁹ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.3), 28 July 2025

¹⁰⁰ Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

¹⁰¹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 3), January 2026

church. Security officials closely monitor registered churches to verify that services are not conducted in Farsi (they must be performed in the traditional language of the Church and not the vernacular) and perform regular identity checks on worshippers to confirm that non-Christians or converts do not participate in services. Churches that do not comply face closure.

‘Community leaders associated with registered churches report authorities respect their religious rights, and their communities can act freely in their own spaces without government interference (including holding mixed-gender gatherings, using alcohol for ceremonial purposes and allowing women to uncover their heads).’¹⁰²

10.1.2 The BZ 2023 report stated:

‘Recognised Christians encounter all kinds of pressures in Iran. Within a very limited context, they are permitted to gather and perform their rituals, such as celebrating Christmas. This is permitted as long as the authorities do not consider their activities to be “directed against the Islamic Republic” and provided that recognised Christians do not spread their beliefs or convert people. Evangelising or allowing converts to attend their religious services is forbidden. This means that recognised Christians can only practise their faith under strict conditions. Their compliance with these conditions is actively monitored and controlled by the authorities. The entrances and exits of church buildings are under camera surveillance. The authorities summon church leaders for questioning and, for example, to warn them not to admit converts. Recognised churches also have to submit lists of their church members to the authorities. The ethnic churches are not permitted to conduct the liturgy in Persian; this must be done in one of the other languages, such as Armenian or Assyrian. Nor are ethnic churches allowed to possess religious works in Persian.’¹⁰³

10.1.3 On 31 July 2024, IranWire, a ‘news website run by professional Iranian journalists in the diaspora and citizen journalists inside Iran’¹⁰⁴, published a report entitled ‘Conscience Held Captive: The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, covering developments in the human rights situation for religious minorities in Iran between 1 April and 30 June 2024. The report, which IranWire noted was, ‘... based primarily on IranWire’s own findings’¹⁰⁵, stated: ‘Officially recognized minorities comprise Christians ... who as a result enjoy certain freedoms in “rites and ceremonies,” “personal affairs,” and “religious education,” but “within the limits of the law” ... These groups are in practice further qualified (“Christians” include only heritage Assyrians and Armenians, and not converts from Islamic to Christianity) and exercise of their limited rights depends on compliance with state red lines.’¹⁰⁶

10.1.4 On 29 August 2024, Article 18 published an article which stated:

‘Article 18’s director, Mansour Borji, explains: “It should be noted that Evangelical Protestant churches, which were shutdown one after the other, especially since 2009, were all once officially registered and recognised churches. They came increasingly under pressure when they refused to

¹⁰² DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraphs 2.81 to 2.82), 24 July 2023

¹⁰³ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Section 3.2.3.3), September 2023

¹⁰⁴ IranWire, [About IranWire](#), no date

¹⁰⁵ IranWire, [... The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 31 July 2024

¹⁰⁶ IranWire, [... The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 31 July 2024

abandon the national language of Persian in their worship services, allowing the opportunity for people from all other faith groups to join their congregation. There are still a handful of Evangelical Protestant churches operating with the full knowledge of the Iranian authorities, albeit now open only to ethnic Armenian or Assyrians.”¹⁰⁷

- 10.1.5 On 5 November 2024, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) which stated: ‘Approximately 300 churches across the nation operate without hindrance, and 40 of these have been restored with financial assistance from the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization.’¹⁰⁸ While CPIT was unable to find external evidence in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to support the numbers reported by the Iranian government, see also paragraph 10.1.16.
- 10.1.6 The same report also stated: ‘There are currently 9 specialized branches [“Specialized Dispute Resolution Councils” ... established specifically for religious minorities to address issues and claims related to personal status.¹⁰⁹] ... ([including for] Christians (both Armenian and Assyrian) ...) in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Isfahan, Tehran, Fars, Kerman, Mazandaran and Yazd ...’¹¹⁰ The government of the IRI also noted several press publications and websites that facilitate religious minorities, including Armenian and Assyrian Christians, to communicate with their community members¹¹¹. CPIT was unable to find external evidence in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to support the government’s claims, however.
- 10.1.7 The ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: ‘Making financial donations, charitable offerings, or paying tithes to support church activities are standard practices for Christians worldwide, but such activities have been criminalised by Iran’s Revolutionary Courts. These activities are also common in churches that exclusively serve Armenian and Assyrian-speaking members, which do not face similar restrictions.’¹¹²
- 10.1.8 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated: ‘While historic Armenian and Assyrian churches are permitted to operate ... [e]ven ... [they] are monitored and kept under surveillance. The government controls when churches can meet for worship and keeps lists of attendees. Unofficial meetings are closed down.’¹¹³
- 10.1.9 The Article 18 article, published on 20 October 2025, about the opening of a new metro station in Tehran named after the Virgin Mary and ‘adorned with Christian symbols’¹¹⁴, stated that, ‘... the Iranian government has long used expensive symbolic gestures to project an image of tolerance ... Yet the reality remains unchanged: institutional discrimination, organised repression, and the slow erasure of religious minorities from Iran’s social fabric.’¹¹⁵
- 10.1.10 The same Article 18 article stated that a ‘... dramatic decline [in the

¹⁰⁷ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

¹⁰⁸ Government of the IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report ...](#) (paragraph 29), 5 November 2024

¹⁰⁹ Government of the IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report ...](#) (paragraph 33), 5 November 2024

¹¹⁰ Government of the IRI, published by UNHRC, [National report ...](#) (footnote 43), 5 November 2024

¹¹¹ Gov’t. of the IRI, pub’d. by UNHRC, [National ...](#) (paragraph 35, footnote 45), 5 November 2024

¹¹² Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 14), 20 January 2025

¹¹³ Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

¹¹⁴ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

¹¹⁵ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

Armenian population in Iran, see [Religious demography: 'Ethnic' Christians](#) for further details] reflects the impact of institutionalised discrimination in areas such as inheritance, blood money (diyah), and employment discrimination, relegating Armenians to the status of second or third-class citizens ... [and] Armenians and Assyrians who associate with converts are ... targeted [by the Iranian security forces].¹¹⁶

- 10.1.11 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated that, '... recognized Armenian and Assyrian communities remain subject to legalized discrimination, with restrictions on employment, language use and contact with Persian-speaking converts ... Despite constitutional recognition, they face systematic discrimination in marriage rights, inheritance laws, and employment opportunities.'¹¹⁷
- 10.1.12 The 2026 World Watch List also stated: 'Iranian authorities showcase Armenian and Assyrian representatives in media and international forums to project religious tolerance, while these representatives make statements about "freedoms" that only apply to a small segment of the Christian population ... Historical communities of Armenian and Assyrian Christians are recognized by the state but are treated as second-class citizens.'¹¹⁸
- 10.1.13 The 'Scapegoats' annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated that '... [R]ecognised Christians of Armenian or Assyrian descent are lauded in public; provided with political representation in the parliament; access to churches; and freedom to worship in their own ethnic minority languages – though not to open their doors to converts, or to preach in Persian ... [and while t]hese groups are relatively free to practise their faith ... [they] face legal and societal discrimination and are not permitted to hold services or possess religious materials in Persian (the national language), and can face imprisonment if they promote Christianity among people from a Muslim background or encourage them to attend church services.'¹¹⁹
- 10.1.14 On 26 February 2025 and 23 March 2026, Freedom House published its annual 'Freedom in the World' reports, covering events of 2024 and 2025, respectively. Both reports stated, in reference to 'certain Christian communities' recognised by the constitution as non-Muslim religious minorities, that, '... these small groups are relatively free to worship ...'^{120 121}
- 10.1.15 The USCIRF 2026 annual report on religious freedom stated: 'Five of the parliament's 290 seats are reserved for recognized religious minorities — two for Armenian Christians and one each for Assyro-Chaldean Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians.'¹²²
- 10.1.16 The factsheet published by the Armenian Assembly of America in March 2026 listed 38 active churches across 3 dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Iran, and a further 4 Armenian Catholic and Evangelical churches, located in Tehran¹²³.

¹¹⁶ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

¹¹⁷ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (pages 1 and 3), January 2026

¹¹⁸ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (pages 4 and 6), January 2026

¹¹⁹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (pages 3 to 4 and 30), February 2026

¹²⁰ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025](#) (section D2), 26 February 2025

¹²¹ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2026](#) (section D2), 23 March 2026

¹²² USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2026 Annual Report](#) (page 31), 4 March 2026

¹²³ Armenian Assembly of America, [Armenian Community in Iran](#), March 2026

10.2 Towards Christian converts

- 10.2.1 The BZ 2023 report stated: ‘Non-recognised religious communities are under great pressure and do not have any protection. They are closely monitored, pressurised and in some cases subject to criminal prosecution. Consequently, many Christian converts do not outwardly express their religious beliefs for fear of criminal persecution.’¹²⁴
- 10.2.2 On 11 June 2024, Article 18 published an article which stated: ‘... [T]here is no freedom whatsoever for any non-Armenian or Assyrian Iranian who wishes to practise Christianity, as they are prohibited from attending the services of Armenians and Assyrians, who are themselves prohibited from preaching in the national language of Persian – all to reduce the chance of conversions.’¹²⁵
- 10.2.3 The article published by IranWire on 28 June 2024 stated: ‘Among the various minority groups in Iran, Christian converts face more repression than other officially recognized minorities. Besides being non-Muslim, they face life threats due to their conversion, primarily from Islam to Christianity, regarded as “apostasy.”’¹²⁶
- 10.2.4 The IranWire report, published on 31 July 2024, stated: ‘Officially non-recognized groups like ... Christian converts ... face an even harsher reality [than officially recognised Christians, see paragraph 10.1.3]. These groups are at special risk of arbitrary arrest and prosecution (often on trumped-up security charges), asset appropriation, denial of education and unemployment, denial of the right to worship and to observe other ceremonies, and even capital punishment on charges of apostasy.’¹²⁷
- 10.2.5 The Article 18 article published on 29 August 2024 stated: ‘... [L]eaked documents ... reveal the common practice of ordinary Christian worship being labelled “cultic”, “anti-revolutionary”, or a “security risk”, with the clear aim of stigmatising Christian groups that do not conform to government criteria of “acceptable Christians”.’¹²⁸
- 10.2.6 A ‘General Briefing’ published by CSW on 25 November 2024 stated:
‘Despite the notable releases in 2023 of nine unjustly detained Christians as part of a general amnesty, members of this religious community, and particularly the converts who form the majority of adherents, continue to experience discrimination, harassment, arbitrary and often cyclical arrest and detention, lack of due process, lengthy imprisonment, excessive fines denial of education or employment, psychological and physical torture, flogging and confiscation of property, among other violations.’¹²⁹
- 10.2.7 On 10 July 2025, Article 18 published an article which, citing various sources, stated: ‘In Iran, prosecutors and judges frequently label evangelical Christians as “Zionists”, “deviant” and belonging to “illegal sects”, in an attempt to distinguish between them and the tolerated Orthodox and Catholic

¹²⁴ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Section 3.2.3.4), September 2023

¹²⁵ Article 18, [Armenian Christian given 10-year sentence ‘on judge’s intuition’](#), 11 June 2024

¹²⁶ IranWire, [Religious Minorities Overlooked in Iran’s Presidential Campaigns](#), 28 June 2024

¹²⁷ IranWire, [... The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 31 July 2024

¹²⁸ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

¹²⁹ CSW, [General Briefing: Iran](#), 25 November 2024

Christians of Armenian and Assyrian descent.’¹³⁰

10.2.8 In another article, published on 24 July 2025, Article 18 stated that the ‘... monitoring of news sites linked to the intelligence agencies of the Islamic Republic has shown a significant increase in hate speech against evangelical Christians during and since the conflict [with Israel, in June 2025], with many seeking to paint them as co-conspirators with Israel.’¹³¹

10.2.9 The Landinfo update report, translated into English, stated:

‘The authorities’ interest in Christian converts goes in waves ... The focus on converts may be related to the capacity of the security forces, the resources they have available, and whether they are facing other pressing tasks. But it may also be the result of signals from the supreme leader or other high-ranking representatives of the regime that converts pose a threat to national security.

‘... Christians and converts are considered peaceful communities that are not directly involved in politics and do not have an overt agenda for regime change. In 2023, Article 18 stated in conversation with Landinfo ... that Christians and converts are not the highest priority precisely because converts do not endanger the political system and do not advocate for revolution. Nevertheless, it is primarily provisions on national security that are used when Christians and converts are persecuted.’¹³²

10.2.10 The translated Landinfo report also stated:

‘Converts can also be deprived of social rights and subjected to movement restrictions ... The authorities exercise various forms of extrajudicial pressure ... Some are pressured to leave the country. The authorities focus on what happens inside the country, and thus it may be a solution for troublesome individuals to leave. The totality of reactions, threats and harassment results in many Christian converts feeling compelled to leave the country.’¹³³ See also paragraphs 10.9.4 to 10.9.5 and 11.1.5.

10.2.11 The Article 18 article, published on 20 October 2025, stated: ‘For Christian converts, the situation is far worse [than for Armenian Christians]. This community — now the largest Christian population in Iran — is not even afforded the recognition of citizenship ... [T]hey have been turned into ... people without a voice, without the right to worship, without the right to gather ... [and they] are denied churches and cemeteries and live under the constant threat of being accused of apostasy.’¹³⁴

10.2.12 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: ‘Converts from Islam to Christianity in Iran face the harshest religious freedom violations, primarily from the government ... The regime views conversions as a Western threat to undermine the Islamic Republic. Leaders and members of convert groups, and Christians assisting them, face arrests, prosecutions, and lengthy sentences, typically on charges of “national security” violations ... Following the Iran-Israel war, the government now publicly brands them as spies and

¹³⁰ Article 18, [Over 20 Christians arrested as UN experts decry targeting of minorities](#), 10 July 2025

¹³¹ Article 18, [Increase in arrests and hate speech against Christians since war ...](#), 24 July 2025

¹³² Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.3), 28 July 2025

¹³³ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 6), 28 July 2025

¹³⁴ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

collaborators.’¹³⁵

10.2.13 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated:

‘Christian converts from a Muslim background ... are frequently targeted by the authorities ... Unable to attend existing churches belonging to the Armenian and Assyrian communities, converts either gather in informal meetings in private homes, known as “house-churches”, or are forced to remain isolated and disconnected from other Christians. In either case, their freedom to collectively express their faith is violated ... [D]ifferences in interpretation of Islamic law regarding apostasy contribute to a lack of certainty and consistency in how converts from Islam are treated.’¹³⁶

10.2.14 The Freedom in the World 2026 report stated: ‘The government subjects some non-Muslim minority groups to repressive policies and discrimination, including ... unrecognized Christian groups.’¹³⁷ The Freedom in the World 2025 report made the same assertion¹³⁸. Neither report provided any further information to quantify the scale or extent to which this occurred.

10.2.15 The USCIRF 2026 annual report on religious freedom stated: ‘The June [2025] military escalation [the 12-day Iran-Israel war] exacerbated religious freedom concerns for religious minorities ... Iranian state media ... portrayed Christians as national enemies and accused Evangelical Christians of collaboration with foreign “Zionist” churches. In June [2025], Ferghe News [an Iranian news site which describes itself as being ‘in the field of criticism and review of deviant sects’¹³⁹ (translated from Farsi to English)] claimed Evangelicals harbor the same “racist and inhuman beliefs of the Zionist regime.”’¹⁴⁰

10.2.16 An undated GCR persecution report stated: ‘The pattern of Christian persecution in Iran varies by location, particularly for Christians of Muslim heritage. In major cities, the state is the persecutor. Some are arrested, some imprisoned; others are simply excluded from their place of study or work. Some choose to leave the country; a few are obligated to do so due to intense pressure and threats of imprisonment.’¹⁴¹

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10.3 Monitoring of, and raids on, house churches

10.3.1 The BZ 2023 report stated:

‘According to several sources, Iranian authorities pursue an active policy of detection regarding attendance of house churches by Christian converts. The intelligence agencies monitor the activities of a range of religious groups in Iran, including Christians. As part of this monitoring, [Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security] MOIS personnel seek to infiltrate churches. They may infiltrate directly or use informants. This policy is used regardless of the type of Christianity under surveillance ... It is not possible to be more specific about how frequently house churches were broken up during the reporting

¹³⁵ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (pages 1 and 6), January 2026

¹³⁶ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 30), February 2026

¹³⁷ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2026](#) (section D2), 23 March 2026

¹³⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025](#) (section D2), 26 February 2025

¹³⁹ Ferghe.ir, [About Us](#), no date

¹⁴⁰ USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2026 Annual Report](#) (page 30), 4 March 2026

¹⁴¹ GCR, [Persecution Report: Iran](#), no date

period, as much of this information is not in the public domain.’¹⁴²

10.3.2 The same BZ report stated that, ‘... house churches are closely monitored by the Iranian authorities. If house churches go too far in their eyes, attendance at these gatherings can result in interrogation, threats, arrest and/or criminal conviction.’¹⁴³

10.3.3 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated:

‘Authorities interpret the growth in house churches as a threat to national security and periodically carry out raids against them. Congregants regularly change houses to avoid detection. Raids focus particularly on house churches that actively proselytise or seek out new members. Sources told DFAT authorities do not actively look for house churches. Rather, raids – where they occur – are usually the result of tip-offs by Muslim neighbours. Other sources say the government sends people posing as converts to infiltrate house churches.’¹⁴⁴

10.3.4 A BBC News article published on 1 April 2024 entitled ‘The Christians celebrating Easter in secret’ stated: ‘Authorities have been intensifying raids against ... [house church] groups ... so church members are having to take extra precautions.’¹⁴⁵

10.3.5 An article published by Article 18 on 18 February 2025 stated: ‘Iranian authorities routinely raid the homes of Christian converts and house-churches ...’¹⁴⁶ While the article provided an example of one such raid (see paragraph 10.3.15), it did not expand on what it meant by ‘routinely’, nor did it provide any broader data to indicate the scale or extent to which raids on house churches occurred in Iran.

10.3.6 The translated Landinfo update report, translated into English, stated:

‘It is not personal faith that is problematic for the authorities, but activities such as evangelism and the organisation of home churches. From the authorities’ perspective, home churches threaten national security and contribute to cooperation with foreign and hostile states such as the USA and Israel. Iranian authorities therefore define the organised home church movement as political opposition activity that threatens national security. The Iranian regime constantly works to protect the Islamic Republic and neutralise all opposition.

‘... Previously, the Ministry of Intelligence carried out most of the raids and interrogations targeting converts and house church communities. In recent years, there has been a shift towards the intelligence service of the Revolutionary Guards, which is more violent and less respectful, becoming more involved. The trend appears to have continued into 2024. An increased focus and pressure from the authorities will normally result in a higher number of raids on house churches and private homes. This leads to an increase in the number of arrests and detentions.

‘... Usually, the house church dissolves after a raid and members and

¹⁴² BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Section 3.2.3.8), September 2023

¹⁴³ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Section 3.2.3.4), September 2023

¹⁴⁴ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.85), 24 July 2023

¹⁴⁵ BBC News, [Iran: The Christians celebrating Easter in secret](#), 1 April 2024

¹⁴⁶ Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

leaders are monitored.’¹⁴⁷ For more information about the numbers of arrests and detentions of Christians, see [Arrests, detentions and criminal charges](#).

- 10.3.7 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated: ‘... “[H]ouse churches” made up of Farsi-speaking converts, deemed to be apostates and a threat to the nation’s security, are illegal.’¹⁴⁸
- 10.3.8 The Article 18 article, published on 20 October 2025, stated: ‘Security forces have repeatedly raided ... homes merely because a few Christians gathered to read the Bible.’¹⁴⁹ The source did not provide any further information regarding the scale or extent to which this occurred.
- 10.3.9 In December 2025, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) published a report which cited various sources, entitled ‘Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025’. The report stated: ‘Based on the conversion cases in Iran, the security apparatus does not target individual converts themselves, but rather the practises in house churches. The main focus of the authorities is on the collective activities and the gatherings themselves, as the primary goal is to stop the spread of Christianity in Iran.’¹⁵⁰
- 10.3.10 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated that house churches were, ‘... constantly threatened by security services that monitor their activities ... Government surveillance is most concentrated in urban centers, while rural areas experience less direct monitoring. However, this creates a paradoxical situation, despite a stronger government presence, urban Christians benefit from greater anonymity, allowing them to organize gatherings with less community scrutiny. Conversely, rural Christians face intense social monitoring from neighbors and community members who might report suspicious activities to authorities.’¹⁵¹
- 10.3.11 The same Open Doors report also stated: ‘Christians face constant community-level surveillance, particularly those suspected of house church involvement or evangelism ... The government has intensified efforts to eliminate Persian-speaking Christianity by raiding house churches and arresting leaders and members.’¹⁵²
- 10.3.12 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report also stated: ‘Unrecognised converts to Christianity ... are arrested for praying and worshipping together in their homes, in what are termed “illegal gatherings” of “enemy groups” ... Whereas in previous years the MOIS was the main government body responsible for the monitoring and gathering evidence against Christians, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is now playing an increasing role ... IRGC involvement in raids tends to be characterised by increased brutality.’¹⁵³
- 10.3.13 On 10 April 2026, Christianity Today, ‘a nonprofit global media ministry’ and magazine¹⁵⁴, published an article which stated:

¹⁴⁷ Landinfo, [... Conditions for ... converts ...](#) (English translation) (sections 1.3, 2, 6), 28 July 2025

¹⁴⁸ Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

¹⁴⁹ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

¹⁵⁰ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 11), December 2025

¹⁵¹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 3), January 2026

¹⁵² Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

¹⁵³ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (pages 4 and 8), February 2026

¹⁵⁴ Christianity Today, [What We Do](#), no date

‘Through gaps in the internet blackout [amid war in Iran], I hear that many house churches are still meeting despite government checkpoints increasing the risk of being searched and arrested ... Pushed underground, Persian-speaking Christians now meet only in house churches, facing constant threats of raids, arrests, interrogation, torture, and prosecutions that often end in prison.’¹⁵⁵

10.3.14 The Amnesty International 2025 and 2026 reports both noted that Iranian authorities raided house churches during the reporting periods^{156 157}, neither report provided any further information to quantify the scale or extent to which raids occurred.

10.3.15 A recent example of an IRGC raid was (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list) conducted on 6 February 2025 by at least 20 IRGC plainclothes agents on a gathering of Christians in northern Iran^{158 159 160} which reportedly took place in a private garden¹⁶¹. CPIT notes that the number of Christians reportedly present at the gathering, approximately 80^{162 163}, is inconsistent with the evidence about the typical size of house church gatherings (see [House churches](#)). However, it is also noted that, ‘Christians from the nearby cities of Gorgan and Babol had joined together’¹⁶⁴ for the gathering.

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10.4 Social media monitoring

10.4.1 The translated Landinfo update report stated:

‘According to several sources, Christians in Iran have become more cautious with direct and physical missionary work. The authorities monitor phone calls and keep track of the movements of people suspected of missionary activity. According to an Iranian leader (... [in] 2023), it has therefore become more common to evangelise on digital platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp and Instagram or through satellite TV. This is, according to the leader, the safest way to spread the Christian message. In this way, they can reach thousands of people without revealing their identities. Training programmes for Christian leaders focus on how they can evangelise online with minimal risk.

‘Much Christian material is available online and can be used by both individuals and house churches ... The Bible is available in Persian and can be downloaded for free from the internet. [Virtual Private Network] VPN technology enables Christians in Iran to access such channels.’¹⁶⁵

10.4.2 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: ‘Christians, particularly converts, face severe risks for expressing faith publicly or online, as authorities monitor internet activities to gather evidence for arrests. Sharing

¹⁵⁵ Christianity Today, [The Iranian Church Persists](#), 10 April 2026

¹⁵⁶ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

¹⁵⁷ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (page 206), 21 April 2026

¹⁵⁸ Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁵⁹ IranWire, [Christian Convert Arrested in Northern Iran](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁶⁰ NCRI Women’s Committee, [... Christian Convert, Is Arrested in a Raid ...](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁶¹ Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁶² Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁶³ NCRI Women’s Committee, [... Christian Convert, Is Arrested in a Raid ...](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁶⁴ Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

¹⁶⁵ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 1.4), 28 July 2025

Christian content in Persian is considered proselytization, while accessing Christian materials online or contacting foreign Christians invites surveillance.¹⁶⁶

10.4.3 Some recent examples of Christians who were convicted, in part, for their social media activities, include (Note: this is not intended to be exhaustive):

- a pregnant female Christian convert who was sentenced to an additional year in prison for ‘propaganda against the state’ (on top of prison sentences relating to her other religious activities including worship at a house church) after she criticised the government on social media^{167 168 169}. Sources reported, in April 2025, that her sentence was upheld at appeal^{170 171}
- a female Christian convert who, having been arrested and charged in relation to her religious activities, reportedly faced 2 additional charges for alleged social media activity in support of the ‘Women, Life, Freedom’ protests [a protest movement which began in September 2022, with the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman arrested in Tehran for allegedly violating Iran’s requirement that women cover their hair with a hijab¹⁷², and against the former leader of Hezbollah [an Iran-based political party and militant group based in Lebanon^{173]}^{174 175}
- a male Christian convert who was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for ‘propaganda activity contrary to Islamic law due to overseas connections’ and 7 months for ‘propaganda against the system’, in relation to his Christian activities, was reportedly served an additional 17 months for allegedly insulting Iran’s Supreme Leader on social media^{176 177}.

10.4.4 For more information about the general surveillance of online activities in Iran, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).

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10.5 Arrests, detentions and criminal charges

10.5.1 The joint submission on 18 July 2024 to the UNHRC of CSW and CSW-Nigeria noted that vague, or broadly defined charges of blasphemy, ‘spreading corruption on earth’, and ‘waging war against God’ were used to persecute religious minorities, including Christians¹⁷⁸. The same submission also stated: ‘The first known case of Christians being charged under the amended articles [499 and 500 of the IPC, see [Legal context: Apostasy and](#)

¹⁶⁶ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

¹⁶⁷ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

¹⁶⁸ HRANA, [Christian Convert Narges Nasri Sentenced to 16 Years in Prison ...](#), 10 March 2025

¹⁶⁹ Barnabas Aid, [Three Iranian Christians receive prison sentences ...](#), 14 March 2025

¹⁷⁰ Article 18, [Tehran court rejects appeals of converts ...](#), 28 April 2025

¹⁷¹ HRANA, [Appeals Court: 3 Christian Converts Sentenced to Over 41 Years ...](#), 28 April 2025

¹⁷² BBC News, [Iran: A really simple guide to the protests](#), 15 September 2023

¹⁷³ PBS News, [What is Hezbollah? ...](#), 16 October 2023

¹⁷⁴ Article 18, [Prayer, baptism and celebrating Christmas cited as ... ‘crimes’](#), 12 June 2025

¹⁷⁵ Article 18, [Over 20 Christians arrested as UN experts decry targeting of minorities](#), 10 July 2025

¹⁷⁶ Barnabas Aid, [Iranian appeal court upholds prison sentences for five Christians](#), 7 October 2025

¹⁷⁷ Article 18, [Christian convert begins nine-year prison sentence after torture ...](#), 4 November 2025

¹⁷⁸ CSW and CSW-Nigeria, [Iran: submission to the 48th session ...](#) (paragraph 7), 18 July 2024

[proselytising](#)] occurred in May 2021.¹⁷⁹

- 10.5.2 The Article 18 article published on 29 August 2024 referred to leaked data which ‘... include[d] the cases of at least 327 Christians prosecuted in the Tehran area between July 2008 and January 2023, including at least seven ordained ministers ... represent[ing] a mere drop in the ocean of all convictions of Christians over the 15-year period ...’¹⁸⁰
- 10.5.3 The same Article 18 article also stated:
‘The most common charge, referenced in 86% of cases [representing approximately 281 individuals], was “propaganda against the state (by promoting Christianity)”, followed by membership (69%) [approximately 226 individuals] or leadership (58%) [approximately 190 individuals] of “anti-security” groups (house-churches).
‘Other common charges included “insulting Islamic sanctities” (42% of cases) [approximately 137 individuals] and “gathering and collusion against national security” (30%) [approximately 98 individuals], while 34 individuals were charged with “disturbing public opinion”; 30 with “disrupting peace and order”; 28 with “insulting the Supreme Leader”; 26 with possession of satellite receivers; and 25 with “apostasy”.’¹⁸¹
- 10.5.4 Article 18 noted that other charges included ‘spying’, ‘disobeying officers performing their duty’, ‘acting against the country’s national security through the administration of illegal organisations of the Iranian Evangelical Council’, and ‘foreign trips and communicating and cooperating with evangelistic organisations and spy services’¹⁸².
- 10.5.5 The same Article 18 article additionally stated: ‘Of the 327 individuals, the vast majority (around 90%) [approximately 294] were converts to Christianity ... and 22 [approximately 7%] Christians of Assyrian or Armenian descent ...’¹⁸³
- 10.5.6 The ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: ‘At least 139 Christians were arrested in Iran in 2024 on account of their religious beliefs or activities, 80 were detained and 77 were charged ... [I]n the same month [September 2024] that ... two Christians were released [from prison, see paragraph 10.8.18], others were being detained, illustrating that any hopes of a substantive change of approach under the new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, may be unfounded.’¹⁸⁴
- 10.5.7 The same report also noted that a trend of arrested Christians, or their families choosing not to publicise their cases for fear of repercussions during 2023, ‘... continued in 2024; however, some who experienced violations chose to publicise their cases in the hope it would help not only them, but others also ...’¹⁸⁵
- 10.5.8 The ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ report also stated:
‘In the latter half of 2024, a new trend emerged involving the financial

¹⁷⁹ CSW and CSW-Nigeria, [Iran: submission to the 48th session ...](#) (paragraph 6), 18 July 2024

¹⁸⁰ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

¹⁸¹ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

¹⁸² Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

¹⁸³ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

¹⁸⁴ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 3), 20 January 2025

¹⁸⁵ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 3), 20 January 2025

transactions of Christians and that of their lawyers being scrutinised by agents of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to uncover any funds received from friends, family members or Christians abroad. Over a two-month period, Christians in at least five cities were arrested or summoned for prolonged questioning by IRGC agents on suspicion of having received funds from abroad, for which they were threatened with charges under the amended Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code (IPC) ... [it is noted that the translated Landinfo report, commenting on the same information, stated: 'There is no information on whether any convictions have been made on this basis.'¹⁸⁶]. Over 70% of the charges against Christians in 2024 were filed under the amended Article 500.'¹⁸⁷

- 10.5.9 The 'Tip of the Iceberg' report also provided the following breakdown of charges against detained Christians in 2024; 2 for apostasy, 4 under Article 498, 13 under Article 500, 53 under 500 bis [second version¹⁸⁸] [CPIT calculates this to represent just under 69% of the 77 Christians that the report said were charged in 2024], 1 under Article 513, and 2 under other (unspecified) charges¹⁸⁹. For information about each of the mentioned articles of the penal code, see [Legal context: Apostasy and proselytising](#).
- 10.5.10 On 7 January 2025, Article 18 published an article which stated: 'There is always an increase in arrests of Christians at Christmas-time, as well as Easter, both as a deterrent to stop Christians from meeting and a means of arresting the greatest number of Christians possible, as Christians are guaranteed to gather together in larger numbers on such occasions.'¹⁹⁰
- 10.5.11 In March 2025, the USCIRF published its 2025 annual report on international religious freedom, covering events of 2024, which stated that, '... at least 21 Christians remained imprisoned in Iran [as of the end of 2024]'.¹⁹¹
- 10.5.12 On 1 April 2025, the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI), published an article about a sixfold increase in the combined length of prison sentences handed down to Christians in 2024 compared with 2023 [see [Convictions and prison sentences](#)], which stated: 'The arrests in 2024 were carried out by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) intelligence agents ...'¹⁹²
- 10.5.13 An article published by Article 18 on 12 June 2025 stated: 'Ordinary Christian acts such as praying, performing baptisms, taking Communion and celebrating Christmas have been cited as evidence of alleged crimes in the indictment against five Christians charged with "gathering and collusion" and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran"'.¹⁹³ See also paragraph 10.10.6.
- 10.5.14 In its article of 24 July 2025, Article 18 stated:
- 'More Christians have been arrested in the month since the [Israel-Iran] ceasefire was announced [on 24 June 2025¹⁹⁴] than in the six months prior,

¹⁸⁶ Landinfo, ... [Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 3.5), 28 July 2025

¹⁸⁷ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 3), 20 January 2025

¹⁸⁸ US Law Explained, [Bis in Law: An Ultimate Guide to Double Jeopardy and Legal Citations](#), no date

¹⁸⁹ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 24), 20 January 2025

¹⁹⁰ Article 18, ... [Christmas leave for ... prisoners, as arrests continue](#), 7 January 2025

¹⁹¹ USCIRF, ... [International Religious Freedom 2025 Annual Report](#) (page 25), March 2025

¹⁹² CHRI, [Imprisonment of Christians Jumps Six-Fold in Iran as Persecution Intensifies](#), 1 April 2025

¹⁹³ Article 18, [Prayer, baptism and celebrating Christmas cited as ... 'crimes'](#), 12 June 2025

¹⁹⁴ Zeidan, Adam and fact-checked by Britannica Editors, [12-Day War](#), 22 May 2026

with at least 54 documented arrests since 24 June [2025], compared to 40 between 1 January and 24 June [2025] ... Christians ... [are] known to have been targeted in Amol, Lahijan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Garmsar, Hamedan, Miandoab, Isfahan, Karaj, Takestan, Borujerd, Anzali, Neyshabur, and Nowshahr [as well as in Tehran, Rasht, Orumiyeh, Kermanshah and Varamin¹⁹⁵].¹⁹⁶

- 10.5.15 The same article noted ‘... a newly proposed law ... seeks to enforce harsher punishments for those perceived to have collaborated with “hostile states” such as the United States or Israel, and which some of the arrested Christians have been threatened will be used against them.’¹⁹⁷
- 10.5.16 The article published by Article 18 on 12 August 2025 stated:
‘Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) has admitted to having arrested over 50 Christians since the end of the [12-day] conflict with Israel, accusing them of involvement in “anti-security” activities and even possession of arms ... At the time of writing ... over 40 ... remain detained, on top of those already serving prison sentences. Prior to the conflict, over 60 other Christians were either detained or in the process of being tried on charges related to their faith in Iran, and this number has now nearly doubled.’¹⁹⁸
- 10.5.17 On 19 August 2025, the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), a US-registered press association of human rights advocates, reporting daily on human rights violations in Iran¹⁹⁹, published an article which noted that an IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Iran’s state broadcaster²⁰⁰) documentary, broadcast after a group of Christians were arrested, showed forced confessions of detained Christians. The article stated that the documentary, ‘... levels accusations against Christian converts – referred to in the program as “Evangelists” – including alleged ties to foreign entities, participation in religious camps abroad, collaboration with opposition groups, and attempts to undermine national security.’²⁰¹
- 10.5.18 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated: ‘The usual charges levelled at Christians are offences against national security, spreading “propaganda activities contrary to Islamic law”, and membership of illegal organisations. House churches are routinely defined as illegal groups “with the aim of disrupting the security of the country through educational and propaganda activities contrary to and disturbing to the holy religion of Islam”.’²⁰²
- 10.5.19 An IranWire article published on 22 October 2025, stated: ‘International organizations report that conditions for religious minorities have worsened since the recent war between Iran and Israel, with many Christians facing accusations of spying for Israel or maintaining illegal contact with the Jewish state.’²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ Article 18, [Over 20 Christians arrested as UN experts decry targeting of minorities](#), 10 July 2025

¹⁹⁶ Article 18, [Increase in arrests and hate speech against Christians since war ...](#), 24 July 2025

¹⁹⁷ Article 18, [Increase in arrests and hate speech against Christians since war ...](#), 24 July 2025

¹⁹⁸ Article 18, [Ministry of Intelligence admits arresting over 50 Christians](#), 12 August 2025

¹⁹⁹ HRANA, [About Us](#), no date

²⁰⁰ BBC Monitoring, [Media Guide: Iran](#) (Media Overview) (via subscription), 18 February 2026

²⁰¹ HRANA, [Iran’s State TV Airs Forced Confessions of Christian Converts](#), 19 August 2025

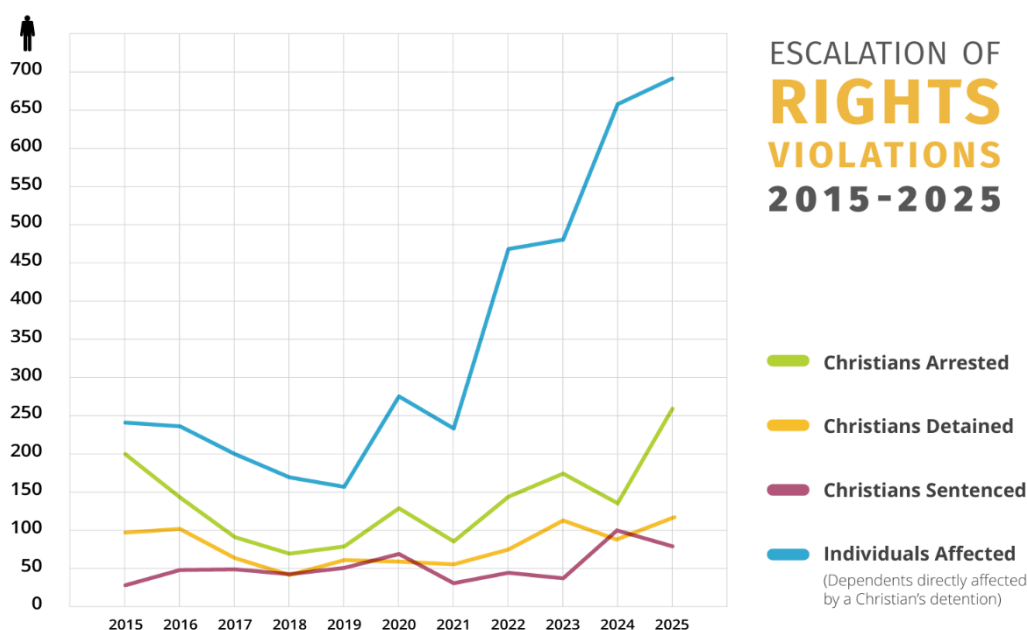
²⁰² Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

²⁰³ IranWire, [Tehran’s ‘Christian’ Metro Station Opens as Persecution Intensifies](#), 22 October 2025

10.5.20 The December 2025 DIS report stated: ‘Christian converts are often charged under vague national security laws, such as “acting against national security” or “propaganda against the state”.’²⁰⁴ The same report noted that stricter national security law, adopted in Iran’s penal code law [see Legal context: Apostasy and proselytising], ‘... is frequently used against religious converts.’²⁰⁵

10.5.21 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: ‘Many [Christians] endure repeated intimidation through summons for interrogation.’²⁰⁶

10.5.22 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, included the below graph, showing the numbers of arrested, detained, and sentenced Christians (as well as dependents directly affected by the detention of Christians) between 2015 and 2025²⁰⁷:



10.5.23 The above graph shows that while the number of arrested and detained Christians fell between 2015 and 2018, between 2018 and 2023 there was an overall increase, despite some decreases within that period. Numbers of arrested and detained Christians fell again in 2024, however, they rose to their highest levels in 10 years in 2025, with over 250 Christians arrested and over 100 Christians detained.

10.5.24 With regard to how the Article 18 et al report defined arrests, the translated Landinfo update report stated:

‘In an email to Landinfo, Article 18 ([in] March, 2025) explains that persons held for up to 24 hours are considered arrested. This also includes persons who have been summoned for interrogation by a court order or by telephone, provided they are released within 24 hours. In an email ([in] 2025) from one of the other organisations behind the reports, it is stated that they are not

²⁰⁴ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 11), December 2025

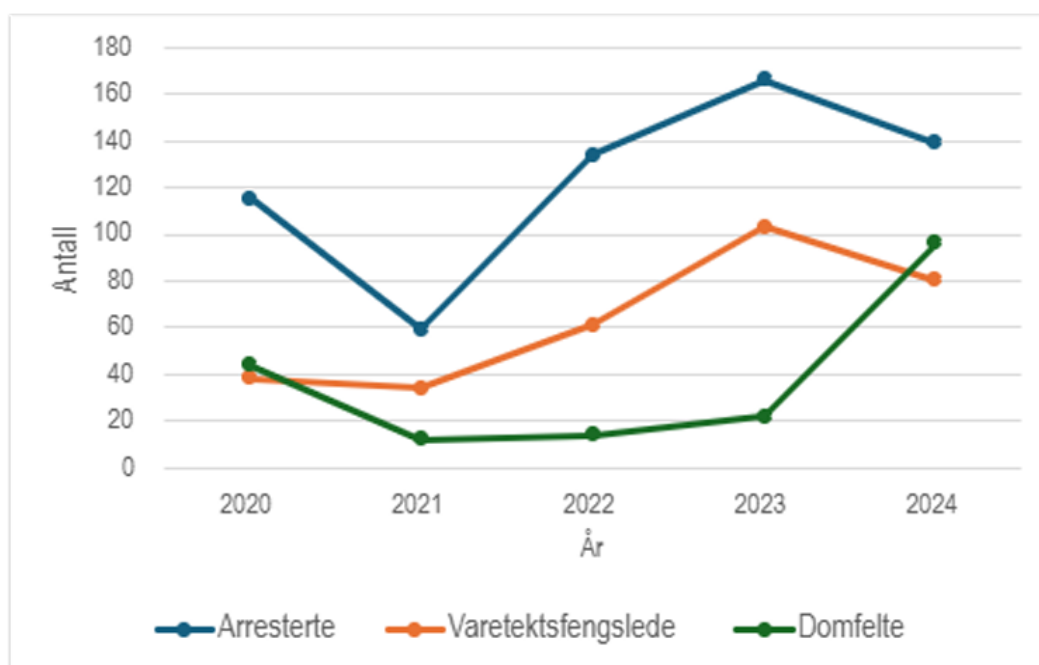
²⁰⁵ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 11), December 2025

²⁰⁶ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

²⁰⁷ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 25), February 2026

aware of such a definition of the term. They write in their response to Landinfo: “This is a good question and one we should discuss with partners to make sure we are agreed on a definition.” ... A differing understanding of such a central term can be a significant source of error and result in inaccuracies in reporting.’²⁰⁸ CPIT therefore considers there to be some ambiguity about how Christians who came to the adverse attention of the authorities were classified for the purposes of the above graph.

10.5.25 The translated Landinfo update report also included the below graph which, citing Article 18 et al data (in their annual reports published between 2021 and 2025²⁰⁹), showed a ‘zoomed in’ picture of the numbers of arrested (blue line, ‘arresterte’ in Norwegian), detained (orange line, ‘varetektsfengslede’) and convicted (green line, ‘domfelte’) Christians in Iran, between 2020 and 2024²¹⁰. Regarding the definitions applied, Landinfo stated: ‘In this note, we adopt Article 18’s understanding of arrested and detained. If the arrested person is held for more than 24 hours, they are considered detained; in this report, the term ‘in custody’ is used for this category [see also paragraph 10.5.24].’²¹¹:



10.5.26 The translated Landinfo update report stated: ‘As Landinfo understands the situation, the number of arrested individuals is ... a “barometer” of whether the pressure on Christians and converts is increasing or decreasing. It will take some time before the effects are reflected in the statistics on convicted individuals.’²¹²

10.5.27 The translated Landinfo report noted several factors which, it considered, explained the fluctuations in arrest numbers between 2021 and late 2023, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the Women, Life, Freedom movement. The report stated:

²⁰⁸ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 2.1), 28 July 2025

²⁰⁹ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 2.2), 28 July 2025

²¹⁰ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 2.2), 28 July 2025

²¹¹ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 2.1), 28 July 2025

²¹² Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 2), 28 July 2025

‘It was only in the autumn of 2023 that Iran returned to what can be described as a “normal state”.

‘... In discussions with Landinfo [in March 2023], Article 18 ... estimated that the actual number of arrests varies between 200 and 300 per year. This includes cases that have become known afterwards.

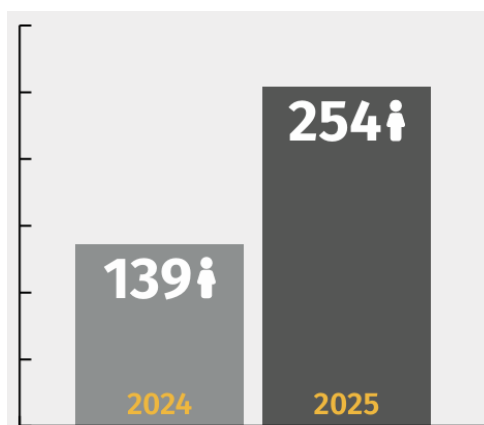
‘The number of arrests during the reporting period [2022 to 2024²¹³] falls within this range of variation. In these three years, between 100 and 200 arrests have been reported annually, with the highest number in 2023. Consideration must be given to unreported cases and to the fact that cases may come to light later.

‘... The highest number of arrests was in 2023, when 166 were registered as arrested, and of these, 103 were remanded in custody. In the first six months, there were few arrests.

‘In 2024, the number of arrests and remand detainees decreased slightly, according to Article 18 a total of 139 people were arrested. Of these, 59 received no criminal penalties, while 80 were remanded in custody.’²¹⁴

10.5.28 Landinfo (translated) added: ‘By the nature of the matter, it is difficult to know the extent of hidden and unreported cases. As understood by Landinfo, it is particularly arrests that may go unreported ... [and t]he leader of an Iranian organisation (... [in] 2025) explained that even though ordinary members are not prosecuted, they are questioned and threatened.’²¹⁵

10.5.29 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, included the below graph, showing the number of Christians arrested in Iran in 2024 and 2025²¹⁶. The graph shows that the number of arrested Christians increased by almost 83% in 2025 compared with 2024 (CPIT’s calculation):



10.5.30 The ‘Scapegoats’ report also noted that, in 2025, an additional 108 Christians were detained²¹⁷. However, it also stated that ‘... many more go unreported, either because no-one raises awareness – arresting authorities frequently issue threats against publicity – or because those involved request confidentiality.’²¹⁸ It further stated, in respect of Christians who were charged in 2025, ‘[i]n the vast majority of cases (nearly 90%), charges

²¹³ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (Summary), 28 July 2025

²¹⁴ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 2.2), 28 July 2025

²¹⁵ Landinfo, [... Conditions for ... converts ...](#) (English translation) (sections 5 and 6), 28 July 2025

²¹⁶ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 5), February 2026

²¹⁷ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 12), February 2026

²¹⁸ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 13), February 2026

against Christians were brought under the amended Article 500 ... of the penal code, which criminalises “propaganda contrary to the holy religion of Islam” ... [while at least] 5 Christians faced charges under the new espionage law brought in following the 12-day war, resulting in combined sentences of over 40 years in prison.’²¹⁹

10.5.31 The Article 18 et al report further noted that at least 16 Christians remained in pre-trial detention at the end of 2025²²⁰ and stated that, ‘... it should be noted that at least five of the Christians who remained detained in Iran on charges related to their religious activities at the end of 2025 were ethnic Armenians.’²²¹

10.5.32 The Amnesty International 2025 and 2026 human rights reports both noted that the Iranian authorities subjected religious minorities who professed or practised their faith to arbitrary detention and unjust persecution^{222 223}. Both reports also noted that the Iranian authorities arbitrarily detained, specifically, Christian converts during 2024 and 2025^{224 225}. Neither report, however, provided any further information to quantify the scale or extent to which this occurred, nor to indicate its occurrence to Christian converts compared with its occurrence to ‘ethnic’ Christians.

10.5.33 The Amnesty International 2026 human rights report also stated: ‘Authorities smeared Christians as “Mossad mercenaries” ... [and] broadcast forced “confessions” of those detained ...’²²⁶

10.5.34 Some recent examples of the arrest and detention of, or criminal charges made against, Christians by Iranian authorities include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- the arrest of a Christian convert at his home in Karaj (in the Kermanshah province) on 26 May 2024 by members of the intelligence forces who reportedly held him in custody at an unknown location^{227 228 229 230}. He had not been made aware of any charges against him 19 days after his arrest more than 2 weeks later^{231 232}. CPIT was unable to find any further information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to indicate whether he was subsequently released or charged and prosecuted
- the arrest, in September 2024, of a Christian convert who had gone to the Prosecutor’s Office with documents for her Christian friend’s release, after they were arrested the previous day; she was reportedly detained

²¹⁹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 5), February 2026

²²⁰ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 5), February 2026

²²¹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 4), February 2026

²²² Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

²²³ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (page 205), 21 April 2026

²²⁴ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

²²⁵ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (page 206), 21 April 2026

²²⁶ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (page 206), 21 April 2026

²²⁷ Article 18, [Concern for Christian convert after two weeks’ detention ...](#), 12 June 2024

²²⁸ Hengaw, [... Christian convert, Farokh Kakai arrested and his case status pending](#), 13 June 2024

²²⁹ IranWire, [Christian Convert in Iran Detained for 19 Days, Charges Unclear](#), 14 June 2024

²³⁰ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 8), 20 January 2025

²³¹ Article 18, [Concern for Christian convert after two weeks’ detention ...](#), 12 June 2024

²³² IranWire, [Christian Convert in Iran Detained for 19 Days, Charges Unclear](#), 14 June 2024

on arrival on charges of 'illegal Christian activities'^{233 234 235} See [Bail](#) for information about her subsequent release on bail. CPIT was unable to find any further information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to indicate whether she was subsequently prosecuted and sentenced

- the arrest, in 2 incidents in 2 different cities, in December 2024, of 40 Christians who had met to celebrate Christmas^{236 237 238 239}. The arrests coincided with an announcement by the authorities to grant 5 days' leave to some Christian prisoners to celebrate Christmas^{240 241}
- the arrest of one Christian convert, on 6 February 2025, during an IRGC raid on a gathering of approximately 80 Christians in a garden in northern Iran²⁴². She was reportedly later charged with 'gathering and collusion' and 'propaganda against the regime' before being released on bail^{243 244}. However, CPIT was unable to find any further information from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) regarding whether she was subsequently prosecuted and/ or sentenced
- the arrest, also on 6 February 2025, in Tehran, of a female Christian convert in her 40s (who was reportedly arrested and charged in January 2022 with 'deviant propaganda contrary to the sacred Islamic faith' (under the amended Article 500 of the penal code) but was acquitted later that year), when she was taken to Evin Prison facing charges of 'acting against national security' and 'propaganda against the regime'^{245 246}
- 2 Christian males who were reportedly rearrested, in February 2025, in the Tehran area and returned to Evin Prison, having previously been 'pardoned' and released from prison on charges relating to their leadership of house-churches²⁴⁷. One of the men, a Christian convert, had been released in October 2022 after previously serving 5 years in prison^{248 249}, while the other, an Iranian-Armenian, was released in September 2023 after serving just over one year in Evin Prison^{250 251}. Both were reported to have initially been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for 'actions against national security'^{252 253 254}, though the Iranian-Armenian's sentence was subsequently reduced to 2 years in

²³³ Barnabas Aid, [Iranian Ministry of Intelligence detains Christian convert](#), 18 September 2024

²³⁴ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 9), 20 January 2025

²³⁵ USCIRF, [Mojdeh Falahi](#), no date

²³⁶ Article 18, [... Christmas leave for ... prisoners, as arrests continue](#), 7 January 2025

²³⁷ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 11), 20 January 2025

²³⁸ UNHRC, [... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 43), 18 June 2025

²³⁹ Stefanus Alliance USA, [Iranian Christians: Sixfold Increase in Prison Sentences ...](#), no date

²⁴⁰ Article 18, [... Christmas leave for ... prisoners, as arrests continue](#), 7 January 2025

²⁴¹ UNHRC, [... Report of the Secretary-General ...](#) (paragraph 43), 18 June 2025

²⁴² Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

²⁴³ Article 18, [Christian convert released on \\$40,000 bail charged ...](#), 11 March 2025

²⁴⁴ Church in Chains, [Iran: Somayeh Rajabi released on large bail](#), 12 March 2025

²⁴⁵ Article 18, [Christian convert can't afford bail, remains in Evin Prison ...](#), 19 May 2025

²⁴⁶ Church in Chains, [Iran: Christian convert unable to afford bail remains in prison](#), 21 May 2025

²⁴⁷ Article 18, [Christians once 'pardoned' after years in prison re-arrested](#), 10 February 2025

²⁴⁸ Article 18, [Christian convert freed after nearly five years in Evin Prison](#), 17 October 2022

²⁴⁹ Article 18, [Christians once 'pardoned' after years in prison re-arrested](#), 10 February 2025

²⁵⁰ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor 'pardoned', released from prison](#), 14 September 2023

²⁵¹ Article 18, [Christians once 'pardoned' after years in prison re-arrested](#), 10 February 2025

²⁵² Article 18, [Christian convert freed after nearly five years in Evin Prison](#), 17 October 2022

²⁵³ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor 'pardoned', released from prison](#), 14 September 2023

²⁵⁴ Article 18, [Christians once 'pardoned' after years in prison re-arrested](#), 10 February 2025

prison²⁵⁵. The USCIRF reported broadly the same information about the rearrests of both men, though with some differences regarding some of the details^{256 257}

- the Iranian-Armenian's (in the above example) Christian wife, was also reportedly arrested in April 2025^{258 259} though she was not informed of any official charges, despite Iranian law requiring that detainees are informed of charges within 48 hours²⁶⁰

10.5.35 For additional details regarding the above examples, and for further examples of arrests, detentions and charges made against Christians for their faith-related activities in 2024 and 2025, see, respectively, pages 4 to 11 of the [‘Tip of the Iceberg’](#) and pages 13 to 21 of the [‘Scapegoats’](#) annual reports, published by Article 18 et al. Additionally, Article 18 maintains a [Prisoners List](#), which provides the names, dates, location, and current status of Christians arrested in Iran, as well as the charges under which they were arrested, where known. It should be noted that Article 18 has not presented this list as definitive of all prisoners.

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10.6 Treatment of detainees

10.6.1 The ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, noted that reports were made that detained Christians were physically tortured during 2024²⁶¹.

10.6.2 On 24 June 2025, Article 18 noted that, considering Israeli strikes on Iran that took place in June 2025, rather than the Iranian authorities effecting the ‘... release of all prisoners of conscience, in line with the Islamic Republic’s own regulations, which allow for the temporary release of all but the most dangerous criminals in “critical situations”²⁶², they instead transferred some prisoners, including some Christian prisoners, ‘... to the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary, where they are being held in unsanitary conditions in overcrowded cells, with as many as 40 prisoners in each.’²⁶³

10.6.3 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: ‘Christian women, especially converts, are highly vulnerable. Many participate in house churches, but risk arrest, sexual harassment, and verbal abuse during interrogations ... [while] Christian men in Iran are more likely to be arrested, tortured and imprisoned for years, often in deplorable conditions with no phone calls, exercise, or due process.’²⁶⁴

10.6.4 The 2026 World Watch List also stated: ‘Despite violating Iran’s own Penal Code, sexual harassment during interrogation of arrested Christians continues with impunity.’²⁶⁵

²⁵⁵ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor ‘pardoned’, released from prison](#), 14 September 2023

²⁵⁶ USCIRF, [Naser Navard Goltapeh](#), no date

²⁵⁷ USCIRF, [Joseph Shahbazian](#), no date

²⁵⁸ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor denied leave ... as wife ... arrested](#), 14 April 2025

²⁵⁹ Article 18, [Prayer, baptism and celebrating Christmas cited as ... ‘crimes’](#), 12 June 2025

²⁶⁰ Article 18, [Pastor’s wife released on \\$50,000 bail after month in Evin Prison](#), 13 May 2025

²⁶¹ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 3), 20 January 2025

²⁶² Article 18, [Prisoners including Christians transferred after strike on Evin](#), 24 June 2025

²⁶³ Article 18, [Prisoners including Christians transferred after strike on Evin](#), 24 June 2025

²⁶⁴ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 5), January 2026

²⁶⁵ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

- 10.6.5 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: ‘Severe mistreatment of Christian prisoners was another notable characteristic of 2025, including denial of healthcare, psychological torture, and a reported beating ...’²⁶⁶ See paragraph 10.6.10 for some individual examples provided within the same report.
- 10.6.6 The same annual report also stated:
 ‘After the strike [on Evin Prison, on 23 June 2025, during the 12-day war with Israel²⁶⁷], male prisoners were transferred to Greater Tehran Penitentiary and female prisoners to Qarchak Prison in Varamin, while Evin Prison underwent repairs. Rights organisations reported unsuitable conditions, including severe overcrowding in both prisons, prompting Amnesty International to initiate an urgent appeal on behalf of prisoners. Christians involved in the prison transfers confirmed the dire conditions ...’²⁶⁸
- 10.6.7 In December 2025, the USCIRF published a factsheet about prison mistreatment and the freedom of religion or belief (FORB). The factsheet, which cited various sources, stated: ‘Evin holds about 60 percent of Christians detained in Iran. Former Christian prisoners report prison guards making harassing comments about their religion during interrogations. Others have been pressured to “confess” to participation in religious activities. An Armenian Christian woman reported that in 2022, an interrogator at Evin sexually assaulted and disparaged her for not wearing hijab on account of her non-Muslim religious identity.’²⁶⁹
- 10.6.8 The Amnesty International 2025 and 2026 human rights reports both noted that the Iranian Authorities subjected religious minorities professing or practising their faith to arbitrary detention, unjust prosecution, torture, and other ill treatment^{270 271}. Neither report provided any data to quantify the scale or extent to which this occurred, nor did they comment on the occurrence of this specifically for Christians.
- 10.6.9 Though not specifically regarding Christians, the Amnesty International 2026 human rights report stated:
 ‘Torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention were widespread and systematic.
 ‘Following Israeli air strikes on Evin prison, dozens of prisoners detained for political reasons were forcibly disappeared for weeks or months. Authorities transferred hundreds of other Evin prisoners to other prisons where conditions were cruel and inhumane and included overcrowding, insanitary conditions, poor ventilation, infestations of mice or insects, and insufficient access to potable water, edible food, bedding, toilets or washing facilities. Authorities continued to deny prisoners adequate healthcare. Several individuals died in custody in suspicious circumstances following credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment, including denial of healthcare ...
 ‘... Trials were systematically unfair, rendering detentions and executions

²⁶⁶ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 6), February 2026

²⁶⁷ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (pages 2 and 4), February 2026

²⁶⁸ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 4), February 2026

²⁶⁹ USCIRF, [Factsheet – Prison Mistreatment and FORB](#) (page 2), December 2025

²⁷⁰ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

²⁷¹ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (page 205), 21 April 2026

arbitrary. Authorities routinely denied detainees access to lawyers during investigations and based convictions on torture-tainted “confessions” that were frequently broadcast by state television. The judiciary lacked independence and was complicit in torture and other crimes under international law.²⁷²

10.6.10 Some recent examples of the treatment of Christian detainees by Iranian authorities include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- a detained Christian convert who, as of May 2024, needed a ‘specialist neurological examination’ due to interrogator abuse/imprisonment conditions^{273 274}, but who was reportedly denied medical care²⁷⁵. In April 2025, Article 18 reported that the same individual was denied ‘specialised medical care and medical furlough’ after she fell in the prison yard, bending 2 fingers on her left hand²⁷⁶
- a female Christian convert in her 40s who said, in July 2025, that she, and other prisoners, transferred to Qarchak Prison were transferred ‘... in “such a disgraceful manner, handcuffed”, and are now “suffering without clean water, cooling, or heating, lacking hygiene and proper food, entangled and helpless”²⁷⁷. She was reportedly also denied proper medical treatment in late October 2025 after she fell from her bunk bed at Evin Prison, fracturing her spine; she was taken to hospital for an x-ray, but was reportedly returned to prison the same day on a stretcher and in pain, and was only hospitalised after other prisoners protested^{278 279 280}. Article 18 stated that, ‘[s]he has been repeatedly denied access to adequate medical care during her detention, which included 65 days of solitary confinement in the ward operated by the Ministry of Intelligence: Ward 209.’²⁸¹
- a male Christian convert in his 60s, held in Tehran’s Evin Prison since February 2025, who, after suffering a stroke while on hunger strike in prison, and despite being ‘... rushed to the nearby Bani-Hashem Hospital, where he was treated and provided with a range of exercises to help him seek to regain movement in the left-hand side of his body ... [before t]wo days later, [he] was returned to the general ward of Evin Prison, where he remains detained ...’²⁸², was reported by a number of sources to have been denied adequate medical care^{283 284 285 286}
- the Iranian-Armenian Christian who was rearrested and sentenced to 10-years’ imprisonment in 2025 was denied permission to attend his

²⁷² Amnesty International, [... the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (pages 203 to 204), 21 April 2026

²⁷³ Iran International, [Jailed Iranian Christian Denied Medical Care](#), 11 May 2024

²⁷⁴ IranWire, [... The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), 31 July 2024

²⁷⁵ Iran International, [Jailed Iranian Christian Denied Medical Care](#), 11 May 2024

²⁷⁶ Article 18, [Christian convert denied urgent medical care in Evin Prison](#), 17 April 2025

²⁷⁷ Article 18, [Over 20 Christians arrested as UN experts decry targeting of minorities](#), 10 July 2025

²⁷⁸ Article 18, [Christian convert in Evin Prison suffers spinal fracture after fall](#), 4 November 2025

²⁷⁹ Voice of the Martyrs, [Iran: Christian Prisoner Injured After Fall](#), 12 November 2025

²⁸⁰ Iran International, [Christian convert broke spine, denied care in Iran prison ...](#), 13 November 2025

²⁸¹ Article 18, [Christian convert in Evin Prison suffers spinal fracture after fall](#), 4 November 2025

²⁸² Article 18, [Christian convert suffers stroke after 35-day hunger strike](#), 24 March 2025

²⁸³ IranWire, [Christian Convert Denied Medical Care After Possible Stroke ...](#), 25 March 2025

²⁸⁴ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor denied leave ... as wife ... arrested](#), 14 April 2025

²⁸⁵ Article 18, [Christian convert denied urgent medical care in Evin Prison](#), 17 April 2025

²⁸⁶ USCIRF, [Naser Navard Goltapeh](#), no date

mother's funeral when she died two months after his re-arrest^{287 288 289}

- an imprisoned Christian convert in his 30s who, reportedly developed a heart condition due to stress/interrogations during his initial detention and subsequently had all his requests for a referral to a cardiologist rejected and was beaten^{290 291 292}, causing a fracture in his leg or foot^{293 294}. The same individual was reportedly denied access to a telephone in April 2025 before a 2-day hunger strike led to him being given limited use²⁹⁵
- in May 2025, a letter written by an Armenian²⁹⁶ Christian man, describing '... the treatment he has been subjected to by Iranian security forces while in detention, which includes psychological torture, denial of due process, and death threats to his family members.'²⁹⁷
- the reported torture by prison authorities in June 2025 during the pre-trial detention of a male Christian^{298 299}, who was reported by one source to be a Christian convert³⁰⁰

10.6.11 For additional details regarding the above examples, and for some further examples of the treatment of Christian detainees in 2024 and 2025, see, respectively, pages 4 to 11 of the '[Tip of the Iceberg](#)' and pages 13 to 21 of the '[Scapegoats](#)' annual reports, published by Article 18 et al.

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10.7 Bail

10.7.1 The BZ 2023 report stated: 'Christians charged under Section 610 [threatening national security] of the Penal Code are often released on bail pending sentencing, although they are often remanded in custody for longer than legally prescribed and the amounts demanded in bail are high.'³⁰¹

10.7.2 The BBC News article, published on 1 April 2024, stated: 'Bails [for Christians] have become more expensive, and often are unaffordable.'³⁰²

10.7.3 Article 18 noted that as of 12 August 2025, 11 of the 54 Christians arrested since the end of the 12-day war in Iran had been released on bail³⁰³.

10.7.4 An article published by Article 18 on 4 November 2025 stated: 'Heavy bail conditions have increasingly been imposed on Christian detainees.'³⁰⁴

10.7.5 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: 'A systematic pattern of

²⁸⁷ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor denied leave ... as wife ... arrested](#), 14 April 2025

²⁸⁸ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 6), February 2026

²⁸⁹ USCIRF, [Joseph Shahbazian](#), no date

²⁹⁰ Article 18, [Imprisoned Christian convert with heart condition beaten ...](#), 19 March 2025

²⁹¹ Article 18, [Christian convert assaulted by prison officer ends hunger strike](#), 22 April 2025

²⁹² USCIRF, [Amir-Ali Minaei](#), no date

²⁹³ Article 18, [Christian convert assaulted by prison officer ends hunger strike](#), 22 April 2025

²⁹⁴ USCIRF, [Amir-Ali Minaei](#), no date

²⁹⁵ Article 18, [Christian convert assaulted by prison officer ends hunger strike](#), 22 April 2025

²⁹⁶ USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2025 Annual Report](#) (page 25), March 2025

²⁹⁷ USCIRF, [Hakop Gochumyan](#), no date

²⁹⁸ Article 18, [Christian convert tortured during 6-month pre-trial detention](#), 30 September 2025

²⁹⁹ USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2026 Annual Report](#) (page 31), 4 March 2026

³⁰⁰ Article 18, [Christian convert tortured during 6-month pre-trial detention](#), 30 September 2025

³⁰¹ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.5), September 2023

³⁰² BBC News, [Iran: The Christians celebrating Easter in secret](#), 1 April 2024

³⁰³ Article 18, [Ministry of Intelligence admits arresting over 50 Christians](#), 12 August 2025

³⁰⁴ Article 18, [Christian convert in Evin Prison suffers spinal fracture after fall](#), 4 November 2025

financial exploitation targets imprisoned Christians, particularly converts. Authorities regularly offer release on bail, demanding sums between \$2,000 [approximately £1,493 GBP³⁰⁵] and \$150,000 [approximately £112,000 GBP³⁰⁶], forcing families to surrender property deeds. Those released on bail often self-censor due to fear of property confiscation, while authorities pressure them to leave Iran and forfeit their bail.³⁰⁷

10.7.6 Some recent examples of bail amounts set for detained Christians include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- a Christian convert who was released on bail of 2.5 billion tomans (equivalent to \$40,000/ 38,000 Euros (approximately £30,000 GBP³⁰⁸³⁰⁹)) on 8 October 2024, having been detained approximately one month earlier when she attended the Prosecutor's Office to assist her Christian friend who was arrested a day earlier^{310 311}
- in December 2024, approximately one month after their arrest, 3 Christian converts were released on a bail amount equivalent to over \$20,000 (approximately £14,800 GBP³¹²) each, prior to their court hearing on 15 February 2025 and their sentencing in March 2025³¹³
- the release on 8 March 2025 on a bail amount equivalent to approximately \$40,000/ 36,000 Euros (approximately £30,000 GBP³¹⁴³¹⁵) of a Christian convert who was arrested at a gathering on 6 February 2025, after she was charged with 'gathering and collusion' and 'propaganda against the regime'^{316 317}
- a Christian convert who remained in Evin Prison several months after her arrest due to her bail amount being set at the equivalent to \$130,000 (approximately £96,000 GBP³¹⁸)^{319 320}. She was later sentenced to 17 years in prison, and reportedly on 21 December 2025, she was released on bail^{321 322}, pending the outcome of her appeal against her sentence³²³
- the release on a bail amount equivalent to \$50,000 (approximately £37,000 GBP³²⁴) one month after the arrest^{325 326 327} of the wife of an

³⁰⁵ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 18 May 2026

³⁰⁶ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 18 May 2026

³⁰⁷ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 4), January 2026

³⁰⁸ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 6 May 2026

³⁰⁹ XE.com, [Currency converter – Euros to British pounds](#), 22 May 2026

³¹⁰ Church in Chains, [Iran: Christian convert ... detained](#), 18 September 2024, updated January 2025

³¹¹ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 9), 20 January 2025

³¹² XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 29 April 2026

³¹³ Article 18, [Christian converts summoned to begin sentences or forfeit \\$20,000 bail](#), 8 May 2025

³¹⁴ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 22 May 2026

³¹⁵ XE.com, [Currency converter – Euros to British pounds](#), 22 May 2026

³¹⁶ Article 18, [Christian convert released on \\$40,000 bail charged ...](#), 11 March 2025

³¹⁷ Church in Chains, [Iran: Somayeh Rajabi released on large bail](#), 12 March 2025

³¹⁸ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 27 April 2026

³¹⁹ Article 18, [Christian convert can't afford bail, remains in Evin Prison ...](#), 19 May 2025

³²⁰ Article 18, [Christian convert in Evin Prison suffers spinal fracture after fall](#), 4 November 2025

³²¹ Church in Chains, [Iran: Five Christians ...](#), 10 December 2025, updated 23 December 2025

³²² Voice of the Martyrs, [Iran: Update – Aida Najafloo Secured Temporary Release](#), 14 January 2026

³²³ Voice of the Martyrs, [Iran: Update – Aida Najafloo Secured Temporary Release](#), 14 January 2026

³²⁴ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 28 April 2026

³²⁵ Article 18, [Pastor's wife released on \\$50,000 bail after month in Evin Prison](#), 13 May 2025

³²⁶ Article 18, [Prayer, baptism and celebrating Christmas cited as ... 'crimes'](#), 12 June 2025

³²⁷ Article 18, [Christian convert in Evin Prison suffers spinal fracture after fall](#), 4 November 2025

Iranian-Armenian detained pastor^{328 329}, who as of 12 June 2025 had not himself been set any bail amount having been rearrested in February 2025³³⁰

- 10.7.7 For additional details regarding the above examples, and for some further examples of bail amounts set for Christian detainees in 2024 and 2025, see, respectively, pages 4 to 11 of the [‘Tip of the Iceberg’](#) and pages 13 to 21 of the [‘Scapegoats’](#) annual reports, published by Article 18 et al.

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10.8 Convictions and prison sentences

- 10.8.1 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated: ‘Prison or the death penalty are possible outcomes for Christians meeting in house churches, both leaders and everyday adherents. DFAT understands that while not a common punishment, prison or the death penalty for apostasy is possible. Years or even decades-long prison sentences are also possible.’³³¹
- 10.8.2 The Article 18 article, published on 7 May 2024, stated: ‘Members [of house churches] have faced prison sentences of up to five years, and leaders up to 10 years, under Articles 498 and 499 of the penal code, relating to organisation and membership, respectively, of “anti-state groups”. It is also increasingly common for house-church members to be charged under the amended Article 500, which criminalises “educating in a deviant way contrary to the holy religion of Islam”.’³³²
- 10.8.3 The joint submission on 18 July 2024 to the UNHRC of CSW and CSW-Nigeria stated: ‘Despite its articulated commitment to protect the rights of Christians and other religious minorities, Iran has continued to target the former, and particularly converts to Christianity, with lengthy periods of arbitrary detention and imprisonment on unfounded charges typically related to “national security”, “extremism” and “propaganda”.’³³³
- 10.8.4 The ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al stated: ‘Heavy sentencing was a ... trend in 2024, with 96 Christians sentenced to a combined 263 years in prison, 37 years of internal exile, and nearly \$800,000 [approximately £588,500 GBP³³⁴] in fines. Confiscation of Christian properties was another trend ...’³³⁵ While 96 Christians were reported to have been sentenced in 2024, the same report also noted that 25 Christians ‘endured imprisonment’ during 2024³³⁶.
- 10.8.5 The ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ report also stated:
- ‘... [O]ver four times as many individuals were convicted for their peaceful Christian activities in 2024 than in the previous year ... [T]he cumulative length of sentences issued in 2024 [was] over six times higher than in 2023. This was partly due to a huge uptick in arrests in the second half of 2023

³²⁸ Article 18, [Pastor’s wife released on \\$50,000 bail after month in Evin Prison](#), 13 May 2025

³²⁹ Article 18, [Christian convert in Evin Prison suffers spinal fracture after fall](#), 4 November 2025

³³⁰ Article 18, [Prayer, baptism and celebrating Christmas cited as ... ‘crimes’](#), 12 June 2025

³³¹ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.86), 24 July 2023

³³² Article 18, [Why do most Iranian Christians worship in house-churches?](#), 7 May 2024

³³³ CSW and CSW-Nigeria, [Iran: submission to the 48th session ...](#) (paragraph 17), 18 July 2024

³³⁴ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 6 May 2026

³³⁵ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 3), 20 January 2025

³³⁶ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 12), 20 January 2025

which required judicial processing, resulting in a surge of sentencing in 2024 of over four times as many Christians. Notably, five Christians received 10-year prison terms, while another was sentenced to 15 years – a stark example of the intensifying penalties imposed ... Over the past decade, Revolutionary Court judges have increasingly been adding supplementary punishments such as fines on top of prison sentences. Other punishments frequently employed against Christians in recent years have included terms of internal exile, deprivation of social rights, enforced religious “re-education”, and travel bans.’³³⁷

10.8.6 The Landinfo update report stated:

‘Article 18 explains [in email correspondence] the large increase in the number of convictions in 2024 partly due to the large “waves of arrests” in the autumn and Christmas of 2023. These came to trial in 2024. The news outlet Christian Daily International points to this exactly as the explanation ...

‘An Iranian Christian organisation (... [in] April 2025) stated that the number of convictions in 2024 does not represent a new trend, but rather a return to a normal level after the COVID-19 pandemic and the Women, Life, Freedom protests ...

‘The leader of an Iranian organisation (... [in] May 2025) pointed out that the authorities want to curb the strong growth in the number of converts, which is done by sentencing leaders of house churches to long prison terms. The leader further noted that no one has the complete picture, and there may be unreported cases making it difficult to compare figures from year to year. At the same time, the source believed that the number of convicts is probably more reliable than the number of arrests.’³³⁸

10.8.7 Article 18 et al noted that 18 Christian ‘prisoners of conscience’ remained in prison at the end of 2024³³⁹, further to which the translated Landinfo update report stated:

‘... [I]n the period from December 2024 to March 2025 ... the number of Christians and converts serving sentences had risen to 21 people. In addition, 7 Christians had been summoned to serve their sentences, but following advice from their lawyer, they were waiting for the appeal case to be heard.

‘... [T]he relatively low number of incarcerated individuals ... [was explained by one of the organisations behind the report by] noting that some are out on bail pending the hearing of their appeals. The organisation points out that there may also be unreported cases here.

‘This illustrates that the number of convictions can be misleading, as it is not clear at what stage in the criminal process the case is. It is not indicated whether the judgment is final, whether the case has been appealed, whether the convicted person is out on bail, or is possibly waiting in the prison queue.’³⁴⁰ The translated Landinfo report also noted: ‘This may be significant because there appears to be a pattern where the appellate court in some

³³⁷ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual ...](#) (pages 11 and 14), 20 January 2025

³³⁸ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 3.1), 28 July 2025

³³⁹ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 11), 20 January 2025

³⁴⁰ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 4), 28 July 2025

cases reduces the sentences from the first instance.’³⁴¹

10.8.8 Addressing the issue of whether Christians have ever been sentenced to death or executed for apostasy, the Article 18 et al ‘Tip of the Iceberg’ report stated:

‘Rev Hossein Soodmand of the Assemblies of God (AoG) denomination is ... the only Iranian Christian convert to have been executed for “apostasy” – back in 1990. Since then, others have been sentenced to death, but in each case the sentence has been overturned following an international outcry. However, in 1994, Christian convert Rev Mehdi Dibaj of the AoG was freed from death row, only to be killed extrajudicially five months later. Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani of the Church of Iran denomination was the most recent publicly reported instance of an “apostate” being sentenced to death, in 2010, but he was also later acquitted.’³⁴² Referring to the same information, the translated Landinfo report stated that it ‘... has no further information on the circumstances of these cases and is not aware that charges of apostasy have resulted in convictions in recent years.’³⁴³

10.8.9 The CHRI article, published on 1 April 2025, stated, in reference to evangelical Christians, that, ‘... the courts typically used a provision added to Article 500 of Iran’s Penal Code in 2021 (which stipulates heavy punishments for anyone who commits “any deviant educational or proselytizing activity that contradicts or interferes with the sacred law of Islam”) [see [Legal context: Apostasy and proselytising](#)] to justify long prison sentences.’³⁴⁴

10.8.10 The translated Landinfo update report stated:

‘Christians and converts who are persecuted as punishment are generally charged and punished under the provisions of the Penal Code concerning national security. Individuals charged with national security offences are normally tried by the Revolutionary Courts ... Sentencing can be arbitrary in many cases, and it is not obvious that there is a direct correlation between indictment and conviction. Some judges in the Revolutionary Court are known for imposing very harsh punishments on Christians and converts.’³⁴⁵

10.8.11 The translated Landinfo report also stated:

‘There is no complete overview of the profile of the convicted. No sources, including Article 18, publish such information. In many of the referenced cases, there is no information about either the profile or which law they are charged or convicted under. It is therefore difficult to state anything certain about the profile of the convicted ...

‘... In 2023, Landinfo held a number of conversations with Iranian converts and Christian organisations in Turkey and England about the profile of those convicted. Article 18 confirmed that the majority of those convicted in 2022 were leaders. The sources were relatively consistent in stating that the regime’s primary focus is to stop the spread of Christianity in Iran. Therefore, they target individuals who contribute to spreading the Christian message;

³⁴¹ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 3.2.2), 28 July 2025

³⁴² Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 24), 20 January 2025

³⁴³ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 3.2.1), 28 July 2025

³⁴⁴ CHRI, [Imprisonment of Christians Jumps Six-Fold in Iran as Persecution Intensifies](#), 1 April

³⁴⁵ Landinfo, [... Conditions for ... converts ...](#) (English translation) (sections 3 and 3.2.2), 28 July 2025

these are people who lead and organise house churches, and those who engage in outreach evangelism and distribute information about Christianity to Muslims.

'In May 2023, Landinfo met (digitally) with a leader of an Iranian Christian organisation who has previously been imprisoned in Iran. The leader has left the country but continues to have close contact with the church community in his home country. In conversation with Landinfo, he emphasised that the authorities do not care about an individual's faith, or whether they are Christian or not. He stated the following regarding the authorities' attitude: "They do not care what you believe in your heart, that is your personal problem. But if they hear that you are evangelising or bringing people together, then they will put you in prison."

'Furthermore, the Christian leader stated [Note: the following statement of the Christian leader was published in English and has not, therefore, been translated]:

'The government does not put ordinary members in prison. Because the government doesn't have enough resources, money and prisons to put hundred[s of] thousands of Christians in prison. Let me tell you the process: they raid a house and arrest all the people who are there. Then they find out who is the leader and separate him/her from the rest and take that person to the intelligence service center. The other members are just interrogated (who are you, what are you doing), and then they need to sign a paper that they will never join the house church again. For the government it is the leaders that are important.

'... Article 18 stated in an email ([in] March 2025) that many of those currently convicted under the Penal Code's Article 500 (propaganda undermining the Islamic Republic) are ordinary members. According to Article 18, only 11 of the 96 people convicted in 2024 had responsibilities as pastors, evangelists and organisers. The rest can, according to Article 18, be categorised as merely members. As an example, Article 18 refers to ... not a convert but a born Christian Armenian ... [who] was on holiday in Iran with his Iranian-Armenian wife and is, among other things, convicted for proselytising in Persian communities. Article 18 wrote in October 2024 that ... [he] was sentenced to ten years in prison for 'alleged membership and leadership of a network of evangelical Christianity.

'As far as Landinfo is aware, there is no documentation that substantiates and verifies the claim that a large proportion of those convicted are ordinary members. Therefore, in an email in April 2025, Landinfo requested Article 18 to provide additional information and a description of the profile of converts who are only members and who have been sentenced to the lowest punishments. Despite a reminder in May 2025, Landinfo has not received a response to the request. In preparing this note, Landinfo has contacted several of the sources we spoke with in 2023 and asked whether the situation has significantly changed over the past two years. The organisations agree that the overall picture has not changed. The authorities do not have the capacity to prosecute several hundred thousand Christians and converts. The leader of an Iranian Christian organisation ([by] email, [in] April 2025) expressed himself as follows [Note: the following statement of the Christian leader was published in English and has not, therefore, been

translated]:

‘The regime’s strategy hasn’t changed. They go after the house group leaders - those who actively share their faith and anyone found with more than one or two New Testaments.

‘According to a leader of an Iranian organisation ([in a] digital meeting, [in] May 2025), the authorities are primarily after “the big fishes”. The authorities focus on individuals who could undermine the Islamic identity of the republic by sharing their Christian faith with others, and who have influence by organising and running house churches. The authorities’ assessment is that if they imprison a leader, it will help stop the growth of Christian communities. In this context, a pastor of a house church with five or ten members is not of interest, but influential leaders who can mobilise and persuade are.

‘One of the four Christian organisations (... [in] March 2025) states in its response to Landinfo that there is a strong correlation between high activity, such as proselytising among former Muslims, and prison sentences. When asked how many of the convicted are regular members of house churches, the organisation replies that it is impossible to estimate. The organisation points out that some take greater risks than others. Much depends on whether the person has come under the authorities’ scrutiny.’³⁴⁶

10.8.12 The translated Landinfo update report, stated, in summary:

‘Based on the information presented above, the pattern seems to be that the likelihood of conviction increases with leadership positions in home churches and outward missionary work. Nevertheless, it is a fact that some who have kept a low profile and acted cautiously have still been convicted. As Landinfo understands the situation, this happens exceptionally and there may be circumstances that explain why the convert has come under government scrutiny. An example of an ordinary member that Article 18 refers to is ... [the female] who was remanded in custody in September 2024 [see paragraph 10.5.34]. The background was that she approached the prosecution to request the release of Christian friends.

‘The leader of an Iranian organisation (... [in] May 2025) believed that in smaller locations, where the intelligence service has full control over the population, it can happen that ordinary members are arrested and convicted. In large cities like Tehran, with thousands of converts, ordinary members are ignored, according to the leader.

‘Another exception may, according to a Christian organisation, be if the person has a high public profile, for example in the security apparatus or in the entertainment industry. They may risk punishment to set an example in the public sphere, in addition they risk losing their job.’³⁴⁷

10.8.13 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated:

‘Punishments [for Christian-related ‘offences’] include long prison terms of several years, often including fines. On release Christians are sometimes forced into internal exile, living hundreds of miles from home for years, and suffer social exclusion, banned from certain professions as well as

³⁴⁶ Landinfo, [... Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (sections 3.3, 3.3.2, 3.3.3), 28 July 2025

³⁴⁷ Landinfo, [... Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.4), 28 July 2025

associating with churches or other Christian organisations ...

'Those convicted are not immediately incarcerated. They are instructed to await a summons to begin their sentences, forcing them to put their lives on hold for weeks, even months.

'Even when sentences are reduced and a "pardon" is granted, grounds have been found to re-arrest Christians within months.'³⁴⁸

For more information about social exclusion, see [Right to education and employment](#).

10.8.14 Citing information provided in May 2025 by an expert in Iranian law, the December 2025 DIS report stated that, for apostasy '... consequences can follow, especially if the individual is publicly open about their faith or involved in evangelism ... [however,] death sentences for apostasy are rarely enforced.'³⁴⁹

10.8.15 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: 'Both leaders and ordinary members [of small house churches] face prosecution and lengthy prison sentences for "national security crimes".'³⁵⁰

10.8.16 The 'Scapegoats' annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated:

'At least four trials involving Christians facing charges related to their beliefs or religious activities were postponed during the [12-day] conflict [in June 2025], but calls to temporarily release prisoners of conscience, especially in detention centres close to conflict zones, were ignored ... Following the conflict, the sentencing and imprisonment of Christians resumed, with at least four Christians beginning prison sentences in the month of November [2025] alone ...'³⁵¹

10.8.17 The 'Scapegoats' report also noted that in 2025:

- at least 73 Christians were sentenced
- at least 57 Christians served sentences of imprisonment (totalling over 280 years in prison, a higher figure than in 2024 despite involving fewer individuals, which indicates a trend towards harsher sentences), exile (totalling 9 years), or forced labour. Sentences also included at total of 249 years of social deprivation, and at least 4 Christians paid fines to avoid imprisonment
- at least 11 Christians were given prison sentences of at least 10 years
- at least 43 Christians were serving sentences at the end of the year³⁵²

10.8.18 Some recent examples of sentences that the Iranian authorities have handed down to Christians for their faith-based activities, including some amended sentences at appeal, acquittals etc., include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- the May 2024 sentencing by the Revolutionary Court of 8 Christian converts from Izeh, Western Iran, who were among at least 46 Iranian

³⁴⁸ Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

³⁴⁹ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 11), December 2025

³⁵⁰ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 3), January 2026

³⁵¹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 4), February 2026

³⁵² Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (pages 5 and 12), February 2026

Christians to have been arrested over the Christmas period, to a total of almost 45 years in prison^{353 354}. One of the 8 had been arrested 3 times previously, including during the 2022 protests, and was given the harshest sentence of 15-years in prison (10 years for ‘membership of a group intent on disrupting national security’ and 5 years for ‘propaganda against the regime through the promotion of Zionist Christianity’)^{355 356}. His indictment ‘... alleged he had “played an active role in the protests” and had been “one of the leaders” of an evangelical Christian organisation in the region.’³⁵⁷ The individual given the most lenient sentence was sentenced to 9 months in prison³⁵⁸. At the time of reporting the sentences (June 2024), all but one of the individuals (who was sentenced to 5 years in prison) were reportedly released on bail^{359 360}. CPIT has been unable to find any further information from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) about the outcomes of their appeals, or whether the individuals have served, or begun serving, their sentences

- the sentencing by the Revolutionary Court (the same judge who sentenced the 8 Christian converts, see example immediately above), on 28 May 2024, of another Christian convert to 5 years in prison for ‘acting against national security by communicating with Christian Zionist organisations’^{361 362}. He had reportedly previously (in 2021) been cleared of ‘propaganda’ charges, but (in January 2022) forced to attend Islamic re-education classes³⁶³. As of mid-June 2024, he was on bail, awaiting a summons to begin serving his sentence^{364 365}, however CPIT has been unable to find any more recent update from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#))
- in June 2024, the Iranian judicial authorities upheld at appeal the 10 years prison sentence for of an Armenian Christian man who was arrested in summer 2023 and sentenced in early 2024 for ‘engaging in deviant proselytising activity that contradicts the sacred law of Islam’ and the alleged membership and leadership of ‘a network of evangelical Christianity’^{366 367 368}. According to an undated Article 18 webpage, he continued to serve his sentence at the time of writing³⁶⁹
- the acquittal by the Appeal Court of Tehran, and release from Evin Prison, of an Iranian-Armenian pastor on 24 September 2024 after he successfully appealed against a 10-year prison sentence for leading a

³⁵³ Article 18, [Eight Christians sentenced to combined 45 years in prison](#), 18 June 2024

³⁵⁴ Church in Chains, [Iran: Eight Christian converts sentenced to total of 45 years ...](#), 27 June 2024

³⁵⁵ Article 18, [Eight Christians sentenced to combined 45 years in prison](#), 18 June 2024

³⁵⁶ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 7), 20 January 2025

³⁵⁷ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 7), 20 January 2025

³⁵⁸ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 7), 20 January 2025

³⁵⁹ Article 18, [Eight Christians sentenced to combined 45 years in prison](#), 18 June 2024

³⁶⁰ Church in Chains, [Iran: Eight Christian converts sentenced to total of 45 years ...](#), 27 June 2024

³⁶¹ Church in Chains, [Iran: Esmail Narimanpour sentenced to five years in prison](#), 13 June 2024

³⁶² Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 8), 20 January 2025

³⁶³ Church in Chains, [Iran: Esmail Narimanpour sentenced to five years in prison](#), 13 June 2024

³⁶⁴ Church in Chains, [Iran: Esmail Narimanpour sentenced to five years in prison](#), 13 June 2024

³⁶⁵ Voice of the Martyrs, [Iran: Esmail Narimanpour Sentenced to Prison](#), 19 June 2024

³⁶⁶ Article 18, [Armenian Christian given 10-year sentence ‘on judge’s intuition’](#), 11 June 2024

³⁶⁷ USCIRF, [Hakop Gochumyan](#), no date

³⁶⁸ USCIRF, [... International Religious Freedom 2025 Annual Report](#) (page 25), March 2025

³⁶⁹ Article 18, [Hakop Gochumyan](#), no date

house-church, after serving a little over one year of his sentence^{370 371}
³⁷². CPIT was unable to find any information from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to suggest that he had been rearrested or returned to prison at the time of writing

- the September 2024 release of a Christian convert after his 10-year prison sentence, for ‘acting against national security by forming a house-church’, handed down in 2020, was reduced to 4 years and 5 months by the Tehran appeal court^{373 374}. He had spent 4 years and 9 months in prison and had had 4 previous applications to the Supreme Court for retrial rejected, with the 5th application approved which subsequently led to his sentence reduction and release^{375 376 377}. CPIT was unable to find any information from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to suggest that he had been rearrested or returned to prison at the time of writing
- the November 2024 sentencing by the Revolutionary Court of Karaj of a Christian convert (who was reportedly first arrested in October 2022 for faith-based reasons^{378 379}) to 10 years in prison, and a 2 year ban from membership of any group, for ‘propagating Christianity’, ‘collaborating’ with the ‘hostile governments’ of Israel, the UK and the US, and membership of ‘anti regime groups’^{380 381 382 383}. As of 18 November 2024, he was awaiting an appeal outcome^{384 385}. CPIT has been unable to find information from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) on the appeal outcome, or whether he has begun serving his prison sentence
- the sentencing of a Catholic convert women, arrested on 5 November 2024, to 6 months in prison (with two-thirds of her prison sentence suspended), 74 lashes, and a mobile phone ban on charges of ‘propaganda against the regime’ and ‘appearing in public without a hijab’^{386 387}. It was since reported that in May 2026 she was sentenced to 9 years and 8 months in prison on charges including ‘propaganda against the state’ and ‘assembly and collusion with the intent to disrupt national security’ after her re-arrest in January 2026^{388 389}
- the sentencing to a total of over 40 years in prison, on 8 March 2025, to 3 Christian converts who were arrested in raids in autumn 2024 and

³⁷⁰ Article 18, [Iranian-Armenian pastor acquitted ...](#), 25 September 2024

³⁷¹ Barnabas Aid, [Pastor released after serving one year of ten-year sentence ...](#), 26 September 2024

³⁷² Premier Christian News, [Pastor freed from Iranian jail ...](#), 27 September 2024

³⁷³ Barnabas Aid, [Christian convert released after nearly five years in Iranian prison](#), 1 October 2024

³⁷⁴ Article 18, [Yasser Akbari](#), 9 October 2024

³⁷⁵ Barnabas Aid, [Christian convert released after nearly five years in Iranian prison](#), 1 October 2024

³⁷⁶ Article 18, [Yasser Akbari](#), 9 October 2024

³⁷⁷ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 10), 20 January 2025

³⁷⁸ Article 18, [‘Propagating Christianity’ among charges against convert ...](#), 18 November 2024

³⁷⁹ HRANA, [Toomaj Aryankia Sentenced to 10 Years in Prison](#), 18 November 2024

³⁸⁰ Article 18, [‘Propagating Christianity’ among charges against convert ...](#), 18 November 2024

³⁸¹ HRANA, [Toomaj Aryankia Sentenced to 10 Years in Prison](#), 18 November 2024

³⁸² PIME AsiaNews, [Iran, 10 years jail for convert for ‘propagating Christianity’](#), 19 November 2024

³⁸³ Article 18 et al, [The Tip of the Iceberg – 2025 Annual Report ...](#) (page 10), 20 January 2025

³⁸⁴ Article 18, [‘Propagating Christianity’ among charges against convert ...](#), 18 November 2024

³⁸⁵ HRANA, [Toomaj Aryankia Sentenced to 10 Years in Prison](#), 18 November 2024

³⁸⁶ NCRI Women’s Committee, [Christian Convert Sentenced to Prison and ...](#), 1 January 2025

³⁸⁷ HRANA, [Christian Convert Ghazal Marzban Sentenced to Prison, Flogging ...](#), 2 January 2025

³⁸⁸ Iran HRS, [Ghazal Marzban Sentenced to 9 Years and 8 Months in Prison](#), 21 May 2026

³⁸⁹ Hengaw, [Christian convert Ghazal Marzban sentenced to more than 9 years ...](#), 26 May 2026

convicted on charges that included ‘propaganda activities contrary to Islamic law’ and membership of an ‘opposition group’ for their religious beliefs and worship meetings (in a house-church)^{390 391 392}, under Articles 499, 500, and 500 bis of the IPC³⁹³. The most severe sentence, 16 years’ imprisonment, was handed down to a pregnant woman^{394 395 396}. In addition to imprisonment, the 3 converts were sentenced to years of deprivation of social rights (such as access to healthcare, education, and employment³⁹⁷), given fines of between 250 million tomans (\$2,750 [approximately £2,040 GBP³⁹⁸]) and 330 million tomans (\$3,500 [approximately £2,600 GBP³⁹⁹]), and were banned from membership of any group, residing in their home province of Tehran or leaving Iran for 2 years after their release^{400 401 402}. It was reported that in April 2025 their sentences were upheld at appeal^{403 404}, and that in May 2025, the 3 converts were summoned to begin their sentences^{405 406}. Sources indicate that all 3 converts may have since fled Iran^{407 408}, with one of the 3 detained and having started serving his sentence, in July 2025, after he was deported to Iran from Turkey^{409 410 411}

- 2 Christian convert brothers, who were arrested in December 2021 at a Christian gathering, were each sentenced in early 2025 to 4 years in prison, deprivation of social rights, and fines^{412 413} (of 150 million tomans each, around \$1,500 (approximately £1,120 GBP⁴¹⁴)⁴¹⁵). Article 18 reported that both brothers began serving their prison sentences in December 2025^{416 417}
- the sentencing of 2 Christian converts from Tabriz, each to 12 years in prison, a fine, and 15 year bans from being able to exercise their social rights, including for ‘propaganda activity of deviant Christian Zionist beliefs opposed to the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran’ and

³⁹⁰ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

³⁹¹ Barnabas Aid, [Three Iranian Christians receive prison sentences ...](#), 14 March 2025

³⁹² Open Doors, [Iran: Harsh Prison Sentences Given to Three Converts](#), 17 March 2025

³⁹³ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

³⁹⁴ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

³⁹⁵ Barnabas Aid, [Three Iranian Christians receive prison sentences ...](#), 14 March 2025

³⁹⁶ Open Doors, [Iran: Harsh Prison Sentences Given to Three Converts](#), 17 March 2025

³⁹⁷ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

³⁹⁸ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 29 April 2026

³⁹⁹ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 29 April 2026

⁴⁰⁰ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

⁴⁰¹ Barnabas Aid, [Three Iranian Christians receive prison sentences ...](#), 14 March 2025

⁴⁰² Open Doors, [Iran: Harsh Prison Sentences Given to Three Converts](#), 17 March 2025

⁴⁰³ Article 18, [Tehran court rejects appeals of converts ...](#), 28 April 2025

⁴⁰⁴ Article 18, [Mehran Shamlouj](#), no date

⁴⁰⁵ MEC, [Iran: Christian converts summoned to serve prison sentences](#), 13 May 2025

⁴⁰⁶ Article 18, [Mehran Shamlouj](#), no date

⁴⁰⁷ Church in Chains, [... Three Christian converts ...](#), 20 March 2025, updated May 2025

⁴⁰⁸ USCIRF, [Narges Nasri](#), no date

⁴⁰⁹ Open Doors, [Update: Iranian convert detained after deportation back to country](#), 7 July 2025

⁴¹⁰ Barnabas Aid, [Iranian convert deported from Turkey](#), 9 July 2025

⁴¹¹ Article 18, [Mehran Shamlouj](#), no date

⁴¹² Article 18, [Brothers sentenced to four years in prison, fined and exiled](#), 31 March 2025

⁴¹³ IranWire, [Christian Convert Brothers Sentenced to Prison in Iran](#), 1 April 2025

⁴¹⁴ XE.com, [Currency converter – US dollars to British pounds](#), 18 May 2026

⁴¹⁵ Article 18, [Brothers sentenced to four years in prison, fined and exiled](#), 31 March 2025

⁴¹⁶ Article 18, [Mahmoud Mardani-Kharaji](#), no date

⁴¹⁷ Article 18, [Mansour Mardani-Kharaji](#), no date

‘smuggling prohibited goods’, after they were tried in absentia in April 2025 in relation to their multiple copies of the Bible/ other Christian religious books^{418 419 420}, which Hengaw, an organisation that covers human rights violations across Iran⁴²¹ specifically reported they were distributing⁴²². Article 18 reported that both converts fled Iran

- the October 2025 sentencing to 8 years in prison of the wife of an Iranian-Armenian pastor⁴²³
- the sentencing on 21 October 2025⁴²⁴ to 17 years in prison of a female Christian convert after she was arrested in February 2025 and charged in connection with her Christian activities^{425 426 427}. As of late December 2025, she was on temporary release from prison, pending the outcome of an appeal against her sentence⁴²⁸

10.8.19 For tables showing ‘... the public cases of Christians charged with offences related to their faith and detained or serving sentences of exile or forced labour ...’ in 2024 and 2025, see, respectively, pages 16 to 18 of the [‘Tip of the Iceberg’](#) and pages 22 to 24 of the [‘Scapegoats’](#) annual reports, published by Article 18 et al. In respect of the data included, Article 18 stated: ‘Some unpublicised cases have also been included, with individuals identified only by their first name, or a pseudonym ... It should also be noted that at the end of 2025 many more Christians were still awaiting verdicts, the decision of an appeal court, a summons to serve their sentences, or had fled the country to avoid imprisonment. Supplementary punishments, such as internal exile, deprivation of social rights and travel bans, are not included in this list.’⁴²⁹ Therefore, the absence from the table of a claimed detention, charge or sentence should not be considered as definitive evidence that the claimed incident did not take place.

10.8.20 Article 18’s [Prisoners List](#) also provides the sentences handed down to convicted Christians, however it should not be considered as a definitive or exhaustive list of all prisoners.

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10.9 Declaration to end Christian activity and re-education

10.9.1 Citing Open Doors’ World Watch List 2023⁴³⁰, the BZ 2023 report stated: ‘Several sources say that some Christians [found by authorities during their raids on house churches] were warned and forced to sign statements that they would refrain from further contact (including online contact) with other Christians and from searching for Christian material online.’⁴³¹

⁴¹⁸ Hengaw, [Two Christian converts in Tabriz face 24 years in prison and civil rights ban](#), 25 May 2025

⁴¹⁹ HRANA, [Christian Converts Sentenced to 24 Years in Prison ...](#), 26 May 2025

⁴²⁰ Article 18, [Christian converts sentenced to 12 years in prison for bringing Bibles ...](#), 6 June 2025

⁴²¹ Hengaw, [About us](#), no date

⁴²² Hengaw, [Two Christian converts in Tabriz face 24 years in prison and civil rights ban](#), 25 May 2025

⁴²³ Article 18, [Five Christians sentenced to combined over 50 years in prison](#), 9 December 2025

⁴²⁴ USCIRF, [Aida Najaflou](#), no date

⁴²⁵ Hengaw, [Five Christian converts sentenced to 55 years in Tehran](#), 9 December 2025

⁴²⁶ HRANA, [Five Christian Converts Sentenced to Prison](#), 9 December 2025

⁴²⁷ USCIRF, [Aida Najaflou](#), no date

⁴²⁸ Voice of the Martyrs, [Iran: Update – Aida Najaflou Secured Temporary Release](#), 14 January 2026

⁴²⁹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 22), February 2026

⁴³⁰ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2023](#) (page 6), January 2023

⁴³¹ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.8), September 2023

- 10.9.2 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated: ‘Christian converts from Islam reported being detained and forced to sign commitments to refrain from further Christian activities or ordered to attend Islamic re-education sessions.’⁴³²
- 10.9.3 The August 2024 Article 18 article stated that, ‘... a letter ... included in a ... [leaked] case file describes how [a Christian man] and his wife were made to confess their crimes on camera and ask for forgiveness, as well as being forced to participate in Islamic classes and break contact with other Christians.’⁴³³ The article did not state when this case related to; as the leaked case files covered the period from July 2008 to January 2023, CPIT noted that this may be a recent example.
- 10.9.4 The translated Landinfo update report stated:
 ‘Individuals arrested in connection with a house search or raid at a house church may be forced to sign a statement confirming that they are still Muslims and that they will refrain from further participation in house churches. Signing such a statement is a prerequisite for their release. According to an Iranian leader ([in] 2023), many see this as a formality and sign to avoid further trouble.
 ‘... If they sign the declaration and are then arrested again, the pressure may increase further. The threats may include family members being subjected to reactions or being arrested. The aim is to create fear so that they refrain from further activity. In rare cases, the threats may also involve losing daily care of their own children and the children being placed in orphanages. The result is that some drop out and do not dare to maintain contact with home churches.’⁴³⁴
- 10.9.5 The same translated Landinfo report also noted that some Christian converts were forced into compulsory religious re-education⁴³⁵.
- 10.9.6 Reports were made that some of a group of at least 7 Christian converts, who were arrested in June 2025 in Varamin and Pishva (in the Tehran area), were pressured to renounce their faith in exchange for having their sentences reduced^{436 437}. The 7.5-year sentences of 5 of the group were upheld at appeal in October 2025⁴³⁸.
- 10.9.7 The Barnabas Aid article, published on 14 October 2025, stated: ‘Christians are sometimes forced to undertake re-education classes in Islam to be guided “back on the right path”’.⁴³⁹
- 10.9.8 The USCIRF factsheet, published in December 2025, stated: ‘In April 2025, a convert to Christianity who was recently released from Evin reported that in late 2023 or early 2024, an interrogator at Evin tried to pressure him to sign a legal commitment to cease his religious activities.’⁴⁴⁰

⁴³² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Executive Summary), 26 June 2024

⁴³³ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

⁴³⁴ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 6), 28 July 2025

⁴³⁵ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 6), 28 July 2025

⁴³⁶ Barnabas Aid, [Iranian appeal court upholds prison sentences for five Christians](#), 7 October 2025

⁴³⁷ Article 18, [Christian convert begins nine-year prison sentence after torture ...](#), 4 November 2025

⁴³⁸ Barnabas Aid, [Iranian appeal court upholds prison sentences for five Christians](#), 7 October 2025

⁴³⁹ Barnabas Aid, [... What is it like to live as a Christian in Iran?](#), 14 October 2025

⁴⁴⁰ USCIRF, [Factsheet – Prison Mistreatment and FORB](#) (page 2), December 2025

10.9.9 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated that in 2025, at least 5 ‘... Christian converts were referred by court order to “cult treatment clinics”, with the stated aim of “returning them to the holy religion of Islam”.’⁴⁴¹

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10.10 Christian symbols (including bibles, tattoos, and crosses)

10.10.1 The BZ 2023 report stated:

‘In Iran, it is not a punishable offence to have a tattoo. There is no law that explicitly prohibits tattoos or classifies them as prohibited under Islamic law (haram). Nevertheless, the authorities consider tattoos to be a Western phenomenon and, as such, detrimental to Iranian values. According to one source, a court can treat visible Christian tattoos as part of the burden of proof in connection with a conversion. The same applies to items confiscated when a convert is arrested, such as jewellery in the shape of a cross or paintings on Christian themes. This practice can differ from case to case.’⁴⁴²

10.10.2 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated: ‘Citizens who are not recognized as Christians [or one of the other recognised minority religions] ... generally may not engage in public expression of religious faith, such as worshiping in a church or wearing religious symbols such as a cross. The government makes some exceptions for foreigners belonging to unrecognized religious groups.’⁴⁴³

10.10.3 The same USSD report also stated:

‘According to Christian NGOs, government restrictions on published religious material continued, although government-approved translations of the Bible reportedly remained available. Government officials frequently confiscated Bibles and non-Shia religious literature and pressured publishing houses printing unsanctioned non-Muslim religious materials to cease operations ... Authorities required books published by religious minorities, regardless of topic, to carry labels on the cover denoting their non-Shia Muslim authorship.’⁴⁴⁴

10.10.4 The Article 18 article published on 29 August 2024 stated: ‘... [T]he managers of three online shops which sold Christian books were charged with “selling deviant evangelistic materials” and “hurting public modesty and morals through the display, promotion and sale of evangelistic books and items”.’⁴⁴⁵

10.10.5 The same article also stated:

‘A ... notable trend is the frequent reference in court documents to the Christian holy book as evidence of a crime. In one case, Bibles in the evangelical church of [an] Iranian-Assyrian pastor ... are referred to as “unauthorised evangelical items”. In another case, they are termed “deviant books”, and in another “divisive books”.

‘The “smuggling” of Bibles is listed among accusations in numerous other

⁴⁴¹ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 5), February 2026

⁴⁴² BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.7), September 2023

⁴⁴³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

⁴⁴⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

⁴⁴⁵ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

cases, termed a “propaganda activity against the regime”, while Christian literature sold online is described as “providing grounds for people’s corruption”.⁴⁴⁶

10.10.6 Articles published by Article 18 on 12 June 2025 and 10 July 2025 noted that an indictment against five Christians charged with ‘gathering and collusion’ and ‘propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran’ [see paragraph 10.5.13] referred to the Bible as a ‘prohibited book’^{447 448}.

10.10.7 An article published by Article 18 on 19 August 2025 referred to a video report of more than 50 Christians arrested in ‘recent months’ which, it noted, contained screenshots of some of their confiscated items including New Testaments and other Christian literature⁴⁴⁹. The article also noted that the video report contained ‘... alleged surveillance recordings of Bibles being “smuggled” into the country.’⁴⁵⁰ See also paragraph 12.1.4.

10.10.8 The Article 18 article, published on 20 October 2025, stated: ‘Religious books, crosses, and even personal belongings have been confiscated [by security forces].’⁴⁵¹

10.10.9 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated: ‘Even private possession of religious items like Bibles, songbooks or cross necklaces has been used as criminal evidence.’⁴⁵²

10.10.10 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: ‘The targeting of Christians involved in Bible distribution continued to be a theme in 2025, with at least 21 Christians receiving custodial sentences related to their alleged involvement in the distribution of Bibles in Iran, in addition to other forms of punishment, such as fines, exile, and social deprivation.’⁴⁵³

10.10.11 The same annual reported stated: ‘... [S]ince the forced closure and confiscation of the Bible Society’s premises in Tehran in 1990, Christians have found it challenging to access printed Bibles and the Iranian authorities have criminalised importing and distributing Bibles ... [D]espite the passage of years, the Bible Society remains closed, and the Bible and other Christian books are frequently treated as illegal contraband and evidence of a crime.’⁴⁵⁴

10.10.12 Some recent examples of the Iranian authorities having confiscated Christian symbols from Christians include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- the confiscation of Bibles, musical instruments and communication devices IRGC, during a raid on a Christian gathering on 6 February 2025 in northern Iran, in which security agents reportedly targeted those

⁴⁴⁶ Article 18, [Over 300 Christian cases among hacked Tehran judiciary files](#), 29 August 2024

⁴⁴⁷ Article 18, [Prayer, baptism and celebrating Christmas cited as ... ‘crimes’](#), 12 June 2025

⁴⁴⁸ Article 18, [Over 20 Christians arrested as UN experts decry targeting of minorities](#), 10 July 2025

⁴⁴⁹ Article 18, [State media accuses Christians of espionage in ‘clear hate speech’](#), 19 August 2025

⁴⁵⁰ Article 18, [State media accuses Christians of espionage in ‘clear hate speech’](#), 19 August 2025

⁴⁵¹ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

⁴⁵² Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

⁴⁵³ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 6), February 2026

⁴⁵⁴ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 9), February 2026

wearing cross necklaces, tearing them off^{455 456}

- the confiscation of personal belongings including Bibles, crosses and musical instruments from the homes in Tehran of 3 Christian converts when they were raided by intelligence agents on 3 November 2024, before being sentenced on 8 March 2025⁴⁵⁷
- the confiscation of personal property, including Bibles and other Christian literature, from five Christians who were tried on 21 October 2025⁴⁵⁸. Article 18 reported that the items were ‘... confiscated by the state for the “research” purposes of the Ministry of Intelligence – as happened in a previous case earlier [in 2025] involving two Christians sentenced to 12 years each in prison for “smuggling” Bibles into Iran’⁴⁵⁹

10.10.13 See also [Arrests, detentions and criminal charges](#) and [Convictions and prison sentences](#), and for more information about the smuggling of items into Iran, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Smugglers](#).

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11. Right to education and employment

11.1 Education

11.1.1 The Amnesty International 2024 and 2025 human rights reports, covering events of 2023 and 2024, respectively, both stated: ‘Religious minorities, including ... Christians ... suffered discrimination in law and practice, including in access to education ...’^{460 461} The reports did not provide any data to quantify the scale or extent of the discrimination it said took place.

11.1.2 In April 2024, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report which cited various sources and stated that, ‘... the criteria for entering universities in Iran is belonging to one of the recognized religions in the Iranian Constitution ... [which includes] Christianity [see [Legal context: Religion](#)] ...’⁴⁶² The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom noted that Christian university applicants must pass on an exam on Christian theology. However, ‘[m]embers of unrecognized religious groups must pass Islamic studies exams.’⁴⁶³

11.1.3 The same USSD report also stated: ‘Assyrian Christians reported the government continued to permit their community to use its own religious textbooks in schools, but only after the government authorized their content. Armenian Christians were also permitted to teach their faith to Armenian students as an elective at select schools.’⁴⁶⁴

11.1.4 The government of Iran, in its report to the UNHRC of November 2024, noted that 50 schools for Christians provide the opportunity for study in

⁴⁵⁵ Article 18, [Christian convert arrested, Bibles ... confiscated during IRGC raid](#), 18 February 2025

⁴⁵⁶ NCRI Women’s Committee, [... Christian Convert, Is Arrested in a Raid ...](#), 18 February 2025

⁴⁵⁷ Article 18, [Three Christians ... sentenced to over 40 years in prison](#), 10 March 2025

⁴⁵⁸ Article 18, [Five Christians sentenced to combined over 50 years in prison](#), 9 December 2025

⁴⁵⁹ Article 18, [Five Christians sentenced to combined over 50 years in prison](#), 9 December 2025

⁴⁶⁰ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2024](#) (page 204), 23 April 2024

⁴⁶¹ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

⁴⁶² HRW, [“The Boot on My Neck” ... Crime of Persecution Against Baha’is ...](#), April 2024

⁴⁶³ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

⁴⁶⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

addition to the country's regular schools⁴⁶⁵. Notwithstanding the information provided at paragraph 11.1.8, CPIT was unable to find any independent information from the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) to corroborate this claim.

- 11.1.5 The translated Landinfo update report stated: 'The authorities exercise various forms of extrajudicial pressure, which can include bans on education and work. According to an Iranian leader (... [in] 2023), there is no uniform policy in this area; it largely depends on the individual employer, principal or director to choose the form of reaction.'⁴⁶⁶
- 11.1.6 The Amnesty International 2026 human rights reports noted that, '[r]eligious minorities, including ... Christians ... suffered widespread and systemic human rights violations, including discrimination in access to education ...'⁴⁶⁷ The report did not expand on what it meant by 'widespread and systemic', nor did it provide any data to quantify the scale or extent of the violations it said took place.
- 11.1.7 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List stated:
'Children of converts are automatically registered as Muslims and must attend Islamic education, while even recognized Armenian and Assyrian Christians' children face mandatory Islamic classes. University applications require religious declaration, with Muslim-background individuals who identify as Christian being rejected.
'... [R]ecognized [Armenian and Assyrian Christian] communities operate some state subsidized schools, though Muslim headteachers are typically imposed.'⁴⁶⁸
- 11.1.8 The factsheet published by the Armenian Assembly of America in March 2026 stated: 'There are currently 30 functioning Armenian schools across Iran, including primary and secondary institutions – for boys, for girls, and coeducational.'⁴⁶⁹

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11.2 Employment

- 11.2.1 The Amnesty International 2024 and 2025 human rights reports both noted that access to employment was among the discrimination suffered by religious minorities, including Christians, in law and practice^{470 471}. The reports did not provide any data to quantify the scale or extent of the discrimination it said took place.
- 11.2.2 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated: '... [I]n-country sources report that the government restricts the ... community members [of recognised churches] from senior management roles in public and private organisations due to an Iranian law that prohibits non-Muslims from holding positions of authority over Muslims. This means that the heads of Christian

⁴⁶⁵ Gov't. of the IRI, pub'd. by UNHRC, [National ...](#) (paragraph 35, footnote 46), 5 November 2024

⁴⁶⁶ Landinfo, [... Conditions for Christian converts ...](#) (English translation) (section 6), 28 July 2025

⁴⁶⁷ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2026](#) (page 205), 21 April 2026

⁴⁶⁸ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

⁴⁶⁹ Armenian Assembly of America, [Armenian Community in Iran](#), March 2026

⁴⁷⁰ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2024](#) (page 204), 23 April 2024

⁴⁷¹ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2025](#) (page 204), 28 April 2025

schools [are] Shi'a Muslims appointed by the government.⁴⁷²

- 11.2.3 Citing information provided in March and April 2024 by an 'expert and professional working for the French authorities examining asylum applications', the EUAA Country Focus report stated: 'Most of the Christians run family business[es] in the country due to the discrimination they face when they are applying for jobs in the public sector.'⁴⁷³
- 11.2.4 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated:
'By law, non-Muslims may not serve in the judiciary, the security services (which are separate from the regular armed forces), or as public school principals. Officials screen candidates for elected offices and applicants for public sector employment based on their adherence to and knowledge of Islam and loyalty to the Islamic Republic (gozinesh review requirements), although members of recognized religious minorities may serve in the lower ranks of government if they meet these loyalty requirements. Government workers who do not observe Islamic principles and rules are subject to penalties and may be fired or barred from work in a particular sector.'⁴⁷⁴
- 11.2.5 On 19 September 2024, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) published 'Concluding observations on the combined twentieth to twenty-seventh periodic reports of the Islamic Republic of Iran' which stated:
'The Committee is ... concerned about the application of the gozinesh criterion for selection and employment in the public sector, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, whereby prospective State officials and employees are required to demonstrate allegiance to the State religion, which leads to discrimination against and low levels of participation among members of ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups, particularly women, at the central and provincial levels ...'⁴⁷⁵
- 11.2.6 The Article 18 article, published on 20 October 2025, stated that the Iranian, '... regime has barred ... [Christian] communities from employment in the army, public institutions, and key professions for decades.'⁴⁷⁶
- 11.2.7 The IranWire article, published on 22 October 2025 stated: 'Armenians and Assyrians – recognized Christian minorities under Iranian law – face barriers to employment in the military and many government institutions.'⁴⁷⁷
- 11.2.8 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List noted that Christian women may be pressured with 'economic harassment via business/job/work access', while '[m]any [Christian men] face job loss, denial of business permits, or expulsion from education, leaving families in financial ruin. As primary providers, imprisonment or unemployment causes deep strain, sometimes leading to divorce or trauma for children. Converts endure monitoring, threats, and harassment, and many ultimately flee the country under acute stress, leaving families vulnerable and divided.'⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷² DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraph 2.82), 24 July 2023

⁴⁷³ EUAA, [Iran – Country Focus](#) (section 4.8.2), June 2024

⁴⁷⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

⁴⁷⁵ UNCERD, [Concluding observations ...](#) (paragraph 32), 19 September 2024

⁴⁷⁶ Article 18, [Why has Iran named a metro station after the Virgin Mary?](#), 20 October 2025

⁴⁷⁷ IranWire, Tehran's 'Christian' Metro Station Opens as Persecution Intensifies, 22 October 2025

⁴⁷⁸ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 5), January 2026

- 11.2.9 The Open Doors 2026 World Watch List also stated: ‘The state’s control of over 80% of the economy enables systematic discrimination, with historical Armenian and Assyrian Christians facing business obstacles while other Christians rarely receive business permits ... All high government positions are reserved for Shia Muslims, with Christians banned from public office except for three token parliamentary seats allocated to Armenian and Assyrian representatives.’⁴⁷⁹
- 11.2.10 The ‘Scapegoats’ annual report, published by Article 18 et al, stated: ‘In an unpublicised case [in 2025], an army officer’s employment was terminated after 23 years of service because of his conversion to Christianity ...’⁴⁸⁰
- 11.2.11 The Amnesty International 2026 human rights report noted that Christians were among the religious minorities who suffered ‘widespread and systemic human rights violations, including discrimination, in access to employment’⁴⁸¹. The report did not expand on what it meant by ‘widespread and systemic’, nor did it provide any data to quantify the scale or extent of the violations it said took place.
- 11.2.12 In 2026, Bertelsmann Stiftung, a ‘German non-profit think tank’⁴⁸², published an Iran report which stated: ‘Religious minorities, including ... Christians ... are systematically excluded from high-ranking positions and face daily discrimination. This includes ... business closures ...’⁴⁸³
- 11.2.13 An article published by Article 18 on 1 May 2026 stated:
- ‘The state has weaponised the economy for decades as a tool of pressure and punishment, routinely depriving individuals of work and livelihood as a means of repression against unrecognised religious minorities such as Christian converts ... In countless cases, judges and security agencies have ... imposed employment bans that effectively strip individuals of the right to earn a normal livelihood and even survive ...
- ‘In some cases, these sanctions are set out explicitly in court verdicts ...
- ‘... Elsewhere, pressure continues after release from prison through direct interference in employment. [A] Christian convert and former prisoner of conscience ... for example, was dismissed from Maskan Bank after 10 years of service following orders from security bodies. He later explained that “wherever I found work, within a few days the employer would say they had been threatened and told not to hire me” ...
- ‘Another convert and former prisoner ... lost his business licence and later faced obstacles even in trying to obtain simple jobs such as driving a taxi.’⁴⁸⁴

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12. Sur place Christian activities

12.1 Treatment on return

- 12.1.1 The DFAT country report, published on 24 July 2023, stated:

⁴⁷⁹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026](#) (page 7), January 2026

⁴⁸⁰ Article 18 et al, [Scapegoats - 2026 Annual Report ...](#) (page 4), February 2026

⁴⁸¹ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2026](#) (page 205), 21 April 2026

⁴⁸² Ecoi.net, [Source description: Bertelsmann Stiftung](#), 19 May 2020

⁴⁸³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, [Transformation Index \(BTI\), Iran report 2026](#) (page 22), 2026

⁴⁸⁴ Article 18, [International Workers’ Day in Iran ...](#), 1 May 2026

‘Protestant (including Evangelical) and Pentecostal churches, which some asylum seekers join while they are in Western countries like Australia, are not legal [in Iran] ... [and] conversions that take place outside Iran are not recognised by the government ... [If a] person who claims to be Christian, however cannot prove that their family was Christian before 1979, [they] would be considered Muslim by the government and thus subject to apostasy laws.

‘... In-country sources told DFAT that returnees who have not had a profile previously (for example through political activism in country) are unlikely to come to attention of authorities if they keep a low profile, and that this is not affected by social media posts about their conversion that they may have made while they were in a Western country like Australia.’⁴⁸⁵

12.1.2 Citing confidential sources, the BZ 2023 report stated:

‘In itself, religious background does not play a role on return, according to one source. According to another source, religious background does not usually play a role because religion is not stated in a person’s passport or on their national identity card, and the authorities at the airport tend not to ask about religious beliefs. This may come into play, however, if the authorities are aware that someone has changed religion while abroad. According to yet another source, in some cases, the authorities ask questions of the returnee if they know that the person has converted to Christianity or if they know that the person has used conversion to Christianity as a motive for applying for asylum. According to another source, the authorities may be aware of this without paying it any further attention.

‘... It cannot be ruled out that if a convert is subject to surveillance for reasons other than conversion to Christianity after returning to Iran, they may still be accused of conversion to Christianity in the course of the surveillance.’⁴⁸⁶

12.1.3 The BZ 2023 report, citing confidential sources, also stated:

‘Insufficient information was available to answer the question of whether, in cases where an asylum seeker has invoked apostasy as a motive for asylum and this is known to the Iranian authorities, that person has to be able to prove that they are not an apostate and how the person might then go about proving this. However, according to one source, apostasy can be used as a contributory factor leading to a harsher punishment for committing another offence.’⁴⁸⁷

12.1.4 The Article 18 article, published on 19 August 2025, noted there was video footage of some of the over 50 Christians arrested in ‘recent months’ (see paragraph 10.10.7) attending a gathering in Turkey for ‘religious instruction’⁴⁸⁸.

12.1.5 The IranWire article, published on 22 October 2025 stated:

‘... [O]ver a dozen Iranian Christian converts who had migrated to the United States and were deported from there, were arrested at the airport on their return to Iran, forced to hold up their crosses and Bibles before government

⁴⁸⁵ DFAT, [Country Information Report Iran](#) (paragraphs 2.80 and 2.87), 24 July 2023

⁴⁸⁶ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report ...](#) (Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.3), September 2023

⁴⁸⁷ BZ, [General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran](#) (Section 3.2.3.9), September 2023

⁴⁸⁸ Article 18, [State media accuses Christians of espionage in ‘clear hate speech’](#), 19 August 2025

cameras, and coerced into making confessions against their faith.

‘... Mohabbat News [a US-based TV channel which promotes Christianity among Persian-speaking audiences⁴⁸⁹] reported that Christian converts arriving at Khomeini International Airport after deportation from the United States were immediately detained.

‘Authorities interrogated them and forced them to appear before state media cameras for what the publication described as coerced confessions.’⁴⁹⁰ CPIT has been unable to find any further information in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)) about whether the individuals involved were released after their confessions, or subjected to any further action by the Iranian authorities, such as formal prosecution.

- 12.1.6 On 5 November 2025, FIS published a response to a query on the situation for Christian converts (and Jehovah’s Witnesses) since June 2025. The translated response, which cited various sources, mentioned the same US to Iran deportations covered in the above IranWire article. It noted there to have been approximately 10 to 15 Iranians involved and, with regard to their televised confessions, it noted that the converts had been ‘... forced on video to deny their faith and to state that the reason for their conversion was to obtain asylum by deceitful means.’⁴⁹¹
- 12.1.7 On 22 November 2025, BBC News published an article about the same deportees from the US to Iran, which stated: ‘On arrival, they were questioned about their time in the US and their religious activities but were not immediately arrested ... [one of the deportees] said in a video, which was posted on a Farsi-language YouTube channel. Among the passengers was the wife of ... an Iranian Christian convert now living in the US. She has since been contacted and summoned by Iranian intelligence.’⁴⁹²
- 12.1.8 The December 2025 DIS report, citing information provided by an international organisation in March and May 2025, stated that it ‘... is not a common procedure to prosecute or interrogate returning migrants for ... [having converted to Christianity while abroad] upon arrival. It may happen only when there is concrete evidence for that.’⁴⁹³ When asked to what extent rejected asylum applicants who converted to Christianity while abroad are subjected to reactions (official legal procedure including arrest, prosecution and trial) upon return to Iran, the international organisation stated: ‘Rarely.’⁴⁹⁴
- 12.1.9 The DIS report also stated that an
- ‘... expert on civil society [with more than 10 years’ experience working on Iran, in May 2025⁴⁹⁵] had not heard about recent cases of converts being questioned upon return to Tehran. The source considered the likelihood of repercussions for low-profile converts who share their faith on social media to be highly hypothetical - depending on different factors; e.g. the asylum claim, possession of a valid passport upon return, the mode of exit and

⁴⁸⁹ BBC Monitoring, [Media Guide: Iran](#) (Christian channels) (via subscription), 18 February 2026

⁴⁹⁰ IranWire, Tehran’s ‘Christian’ Metro Station Opens as Persecution Intensifies, 22 October 2025

⁴⁹¹ FIS, [Situation of Christian converts ... in 2025 ...](#) (pages 2 to 3), 5 November 2025

⁴⁹² BBC News, [Christian converts ... among the Iranians ... sent home from US](#), 22 November 2025

⁴⁹³ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 31), December 2025

⁴⁹⁴ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 31), December 2025

⁴⁹⁵ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 22), December 2025

return to Iran. If a person left Iran irregularly, the authorities would want to know their background and question them in order to identify the network that helped them leave the country. The source however assesses that the authorities would deal differently with a person who is vocal about their conversion; boasts about it; tries to convert others or organises groups or congregations, compared to a person who keeps it private. However, the authorities do not have the human resources to target every single person.⁴⁹⁶

12.1.10 A 16 October 2024 report entitled ‘Iran; Treatment by the authorities of family members of dissidents residing abroad’ was written by the COI unit of the Belgium Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS–CEDOCA). Citing a phone call with a researcher on transnational repression on 23 September 2024, the report, on the subject of ‘expatriate Christian converts proclaiming their faith on social media’, stated: ‘In light of the ongoing monitoring, he believes it is not unlikely that Iranians openly proclaiming and discussing their conversion will face retaliation.’⁴⁹⁷

12.1.11 Some recent examples of returnees to Iran who encountered difficulties due to their Christian activities abroad include (Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- a Christian woman who was arrested and sentenced to 2 years in prison and a 2 year travel ban following her release, on charges of ‘acting against national security’ in February 2024 after she was baptised in Malaysia (where she claimed asylum) some years earlier, having returned to Iran in 2017^{498 499 500 501}. She was reportedly released from prison on 31 May 2025, after spending 15 months in prison, on the condition that she refrained from speaking with any media or other contacts abroad and with her travel ban taking effect⁵⁰². See also paragraph 10.6.10 for information regarding her treatment while in detention.

On 9 August 2024, the EUAA published a response to a query on the treatment of returnees from Western countries of Christians who have converted from Islam. The response cited the situation for the individual who returned from Malaysia and stated: ‘Further information on specific incidents of the treatment by the state towards Christian convert returnees could not be found among the sources consulted by the EUAA within the time constraints of this query.’⁵⁰³

- in July 2025, 5 Christian converts were sentenced (following their arrest in June 2024) to 7.5 years in prison each (one was reportedly sentenced to an additional 17 months), due to, in part, their attendance at Christian training courses in Turkey (as well as attendance of church meetings in their homes and online, and other online activities)⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁶ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 13), December 2025

⁴⁹⁷ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 13), December 2025

⁴⁹⁸ Article 18, [Christian convert baptised in Malaysia given prison sentence ...](#), 26 March 2024

⁴⁹⁹ PIME AsiaNews, [Easter in Iran: convert asylum seeker sentenced to two years ...](#), 30 March 2024

⁵⁰⁰ Open Doors, [Iranian Christian sentenced to two years in Evin Prison](#), 27 April 2024

⁵⁰¹ Article 18, [Former asylum-seeker released after 15 months in Evin Prison](#), 4 June 2025

⁵⁰² Article 18, [Former asylum-seeker released after 15 months in Evin Prison](#), 4 June 2025

⁵⁰³ EUAA, [... returnees ... who converted ... to Christianity ...](#) (page 4), 9 August 2024

⁵⁰⁴ Article 18, [Five Christian converts sentenced to total of over 40 years ...](#), 26 September 2025

- a migrant who ‘... experienced arrest and interrogation for [a] couple of weeks and was released accordingly’ after a photo that he shared on social media of himself in front of a Church while abroad, suggesting that he had converted to Christianity, was disclosed by someone to the authorities⁵⁰⁵ The report did not state when this incident was alleged to have taken place.

12.1.12 For more information about the treatment of returnees, including procedures on arrival in Iran, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Illegal exit](#). For more information about sur place activities more generally, including sur place social media activities and the monitoring of such by the Iranian authorities, see [Country Policy and Information Note, Iran: Social media, surveillance and sur place activities](#).

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12.2 Family members

12.2.1 The USSD 2023 report on international religious freedom stated: ‘Iranian nationals from religious minority groups also reported they sometimes received threats from apparent Iranian regime officials while abroad – either to themselves or to their family members.’⁵⁰⁶ It was not clear from the report, however, whether the mentioned family members were in Iran or also abroad.

12.2.2 The CGRS-CEDOCA report, regarding the treatment by the authorities of family members of dissidents residing abroad stated: ‘There are ... some reports of ... Christians’ families being targeted in Iran.’⁵⁰⁷

12.2.3 While both the CGRS-CEDOCA report and the December 2025 DIS report referred to the reporting, by Article 18 et al and at least one other source, of families of Iranian Christians active abroad having been questioned and harassed in Iran, these references related to events in 2020 and 2022^{508 509}.

12.2.4 The CGRS-CEDOCA report added:

‘Cedoca did not find any mention of Iran-based relatives of Christian Iranian expatriates being targeted by the Iranian authorities in USCIRF’s annual reports covering 2021, 2022 and 2023 or its September 2023 country update on Iran, nor in the 2020, 2021 and 2023 annual reports on rights violations against Christians in Iran by Article 18, MEC, CSW and Open Doors International, nor in USDOS’ 2021 and 2022 freedom of religion reports.

‘Asked about the likelihood of Iranian authorities targeting Iran-based relatives of expatriate Christian converts proclaiming their faith on social media, the researcher on transnational repression replied that he had not come across such cases, adding that his research focuses more on activists.’⁵¹⁰

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⁵⁰⁵ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 31), December 2025

⁵⁰⁶ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom](#) (Section II), 26 June 2024

⁵⁰⁷ CGRS–CEDOCA, [... family ... of dissidents ... abroad](#) (page 2), 16 October 2024

⁵⁰⁸ CGRS–CEDOCA, [... family ... of dissidents ... abroad](#) (page 19), 16 October 2024

⁵⁰⁹ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 13), December 2025

⁵¹⁰ DIS, [Iran: Return following Sur Place Activities 2025](#) (page 13), December 2025

Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' are the main topics and issues relevant to the scope of this note and provides the framework for the country information. In this note, they were:

- Religious demography
 - In general
 - Christians
 - Converts
 - Denominations
- House Churches
 - Numbers
 - Types
 - Locations
- Legal framework on religious minorities
 - Generally
 - 'Ethnic' Christians
 - Christian converts
- Treatment by the state
 - Christians and converts
 - House church monitoring and raids, social media monitoring
 - Arrest, detention and prosecution, bail conditions/amounts
 - Charges, trials, sentences
 - Possession of Christian symbols e.g. crosses, Bibles, Christian tattoos
 - Recant and re-educate
- Right to education and employment
- Treatment on return of 'sur place' Christians and Christian converts

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **8.0**
- valid from **26 June 2026**

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.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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Changes from last version of this note

Updated COI and updated assessment.

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Feedback to the Home Office

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](#).

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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](#).

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