



Human Rights Violations in Kurdistan of Iran
KMMK-G Annual Report on the Situation of Human
Rights in Kurdistan of Iran for the period:

1st January to 31st December, 2023

**Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva
(KMMK-G)**

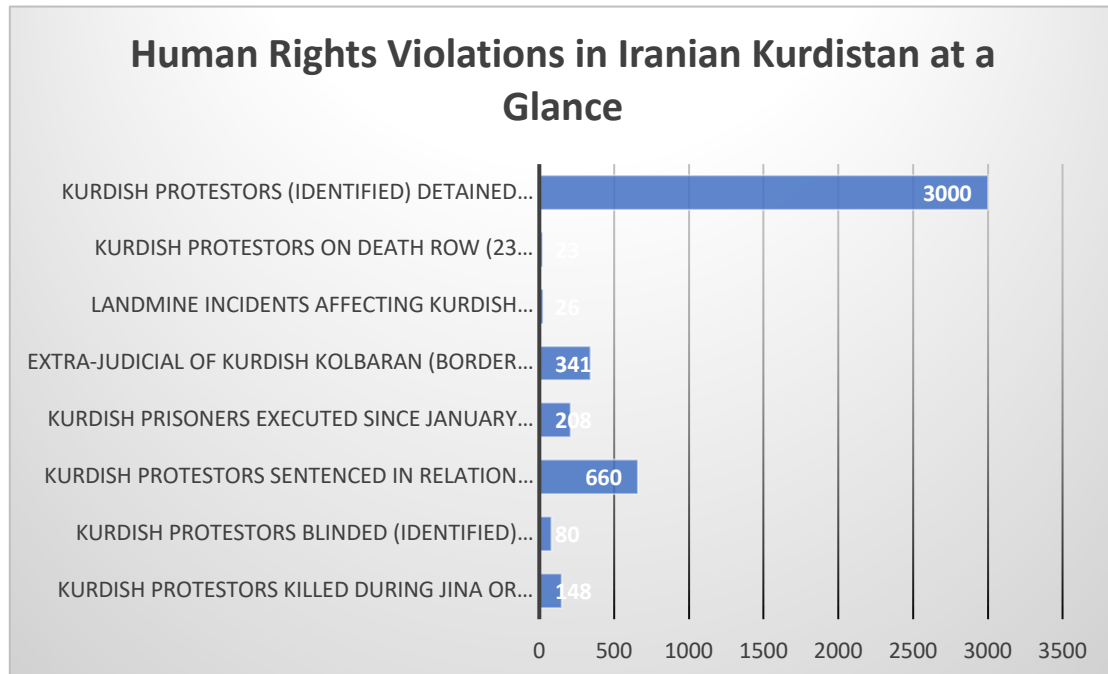


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* For information regarding the collected data, please contact KMMK-G.





Introduction

This report provides up-to-date data and analysis on the situations of human rights in the Iranian Kurdistan-majority provinces of Iran from January 1 until December 31, 2023, prepared in particular for the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, OHCHR, FFMI, UN agencies, media, governments and public attention.

The report also sheds light on the recent crackdowns in Iranian Kurdistan provinces following the murder of Jina (Mahsa) Amini by Tehran's morality police.

Similar to previous Islamic Republic administrations, the current presidency of Raisi continues its security approach toward Iranian Kurdistan and other ethnic and religious groups. The persecution, execution, imprisonment, arbitrary detention, and arbitrary disappearances of Kurdish civil, cultural, environmental, and political rights activists and protestors as well as the extra-judicial executions of *Kolbaran* (border couriers or tradespersons) remain alarmingly high. This report specifically addresses the recent crackdowns, executions, political prisoners, indiscriminate killings of *Kolbaran* (border couriers) and landmine incidents affecting Kurdish civilians from January 1 until December 31, 2023.

Every year, KMMK-G provides the details of data collected in each aforementioned category in Persian attached to its annual report of human rights violations in Kurdistan.

Methodology

The Iranian authorities refuse to provide accurate data on executions, landmines, *Kolbaran* (border couriers) and other issues affecting the members of Iran's national, ethnic and religious minorities, in particular. For instance, 86% of the recent executions are undeclared by the state. To get the most credible data, KMMK-G collects and verifies up-to-date information in the following ways: (a) conducts interviews with the families of the victims, (b) conducts interviews with the lawyers of the victims, (c) contacts and receives information from various institutions, on-the-ground local networks, as well as informants within authorities and governmental entities, (d) monitors the Islamic Republic's official statements, state media and publications, (e)



receives information from informal news agencies and obtains on the ground information.

Regarding the detention facilities and the cruel and inhumane treatment inflicted to the detainees for the period of Jina Woman, Life, Freedom Movement from 16th September 2022 till 15th September 2023, the Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva (KMMK-G) has gathered testimonies of 19 detainees including 7 women who were arbitrarily detained in connection with the protests. The former detainees were selected based on their willingness to share their experiences with KMMK-G upon their consent. Furthermore, the organization through its inside country sources has collected information about 12 formal and informal detention facilities in three of four Kurdish majority populated provinces namely Kermashan (Kermanshah), Sine (Kurdistan), and Wermê (Western Azerbaijan).

The KMMK-G provides the list of the victims upon demand. It is worth noting that most Kurdish cities have double names, a Persian-official name and a Kurdish one. The names put in the parenthesis are the official Persian imposed names.

Backgrounds

Iran

Iran is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a population of 82 million composed mainly of Persians, Kurds, Baluchis, Azerbaijanis, Turkmens, and Ahawazi-Arabs. Based on Articles 1, 4, 12, 15 and 105 of the Constitution, the minorities are excluded from political participation and power predominantly resides with the Persian-Shia group. The governance is based on a system of one country, one nation, one language and one religion. The utilization of the "gozinesh" criterion, a selection process mandating allegiance to the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official state religion for prospective officials and employees, severely restricts the employment prospects and political involvement of individuals from ethnic and religious minorities, including the Kurds, Ahwazi-Arabs, Azeris, Balochis, Jews, Bahá'ís, Christians, Armenians, and Kurdish Yarsanis.

Iranian Kurdistan

Iranian Kurdistan reaches a population of about 13 million, or 17.5% of the population of Iran (82 million). Iranian Kurdistan is composed of four main provinces: Sine (Kurdistan), Kermashan (Kermanshah), Ilam and Wermê



(Western Azerbaijan)¹. In addition, around two million Kurds live in Khorasan (1.5 million) and Tehran (0.5 million).² Kurdish cities have often two names, one Persian name imposed by the State and a Kurdish historical name. The names in parenthesis are Persian-imposed names.

Kurdistan encompasses a diverse religious landscape, with a mosaic of followers including Sunnis, Shias, Yarsanis, Chaldo-Assyrians (Chaldean Catholics), Jews, Bahá'ís, Zoroastrians, Gonabadi Dervishes, and members of various religious brotherhoods such as Ghaderi, Naqshbandi, and others.

Statistics

There are no official and reliable statistics on the exact number of Kurds in Iran and the Near East states where they live. Despite multiple demands from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2006³ and in 2010, Iran refuses to carry out a study/census based on ethnicity and religion.⁴ Current estimates are based on population statistics for each department or governorate in the Kurdish majority settlement area.

In 2009, Hamid Reza Haji Babai, the then Minister of Education, stated that 70 per cent of Iran's pupils are bilingual, with Persian still not used as the primary language by children even after first grade.⁵ He further claimed that students experience academic difficulties, which arise during the first grade, because of language barriers and they continue with these same issues in the later stages of their education. In reality, over 50 percent of Iran's population neither identifies as Persian nor speaks the language as their first language.

Since the inception of the Islamic Republic and Ayatollah Khomeini's declaration of holy war against the Kurds, they have been framed, stigmatized, and perceived as anti-Islam, anti-revolutionary, ashraf (pagans), violent, 'separatists,' 'rebels,' and agents of Israel or the West.

¹ Iranian Kurdistan geographically include also Hamadan and Lorestan Provinces. Hamadan have 8.33% Kurdish population and Lorestan 27.92% Lak.

² Institut Kurde de Paris: <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004>

³ UN CERD Committee :

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2F63%2FCO%2F6&Lang=en

⁴ The Committee urges the State party to carry out a study of members of all such communities:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2F18%2FCO%2F18-19&Lang=en

⁵ UNPO (2021). UNPO: Braanz: Towards a multilingual Iran! [online] unpo.org. Available at: <https://unpo.org/article/22149> . See also: Moinipour, S. (2022). View of The Islamic Republic of Iran and children's right to education: availability & accessibility. [online] Humanrer.org. Available at: <https://humanrer.org/index.php/human/article/view/3929/3984>



Discrimination, violence and hate speech against Kurdish people and other minorities in Iran are inherent to the inception of the Islamic Republic. On the 19th of August 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini, in an incendiary rhetoric, declared a holy war against Kurdish people and framed them as anti-Islam and Anti-revolutionary because they were simply for a secular, federal and democratic state and refused the establishment of an Islamic State in Iran. Since then, the Kurds have been stigmatized, marginalized, and excluded from any participation in public life and perceived and treated as a hostile group by the Iranian state and its media.

Baluchistan

Baluchis are virtually all Sunni Muslims. They are estimated to be 5-6 million but the Iranian state, Persian media in diaspora as well as Iranian Human Rights Groups estimate their number to be only a little over one million.

Baluchistan geography:

Reza Shah in 1928, in a nationalistic and centralized policy, supported by the British, undertook an assimilation strategy of non-Persians by demographic changes, disintegrating territories, changing names, and annexing parts of one ethnic territory to another in order to divide and govern. Baluchistan known as “British Baluchistan” before its takeover by Iran with the support of the British in 1922, was disintegrated and parts of it were annexed to the neighbouring provinces of South Khorasan, Kerman and Hormozgan.

Today both Iranian official media and diaspora Persian media call Baluchistan: Sistan or Zahedan but not Iranian Baluchistan which covers at least 3 provinces.

The Baluchis are perceived as “*malakh-khur*” (insect eaters) and “*biaban-gard*” (wanderers), dehumanized and treated by the state and its media as people not worth living. Dozens of thousands of Baluchi children are deprived of national ID cards, thus deprived of education, access to health care and public life.

Ahwazi-Arabs

The Ahwazi-Arab people are perceived and framed by the state media as “*Susmar-khur*” (lizard eaters), “*chadur nisheen*” (tribals and uncivilized), “camel riders”, “A’arabs” or “savages” or “Arab zaban” (Arab speakers) and “non-indigenous people of that very rich part of Iran”. The name Ahwaz is not used, they call it Khuzestan (and Ahwaz as a part of Khuzestan), which refers only to a small part of Ahwaz. The State media refers to Ahwaz as the Southwest of Iran. The Ahwazi-Arabs are also living in Bushehr, Mahshahr,



Bandar Abbas and Abadan. Their number is estimated to be 5-7 million, but the regime talks about one million and a half. While Ahwaz is one of the richest parts of Iran in terms of oil and gas, it is the most impoverished part of Iran along with Kurdistan and Baluchistan. Over 70% of Ahwazi-Arabs are Shiite.

Turkmens

Turkmens, similar to the Kurds and Baluchis, are mostly Sunnis and their number is estimated to be 4 million. They live in Turkmen Sahra (Desert, Forest, Caspian Sea and Khorasan mountains), Gulestan, North Khorasan (Kurds, Turkmens), Razavi Khorasan, and South Khorasan.

The Iranian Turkmens are perceived as “*rahzan*” (bandits), “*gharatgar*” (looters), “*mohajem*” (invaders), “*mohajer*” (immigrants), and “non-Iranians and non-indigenous people of the region”. Turkmens are also suffering from a high level of discrimination in access to education and healthcare, high rates of unemployment, and a lack of industry or investment by the state. The main occupations of Turkmens are animal husbandry (*damdari*) and fishing (*sayyadi*).

Turkmen sayyads (Fishermen) in the port of Bandar Turkmen, similar to the Kurdish *kulbars* (border couriers) or Baluchi *sukhtbars* (fuel porters) are victims of extrajudicial killings by IRCG.

Azerbaijani-Turks

Azerbaijani-Turks number is estimated to be between 17-20 million. They are virtually all Shiite. Azerbaijan like Kurdistan, Baluchistan, Ahwaz and Turkmen Sahra have suffered as a consequence of Reza Shah’s demographic changes and divisions. Reza Shah divided Azerbaijan to Eastern Azerbaijan and Western Azerbaijan and annexed and mixed Kurdish and Turkish cities. Azerbaijani-Turks mainly live in Ardabil, Zanjan and other cities such as Tehran.

Azerbaijani Turks are depicted in Iranian official media and newspapers as “intellectually challenged”, “sub-human members of society” and often referred to as “Turk-i khar” (donkey Turks), “qazanfar” (dim people with low IQ), “cockroaches” and made fun of in state affiliated mass media. As an example, in May 2006, Iran Newspaper, the official daily newspaper of the government of Iran, depicted the Azerbaijanis in a cartoon as “cockroaches” speaking Turkish.



Education in the mother tongue

Despite the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendation and call to Iran in 2011 to ensure that all members of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities can enjoy their own culture and use their language in media and schools, the Iranian regime continues to ignore and suppress the Kurdish and other linguistic and cultural activists.

Historically, the suppression of minority languages in favor of the Persian language goes back to the beginning of the 20th century and has continued from the Pahlavi dynasty to the Islamic Republic. For nearly a century, assimilatory policies have been enforced, prominently marked by the imposition of Persian as the sole language of instruction in state schools. Additionally, these policies encompass alterations in geographic names, the suppression of minority language publications and cultural associations, and the persistent practice where civil registry officials continue to deny children from ethnic minorities the right to be named in their native languages.

Under Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution, Persian is the only official language in the country. However, the same article stipulates that "the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian." The phrasing of this article effectively restricts the domains in which languages other than Persian can be used, including in schools where teaching in a minority language is permitted only for literature classes. This provision does not involve guarantees that children belonging to linguistic minorities will have access to education in their mother tongue.

However, in practice, there have been no elementary, middle, or high schools in the public system that teach the foremost minority languages, such as Azeri-Turkish, Baluchi or Kurdish. On the contrary, the Ministry of Education has reportedly circulated reminders to teachers and school administrators that the use of Kurdish and Turkish languages inside public schools is forbidden.

In addition, the Kurdish cultural and linguistic activists and teachers are often facing arbitrary detention and unfair imprisonment. Ms Zara Mohammadi, a Kurdish teacher and the founder of the Nojin Cultural Association, was arbitrarily sentenced to ten (10) years imprisonment and spent five (5) years in Sanandaj Central Prison for teaching the Kurdish language. All other



members of this cultural association are either facing unfair trials or are in jail.⁶

Jina (Mahsa) Amini: Woman, Life, Freedom's Nationwide Protests and crackdowns in Iranian Kurdistan

This part of the report provides up-to-date data on the recent situation of the unrest in Iranian Kurdistan four majority Kurdish populated provinces of Ilam, Kermashan (Kermanshah), Sine (Kurdistan) and Wermê (Western Azerbaijan)⁷ for the period of 16 September 2022 until 16 September 2023. It sheds light on the number of Kurdish protestors killed, injured, and detained.

The Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva (KMMK-G) has been able to collect testimonies of the victims by interviewing forty (40) protestors who were released on bail or who were able to flee to Iraqi Kurdistan. The KMMK-G has also been able to collect on-the-ground information through its on-the-ground local networks and contacts in Kurdish provinces.

The recent nationwide protests were triggered by the shocking death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, a 22-year-old woman from Iranian Kurdistan, while in custody. Jina Amini was arrested by Tehran's "morality" police for non-compliance with the country's discriminatory and abusive compulsory veiling laws, and her death occurred on 16 September 2022, just days after her arrest.

The protests started in Sine, city of Saqqez, during the funeral of Jina Amini and then followed by a general strike in all Kurdistan provinces on 19th September 2022. On the same evening, the general strike swiftly transformed into street protests throughout Iranian Kurdistan, marked by the chant "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî" (Woman, Life, Freedom), voiced by young women as they removed their Islamic veils. The protests rapidly spread to other major cities in Iran, and this time the slogan "Zan, Zendegi, Azadi" was chanted in Farsi by Iranian women as they also removed their veils. The demands of the protestors were broadened for fundamental political and social change

⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session95/A-HRC-WGAD-2022-82-AEV.pdf>

⁷ West Azerbaijan Province, Kurdistan Province, Kermanshah Province, Ilam Province and parts of Hamadan Province and Lorestan Province either have a majority or sizable population of Kurds and together they are commonly known as "Iranian Kurdistan".



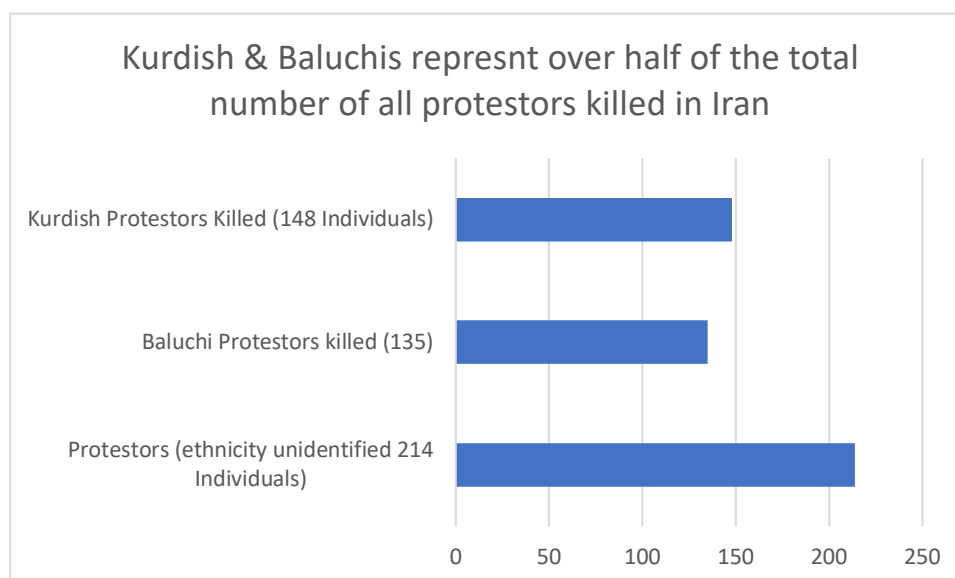
towards the protection and fulfilment of human rights.

Kurdish protestors killed

From the start of the protests in Kurdistan on the 19th of September 2022 until 16th September 2023, KMMK-G, through its on-the-ground contacts and investigations, was able to identify the names of at least, one hundred forty-eight (148) Kurdish protestors who were killed during this period. Eleven (11) of them were women. Seventeen (17) of the victims were under 18 years of age. Forty-nine (49) of them were from Sine province (Sanandaj), fifty-six (56) from Wermê province (Urumiyeh or Western Azerbaijan), thirty-four (34) from Kermashan (Kermanshah), and four (4) from Ilam. One resided in Quchan and four (4) resided in Khuramawa (Khuram-Abad). Twenty-three (23) Kurdish citizens were killed outside Kurdistan provinces.

Since the beginning of the protests, at least four hundred-ninety-seven (497) protestors were killed. Four hundred forty-seven (447) of them were men and forty-five (45) were women. One hundred forty-eight (148) of them were Kurds and one hundred thirty-five (135) were Baluchis.

More than 60% of violent repression against protestors is directed towards the Kurdish and Baluchi populations, despite constituting only 20% of Iran's total population of 82 million. This highlights the disproportionate use of lethal force by security forces in ethnic territories against these minority groups.



- Forty-nine (49) of the victims were from Sine (Kurdistan province),
- Fifty-six (56) of the victims were from Wermê (Western Azerbaijan)

- province),
- Thirty-four (34) of the victims were from Kermashan (Kermanshah province),
 - Four (4) of the victims were from Ilam,
 - Twenty-three (23) of the Kurdish protestors were killed in non-Kurdish provinces such as in Tehran and Razavi Khorasan provinces.

The case of Armita Garawand, a Kurdish 16-year-old from Kermashan



On 16th September 2023, one year after the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini in Tehran's metro, Armita Garawand, a Kurdish 16-year-old girl born in



Kermashan (Kermanshah), was reported suffering a brain injury and in a coma after a violent encounter with the morality police in Tehrans' Shohada metro station. After almost one month in a coma, on 2nd November 2023, the authorities informed the family that Armita was dead. KMMK-G successfully reached out to two close family members who revealed that authorities are exerting intense pressure on Armita's parents, other family members, and schoolmates, banning them from communicating with the media. These contacts informed KMMK-G that the parents do not approve of the state narratives and affirmations and strongly believe that their daughter was hit and murdered by the morality police. The contacts additionally communicated that the authorities informed the family about the death of Armita four days prior to the public announcement of her death on the 2nd of November 2023. The regime chose to announce on the 2nd of November while the focus of the international community was on the Israel-Hamas war.

The contacts also informed KMMK-G that the parents wished to bury their daughter in Kermashan (Kermanshah) in Iranian Kurdistan where Armita was born and had their relatives living. However, the regime prevented the burial in Kermashan fearing public revolt in Kurdistan as was the case for Jina Amini in Saqqez.

Injuries

In the period between 16 September 2022 and 16 September 2023, over nine thousand (9'000) protestors were reported injured in Iranian Kurdistan⁸. Most of the injured protestors did not seek care from state affiliated health centres due to fear of reprisals and detentions. Twelve thousand (12'000) protestors were also reported injured in the whole country.

KMMK-G has been able to identify the names and identities of at least one hundred ninety-nine (199) Kurdish protestors who were seriously wounded by the Iranian security forces' direct shootings. Fifteen (15) of the victims are women.

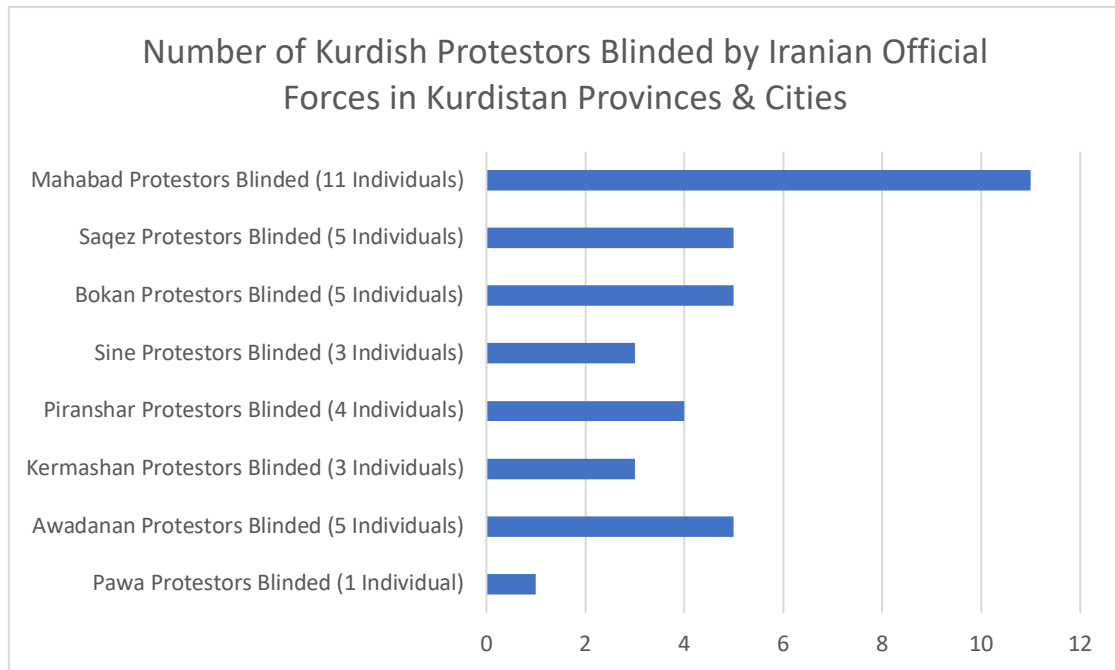
In Iranian Kurdistan provinces, eighty protestors were reportedly targeted by Iranian security forces at close range, resulting in damage to their eyes or

⁸ West Azerbaijan Province, Kurdistan Province, Kermanshah Province, Ilam Province and parts of Hamadan Province and Lorestan Province either have a majority or sizable population of Kurds and together they are commonly known as "Iranian Kurdistan".



blindness. Iranian Kurdistan⁹ has experienced some of the most violent repression, with a disproportionately higher number of protestors losing their sight and being targeted by pellet guns and shootings compared to the rest of the country. Over 80 protestors were reportedly blinded by security forces, but at this stage, KMMK-G has been able to identify the identities of only thirty-seven (37) Kurdish protestors who were blinded by Iranian officials' shootings, including two girls.

In Kurdistan, Mahabad has seen the highest number of protestors blinded by pellet guns and bullets. Eleven (11) protestors were blinded in Mahabad, five (5) in Saqqez, three (3) in Bokeran, three (3) in Sine (Sanandaj), four (4) in Piranshar (Piranshahr), three (3) in Kermashan (Kermanshah), five (5) in Awadanan (Abadanan), and one (1) in Pawa (Paveh).



⁹ West Azerbaijan Province, Kurdistan Province, Kermanshah Province, Ilam Province and parts of Hamadan Province and Lorestan Province either have a majority or sizable population of Kurds and together they are commonly known as "Iranian Kurdistan".

Ms Kawsar (Mehbanoo) Khoushnouni Kia, from Kermashan (Kermanshah), was injured in the eye by a bullet during a protest in Kermashan and lost her left eye on 9 December 2022. Ms Kawsar became an archery champion and silver medal winner at the 2021 Asian Archery Championship Games. Despite surgery, she lost her left sight.

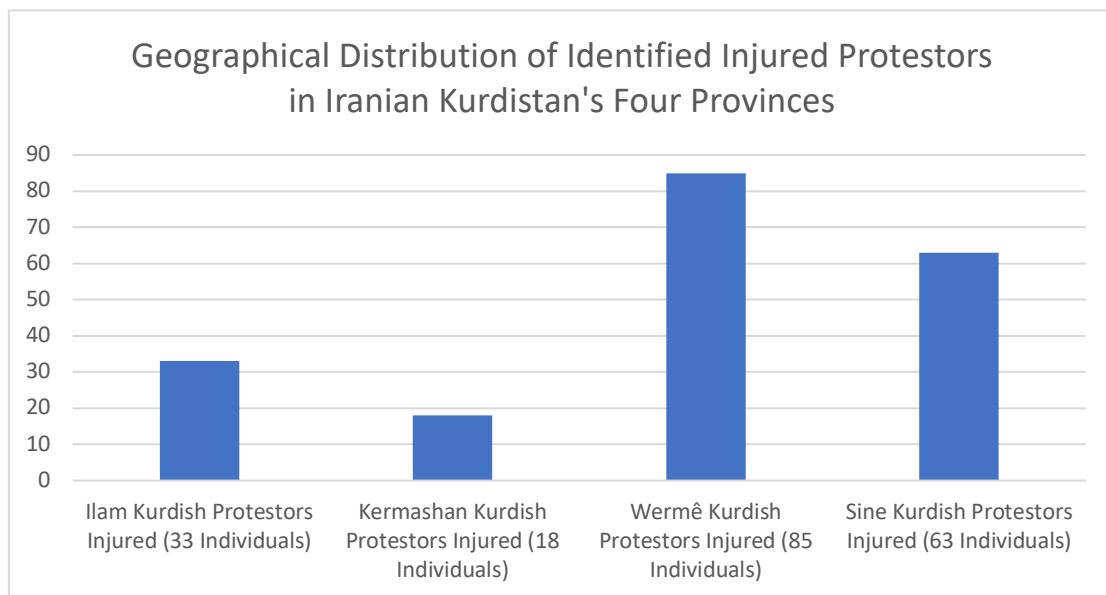


Ms Mastane Nazê, from Piranshahr, was shot in the eyes by a pellet gun in front of her house in the Piranshahr main street (24 meters). She was taken to Khomeini Hospital in Piranshahr and underwent eye surgery three times. Mastane lost her left eye. She was born on 25th November 1999 and her parents are Mr Abdullah and Mrs Ayesha.



Geographical distribution of the number of identified injured protestors in Iranian Kurdistan's following four provinces:

- Sixty-three (63) of the victims are from Sine (Kurdistan province),
- Eighty-five (85) of the victims are from Wermê (Western Azerbaijan province),
- Eighteen (18) of the victims are from Kermashan (Kermanshah province),
- Thirty-three (33) of the victims are from Ilam.



According to several eyewitnesses, many of the injured protestors did not seek care from state affiliated health centres due to fear of reprisals and detentions. A protestor who fled outside the country reported to KMMK-G that he was shot on the 22nd of September in a Kurdish city during the first round of the protests by direct shootings of the security forces. He was then taken to a private house where he received medical attention from a medical doctor hours after he was shot. Videos of ambulances taking the protestors to detention facilities have gone viral on social media. An estimated number of nine thousand (9'000) Kurdish protestors were reported injured during the protests and could not receive adequate medical care due to fear of reprisal and many of them received care in private houses by private doctors.

During the same period, several Kurdish citizens were suspiciously killed. A Kurdish religious leader and a Kurdish female student in Sarpol-e Zahab were killed.

Detainees

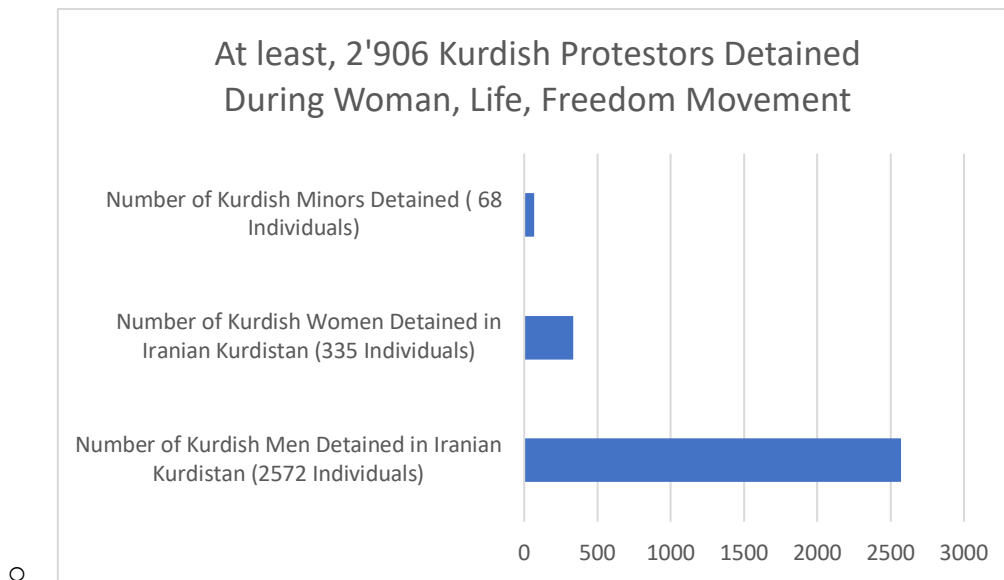
Between the period of 16 September 2022 and 16 September 2023, KMMK-G was able to identify and register the names of two thousand nine hundred



and six (2'906) Kurdish protestors detained by Iranian security forces. At least, three hundred thirty-five (335) of them are women.

- One thousand one hundred and ten (1'110) of them are from Sine (Kurdistan province) (including 176 women),
- Nine hundred seventy-eight (978) are from Wermê (Western Azerbaijan province)
- Three hundred eighty-four (384) are from Kermashan (Kermanshah province) (346 men and 38 women)
- Two hundred ninety-two (292) are from Ilam (260 men and 32 women)

Sixty-eight (68) of the detainees are under 18 years of age and 4 of them are only 14 years old.



Since the beginning of the protests, KMMK-G has been able to identify the identities of at least nineteen (19) Kurdish protestors who were killed under torture in Iranian jails. Thirteen (13) of them were detained in relation to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement. One (1) of them was detained for improper hijab and three others (3) for fabricated security-related charges. A Baluchi protestor (1) and another protestor (1) from Kahkilooye province were also reported killed under torture in prison.

KMMK-G believes that the regime is killing political prisoners in prison under torture to reduce the political cost of executing political prisoners and avoid international pressure. KMMK-G has observed this new trend since the November 2019 public unrest in Iran.



The detainees are subjected to severe forms of physical and mental torture including blackmail, sexual abuse and/or threats of it, manipulation, and infliction of physical suffering such as breakage of legs and hands.

According to several detainees who were released and interviewed by KMMK-G, the prisons in Kurdistan provinces are full and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Intelligence (Ittela'at) forces are using basements and residential buildings with individual rooms to detain protestors. The protestors undergo severe physical and mental torture by IRGC in these facilities.

A woman protestor who was arrested twice since the recent nationwide protests and released by paying a heavy bail told KMMK-G: *"I was detained and confined to a solitary cell in Ittela'at (IRGC Intelligence) facility. This is a place where detainees are not transferred to the judiciary system, and they undergo beatings and torture. Later, I was taken to a building, which looked like a house and again I was held in a solitary cell. There are many houses in town with individual rooms and many protestors are held there."*

Two student protestors who were detained in a basement for one week also declared to KMMK-G that they *"were held for a week in a huge basement full of protestors"*. They *"were beaten by cables and iron sticks"*.

The detainees include, but are not limited to, ordinary citizens, women activists, rights activists, environmental activists, journalists, teachers, workers, university and school students, singers, and athletes.

Ms Waran Mohammad-Nejad, a student at Arts University in Yazd and a member of the Nojin Cultural Association, was detained in her home without prior warning, on the 13th of October 2022. She is a colleague of Ms Zara Mohammadi, a Kurdish teacher from the Nojin Cultural Association who was arbitrarily sentenced to five years and detained illegally in Sanandaj Central Prison for teaching the Kurdish language. On Wednesday the 19th of October 2022, Ms Waran went on a hunger strike protesting her prison conditions and her unlawful detention.

Four other members of the Nojin Cultural Association, Ms Sooma Pour-Mohammadi, Mr Saywan Ibrahimi, Ms Serwa Pour-Mohammadi, and Mr Idris Menbari, were detained during the protests and later released on bail. They are all awaiting trial.



All four were initially charged with the crime of “forming groups against national security”. These charges were dropped by the prosecutor due to the absence of evidence and their alleged charges were changed to “disturbances to public order”, which according to the Islamic Republic of Iran’s (IRI’s) penal code, Article 618, is punishable by one year imprisonment.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp’s (IRGC) Itela’at or secret service has gone against the prosecutor’s decision and appealed the decision by insisting that they all need to be charged with “forming groups against the national security”, which based on the IRI’s penal code, Article 498, is punishable up to 10 years imprisonment. Therefore, all four members of the Nojin Cultural Association have been summoned to Branch One of the Revolutionary Court of Sine (Sanandaj) for a new trial to be presented with these new charges. They are all facing intense pressure and may be taken directly into custody right after their trial.

Mr Idris Menbari, another member of the board of the Nojin Cultural Association, was sentenced to one year of imprisonment in exile, and forty lashes by the 106th Branch of Sanandaj’s Criminal Court. He also was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by the First Branch of Sanandaj’s Revolutionary Court, headed by Judge Bahman Karami, on charges such as “formation of groups”. On October 26th, 2023, this Court ruling was announced to him by his lawyers, Mr Jwanmir Abfoulahi and Mr Hemen Majidi.

Ms Sirwe Pour-Mohammadi, a member of the board of the Nojin Cultural Association, was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment by the First Branch of Sanandaj’s Revolutionary Court, headed by Judge Bahman Karami, on charges such as “Formation of groups”. On October 26th, 2023, her sentence was announced to her by her lawyers.

Again, according to KMMK-G’s findings, at least three hundred thirty-five (335) Kurdish girls and women have been detained during the protests and many of them have been subjected to severe torture, rape, arbitrary detention, and unfair trials. Among them, are dozens of artists, filmmakers, singers, and journalists.

Due to their strong position and public statements, the Kurdish artists have been subjected to harsh repression, unfair trials and arbitrary detentions. Due to a lack of legal support and financial resources, a significant number of them are risking imprisonment and tough sentences amounting to *moharebeh*



(imaginary crime of waging war against God), a crime that carries the death penalty.

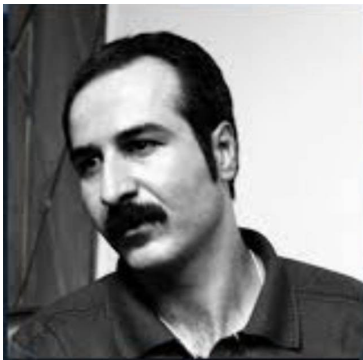
Profiles of a few Kurdish artists facing arbitrary detention, unfair trials and fabricated charges.

Ms Gashin Mohammadi



Ms Gashin Mohammadi is a photographer and artist who has been active in the field of social issues for many years. She was arrested by the security forces in October 2022 once the Woman, Life, Freedom movement began. She has been released on bail until the end of the court proceedings. Currently, she lives in Sine (Sanandaj) city and all her art projects have been stopped.

Mr Nirwan Rezaii



Mr Nirwan Rezaii is a photographer and conceptual artist. He has been working in different cities of Iran for many years and has held many exhibitions. One of his art projects is publishing the painting of children and teenage workers from poor and marginalized areas. He has been summoned to the security agencies many times and is under pressure and at risk of arrest at any moment.

Mr Hêrish Naqeshbandi



Mr Hêrish Naqeshbandi is a director of cinema and an artist. He lost one of his eyes during a protest in December 2022. Until this time, he has gone under surgery twice, but he must continue the treatment process. Finally, he was arrested on 23rd of May 2023 and is at risk of torture and unfair trial.

Three other Kurdish artists, Ms Azadeh Jamaati, a director and actress in cinema, Mr. Shorsh Abubakri, a singer and music trainer, and Mr Farhad Mohammad Jani, a photographer and graphist, are also facing unfair trials.

Saman Yasin Seyyedi at risk of execution



Saman Yasin Seyyedi, a young Kurdish Yarsani rapper and musician, aged 27, from Kermashan (Kermanshah), was arrested and held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison on 2nd of October 2022 in relation to nationwide protests.

On 29th October 2022, following an 11-minute trial conducted by disreputable judge Salavati in charge of Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Court (Branch 15), Saman Yasin was charged with "*moharebeh*" or "waging war against God" in hazily-defined offences, which carry the death penalty.

His "crime" is his participation in the recent protests and his music, which criticizes the establishment. The family has hired a lawyer for his case, but the



lawyer has not yet been able to see Saman about his case and he was not allowed to access the trial, according to his family.

In a video released of the trial by Iranian national TV, the infamous judge Salavati who has already sentenced over 300 Kurdish prisoners to death in the past decades, has accused Saman Yasin of “carrying a pistol during a protest” and “assembly and collusion against national security”. Saman Yasin denied all these accusations. According to a close member of the family, Saman has undergone physical and mental torture and become weak and thin

Saman Yasin is a socio-political critical singer and rapper. He raps about inequality, oppression and unemployment and denounces the regime’s repression of the protestors. A few other musicians such as Shervin Hajipour and Toumaj Salehi (Persians) were also arrested. Shervin Hajipour, a Persian musician whose song went viral around the world was released on bail after a few weeks of detention but Saman Yasin is facing a death sentence.

KMMK-G strongly believes that charging Saman Yasin with the crime of “*moharebeh*” is related to his songs and his ethno-religious background¹⁰. His Kurdish ethnicity and Yarsani faith, singing both in Kurdish and Farsi, are reasons for the state to sentence him to death and make his case an example for all other rappers and musicians in the country.

Since the beginning of the protests on 16 September 2022, dozens of Kurdish singers including Mr Hossein Safamanesh and Aziz Waissi were detained for their public support and songs and video clips for the protestors.

The death penalty for Saman Yasin was announced at a moment when members of Iran’s parliament called and voted in favor of introducing the death penalty for protestors and a dozen, mostly Baluchis and Kurds, were sentenced to “*moharebeh*” and are at risk of the capital punishment.

Given the Iranian judiciary, parliament and public calls and intimidations from IRGC commanders, we are extremely concerned about the fate of Saman Yasin and he is at imminent risk.

Kurdish Protestors on Death Row

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHu3N1O9CJ8>



Twenty-three (23) Kurdish protestors were sentenced to capital punishment for their participation in the nationwide protests. On the 4th of November 2022, Mohammad Mehdi Karami was executed in Karaj in Tehran.

The death sentence of Saman Yasin Seyyedi, a young Kurdish Yarsani rapper and musician, was annulled by the Supreme Court and he is still awaiting a new process. Saman (27), from Kermashan (Kermanshah), was arrested and held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison on the 2nd of October 2022 in relation to nationwide protests. At least one hundred (100) protestors are on death row in Iran.

The Iranian Kurdistan has been the scene of resistance and defiance against the regime since its inception in 1979. Since then, Kurdistan has been perceived, framed, and treated as a hostile group by the Iranian state and its media. The level of repression has been historically higher than any other part of Iran.

Executions in 2023

According to the data collected by KMMK-G, from January 1 to 31 December 2023, at least eight hundred thirty-nine (839) prisoners including 24 women were executed in Iran. At least, two hundred-eight (208) were Kurds including three (3) women and one hundred seventy (170) were Baluchis including four (4) women. KMMK-G believes that whenever the regime is facing a power crisis internally or internationally, the number of executions increases in particular against ethnic minorities. Iran's policy of execution is not about the administration of justice, it's a policy of the control of populations, dissents and in particular against the Iranian national, ethnic & religious minorities. Over 60% of Iran's political executions are Kurds, 25% Baluchis and 10% Ahwazi-Arabs. Despite the international urgent calls, Iranian authorities executed Farhad Salimi, a Kurdish opinion prisoner on 23rd January and four Kurdish political prisoners on 29th January 2024. Twelve (12) other Kurdish political prisoners are at risk of imminent executions.

Crimes and charges against Kurdish prisoners

Twelve (12) prisoners were executed or killed under torture in prisons for political and security-related charges. Mrs. Nasrin (Nasim) Niazy from Wermê was executed on 17 March 2023 on charges of espionage for Israel. Three (3) were executed or killed in prisons for their participation in the



Woman, Life, Freedom movement. Five (5) in relationship to the Kurdish political parties (three were executed and two of them died under torture). Four (4) of them were executed for the fabricated crimes of spying for Israel.

Sixty-two (62) prisoners were executed or killed under torture for murder and another one hundred-nineteen (119) for drug-related offences and one of them was woman and she was executed for the murder of her husband. Mr Qassem Abesteh, a Kurdish prisoner of conscience from Mahabad was executed on the 5th of November 2023 after enduring 13 years in jail. Another Kurdish citizen was executed for moharebeh. Eighty-six (86) % of the Kurdish executions were not declared by the state and its media.

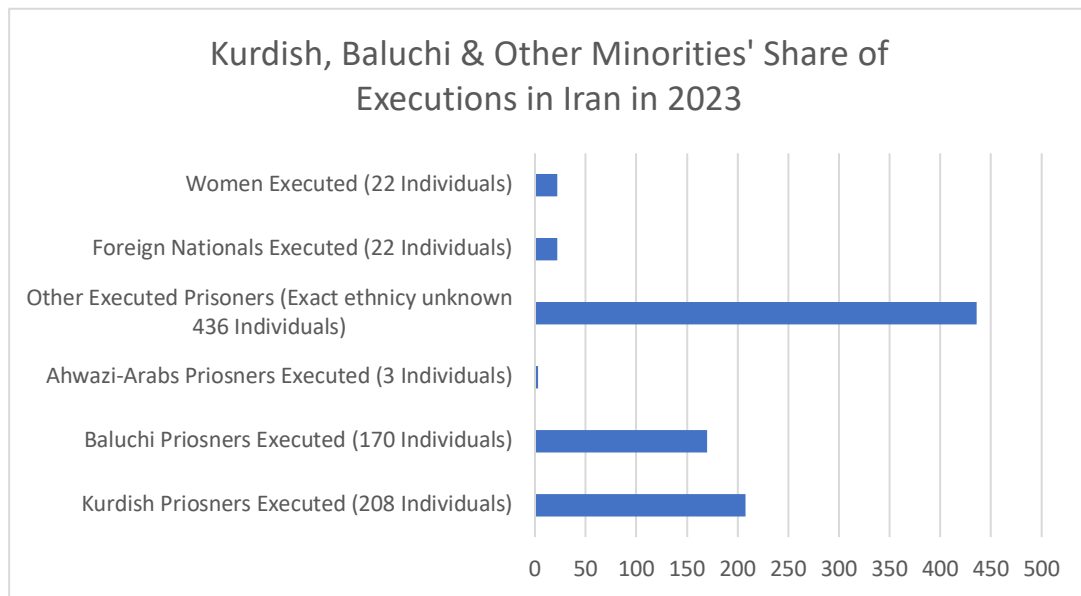
Crimes and charges against Baluchi prisoners

The following Baluchi prisoners were executed: One hundred thirty-six (136) for drug-related offenses including three woman (3), twenty (20) for murder including two women (2), one (1) for the crime of “spreading corruption on Earth”, another (1), who lost his life under torture in jail, for participation in the protests, and one (1) for rape. Nine (9) for political and security related charges. Six (6) in relation to armed groups.

Four hundred thirty-six (436) were also executed including seventeen (17) women.- The KMMK-G has not been able to identify their ethnicities. Twenty-two (22) Foreign nationals in particular Afghans were also executed.

Six (6) Ahwazi-Arab protestors detained during the protests are missing and at risk of imminent execution. Three (3) other Arab citizens were reportedly executed.

Close to 50% of the total executions of the Iranian prisoners are Kurdish and Baluchi citizens while the Kurds and the Baluchis make up only 20% of Iran’s 82 million population.



The state-sponsored violence and the application of death sentences against Iranian ethnic groups, in particular the Kurds and Baluchis are increasing dramatically and disproportionately. While the Kurdish population constitutes only 15% of the total 82 million population, the number of Kurdish executions for political and security-related charges is over 60%.

Iran has one of the highest execution rates globally. Kurdish prisoners face unfair trials and are often convicted in proceedings marked by a pattern of abuses including the use of confessions made under torture and the denial of access to a lawyer. The authorities use the death penalty to control the minorities and the population.

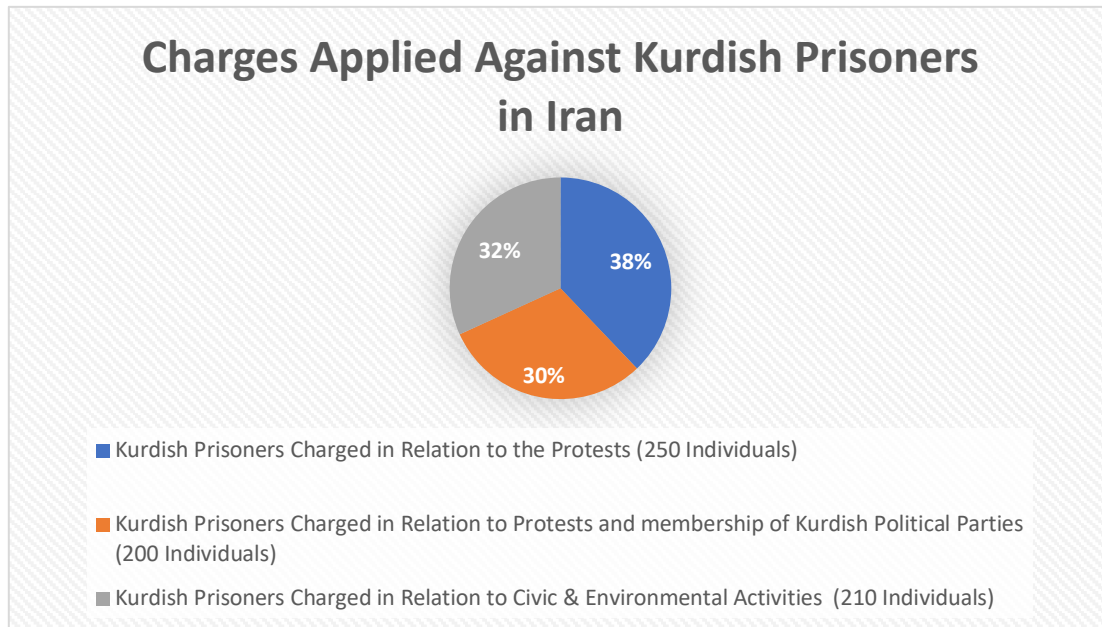
Political Prisoners/Detentions

Similar to previous years, the share of Kurdish political imprisonment remains dramatically high in 2023 (from 1st January 2023 until December 31, 2023).

According to KMMK-G's collected data, from January 1 until 31 December, 2023, at least one thousand one hundred seventy-one (1'171) Kurdish citizens including one hundred twenty-four (124) women and forty-seven (47) religious leaders were arrested. At least two hundred fifty (250) of the detainees were sentenced to long years of imprisonment. Two hundred (200) were charged in relation to the nationwide protests and membership of Kurdish political parties mainly Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) for fabricated crimes such as: "propaganda against the system", "actions against state security", and "membership in opposition groups". This includes fifteen women (15) three of whom are under 18 years of age. The charges include "*moharebeh*" (waging war against God) and "*baghi va qiam-i*

mosalahaneh 'alayhe hokoumat-i Islami" (committing an armed uprising against the Islamic regime).

Therefore, the total number of Kurdish citizens detained by Iranian security forces including those related to the recent unrest, is over three thousand (3'000) individuals. KMMK-G has identified their names. At least, three hundred thirty-five (335) of them are women.

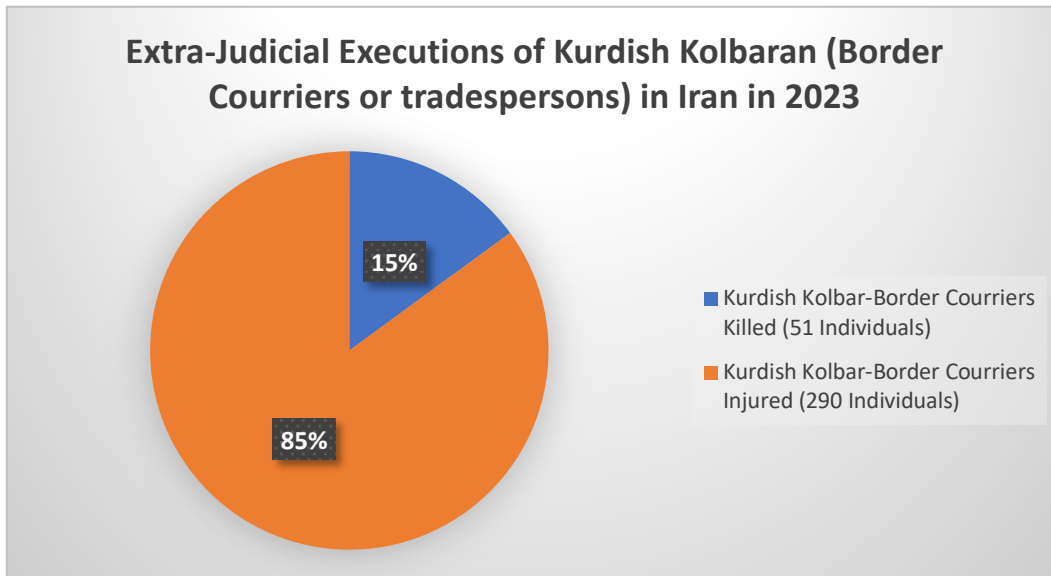


The Kurdish community along with Baluchis remain two of the most suppressed groups in the country, with individuals being persecuted, arrested and in many cases sentenced to death due to their alleged activism. Similar to previous years, the Kurdish political prisoners represent half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran.

Extra-Judicial Executions of *Kolbaran* (border couriers or tradespersons)

Extra-Judicial Executions of *Kolbaran* (border couriers or tradespersons)

KMMK-G has received reports of extra-judicial executions of fifty-one (51) border couriers known as *kolbaran* from January 1 until December 31, 2023, with another two hundred ninety (290) individuals working as *kolbar* injured at the border due to incidents such as direct shootings of border officials and landmine explosions among other things. This brings the total number of incidents reported regarding shootings and discriminatory killings of *Kolbaran* to three hundred forty-one (341) during the period under consideration.



Three of the *kolbaran* killed were under 18 years of age. Mani Habibi was only 14 years old when he was shot dead by Iranian border officials

Hoshiar Hassanpour, 20 years old, from Baneh, is the latest victim of Iran's extra-judicial executions by its official border agents. Hoshiar was shot in the head and chest on Monday 5th of June at the Zala border and died immediately.



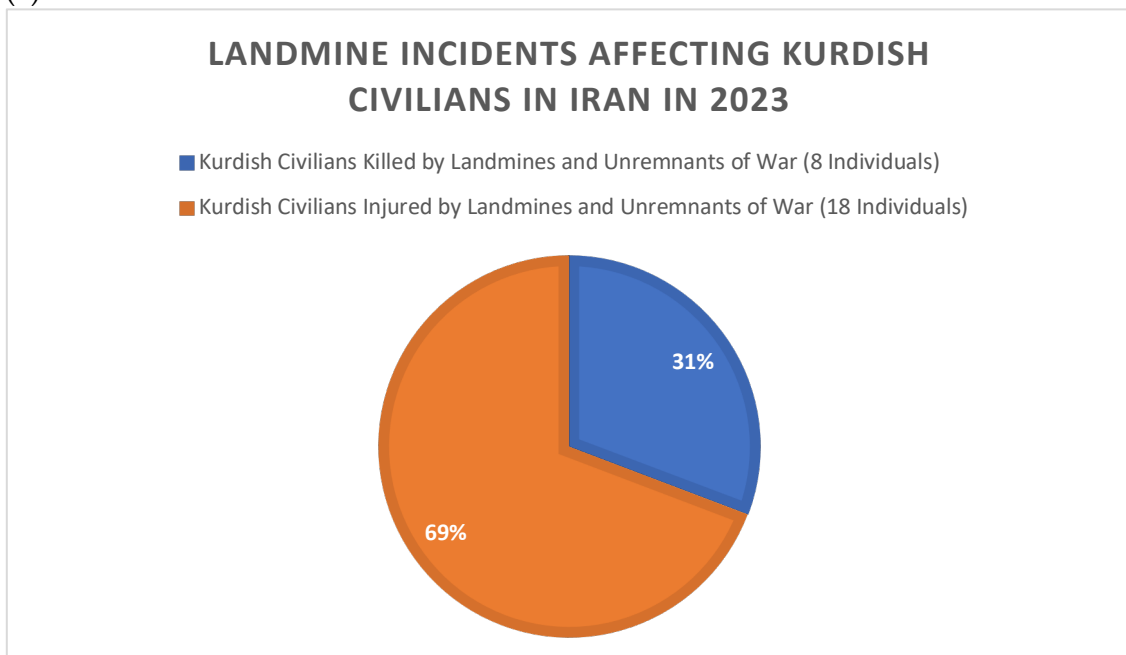
Moreover, many *kolbaran* (border courriers) were arrested and their goods were confiscated by the authorities thus far in 2023. In addition, hundreds of horses belonging to Kurdish *Kolbaran* were also shot dead.

Due to high rates of unemployment and contamination caused by landmines and explosive remnants of the Iran-Iraq war that seriously hamper the daily lives of civilians, particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders, the Kurdish youths from the four Kurdistan provinces of Kermashan (Kermanshah), Sine (Kurdistan), Ilam and Wermê (West Azerbaijan) engage in *kolbari* carrying commodities, such as tea, tobacco and fuel to earn a living.

Landmine Incidents Affecting Kurdish Civilians

Various international bodies and entities such as the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Iran (2010) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (January 2016) have made observations and recommendations, urging the Islamic Republic to clear its territory of landmines and all the remnants of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Nevertheless, despite international and domestic efforts, the Islamic Republic refuses to cooperate with international NGOs and entities and to ratify the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty.

Based on KMMK-G's data, thus far this year (January 1 till November 30, 2023), a total of twenty-six (26) citizens have fallen victims to landmine explosions in the Iranian Kurdistan. Eight (8) Kurdish civilians were killed and eighteen (18) were wounded due to landmines explosions and unexploded remnants of the Iran-Iraq war, which ended a long time ago in 1988. Six (6) of the victims were from Wermê (Western Azerbaijan), eleven (11) from Sine (Kurdistan), five (5) from Kermashan (Kermanshah) and four (4) from Ilam.



It is also important to note that according to Iran's official statistics, during to eight years-long Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), more than 20 million landmines were planted in the Iranian Kurdistan and Khuzestan provinces that seriously hamper the daily lives of civilians, particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders. Essentially, an area of about 4 million and 200 thousand hectares is contaminated by mines and explosive materials.



Iranian Kurdistan is the most affected area by landmines and undetonated ammunitions. The reason for this is the armed conflict of 1980-1993 between state forces and Kurdish combatants. Reportedly, the Iranian Army planted an unknown number of mines around their barracks and compounds in many villages and cities in Kurdistan. Recent reports also indicate that Iran continues to plant landmines in Kurdistan.

Women

After the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini, a Kurdish young girl, in September 2022 in Tehran by the so-called “Morality Police”, we are witnessing a historical and critical moment in Iran, Kurdish women have been playing a major role in bringing together Iranian women, men and youth, from all diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, under the banner and the manifest of Jin, Jiyan, Azadi, women, life, freedom to call for regime change.

Since the inception of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979, Kurdistan has been pioneer in the fight to defy ayatollah rules, and to promote values of a secular, democratic, federal Iran, that fully respect women and minority rights.

Kurdish women have been in the forefront of the fight for the emancipation of women not only in Iran but in the whole Middle-East region. They are in the origin of the manifest of Jin, Jiyan, Azadi, women, life, freedom that has now become the war chant of the protestors in whole Iran. Kurdish women have also played a major role defeating the barbaric Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and pays a huge price for developing a pluralist, tolerant and egalitarian conception of state not only in Iran but in the whole Middle-east dominated by sectarian and radicalism. Since the start of Jina woman, life, freedom movement, at least 335 Kurdish women were detained.

Suffering the outrageous misogynistic Sharia laws of Iran and living under multiple levels of political, ethnic, gender and economic oppression under the Iranian rule, Kurdish women are further handicapped by the politically-driven underdevelopment of their region, and are denied basic human rights such as education. Sadly, suicide through self-burning has become a common way of protest and tends to be seen as the only solution to end an excruciating life. Suicide by burning makes up less than 1 per cent of all suicides in developed countries. In Iran, up to 71 per cent of suicides are conducted via self-immolation, most of which are committed by women between 17-28 in the Kurdish region. The majority of victims are female, little educated (illiterate or only educated to primary school level) and married. Today the Kurdish-majority Kermashan Province has some of the highest rates of female self-immolation around the world.

Another problem most self-burn victims had in common was poverty. In Kurdistan region of Iran, unemployment or underemployment triggers a sense of vulnerability and can cause individuals to worry about their future; it also creates a sense of loss and loneliness, especially because of reduced social



support; and the lack of health insurance coupled with the deteriorating situation, aggravating the consequences of stressful life events. The chain reactions can lead to, for example, having poor problem-solving skills and an inability to consider the consequences of an attempted self-immolation which include disfigurement, embarrassment, and disability.

Since the beginning of the protests, at least four hundred-ninety-seven (497) protestors were killed. Four hundred forty-seven (447) of them were men and forty-five (45) were women. One hundred forty-eight (148) of them were Kurds and one hundred thirty-five (135) were Baluchis.

In Iranian Kurdistan provinces, eighty protestors were reportedly targeted by Iranian security forces at close range, resulting in damage to their eyes or blindness. Iranian Kurdistan¹¹ has experienced some of the most violent repression, with a disproportionately higher number of protestors losing their sight and being targeted by pellet guns and shootings compared to the rest of the country. Over 80 protestors were reportedly blinded by security forces, but at this stage, KMMK-G has been able to identify the identities of only thirty-seven (37) Kurdish protestors who were blinded by Iranian officials' shootings, including two girls.

In Kurdistan, Mahabad has seen the highest number of protestors blinded by pellet guns and bullets. Eleven (11) protestors were blinded in Mahabad, five (5) in Saqqez, three (3) in Bokeran, three (3) in Sine (Sanandaj), four (4) in Piranshar (Piranshahr), three (3) in Kermashan (Kermanshah), five (5) in Awadanan (Abadanan), and one (1) in Pawa (Paveh).

Ms Kawsar (Mehbanoo) Khoushnoudi Kia, from Kermashan (Kermanshah), was injured in the eye by a bullet during a protest in Kermashan and lost her left eye on 9 December 2022. Ms Kawsar became an archery champion and silver medal winner at the 2021 Asian Archery Championship Games. Despite surgery, she lost her left sight.

Ms Mastane Nazê, from Piranshahr, was shot in the eyes by a pellet gun in front of her house in the Piranshahr main street (24 meters). She was taken to Khomeini Hospital in Piranshahr and underwent eye surgery three times. Mastane lost her left eye. She was born on 25th November 1999 and her parents are Mr Abdullah and Mrs Ayesha.

¹¹ West Azerbaijan Province, Kurdistan Province, Kermanshah Province, Ilam Province and parts of Hamadan Province and Lorestan Province either have a majority or sizable population of Kurds and together they are commonly known as "Iranian Kurdistan".



Ms. Gashin Mohammadi is a photographer and artist who has been active in the field of social issues for many years. She was arrested by the security forces in October 2022 once the Woman, Life, Freedom movement began. She has been released on bail until the end of the court proceedings. Currently, she lives in Sine (Sanandaj) city and all her art projects have been stopped

If the international community especially the United Nations does not act in time, stopping the spread of frustration and disappointment among marginalized women who are pushed to edge, self-immolation will be further normalized, extending its vicious circle and turning into an epidemic, leaving children without their mothers and the community deeply scarred. It is therefore the international community's responsibility to intervene and halt Iran's ongoing ethnic oppressions combined with laws that consider women subhuman. Iran's ethnic groups, in particular the Kurds, live in constant state-driven discrimination and persecution.

Conclusion

The Islamic Republic does not seem to even remotely be willing to stop its outrageous human rights violations. Iran's policy of instilling fear and intimidation among members of ethnic nationalities, in particular Kurds, remains actively and aggressively in place thus far in 2023. Meanwhile, the emergence of the Kurds as an inevitable part of a viable solution to a stable Middle East, increases the Islamic Republic's paranoia of its Kurdish populations at home, despite Kurds' modest request for equality and federalism.

The Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as the Islamic judiciary and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), fear even the slightest signs of empowered national and ethnic minorities, Kurds in particular. Yet, the Supreme Leader remains the ultimate decision-maker of the country. In short, despite repeated calls from the United Nations to the Iranian authorities regarding human rights violations, the Islamic Republic's policy to suppress Kurdish populations remains as forceful as ever in 2023.

The recent crackdowns on the Kurdish civil activists in Kurdistan, which emerged in September 2022 after the death of Jina Amini, attest to the growing frustration of ordinary Iranian citizens with economic and political hardships in the country. Instead of effectively addressing these grievances, the Islamic Republic responds by detaining peaceful protestors and intensifying existing repressive measures. Recently, the state has submitted two bills to reform the laws on assembly and gathering and the 1373 (1994-



1995) law on holding arms, which aims to harden the conditions of gathering and offering “carte blanche” to armed forces to eliminate citizens.¹²

About KMMK-G

The Kurdistan Human Rights Association - Geneva (KMMK-G) aims to promote democracy, respect for human rights and social development in and beyond Kurdistan of Iran.

To that end, the Association commits itself to fight against any form of discrimination towards ethnic and religious minorities within the region, defend political prisoners, fight for the abolition of the death penalty, and promote women’s and children’s rights. In addition, the KMMK-G intends to increase public awareness on the situation of human rights in all Kurdish regions and to promote the rights and integration of the Kurds wherever they live.

Established in Geneva in 2006, the KMMK-G constitutes a bridge between the Kurdish civil society, the United Nations Agencies and NGOs and participates actively in all the sessions of the Human Rights Council, the ESCR, the CPR Committee, the UPR and the UN Forum on minority issues and presents them with reports on the situation of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran (www.kmmk-ge.org), (<http://www.kmmk-ge.org/?p=426&lang=en>). Moreover, the Association frequently gets in touch with various United Nations organs in order to submit reports to them on the situation of human rights in the Kurdistan of Iran.

The KMMK-G is, therefore, a recognized source of information. Its reports are published on the website of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner of Human Rights. The Association also frequently publishes articles in Kurdish and Iranian media.

The KMMK-G is also active within the Geneva and Swiss communities. Swiss political parties regularly consult with the Association about the Kurdish issue and immigrants’ integration.

¹²12¹² Draft of laws reforming holding guns:

<https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010328000180/%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AD%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A8%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%AD-%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF>

<https://www.peace-mark.org/135-13>

Law draft to reform gathering laws:

<https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14020219000552/%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AD%D9%87-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%BE%DB%8C%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7>



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Furthermore, the KMMK-G supports the Kurdish diaspora living in exile by organising conferences, cultural events and language courses.